



ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES

*WOMEN'S THREE GENERATION
LIFE HISTORY PROJECT.
IN
WHAPMAGOOSTUI, QUEBEC*

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: EMILY MASTY

DECEMBER, 1993
REVISED APRIL 1995

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THREE GENERATION LIFE HISTORY PROJECT
THE KAWAPIT WOMEN OF WHAPMAGOOSTUI, QC.
PRINICIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Emily Masty

- Reviewer A was most concerned that the original language be retained in the final written document. That is equally important to this author but I am well aware of the limitations of producing a Cree language document. The time and financial constraints of this project greatly limit the possibility of producing a syllabic text. As well, given that this is primarily an oral culture, there are to date very few books in Eastern James Bay Cree. Indeed, my own experience working on Bible translations reminds me of the difficulties, for example, of agreeing upon a standardized syllabarium. In sum, I think that the idea of having a side by side text would be the goal for future projects of this kind. The best combination for practical use of this document however would be a written English text accompanied by Cree language tapes of the interviews.

- Reviewer B asked for particular organizational and editing changes. He also makes important editorial suggestions for future publication. His editorial comments have been taken into account and many of the suggested changes have been made. In particular, all of the Cree words used in this document, whether proper names or phrases are now, according to more standard conventions, in italics. The one term that is not is the word "Iiyuu", which is used so frequently that it remains in regular type. As well, I have included a map of the region at the outset of the document.

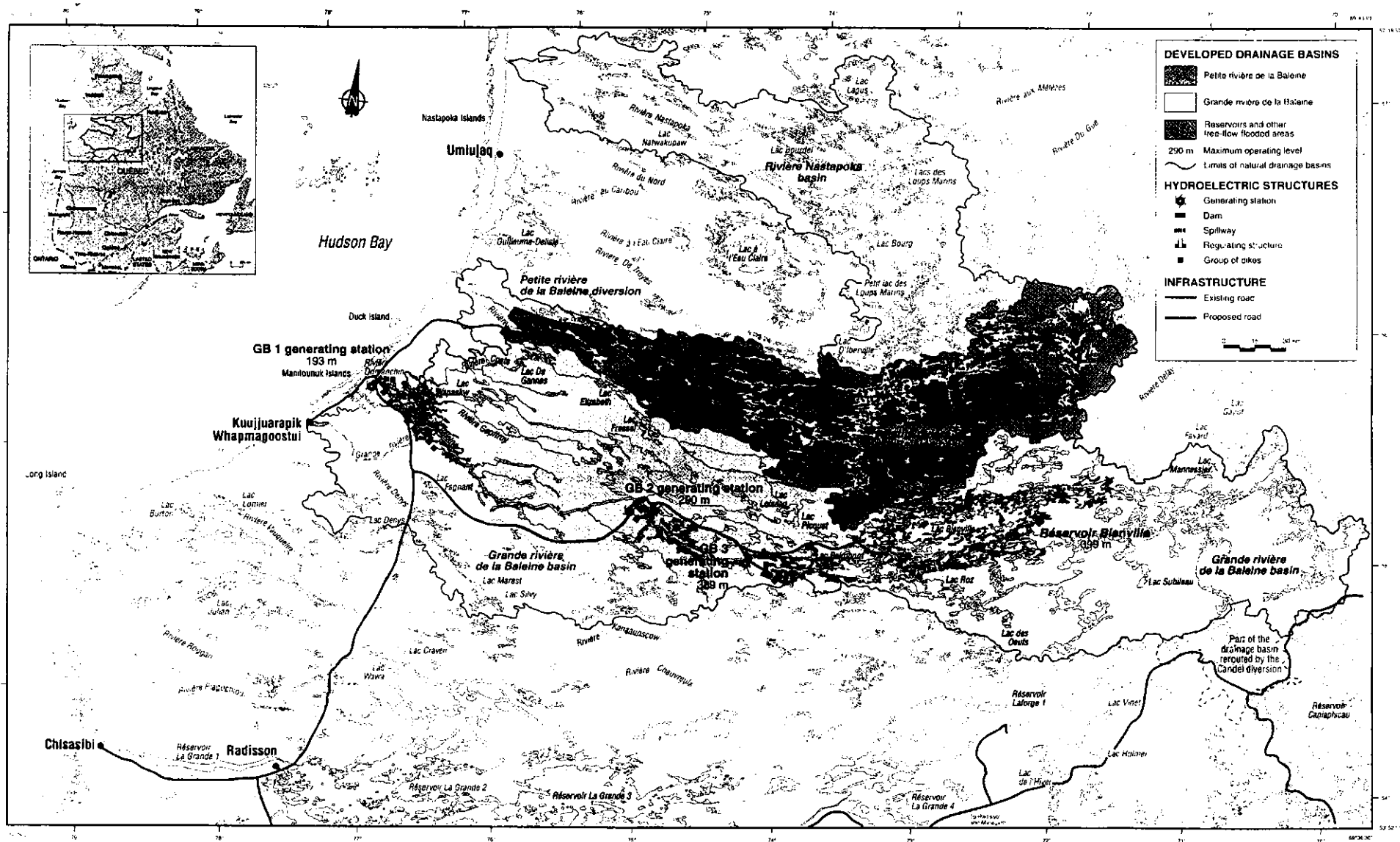
- Ideally, an index would enhance access to this report. Unfortunately this was not a consideration at the outset so the key words have not been coded in the document. If this were to be considered for publication however, an index would be a necessary addition. At this stage, however, the added financial/time costs do not justify its creation.

- I have also chosen to make three relatively minor changes to this final draft of the Life History Project. First, I have included some of my own autobiographical history in the introduction in order to round out the information about *all* of the participants of this study.

Second, I have included recommendations to the RCAP at the end as to how this document can most effectively be used as an educational tool.

Third, I have more formally acknowledged Naomi Adelson's assistance with the writing of the introduction by adding her name as co-author to that chapter.

● Map of Whapmagoostui (Great Whale River/Poste de la Baleine)
and Surrounding Region



CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This three generation life history project tells the stories of the Kawapit women of Whapmagoostui (Poste de la Baleine/Great Whale), Québec. The three life histories together describe the ways in which women have lived and continue to live on the northern boreal forest and taiga land. The Kawapit family was selected for this study because they are one of the Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu (Cree) families that, through the generations, has been shaped by this way of life. Through the testimonies of the three women this document will illustrate how their relationship to the land has progressed over the years.

Resources such as this document provide future relatives with information about a way of life that is without doubt changing. Indeed, life on the land as these three women know it might not be experienced by future Iyiyuu generations if ventures such as large scale hydro-electric projects flood one's ancestral home and territory. With this document, I hope that future generations of Iyiyuuch will have some kind of account of where they came from.

No one can predict whether or not plans for the hydro-electric project will go forward in the Great Whale region. As of November, 1994 these plans have been "shelved". If however, the Quebec government chooses to re-open these or other northern hydro-electric projects the toll they will take will be immeasurable. As these life histories testify, our land is our library. The children of future generations will lose their families' documented histories if they lose the land forms, trees, and

rivers. Fortunately life history projects such as this one at least provide a recorded, albeit second-hand, documentation of life on the land. They also allow the words of the elders to be retained for future generations.

I have chosen, for this project, to present the voices of the Kawapit women in the original interview format. In this way, those words will not be lost. While organized chronologically and to some extent under particular headings, for the most part this document remains a text of voices as well as stories. I have, as much as possible, attempted to retain the natural flow of the interview. Because of this, readers may be aware of repetition in some parts. This repetition however is part of the normal flow of a language based entirely upon an oral tradition and hence integral to Cree language and communication.

I have also chosen to retain the words, phrases, terminologies and place names given during the interviews. These words are rarely heard today in the everyday working language of the Iyiyuu living in town. The words show, however, how intimately the Iyiyuu know the lay of the land and how every significant body of water, mountain or stretch of land is named and handed down through the generations. Over time, each family has added their own special names on top of the last generations' because of some significant event that happened in these places. Events such as a birth, death, marriage, first kill, or a supernatural phenomenon will change the very toponymy of the land. It goes without saying that these place names will be forever lost if submerged under reservoirs, dams or roadways.

I have been collecting stories such as Suzanne Kawapit's since the mid-1980s

because I have felt for a long time that the elders' knowledge must be recorded in some sort of permanent format. This realization took shape soon after my last living grandparent, Sam Masty, died in 1981. That Suzanne mentions my grandfather in some of her stories makes them even more special to me.

I realized that I needed to equip myself with better writing skills and so decided to go to university in 1984. My plan was to become more fluent in the English language so that I could tell the world outside of Whapmagoostui about my people, our history and our ways of living. As it turned out, I ended up with a degree in education, earning my B.Ed from McGill University in 1987 - giving Whapmagoostui, in the process, their first university graduate! It was during the summers of those university years that I began - with the financial assistance of the Whapmagoostui Band Council - to start collecting the stories and legends of my people. I have yet to stop amassing this wealth of information and of course, welcome opportunities such as the Royal Commission Life History Project, which allows me to continue the recording process. Since I have begun teaching, I have realized that there is a real need not just for recording these stories, life histories, and legends but for their dissemination as well. I am now taking steps to begin incorporating these testimonies into the school curriculum.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank in writing some very important people who made this project come to life. First and foremost, I thank Suzanne, Agnes and Rachel Kawapit for so generously giving their time and their words to this project. They spoke openly and honestly with me in part because I am a member of

their own community and because the interviews were conducted with a person familiar to them and in their own language. As well they, like I, understand the value of putting down in writing the life stories of Whapmagoostui's women.

As well I thank the Whapmagoostui Band Council for allowing this project to go ahead. I also thank Dr. Naomi Adelson for her consulting, writing and editing work on this project as well as her continued support of my on-going efforts to record in print the histories, stories and legends of my people. I also thank her for alerting me to this project. She knew how much I would value and want to conduct a project of this type and it was with her prompting that I submitted the original project proposal to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples which provided me with the opportunity and means to collect the indispensable information that is contained in this document.

Finally, I thank my sons Patrick and Robert who constantly provide me with a reason for all that I do. Someday they will understand why it may feel as though I spend more time at the computer than with them! *Chiswaaimitinawaaau nikushituk!*

CHAPTER TWO
INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE HISTORIES
by Emily Masty and Naomi Adelson

I. Whapmagoostui, QC.¹

Whapmagoostui is located approximately 1400 kilometres north of Montreal on the northern shore of the mouth of the Great Whale River (R. Grande Baleine) as it pours into Hudson Bay. The immediate region around Whapmagoostui is comprised of subarctic taïga with northern boreal forest inland of this coastal village. While there are the characteristic coniferous trees on the outskirts of the village site, the vegetation on the shoreline resembles that of the barren lands because of the harsh conditions and fierce winds that blow along the Hudson Bay coast. The sandy terrain of the region around the village is a reminder of the tiers of glaciation and erosion that have shaped this region since the last Ice Age.

Whapmagoostui is the furthest north of the modern Eastern James Bay Cree communities; the other seven communities are located to the south and southeast of Great Whale River. Roads into northeastern Quebec go only as far as Chisasibi, approximately 100 kilometres to the south of Whapmagoostui, so the only means of entry into the Great Whale region is by plane or boat.

This is a relatively recent permanent village site for the Cree of this region. The Whapmagoostui Cree are predominantly northern, caribou hunters and their

¹Information describing the village of Whapmagoostui has been drawn from *Being Alive Well: Indigenous Belief as Opposition among the Whapmagoostui Cree* by Naomi Adelson (Ph.D, Montreal: McGill U. 1992).

The name "Great Whale" refers to the location of the Inuit and Cree villages together. Whapmagoostui refers specifically to the Cree community and land; Kuujjuaraapik, to the Inuit community and land.

parents, grandparents, and all of their predecessors lived, travelled, and hunted in areas north, east, and south of the Great Whale River. Historically the mouth of the Great Whale River was a summer meeting place for the northern Cree and partly for this reason, was selected as a trading post and church site as the fur trade and mission activity moved further north.

Over two hundred years ago this region became a base for a small mining enterprise and, for over a century, a thriving whaling station. The fur trade industry eventually overtook the whaling enterprise and the site remained a trading post up until the early decades of this century. Cree families began to congregate and remain at the post for longer periods of time - either because they could find employment there or perhaps because a family member was too weak or sick to travel inland. With the decline in fur-bearing animals through the mid-1930s, there was another shift toward living closer to the established post.

In the 1950s Great Whale became the site for a Distance Early Warning station and the Cree speak of how the Canadian armed forces seemed to have just appeared one summer, taking over the northwestern reaches of the village area. Research conducted during this period on the contact between Native and non-Native cultures indicates that there were many changes to the village in a relatively short period of time. One significant change was the first local school for the indigenous population. As the need for DEW in the late 1950s waned and fewer armed forces personnel were required at this site, some of the buildings were turned into the beginnings of a school for the Cree and Inuit children of town-dwelling

families.²

Great Whale currently consists of two official municipalities: Kuujjuaraapik (Inuit) and Whapmagoostui (Cree), and three unofficial communities: Inuit, Cree, and non-Native (francophone and anglophone). There are over 600 Cree living in Whapmagoostui and just over double that number living in all of the combined communities. Since the signing of the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement (JBNQA) in 1975, Whapmagoostui's village borders are circumscribed by the limits of Cree and Inuit category 1A lands.

The village of Whapmagoostui is a relatively new permanent site for the Iyiyuu and the homes that people live in today have only in the last decade replaced the wooden housing developments that were built for the people by the Canadian government in the 1960s and 1970s. After the signing of the JBNQA, but not until the mid-1980s, new homes with indoor plumbing, electricity and running water have been built by the community. As well the community now has a school (preK-Secondary V), complete municipal services, a sports facilities, community centre, band hall, 3 stores, nursing station, radio station, church, and a hockey arena.³

The population of Whapmagoostui is young with only about half the people over the age of 30. Many of the young and older adults of the community are employed locally, either in government (federal, provincial, municipal, band)

²In 1957, there was only a summer school. In the 1960s, when more families started to live in the village for longer periods of time, a rudimentary full day school was set up.

³The municipality of Kuujjuaraapik has its own government offices, clinic, radio station, municipal services, school, and social services.

services, the band office, construction, or the school. Families who choose to spend a greater portion of the year hunting and trapping are remunerated through the Income Security Program (developed through the JBNQA). The overall percentage of Whapmagoostui adult men who trap on a full time basis does not reflect the number of families that continue to regularly hunt or fish. There is a twice annual goose hunt, for example, at which time the community virtually shuts down while everyone who is able is off at their respective hunting sites. As well, caribou, rabbit and ptarmigan may be procured by those who work in the village yet hunt on a regular part-time basis.

II. The Life History Interview Process

The reason for this Royal Commission Life Histories research project was to get a sense of the lives of three generations of women who have lived for long periods of time in the bush. The life histories that comprise the bulk of this document present the stories of three Whapmagoostui women who have lived a large portion of their lives in the bush. What makes these life stories significant however is not just that they are of people who have lived in the bush but that they are the stories of Whapmagoostui women. The central themes that are represented are integral to the lives of Whapmagoostui women - whether they live in the bush or in town. For example, Suzanne, now an elder, had her husband chosen for her by her grandfather and father; Agnes grew up in the bush as well as in a chronic care facility and has raised children as a single, working mother; and finally, Rachel is a

teenager in the 1990s. In ways so similar to teenagers now, yet so foreign to either her mother or grandmother, Rachel is spending her days as a youth contemplating her future, seeing also that she can do almost anything she wants to - with the right education. With all of this though, Rachel still defines herself quite strictly within the roles dictated by what it means to be a Cree woman. In all cases, and in each of the stories, there is a clear sense of how women live and work in the bush, and to a lesser extent, in the village.

As stated in the introduction the interviews have, for the most part, been left in their original format in order that the women tell their own stories.⁴ Some editing was necessary however to provide chronological order and it is for that reason that there may be some awkward transitions between some of the stories. As well, especially in the case of Suzanne Kawapit's life history, it was difficult to know where to place certain portions of the text. While I have edited the ordering of the stories, it should be evident that each sub-section is but one part of the larger whole.

I chose to retain the original "voices" of the interviews for a reason that became increasingly clear through the transcription process. One can see in the organization of the texts - that is, in the way that the women spoke - a particular shift in the style of the dialogue between the interviewer and the women telling their life stories. For example, I had to ask many questions of Rachel in order to elicit

⁴Given that the interviews have been left, to a great extent, unedited information has been included in brackets for clarification purposes in certain portions of the text.

Also, the reader may note at times, some confusion as to the gender of some of the "players" in the stories. Given that there are no gender pronouns (he or she) in the Cree language, these distinctions are made based solely on context. In one or two places in the text, then, the gender of a person in the story was not clearly stated, but does not detract from the essence of the story itself.

information from her. This type of dialogue differs dramatically from that which took place with Rachel's grandmother, Suzanne Kawapit. Suzanne, the elder Cree woman, spoke to me much as any Cree elder would in Whapmagoostui. She told her story, saying all that she had to say, with little interruption from the interviewer. This is the way that Cree elders speak and it is the anticipated form of exchange. It implies that respect was shown to the elder by not interrupting her or asking too many questions that may distract her from saying what she wants.

In between, specifically, in the interviews with Agnes, care is taken to not interrupt her story but there is more of a sense of a dialogue that takes place during the interview process. Agnes and I are of the same generation and my interviews with her reflect as well the easy flow of our conversations. With Rachel, the youngest, there is a definite shift in the way the interview takes place. Rachel is not always forthcoming with information since she is not accustomed to speaking in this manner. I had to ask Rachel many questions in order to prompt her to talk about her life. There were great pauses between questions asked of Rachel. When she stopped talking, I would have to ask her another question in order to have her start again. As is quite typical with Cree - or more likely any - adolescents, Rachel had to be prompted to speak. By her silence after the answers, she made it clear that she had finished speaking on that particular topic. Despite the reticence that comes with her age, the interviews reveal that Rachel has great insights about the life and future of the Whapmagoostui Iiyuu.

The shift in dialogue style is nonetheless significant and may point to a

change in linguistic styles between the generations. While Cree was spoken with all three generations of women, the very form of the language nevertheless alters between the generations. The interview transcriptions, in and of themselves, document a shift in the forms and styles of Cree communication. From the primarily monologue of the elder to the interview dialogue of the most junior generation, there is subtle change in the spoken language. This may either be a common effect of inter-generational communication or perhaps, a shift towards more of a mimicking of English dialect taking place in Cree. In either case, the differences between the generations is found not only in the content of these interviews but also in their style and format.

III. Suzanne Kawapit

Suzanne Kawapit is an Elder of Whapmagoostui. She claims that she is the oldest living person of her generation among the Whapmagoostui Iyiyuu. She is eighty-five years old, on record as having been born on the 1st of September 1908. According to Suzanne her birth may have been later in the fall, but this is the date that is recorded on the baptismal records. Church records show that she was baptised in 1909 when they came back to the post after spending the winter out on the land.

Suzanne Kawapit was raised on the land by her parents and grandparents. She was raised in what I define as the Cree traditional way. Her life story tells of the time when the Iyiyuu of Whapmagoostui spent the whole year out on the land.

Her life story tells of time when the Iyiyuu lived in the bush, subsisting primarily on foods available from the land, and living with virtually no help from government agencies. Suzanne continues to go out on the land to this day.

Suzanne Kawapit's life story reflects a time when the Cree woman had to be self-sufficient and had to know how to survive without the help of a man - or anyone, for that matter - for long periods of time. We can tell by her story that she survived using her own learned range of skills - skills she had acquired before she got married. These skills include such things as fishing with hooks and nets, setting traps for fur-bearing animals, cleaning and fixing those animals, making all the clothing for her family, building winter and summer dwellings with materials found on the land and knowing the habitats and habits of all the animals.

According to Cree standards, her father and grandfather chose a good husband for her, a husband who was a successful hunter and industrious worker like herself. Together they made a good living and life for themselves and their six living children out on the land. Today, all their living children are still practicing the Cree way of life. According to Suzanne Kawapit, she had fulfilled her role as an Iyiyuu because her children are carrying on this way of life and are teaching their own children through these practices. However her granddaughter Rachel fears that she will loose the history of her family and drastically reduce any possibility of living on the land as her grandmother did and continues to do.

IV. Agnes Kawapit

Agnes is a forty-five year old single mother of two. Her parents raised her on the land and passed down their knowledge of the land to her so that she may, in turn, pass it along to her children. She has most of the skills needed to survive out on the land if she had to. She has fulfilled some of the obligations with which she was entrusted by going out on the land as much as she can.

Agnes' own history was determined in part quite early in her life. Agnes' illness at a young age meant that she had to leave her family for a significant period of time and live among non-Natives during the lengthy recuperation period. Agnes' illness, and more specifically, the fact that she moved away for so long at such a young age, had a profound effect upon both Agnes and her family. Because of her early exposure to the language and culture of the "south", Agnes became one of the first translators in Great Whale, able to communicate with the English non-Cree. This meant that Agnes would be wanted for employment as a translator in the village and as she tells us, this is exactly what happened. The early education experience led to other jobs and today Agnes is a respected community member who works hard at her job in the social service sector. While she was brought up on the land and still continues to spend long periods in the bush, Agnes is employed in the village as a Drug and Alcohol Abuse counsellor. She is successful in her career and provides well for her children. She has the tenacity of an Iyiyuu raised on the land - doing a difficult job while providing for her children as a single mother.

Agnes has seen and experienced a lot of both worlds in her life. I can not

help thinking about how it might have been for her if her back was not corrected or if she had lived in her mother's time. The concept of a plane, for example, was not in the Iyiyuu mind of that time. Agnes was born on the brink of this new age for the Iyiyuu and has become someone who can successfully integrate Iyiyuu knowledge and skills. Her ability to transcend both "cultures" has meant that she is able to pass along to and teach her children many of the things that were taught to her when she lived in the bush with her family.

Agnes also reveals in these pages some of the inner turmoil that she lives with to this day. She was very candid in these interviews about her experiences and her success in dealing with those events in her life. One must consider that part of the reason Agnes was so forthcoming was because she was talking in Cree to a member of her own community. It is, in fact, an opportune moment to remind the reader that while these words were spoken for the general public in mind, they are very much personal stories.

Over the last few years, Agnes has developed a stronger sense of indigenous spirituality. This is an increasingly strong focus of her life and something which she sees as being an important component of who she is. She is questioning the hypocrisy of past church teachings that imposed a strict compliance on the part of the Cree. The reverberations of that indoctrination process means that there remain certain topics that mother and daughter cannot discuss. Agnes cannot ask her mother about the Cree spiritual ways since she feels that this would be an insult to her mother's strong beliefs in the Anglican church.

This raises yet another dilemma that exists between generations. The older generation to which Suzanne Kawapit belongs holds information about Cree spiritual beliefs and practices. They are reticent to share that information since it remains a taboo subject according to the Christian teachings. On the other hand, Agnes is attempting to resolve some of her present day issues with indigenous spiritual knowledge. She, for her part, restrains herself from discussing this with her mother, and hence is not learning about Cree beliefs directly from those who have knowledge of it. Instead, Agnes has had to rely on outsiders to add to her knowledge about her own people's spirituality and complex belief system.⁵

At the end of Agnes Kawapits' interviews, she enters into a long discussion of place names with me. The discussion is revealing at a number of levels. First, we learn of the intricacies of the Cree language that stem directly from the connection between language and land use. We also learn that she and I [EM], both of whom having been raised on the land, struggle with some terms, but are clear on others. Finally, as these subjects are pursued with Agnes, it becomes clearer that we are both concerned about these particularities given the current reality of less and less time on the land and the potential loss of that land and, by definition, our history.

V. Rachel Kawapit

Rachel is a seventeen year old young woman in her last year of high

⁵This is now changing since an Elder Council has recently been established in Whapmagoostui. Indications are that elders are resuming their roles as teachers and now, after many years of silence, are ready to share their cultural and spiritual knowledge. Early church missionaries proscribed the these practices treating them instead as contrary to church teachings.

school. She has great plans for her future. As can be seen from her story, these plans came to her as result of her experience of the land and the people living on it. She was brought up on the land during her formative years. Rachel has a great attachment to the land and is afraid that she may be the last generation with tangible knowledge of the history and practices of her family and the northern Cree people. One might also wonder whether her desire to become a flying medic leaves her questioning whether she will actually need those skills if fewer and fewer people are able to live on the land because of outside encroachment.

Rachel speaks about differences that she feels between living in the bush and village life. She reveals in the interview that she is actually quite lonely when she returns from long periods in the bush and doesn't like to just hang around the village on days when there is no school. She compares life in the village and life in the bush for a teenage girl and speaks with pride about the amount of work that is anticipated of her while she is in the bush.

It is likely because of this pride that Rachel agreed to represent Cree youth from Whapmagoostui at the World Indigenous Youth Conference despite great apprehensions about traveling so far from home to attend this conference. Knowing this young woman, however, it is not surprising that she chose to attend this conference since she considers the fight for her future and the future of indigenous peoples worldwide central to her life.

Rachel, one of the two representatives of her community to those meetings, discusses her trip to Australia in the interviews. On hearing and reading the

description of her trip, one can see just how different her life is compared to that of her mother or grandmother. This trip would be unfathomable for her grandmother, but for Rachel, as her interview suggests, the trip allows her to put into perspective some very universal features facing many Indigenous populations today. To have had the opportunity as a teenager to travel to Australia as a representative of her community provides Rachel with a heightened sense of her own history and cultural values.

With typical teenage aplomb, Rachel casually goes from an indigenous youth conference in Australia to being a bridesmaid at a friend's wedding back home in Whapmagoostui. She then turns in the interviews to a discussion of the things that she has learned while living in the bush with her mother and grandmother. Rachel exemplifies the contemporary Whapmagoostui youth who balances a variety of "worlds" - as comfortable in the bush as she is in the village: working as a salesclerk or in high school, or learning about people from around the world.

Rachel also describes that she is a traditional dancer. Many of the Whapmagoostui youth and young adults are becoming involved in the drumming and dancing familiar at pow-wows across North America. This is a relatively newly reintroduced yet highly popular cultural activity in Whapmagoostui. Rachel sees this as an important activity and, unlike the "Cree culture" that she learns in school, views this and her life in the bush as being closer to what she sees as Cree life and culture.

Even as a teenager, Rachel is able to speak eloquently and passionately about

the most pressing political issue for the community of Whapmagoostui and the Great Whale River region. Part of this teenager's concern revolves around the threat of hydro-electric development as well as other factors of village living that reduce her chances of opting for the lifestyle in which she was raised. For Rachel, her life history is intimately tied to the new challenges that she must face in the coming years.

CHAPTER THREE

LIFE HISTORY: SUZANNE KAWAPIT

FAMILY

EM: Grandmother, this day that we are talking, I know that you are 85 or 86 years old. You have lived a long life, living the Iyiyuu [Cree]¹ way of life.

SK: Yes, yes. Certainly. I have lived the Iyiyuu way of life all the way, lived the life as I was raised. I was raised and lived the Iyiyuu way of life. I survived from that way of life. There were no *wamistikusiu* ["whiteman"] possessions/food to help in my upbringing and survival.

My mother's father was called *Nutachikwaau*.²

My grandfather, my other grandfather, my father's father was called...I do not know what his other name [Christian name] was but he was known by the name of *Kamichapaut*. His Iyiyuu name was *Mastayaapimiku*. I do not know what his actual Iyiyuu name was. My father was called David.³ My mother's name was Anne.⁴

As far back as I can remember, as I was growing up and being raised, I remember that we always seemed to be in need of something to eat when we would live out on the land. I remember those times to be hungry times when I was still unable to do anything for myself. The only ones who ensured our survival was my father and mother. The only way we could survive was for them to hunt and fish. That is all we did for our survival.

After awhile, I was able to help them to do some of the work. There came a time when I was able to go with them when they did the hunting and fishing, especially when they did the fishing. In those days, there were hardly any caribou around when I was being raised. There was hardly any caribou

¹Throughout this document, Cree words and names are transliterated and in italics. Only the word Iyiyuu is left in regular type since it is used with such frequency that it is akin to any other foreign word adopted into the English language. Square brackets have been used primarily for the English translation or for explaining a Cree word or term. Square brackets have also been used in places to contextualize or explain the speaker's comments. A complete glossary of Cree terms is included the end of the document.

²All Iyiyuuch have both a Cree name and a "Christian" name (and often both are found on the church baptismal records). Suzanne Kawapit refers to one or both of these names in discussions of her family. The interviewer is making particular note of indicating certain (Christian) names in order to specify who Mrs. Kawapit is talking about.

³According to the church records his surname is Masty.

⁴Anne Nutachequan-Masty, according to church records.

anywhere. But today, it is not like that. There are plenty of caribou around it seems. But as far back as I can remember in my youth, it was already the time when there were hardly any caribou in these parts. The only way we survived was by fish and when my father killed some ptarmigan. Also, at that time, there were not many porcupine around. There was some ptarmigan occaisionally. That is how we were able to survive and from fish, too. Fish was about the only thing that ensured our survival as far back as I can remember even before I could put any fishing lines by myself. I remember when I would go with my mother to put fishing lines in the water and the fishing nets. After a time, I was able to help her a little. Later, I was able to do these things by myself. My mother showed and taught me at an early age how to put fishing lines in the ice, ice fishing and putting nets in the water in the winter time. She taught me this all the time. I was able to do these things by myself because I was taught these fishing techniques all the time. That was about the only thing I was taught in the beginning.

I was the oldest of all my siblings. I was the oldest. I learned early everything that I was beginning taught in all that I was being taught about hunting and fishing. I always went with my mother and father as they went about their daily hunting and fishing activities. I would go with one or the other as they went about their work as I was growing up. I was the only one who was able to hunt and fish as I got older. I was taught these things early on in my life and I was capable of doing these jobs at an early age. I learned at an early age how to use a gun to shoot ptarmigan with. I learned to use a gun early. I also learned to do ice fishing, setting fishing lines in the ice and to set fishing nets, early on in my life. These are the kinds of things I learned. After awhile, I was able to chisel the ice to set the lines and nets on my own quite well. It was said of me that I was able to do fishing quite well at an early age.

Sometimes, even though I was good at fishing, we were very hungry. There were times when, we - the young ones - could hardly even get up from our sleeping places because we were too weak from lack of nourishment for long stretches of time. That is what would happen to us at times. We would be in need of food desperately. There were times that every kind of game was not available, not even ptarmigan were around to feed on. There were no porcupine to be seen, also.

There came a time when I could help my parents to hunt and fish. The first thing I learned and capable of was to do some fishing and chisel the ice to do some fishing. I would help my mother to tend to the nets.

I was being raised during a period of hard times. Of all my siblings, I was being raised during a period when not even the smaller game was plentiful. At this time, there were no caribou anywhere where it used to be. It was only

on rare occasions that my father would see some caribou tracks on his outings and not even have a chance to kill them.

EM: What about your parents? Were there some caribou when they were young?

SK: There must have been some caribou around when they were still young. My mother would tell stories when her father would kill some caribou. She also told of stories when he killed some beaver.

But when I was growing up, the game started to seem to dwindle more and more especially the big game like the caribou. There was hardly any caribou in those days as I was growing up.

As I was growing and maturing, I was able to help my parents to do the hunting and fishing and my younger siblings as they got older helped us, too. I had four sisters and three brothers. There were two siblings next to me who helped to do some hunting and fishing. The second oldest, next to me was a male sibling and there were two female siblings after my brother. These were the ones who helped me and my mother to do the fishing. Our mother taught us how to do the fishing early on. My male sibling next to me was good at hunting early on in his life, too. He was not very old when he died.

EM: What were your siblings' names, you being the oldest?

SK: Luke was the next oldest. He was next to me. I was the oldest and then Luke. My other male siblings are Joseph, George and Sandy (Masty). My female siblings were...One of them was called Caroline and there was Marianne. Annie and Maggie are still alive. Maggie was the youngest. There was another female sibling who died at a very young age. Her name was Annie, too. She was still being wrapped [in a *waaspisuyan*] when she died.

EM: You have told me that you are the oldest of all your siblings. When you were born, was the fur-trade happening then?

SK: Yes, the fur-trading was happening. It had been established even before I was born. When I became of age, I helped my father with his trapping and my mother, too.

I was able to do well for myself when the fur-bearing animals were in abundance. There were times when I was able to help myself in that way when I was still living with my parents.

My male sibling next oldest was the same way. He was my grandson Paul's (Dick's) father, Daisy's husband. That was his father. He was also Louisa's

(Natachequan) father. Paul (Dick) is her older brother. As for my other siblings...*Kinuwaapinwaaskum* (Adam Mamianskum) was one of my sister's children. Maggie (Mamianksun-Rupert) and Abraham (Mamianskum) were also my sister's children.

EM: What was their mother's name?

SK: Marianne. She was the third oldest of the siblings in my family.

EM: Did you learn to set a net in the ice at an early age?

SK: Yes, I learned to set a net in the ice early on in my life. I was told that I was a fast learner in all that they taught me. I was told that I was capable of setting a net in the ice at an early age and to set fishing lines in the ice. I was a fast learner. I helped my father in trying to help us by trapping fur-bearing animals. I helped by setting traps and catching some fur-bearing animals by myself. We always went with my father tending to his trapline, my brother Luke and I. We would go with our father on his long expeditions of setting up his trapline. We never had anything to carry us around on these treks that took days to cover. The only way of getting from place to place was by walking in the winter. We would walk to do all our hunting during the winter.

EM: Where did you used to do all your hunting and trapping?

SK: At *Ipisikimis* [Lac Bienville]. That was our homeland/territory [*ka utitauniyach*]. That is where we used to stay as long as I have lived.

My mother said that...I do not remember this but she told me where I was born. I was born south of there on the *Chisasipistuk* [Chisasibi river system]. I have seen the old campsite where I was born on one of the rivers that make up the *Chisasipistuk*. That is where I was born.

EM: What is the name of the place where you were born?

SK: Where I was born? There is an *Iyiyuu* buried there where I was born who was called, *Naanas*. Therefore, the lake where I was born is called, *Naanasiu-saakiikin*. That was the name of the lake. That is where we were born. My brother Luke was born to the east of the lake. We were born on the same lake but not on the same camp spots.

EM: What time of the year were you and Luke born?

SK: I was born in the fall but travelling by canoe was still done at that time of the

year. I must have been born during *Wisakupisium* [lit. caribou mating month; October]. The place I mentioned where I was born, my mother told me that we had spent the freeze up not far from there that same year. I guess it was near freeze up when I was born. My brother Luke was born in the spring time when there was already a lot of water on the ice. The spring thaw had already happened. That is when he was born it is said of him. As for me, I was born near freeze up.

EM: Who gave you your name?

SK: No one!⁵ When I was born, I was only given my Iyiyuu name. *Mis'taskwaau* was the Iyiyuu name I was given. That is the name my grandmother *Chuskuminas* gave me, I was told. She was the one who was married to our grandfather [*Kamichapaut*]. "She is the one who gave you your name, *Mis'taskwaau*," I was told. The minister called, *Mistiwaatin* [Rev. Walton], gave me my name. I was told, "When he was about to baptize you, he was told what your Iyiyuu name was and that you had no other name like the *wamistikusiu* name. When he was told this, he said, 'She will have the name Suzanne. There was a woman long time ago, who had this name. She had great faith in God. She believed in God without a doubt. This will be her name like the other woman.'" My mother told me that is how I got my name, Suzanne. "That is the reason why you have this name because the minister, *Mistiwaatin*, gave you that name."

EM: What is does your Iyiyuu name, *Mis'taskwaau* mean?

SK: I do not know exactly but it sounds like I have a lot of work to do. That seems to be the idea behind that name, that I will be able to do a lot of work in my life. I suppose I have lived up to my name.

EM: That is certainly true. When you were born...I know that in those the women themselves delivered each others' babies. Who attended your mother when you were about to be born?

SK: It was our grandmother *Chuskuminas* [father's mother].

EM: I wonder how many children she delivered.

SK: She must have delivered many children. Her daughters had many children. Her daughter named, *Waapistaniskwaau*, had many children. It is said that this woman had many children. But she could not raise all of them to adulthood [meaning, many of them died]. So, she must have delivered most

⁵Trans. note: She chuckles as she says this.

of her children including my siblings.

We had always lived with her while her husband was alive. Also, the one called, *Atwaan* [Edward Natachequan], his wife was the niece of *Chuskuminas* by marriage to our grandfather *Kamichapaut*. *Atwaan's* wife was *Kamichapaut's* daughter. *Atwaan's* wife and my father had the same father and mother. But I do not know how many there were all together as siblings. The only ones I knew were my father and *Atwaan's* wife. There was another sibling that I heard who died quite near here. His burial site is near, up the inland route which starts across the river from here. "There is a portage near there," *Chisasibiiyuchakip* had said. "He was called, *Waaskinuwaayapau*." This must have been my [consanguineal] uncle. *Waaskinuwaayapau* and my father were brothers with the same parents. He was young when he died. Our grandfather did not have many children, himself. When his wife, my father's mother, died, he married our grandmother *Chuskuminas*, then. He could not impregnate her!⁶ They did not have children together. She must have been an older woman he married. They did not have children together. So, that was the only three siblings I knew of and heard of one who were my father, my aunt and my uncle *Waaskinuwaayapau*. *Waaskinuwaayapau* was my father's younger brother.

EM: Was *Waapistaniskwaau* also a younger sibling of your father's?

SK: She and my father did not have the same mother and father.

EM: Oh yes, the one *Atwaan* was married was your father's sister.

SK: *Waapistaniskwaau* was grandmother *Chuskuminas's* daughter. She had *Waapistaniskwaau* by her other marriage before she married *Kamichapaut* in their twilight years. I do know who her other children were. She was not married long with the father of *Waapistaniskwaau* and then she married *Kamichapaut*. Our grandfather *Kamichapaut* and his family were living with *Chuskuminas* and her husband the year *Chuskuminas's* husband died. I guess he married her much later on. *Kamichapaut* had already been married, too, his first wife being my father's mother and my aunt who *Atwaan* was married to and *Waaskinuwaayapau*. There had been only three siblings. My father had said that my aunt was very young when their mother died.

EM: What was your aunt's name?

SK: She was the one that *Atwaan* was married to. She was Philip Natachequan's mother, *Chisapinipand* his siblings mother.

⁶ Trans. note: She says this with a chuckle.

EM: Oh yes. Hannah Natachequan.

SK: Yes, she was the one. Our grandfather did not have many children, only the three of them I mentioned. Our grandmother *Chuskuminas* also had only three children with her first marriage. One of them as I mentioned earlier was *Waapistaniskwaau*. But *Waapistaniskwaau* had many children.

I imagine that our grandmother *Chuskuminas* had delivered many children in her time.

EM: What about your mother's siblings? How many were there altogether?

SK: *Auk!* She had many siblings. She must have had many siblings. One of them was *Atwaan* and *Atwaanis*. Then there...I do not know how many times, our grandfather *Nutachikwaau* [Natachequan] was married but he was married many times. His wives used to leave whenever he got married. In this way, he had many children by all these wives he had [but not any two at the same time].

I do not know which one of his wives was where *Waatachikwaauutu* [Jacob Rupert] commented about our grandfather *Nutachikwaau*, "It is said that one of his wives used to live with him only a while and then she would leave him again. While he was married to this one, he managed to give her three children, just on the run, it seems."

I wonder what he called the woman? The woman left him a couple of times while they were married. I think our grandmother called, *Piiyasiskwaau*, was one of her children. I think that was her mother. *Piiyasiskwaau's* mother died. She was very young and was still nursing when her mother died. It is said that she died while she was still nursing *Piiyasiskwaau*. It is said that *Piiyasiskwaau* used to say in the middle of the night after her mother died, 'Mother, I need to nurse.' It is said that her father [*Nutachikwaau*] used to be heard crying whenever she would say this because her mother was not there any more.

EM: Was my grandfather Sam Masty married to *Piiyasiskwaau's* daughter [Mina]?

SK: Yes, it was her daughter that he was married to.

EM: Who was my father's mother [Samson Masty's mother]. Her name was Mina.

SK: Yes, that is true. Yes, that was her name. She was not very old when she

died. I am just trying to think how old your aunt Mary [George] was when her mother died. She was young but walking when her mother died.

EM: I am thinking of the other women that *Nutachikwaau* was married to. It is said that he married many women in his time. I wonder what their names were.

SK: When his wife left him, then he married our grandmother, my mother's mother. He married this one while his wife was on the run again away from him. He then married my mother's mother. My mother's mother did not leave him. It is said that our grandmother's husband had left her, too. She then married *Nutachikwaau* after her husband had left her. He was an *Ausawaauiiyuu*. He did not live long after he left her. He could not live with the other woman he had left her for when he died.

The man who had left our grandmother for another had been raised by this old man who did not have any children of his own. He had never had any children of his own. So, our grandmother, my mother's mother, had become a daughter-in-law to this old man who had raised her husband. It is said that the old man really missed my mother after their son left her. It is said that the old woman used to cry. The old man said about his son, "We will see how my son will be like for causing me such sorrow. We will see if he can live a long time with his new wife." The woman he had left her for was a *Waapinutaskwaau*. So, it was. He did not live a long time after taking up this other woman as his wife.

The old man's son could have been married to our grandmother for a long time because she was very old when she died.

EM: What was her name?

SK: Her name was Anne. She is buried where we stayed this fall, at *Wiiminipiis*. Her burial site was near we were camped this fall. She is buried on the portage at the end of *Wiiminipiis*. That is where the old woman was buried. It is thought that she died as result of lack of food. This was during the time when the hard times were upon the *Iyiyuu*. No one was living with them at that time. She was living with her son *Atwaan* and his family. *Atwaan* had already died by that time. She had only one son, *Atwaan*, then. They were trying to make their way to the post when she died along the way. She died where she was buried on the portage at *Wiiminipiis*.

EM: Where are your parents buried?

SK: They are both buried here in Whapmagoostui. My mother and father are

buried here.

Our grandfather *Nutachikwaau* is also buried here. His grave site at the cemetery was visible for a long time. He was buried in the vicinity where there are clump of willows near the entrance of the cemetery. I saw some headstones in that area he was buried. His grave site was visible for a long time.

The other old man who is buried at the cemetery is *Chisachiimis'* father. It is said that he was very old when he died. The old woman who was called *Chisachiin* [Jane the Elder] was also her father. I do not remember what his name was. Anyway, these departed old people I have mentioned, their grave sites were visible for a long time. *Chisachiin* said, "Some earth was being put on their graves from time to time. That is why their graves are visible for a long time."

That is what she said about our grandfather *Nutachikwaau's* grave and...what was his name? *Miskumisiis!* He was called *Miskumisiis*, the old man who was the father of *Chisachusip*, *Chisachiin* and *Chisachiimi*. That was their father. He was named *Miskumisiis*. He was very old when he died. At the end of his life, he was called *Kawaawiipikaput* [lit. Stands shakily]. He was given that name because he was so old that his legs would shake when he stood on his feet. That is what happened to his legs when he would stand on his feet. He was very old when he died.

The other old man who was buried there at the cemetery is our grandfather *Imiskwaaupas*. His grave site was also visible for a long time.

I have seen some headstones from long ago sticking out of the ground in the clump of willow bushes growing there. The gravestone is being covered up by the growing willow bush. It was said that the headstone belonged to an *uchimaau*⁷. He died here, the one whose house caught fire. His daughter [Maria] is also buried there. It is said there was a very strong sickness that was going around the post at that time. He and his daughter died from the sickness. But his wife did not die from it. He and his daughter died from it. They had only one daughter.

It is said that his house caught on fire during the night. I think an *Iyiyuu* was the cook and he caused the fire from his smoking. It was thought that is how the fire got started. When he was told that the house was on fire, he was said to have said to leave him alone in the house and not to take him out. He wanted to die in the fire. His daughter had died before him at that time. They did not listen to him. They took him out of the house. His wife got

⁷Belonged to a Hudson Bay post manager; possibly David Loutitt.

out, too.

MARRIAGE AND CHILDREN

EM: How old were you when you got married?

SK: I do not know. I think, certainly, I was not twenty years old yet when I got married. I was married at an early age.

I have remarked to them about the girls of today that these young girls today are looking to be married even though they are not of age to be married yet. I was not looking to be married when I was a young girl. I did not even think about marriage while I was still living with my parents. I had an inkling that I would not have the same kind of care and security I was having with my parents if I were to be married. I knew that I would not have the same care and security that I was enjoying with my parents. I knew that no one else could give me the same care and kindness that my parents were showing me. That is what I had thought.

One day, my father told me that I was to be married. I was very unhappy about it. I knew for sure that I would not enjoy the same care and kindness from anyone else that I had with my parents. Our grandfather *Kamichpaut* was still alive then. I really missed them after I got married. It was like I had suspected. I felt very different after I got married. I was always homesick for my family. I did not feel right at home with my new family. When I was growing up, I had always lived with my parents. I had not lived with other relatives like it happened sometimes to other girls. I never lived anywhere else other than with my parents as I was growing up. That is one of the reasons why I felt so homesick for my parents after I had gotten married.

My mother told me, "We really missed you after you lived away from us. We miss you and missed your great help to us. Our lives were not the same after we missed your contribution to the work in our family."

EM: So, it was it the parents who arranged the marriages of their children -

SK: Certainly! That was the custom. The parents of the man would be the ones to decide which woman they were to marry. But today, look how it is done. One does not seem to take a careful decision whom to marry. They just seem to pick anyone. That custom has disappeared. The mother of the man really looked for a suitable wife for her son. The mother knew that her son's wife was going to get along with her. Some of the girls who married the young men were very compatible with the family and were not homesick when they left their own families. They treated their in-laws like they treated their own parents.

EM: Was it a common custom for the girl/woman to go and live with her husband's family?

SK: Yes, that is right. That was mostly the case, that the woman lived with her husband's family. It was only sometimes that the man would live with his in-laws. Sometimes, the man was happier to be living with his in-laws. Sometimes, the couple would live with the two sets of in-laws on alternate basis if both sets of parents were still alive. Sometimes, the old men liked each other because they both got to live with their children on alternate basis when the old men lived long lives.

EM: How long did your husband's father live after you were married?

SK: His father was already dead when we got married. He was still very young when his father died. He lived with and was raised by his step-mother after the death of his father. His father had married his aunt. His father had left his mother while she was still alive. Betsy, Noah Mamianskum's mother, Betsy's older brother who was the father of *Sans* [Charlie Niquanicappo], Anne who was also called *Kapishutat*, Mary and then my husband [John Kawapit] were the children of that family. My husband was the second youngest of all his siblings. The youngest sibling was born after their father left them and their mother. My husband's mother was pregnant with her last child when her husband left her. His last sibling was born after their father left his mother. It is said of him that he was not a very nice man when he did not want his wife anymore, he used to fight her and beat her. There were times when some couples would fight with each other - physically, too. He used to fight with his wife. The Factor saw him beating his wife a couple of times even though she was pregnant. The Factor told him to leave his wife alone and not to live with her if he was going to treat her that way. The Factor suggested that the woman be taken away from him and for her to stay at the post. His wife was kept at the post and did not go into the bush. There were women living at the post - widows - and they were told to look after the woman. Her child was born here. It is thought that he injured the child because the child did not live long after she was born. The child was very well taken care of, but she died. Anyway, that was my late husband's youngest sibling. He married the woman he wanted to marry. They had many children it is said but none of his children lived. His children with his new wife died when they were about one or two years old. The *wamistikusiu* said that his children from his new wife died like that because he had been too mean with his wife before he left her. This would not have happened to him if he had looked after his wife, it was said of him. His children would have died when they were about one year old. It is said that my late husband was a youth when his mother died. I think he was able to handle a gun by then, and hunt ptarmigan. It was his sister who was younger than he was.

The children from his first wife lived and the children were Betsy, *Kapisutat* and there was another one named Mary and Charlie Niquanicappo's father, my husband and the youngest sibling who died shortly after birth. That is how many children the old man had from his first wife, my husband's mother. These children lived but the last one died at birth.

EM: What was the name of the woman he left his wife for?

SK: I think she was named Jane.

Wapmakustuwiiyiyuu used to live and hunt with only his immediate family. This is how he came to have his new wife. The woman came upon them for help for her starving husband and family. The woman reached *Wapimakustuwiiyiyuu*'s camp when her husband was already starving. He did not go and try to save the family. The woman and her family had lived with other *Iyiyuu*. The old man did not go and try to save the *Iyiyuu*. The *Iyiyuu* all died. He only saved the woman and that is how he came to live with her and be his wife. The woman's father was still alive when all this happened. When she got here, she did not go to her father. I guess she wanted *Wapimakustuwiiyiyuu*, too. Her husband had lived quite awhile before he starved to death. When *Wapimakustiwiyyiyuu* left here, he left to go to Fort Chimo area. He stayed there until he died. The woman did not see her father again. Her father died while she was there in the Fort Chimo area.

EM: Where did the woman come from? Who are her relatives?

SK: She came from *Wapimakustuwii*. Her father was called *Kausawaaskustuwaat* [lit. Yellow moustache/beard]. I think they were from Chisasibi. It is said that is where *Kausawaaskustuwaat* came from. Her father died while she was away. It was not surprising that she left her father, too, if she could leave her husband.

EM: When I came to see you last year, you told me how unhappy you were when you had to part with our grandfather *Kamichapaut* and his family because he was very sick. Were you able to see him before he died?

SK: Yes, I was able to see him. We met up with them some time before he died. He was near death when they met up with us. He was unable to walk by himself then. He had to be carried by then. We barely made it to see him before he died. Your grandfather Sam Masty - who was raised by *Kamichapaut* - was travelling with us at that time. They reached us somewhere out on the land. After meeting up with them, we moved camp only once when our grandfather *Kamichapaut* died.

EM: Was my grandfather Sam Masty able to see him one last time, too?

SK: Yes, he was able to see him. He and *Katikapusit* were the ones who conducted the burial. My father and my husband helped with his burial. We just barely made it to him before he died.

He was sick. He could have lived more years if he did not get sick. He had worked quite well still the last year he lived. He was still chiselling the ice for hooks and setting his traps that year he died. He had not been that old.

There is a lake near where he died. I remember when he set a fox trap there that winter. He caught a silver fox there. The silver fox was a good trade item at that time. That was the last fur he caught. He got sick that spring. He got worse as we travelled to the post for the summer. When we got here, he was given some medicine but it did him no good. I guess that is how much he was given to live. The medicine did not help.

After the summer, we left to go inland again. It was then that I told you I was very sad when we left them here because we had left the post first. I was sad when we had to leave him. He died in the fall. It was near freeze up when he died. He was still able to make the portages by himself at the beginning of the journey. He is quite far from here and made it there. He is buried to the south of *Ipisikimis*. That is where he died. The last portage taken to where he is buried is the only one he could not make it to on his own. He could still have been very healthy at that time if it was not for the sickness that he had and died from.

EM: You told me once that Maggie Sandy and Hannah Natachequan were the women you were very good friends with when you were a young woman.

SK: Yes, these were the women I liked to go with as we went about our work out on the land whenever we met up with each other's families. I liked to work with them and be with them. There was another woman who was called *Kamaani* [Mary Shem?]. Your grandfather called *Anikawaakin* had three daughters. I loved to be with these women whenever I saw them. The other one I liked was Joseph and Samson Petagumskum's mother [Mary Petagumskum]. I loved to be with these woman as we worked together and talked together whenever saw each other wherever that might be, out on the land or here.

I also have many friends still living in Chisasibi. They usually tell me how they liked it whenever we saw each other out on the land. I have a sister-in-law there. Did you ever hear of the woman called *Kachisaiskwaausit*?

EM: Yes.

SK: She is the one I am talking about. She is my cross-cousin. She is the daughter of one of my late uncles. She was an only child. Her mother was married only one year when she died. She was born when they got to the post. I think her mother lived only one month after she was born.

EM: I usually tell my mother about how I really love to hear your stories. I told her, "Sometimes, I do not know the people she talks about because she calls them by their Iyiyuu name and I can not place them. For example, who is that she called *Anikawaakin*?" She said to me, "Why, he was a close relatives of ours. His other name was Luke Kash." She also told me how he got his Iyiyuu name, *Anikawaakin*. She said that his name refers to the place where he lived inside the dwelling in relation to the rest of the family.

SK: Yes, it refers to living across the hearth from someone else half way between the middle and the entrance way of the dwelling. It was your grandfather Sam Masty who used to say to the old man, *Ntanikawaakin*. Others called him *Anikawaakin*. He called his wife *Anikawaakiniskwaaau*.

We had many relatives but you [all of this generation] do not know most of them. I myself do not remember some of them. I do remember the ones that I thought were my friends and all our grandmothers. Our grandmothers were very good to me when I could still see [be with] them.

There are many friends of ours in Chisasibi. Do you know Mina Tapaitic? She is also quite old now. She is much older than me, I think. It is said that she can still work a bit these days. She had many daughters. She had only one son but many daughters. I think she had six daughters. The first child she had was the son. That is the only son she had. She must look very old now. She came here once by plane when her son was still alive. She seemed quite old by then. I heard that she is still able to walk these days. I believe that she is quite old by now. I was still a very young girl when we lived with them one winter out on the land. As for her, she was married in the summer of that year we lived with them. I used to go with her as we went about our work - like putting fish lines in the ice. We would check the fish lines together. We would walk together whenever we transported caribou back to our camp. She would call me - whenever I would go with her - "*nhakiniskwaam* [my daughter-in-law]."

One time, she said to me, "*Nhakiniskwaam*, come with me. I am going to go and get our caribou that was designated for us." I think there were three caribou and they were all *pinuu*. We went to get the caribou. She had three siblings. One of them was name *Uchamikin*, *Uchamikinis* and the one who

passed away recently, Job Bearskin. He was a youth then. The one called *Uchamikin* was the eldest of her three younger siblings. The three siblings were not married yet. They were younger than her. Their eldest sister was not with them anymore because she had gotten married. She was the mother of my sister-in-law, the one I called *Kachisaiskwaausit*. It is said that the one who wanted to marry their oldest sister really wanted to have her as his wife. He would keep asking the father for his daughter. It took the man two years of asking until the father gave his consent to the man to marry his daughter. The old man was quoted as saying, when he finally let go of his daughter, "We will see if what I thought would come to pass for the reason I did not let go of my daughter when I was first asked for her hand. We will see what will happen now that I have let her go. We will see if what I thought will not come close to coming true." That is what he was quoted as saying. So, it was. His daughter got married. So, it was my sister-in-law *Kachisaiskwaausit* who was born. They arrived at the post in the summer. She was born at the post, my sister-in-law *Kachisaiskwaausit*. They were at the post when she was born. *Kachisaiskwaausit's* mother went to visit her mother one day. She fell down along the way on the incline. She hit her back, the small of her back. She got sick after that and she died from that. She could not walk after she hit her back.

EM: When you got married, what kinds of work were you capable of doing then?

SK: I had almost all the skills I needed to be married. I also knew how to lace up snowshoes that is done by a woman. I knew how to tan caribou skins and all that needed to be done to a caribou skin. I knew how to make mocassins. I must have known most of all I needed to know to run my own family. I did not need anyone to do things or make things for me after I got married. I was capable of doing most things for myself. My husband, too, knew how to make snowshoes, already when we got married. He knew how to make toboggans, too. There wasn't much that we could not do for ourselves as a family when we got married.

I imagine that the girls of today do not think about these things when they seek husbands because they can not seem to do much for themselves these days. They just get married without gaining much of the skills needed to run a home and family. They do not know how to cook. They can only open cans to make meals.⁸

I used to feel sorry that I could not be with my family whenever I thought of the things we used to do as a family - after I got married. I did not feel the same happiness I did with my own family as I did with my husband's family.

⁸Trans. note: She is saying this in good humour.

I was happy with my own family.

We never lived with my family after I got married. We used to go all over the place because my husband was putting his traps all over the place. He worked very hard to trap the fur-bearing animals. That is why we travelled far and wide over the territory by ourselves as a family. I was especially homesick for my parents when my husband and I were alone out on the land.

EM: Was it your husband's first marriage and yours when you got married?

SK: Yes.

EM: You were almost the same age?

SK: Yes, certainly! I think he was two years older than me or more. My mother had told me that when we first my husband and his family...My husband and his family had been staying and living in the territory of the *Ausawaauwiiyuu* [Naskapi]. My mother had said, "When we first saw them, he [John Kawapit, Suzanne's late husband] was just trying on his first snowshoes from time to time whenever we traveled. That year, he was being initiated into wearing snowshoes." I think I must have been two years old when we first saw them. I had been born the year before during the fall. This was the second year of my life when we first saw his family. I must have been more than one year old when we saw them that year. He was not much older than me.

He was always sick during our marriage. I guess that is why he died sooner than me.⁹ He had a near-fatal accident with a gun when he was young. The gun discharged on his chest but the pellets did not go into his body. He was cleaning his gun, the kind of a gun that I told was just telling you about. That is the kind of a gun he was cleaning. This kind of gun could be washed inside the barrel when it got very dirty [from the gunpowder]. It would be washed with warm water first and then dried. That is what he was trying to do with his gun when it discharged. There must have been some ammunition in it. His sister Betsy said that he had a huge bruise on his chest. Betsy was Noah Mamianskum's mother.

"There was blood under his skin on his chest," Betsy had said. "We were with a group of *Ausawaauwiiyuu* at that time. They had asked, "We would like your permission to puncture his skin with a needle to let some of the blood out." That is what they did. They punctured his skin with a needle. What they did was this: They put some gunpowder in water. Then they

⁹Suzanne Kawapit's husband, John, died in the summer of 1990.

soaked the caribou sinew thread in the water. Then they used this caribou sinew thread to pass it through - in and out of - his bruised skin. They had said that when this is done to a person, their wound will not be infected. And so it was. He was not known to have internal injury resulting in his having pus-in-the-lungs-sickness.

I still feel that some kind of damage was done to his health when this happened to him because of what kind of a wound he had - by the way Betsy described it.

EM: Did he have this accident before you were married to him?

SK: Yes, he was still very young when this happened. I did not marry for a long time yet when this happened to him. Yes, this happened when he was just starting to learn how to use a gun to hunt. This accident happened because he had not gained full knowledge yet on how to handle a gun.

EM: I wanted to ask you this, what did you think when you got married? You have told me that you were very sad to have to leave your parents.

SK: Yes, that is true. I was very sad to leave them. I had not thought that I would ever leave them nor did I want to leave them. I had never entertained any ideas about getting married and leaving my parents at the time I was married. My father insisted that I get married. I had always promised myself that I would always do whatever my father ask of me. Even though I knew for certain that I would not have the same security and care that I had had with my parents, I still carried out my father's wishes. I always did everything - whatever my parents asked of me. I knew that I would not have the same care and secure feelings I had had with my parents if I was to leave them and that is why I did not want to marry. At the same time, I had always thought that I would always do whatever my father asked of me and that is why I got married even if I did it reluctantly. I still did it even though I was very unhappy. And that is what happened to me, I did not have the same treatment I had had with my parents. It was quite different from what I had with my parents.

EM: Do you remember the first time you were approached to marry your husband? What did they say to you? What was happening at that time?

SK: My father approached me, that I should marry him, the one I was to marry. Also, your grandfather Sam Masty helped my father to arrange my marriage. He encouraged me to do what my father told me to do and marry the man he had chosen for me. They were quite persistent but finally I agreed - with much reluctance on my part. I knew that my feelings of security with my

parents will never be known again after I got married. Sure enough, that is what happened. The year I was married, I did not see them for a whole year for the first time. I only saw them again in the summer. That would be the same for every year that they lived. I had never lived away from my parents even for a few days since I could remember. Sometimes, a child would live with some of their relatives for a week or more on trips but I had not even done that in my youth. I guess that is why I knew I would feel very different when I would be away from my parents. I guess that is the reason why I was not happy but I went ahead anyway because I always did whatever my father asked me to do. That is why I did as he asked of me. I was right about what I had thought. It sure was different away from my parents.

EM: Was the ceremony here in town?

SK: Yes, that is right. I got married when the minister arrived from Chisasibi. He was brought here by a canoe. There were no outboard motors back then. The Iyiyuu from Chisasibi paddled here from Chisasibi with the minister for his yearly visit. The minister got here. When he got here, he announced that would be the last summer he was going to come here. That would be his last visit to Whapmagoostui. There were many of us couples that got married that summer at the same time.

There was us, *Chwaanchis* and his wife and Noah Mamaianskum's father married his second wife. His mother had died and his father was remarrying. The other couple was David Sandy, from Chisasibi parents. They were married that summer, too. I wonder who else? I think it was...No, Moses Sandy's parents were married the summer before.

EM: What about Philip Natachequan's mother?

SK: She was already married a long time when I got married. Philip Natachequan had already been born when I got married. Andrew Natachequan, sister Maggie's husband, was born two years after my marriage.

My first daughter was born the same year as Andrew. She was born here like I told you. She was born two years after I got married.

David Sandy was born the same year his mother got married. He was born at the same place but one year before my first daughter, as I have stated before. He was born at the same place but different time. He was about two years older than my first daughter/child.

Before he could get old age pension, I was really useful to him. No one knew how old he was. There were no records of his birth. When it was time for

him to get his old age pension, he came here and asked me how old he was. He asked me about the birth of my daughter and him. I told him. He later told me that he had had gotten his old age pension without a hitch. They knew exactly how old he was. He used to say to him, "You were really helpful to me."

EM: You sure have a long-term memory.

SK: Yes, I remember a lot more things before I got too old. I used to retain a lot of what had been said and what happened in my life. A lot of times, I was asked how old people were/are. I used to tell them how old people must be. But for the children who were born in the North, I do not know much. When I was still living with my parents, we hardly ever went to the north. We always went up the Whapmagoostui river system and onto *Ipisikimis*. We always kept to that route. As for the children who were born in the north, I did not remember when they were born but I remember the children who were born on the south side of the Whapmagoostui. They used to put me to good use when they wanted to know how old people were if they did not have records of their births. It was also me who told them how old my brother George was when Sinclair Gilpin was the one who was working on the old age pensions. I told him when George was born and what month he was born. I guess he checked. He said to me, "You were right on what you told me." George got his old age pension that year. He told me that was how old George was like I told him. George was born in the spring time. He was born at our spring break-up camp.

EM: I presume there was a feast when you got married.

SK: Yes, there was a feast. The *ochimau* donated a lot of food towards the wedding feast. There were many couples marrying at the same time. There sure was a lot of food.

EM: When you got married, the *ochimau* donated a lot of food towards the feast. I guess he was doing this for you.

SK: Yes, that is true. I guess he thought of how many fur-bearing animals we had caught in the past. That is the only reason why he donated that much, they said about him.

EM: Was there a dance?

SK: Yes, there was a dance. The one we call *Wamistikusiis* [post manager, named Harold Udgarten] used to be the one to play the fiddle during the dance. He was the musician whenever there was a dance, when he was still healthy. He

used to play the fiddle. He was good at it. The Iyiyuu used to ask him to play his fiddle when they were here. The men used to visit him whenever they were here in the village. He spoke Cree fluently. They would ask him to play his fiddle. The men said, "he does not play a long time even if we ask insistently." He was good at it. He would say when he does not want to play any more, "That's it, the *itus* might hear it!"

EM: Were you and Maggie married at the same time?

SK: No, she was married before me. She got married first. She was living with her brother who raised her. She did not have a father at an early age. Her brother was called *Chisapau*. She had not been married long when her brother died. I think she had two children already when her brother died. The first one died at birth. They were far from here when the child was born. When they were making their way here, the baby died on the way. She was pregnant again the next winter. Her brother never saw her second child. Her brother died before her second child was born. *Chisapau* died from an accident. He went through the ice. He was not sick. He went through the ice while going after an otter. He was found where he pulled himself onto the ice. He was not old when he died. His wife was pregnant at that time. His wife was due any moment when he broke the ice and went through.

EM: How many children did you have?

SK: Myself? I had nine children in all.

EM: Who was the oldest. Is Andrew the oldest?

SK: No, it was my daughter who was the oldest. She was called Martha. She was the oldest. Then Lucy came next. She is the next oldest. Then Andrew, then James. He is next to Andrew. Then there was another girl who was called, Sarah. We could not raise to adulthood. She was quite big when she died [in her youth]. Then there was another boy who was called, Weemish and then Isaiah. Agnes was born next. Agnes was the youngest of my children.¹⁰

EM: Our grandfather *Kamichapaut* had died that summer. My first child was just a baby then. She was born here at the post that summer. Our dwelling was just after [what is now] Sandy's Corner Store, near the slope that goes down to the river. The area was very nice, all covered with grass. That is where she was born.

The other person who was born at the same location is David Sandy who lives

¹⁰She accidentally omitted her daughter, Susan Kawapit-Mukash-Atchynia.

in Chisasibi but he was born the previous summer. He was one year older than my eldest daughter. His mother got married in the summer and he was born the next summer. He was born just shortly after the Iyiyuu returned from inland.

Anyway, my daughter was born the next summer. She was one year younger than David Sandy from Chisasibi.

EM: What was your daughter's name?

SK: She was called Martha.

EM: What was the cause of her death?

SK: She died of TB.

EM: Was she an adult when she died?

SK: Yes, She was already married when she died. She was married for two years when she died.

EM: Who did she marry?

SK: Her husband was called Philip [Mukash]. He was John Mukash's son.¹¹ Philip and David Mukash were brothers. They were the only two male siblings in their family. Anyway, that was her husband. They had been married two years when she died. She died in the third year. It is said that she is buried at the place called, *Takutakimaau*. Yes, that is the name of the lake. That is where she is buried, according to the one who was married to David Mukash.

EM: Nellie [Dick-Mukash-Atchynia]?

SK: Yes, she is the one. She had said that my daughter is buried there. It is quite near here. They could not have travelled very far and much when she had gotten worse with her illness. "That is where she is," she said. The days were already getting longer when she died. That was the third year they were married when she died. They were married almost three years when she died.

EM: How many of your children are no longer with us?

SK: How many? Martha is one of them. There was a boy who was named

¹¹Trans. note: She is referring to present day John Mukash's uncle.

Weemish. He was just a youth when he died. He had already killed some ptarmigan when he died.

EM: How did he die?

SK: He drowned. They had a canoe accident. He was travelling with his brother Andrew when this happened. Andrew's wife drowned, too. Susan, my daughter, was also travelling with her brother Andrew. Two of them drowned and two of them survived. Susan and Andrew survived.

I had another daughter and her name was Sarah. She died from TB. She was young when she died. She must have been fourteen when she died from TB. Three of my children died.

EM: What was your daughter Martha's husband's name?

SK: He was the brother of Eliza Shem's husband, Samson Shem. He was Samson Shem's older brother. His name was Isaac (Shem). We only lived with him for one year and he died the next year. One year after her husband died, my daughter Martha died the next year. She had the same sickness [TB].

I used to think that James would have had the same fate if he had seen a doctor. I suppose, his fate was not to die yet for him to have the chance to see a doctor. He was another one who had TB. He got sick when we were in the bush. He coughed a lot. When we got here in the summer, the nurse did not know what was the matter with him. The nurse had said, 'I do not know what you have. You will be sent to Moose Factory (Ontario) to have an X-ray. Maybe you will come home soon.' He was sent there.

At that time, there were no telephones anywhere. He wrote to us. He said in his letter, 'I am told that I am very sick. I can not come home for a long time. I am told that I have tuberculosis. My lung has already got a big hole in it.'

He really coughed a lot before he left. He did not come back for a long time. He stayed there two years. He had said, 'I was told that I could only go home after the hole in my lungs is healed.' He was gone for two years.

EM: We did not mention Susan, Susan Atchynia.

SK: Oh yes, yes. She is older than Isaiah and Weemish was. Weemish was an older brother to Isaiah.

EM: You have told me that you had nine children in all. Of all your children, how

many of your children were delivered by a doctor or a nurse?

SK: None of my children were delivered by a nurse or a doctor. There were no nurses or doctors here when I was having my children. My children were delivered by the Iyiyuu old women.

EM: From what you told me when we were talking about your children, none of your children died at birth. Most who are no longer with us died when they were adults. I just wanted to say that your pregnancy and the births of your children seemed all to be well even if you were not being looked after by a doctor or a nurse.

SK: Yes, that is certainly true!

EM: Can you tell me where each of your children were born?

SK: I think I can do that for most of them. As I have told you before, my first child was born here in the village near the bank of the river. That is where my first child was born.

One was born in the bush. There is a lake called *Minawaan*. There is another lake to the east of *Minawaan* and it is called *Itikumaakw Sakiikin*. That is where my daughter was born and that is Lucy. She is my second child.

Then Andrew was born. It was quite near here on the river, this river we usually took to go inland. He was born on the landing places along the river route. That is where he was born. He was born just little past *Wiiminipis*.

Another was born at *Minawaan* and that was James. He was born just south of *Minawaan*. My daughter Lucy was born near there as I have told you.

My other son was on the north side of this river. His name was Wiims. I could not raise him to adulthood. He was in a drowning accident.

Then Isaiah was born. He was also born on the north side of this river along the river route.

Agnes was born near where Isaiah was born. She was born just before where Isaiah was born on the river route. Agnes was my last child.

I did not tell you where Sarah was born. She was born in the bush, too. She was born on the same river system we usually travelled up in. The river that comes from the north side is where most of them were born. Martha was the only one that was born here while we were here. All of the others were born

on the land. My first child just happened to be born here during the summer when we came here. I did not come here particularly for her birth.

I did not worry about flying out of here to have my child somewhere else like they do these days. They can not seem to give birth in our town. The first clinic that was here, the one on the hill which is now an Inuit clinic, is where some of the children were born. The women would be admitted to the clinic when they were in labour. The first nurse that was here was quite old and she used to deliver the babies.

I was past the childbearing age when the first nurse who was stationed here [1950's].

EM: As I have told you before, I will be talking to Agnes, too. I would like to ask you some things about her. Who gave Agnes her name?

SK: Her father named her Agnes.

EM: Does she have a Cree name?

SK: Yes. *Naniimaskimkukwaaau*.

EM: Does your granddaughter Rachel have a Cree name?

SK: Yes. Her Cree name is *Chischaimakiniskwaaau*.

EM: You told me that Mr. Walton gave you your English name [Christian]. Who gave you your Iyiyuu name?

SK: Our late grandmother did, *Chuskuminas*. She is also the one who delivered me.

EM: Long ago, what did the Iyiyuuchdo at the birth of their children? I have heard that they would give a feast.

SK: Yes, they did that if there was food to give a feast with. Only if there was food available, a feast was held right away. The feast was called *awaasapus*. There were times when there was no food at all when a child is born, then there was no feast. That was the only reason why a feast could not be held because there was no food. When a feast held after the arrival of a child, it was termed as *awaasapus*.

EM: Was it a common practice of the Iyiyuu when the birth of their child is near that they would start gathering food and save food for the *awaasapus*?

SK: Certainly, certainly! That is what they did. The family would save some special foods for the arrival of their baby. That was a common practice, especially if the family has food to save. If the *wamistikusiumiichim* was available to the *Iyiyuu*, the family would keep some flour to make bannock to go with the feast. Most of the time, the *iyiyuumiichim* was about the only thing used for the feast.

The feast was held to show thankfulness and happiness for the arrival of the new baby and that the child was healthy.

The child was named as soon as he/she has been cleaned and dressed. An elder in the group would give the child his/her name. It was not the practice in the past like they are doing these days that the parents named their children. It was a must that an elder names the child.

EM: Were the parents the ones who decided which elder should give a name to their child?

SK: Yes, the old men and women named the children. My father named my first child who was named Martha. Andrew and Lucy were named by my father.

[Comment about the noise the friends of Paul, Suzanne's grandson, are making during the taping:] They sure are making a lot of noise. They can not be quiet even when they are told to be quiet. Sometimes, I ask some of them to go home when there are too many of them here. I get a headache easily when they are making a lot of noise.

I find that the children are different than the ones of long ago. The children of long ago listened to other people when they spoke to them but today it is like they do not hear when they are spoken to. The other thing is that their parents do not come to look for them even if they are here late at night. From this, I see that their parents do not look after them very well. But my grandson Paul is gone only in the early evenings when he visits other children. If he does not go out with children, he stays home. But the other children his age [5&6 years] do not go home for a long time when they are in the house.

EM: I imagine that you have seen the changes happening through your long life.

SK: Yes, that is true.

EM: There must be a big differences from how you were brought up and how you brought up your children compared to today's children.

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. The children of the past really listened to other

people when they asked them to do something or behave well. They respected other people's demands on them whether it was to be quiet or go home or to do something. But today the children do not behave like that. It is like they do not hear when they are spoken to or are asked to do something. Even if I tell them to go home they do not go home.

EM: Did the children go in to their own dwellings early?

SK: Certainly. They were not like the children of today. We were not like that ourselves when we were growing up. We could never walk around at night. Our dwellings were close to each other. We would only go out to visit the other dwelling. The only time I would go out at night was just to walk over to the other dwelling. There was no way I was going to walk around at night. I always kept in mind that my parents would not be happy with me if I stay out at night. I would enter our dwelling as soon as it got dark. I always kept in mind to keep my parents happy and to do only what I knew they would approve of. I remember that and I see that the children of today are not like that at all towards their parents. Today, the children are very good at talking back at their parents. In my day, it was unthinkable to talk back to your parents and especially to other people.

EM: You have told me about your marriage. When it was time to go inland, were you taken to a different route than the one your parents took?

SK: No. We lived with my parents while it was still summer. The freeze-up was not upon us yet when we got to *Ipsikimis*. We left them when we got to *Ipsikimis*. We did not go see them even after the freeze up. We only saw them again in the summer. We met up along the way down to the coast. That was when we saw them again after left them in the summer and it was summer again.

EM: How long did your parents live after your marriage?

SK: They lived a long time after I got married. My mother was very old when she died. My father also died when he was quite old. I think my mother lived ten years after my father died. My father died fast. He was not sick very long and then he died. There were no doctors around that time. It was not witnessed when he took his last breathe. He had already died when they discovered him in the morning. My sister Maggie [Suzanne's youngest sibling] was still very young at that time.

My mother told this story. "I was getting ready to put the children to bed in the evening. He really loved our last child. While I was fixing the sleeping places, he said to her, 'come here daughter. Let me hold you for awhile.' He

held her while I went about fixing their blankets. I put the children in their sleeping places after I had finished. I could not sleep very well. I kept the stove going most of the night. He said to me, 'Is it morning yet?' I said, 'Not yet.' He turned on his side away from me. He pulled the blankets over him. After I had put the blankets in place, I lay down beside Maggie. Sleep did not come to me. I was wide awake. I wondered why I could not sleep. But I must have fallen asleep fast when I did sleep. I fell asleep after I had laid down. I woke up with a start. I got up right away. I looked over to him and he was in the same position as I had seen him last. He was laying on his side and turned away from me. He did not have the blankets over his face. I peeked at his face. I saw that there was foam on his lips. There were bubbles of saliva on his lips and mouth. I knew that he was not breathing any more.

George's wife was pregnant at that time and so was Albert Natchequan's wife. I thought of these women and restrained myself from crying out or screaming. Everyone was still asleep. I crawled over to Anne and woke her up. [Anne was Suzanne's father's sister.] I said to her, 'Sister-in-law, look at your brother. I wonder if he is still breathing.' She got up right away and moved to his side. I guess she knew that he was not breathing any more and started to cry out. The daylight was already visible. It was a Sunday morning. That is how he died."

Their dwelling was situated just before the doorway of [what is now] the Northern Store. That is where he died. Their dwelling site was still visible because of the dugout base of their dwelling. It was still visible where he was taken from when he died. He died quite fast. He was not known to be very sick. I guess that was his time to go when he did.

SK: James comes to see me all the time. I am glad when he comes. He says to me, 'Mother, do you have tobacco for your pipe?' He seems to be happy to see me smoke my pipe. I would say to him, 'Yes, I can smoke my pipe.' My cousin James Cox would say the same thing to me. I told him that I used to smoke the pipe a long time ago. He said to me, 'Do not stop smoking your pipe. It is not a good sign when someone suddenly stops smoking their pipe.' That is what he would say to me.

EM: We have talked about the times when you were still young and while living with your parents, although we did not exhaust it. We talked about the time when you got married. I think you have told me that your mother lived longer than your father. Am I right?

SK: Yes, my mother lived longer than my father.

EM: The last thing you told me was about your father's death.

SK: My father was not sick for a long time and then he died. He died fast. He was sick but it did not take him long to die. He died fast and did not suffer.

EM: How many years after your marriage did he die?

SK: I had been married many years already when he died. My first daughter who was my first child was already married when he died.

EM: Did you tell me that your mother lived about ten more years after your father died?

SK: Yes, that is true. It must have about ten years.

EM: Did your mother see Agnes?

SK: Yes, she was still alive when Agnes was born. Isaiah my son is my last male child.

EM: Your mother was around for a long time to help you with your children? She must have taught you many things about children.

SK: Yes, that is true. She taught me a lot of things about children. She taught me how to raise children and what to do until they were adults.

EM: Were you the ones who always lived with your mother?

SK: No, not us. My brother Joseph took care of our mother after our father died. My brothers George, Sandy and Joseph always looked after our mother together. Our oldest male sibling died when he was quite young. He was younger than me, my brother named Luke. He died quite young. His first child was about the age of my grandson Paul [5 years old]. His first child is Paul Dick. He was about that age when his father died.

EM: You have told me that you were raised in the bush and lived there all your life even after you got married.

SK: Yes, that is true. We never stayed close to the post or near the coast. We always stayed way inland, far from the coast. That is where we were raised, too. We were always in the true interior at *Ipisikimis* and past the *Ipisikimis*. That is where we stayed. We also stayed to the south of *Ipisikimis*. I have seen alot of the land in all direction from *Ipisikimis* our main base. I have seen the land to the south of *Ipisikimis*. We used to meet people from other places. They came from places like *Nichikun* and from the Naskapi territory we call *Ausawaauwiiyiyuuch*.

WOMEN'S WORK¹²

EM: I would like to take you back to when you were a young person when you were still living with your parents, when they were still your teachers.

SK: Yes, certainly, that is very true.

EM: You have told me before they taught you to use a gun. What kind of a gun did you have? What was it called?

SK: It was a gun where you put all the ammunition right into the gun before shooting [flintlock]. The powder was put first into the barrel, then the stopper. The stopper can be a piece of cloth or something of that consistency. Then the pellets are put in. That is the kind of gun I first used. There was something that stuck out of the gun which made the gun look as if had an ear, in this part was where the flint [*matís*] was put in. The flint was very small. The only time the *matís* was put in the gun was when the gun was in use. The *matís* was so thin that it burst on impact of the discharge of the gun.

EM: You told me another time that sometimes, you did not have proper stopper for your ammunition that you used soft grasses as your stoppers.

SK: Yes, that is true. That is what I used. The other thing I used to use as stopper was a burlap sack cloth. This was the best to use and pack down as the stopper.

EM: You also told me you knew how much stopper to put and how to pack it down when you want to shoot at a long distance because your father showed you how.

SK: Yes, that is true. He showed me everything how the gun worked. He told me how much ammunition to put in when my target was near. If my target was near, I put in a small amount of the pellets but if my target was far, for instance, if the ptarmigan I am trying to shoot are far, I used more pellets. Therefore, there would be more pellets going to my target. When they were near... As for a grouse, fewer pellets were used when aiming for a grouse. The grouse are near most of the time. I knew how it worked and what to do with a gun. I was familiar with it quite soon after my father started teaching how to use it. My brother Luke knew it soon, too. But I was the first one to know how to use a gun than he did. In fact, I helped in teaching him how to use and handle a gun. He soon learned how to use a gun, too.

¹²This section includes *specific* references that Suzanne Kawapit makes to work that was done by women living on the land. Of course, reference to women's work is made throughout her entire life history.

EM: What about making a fishing net, did you know how make a net?

SK: I was already married when I made a net. When your grandmother died, your father's mother, your grandfather and his children were quite poor, like your father and your uncle Isaac. Your great-grandmother who helped with the children after her daughter's death, died shortly after her daughter's death. In those days, there were no nets, ready-made nets, at the store for sale. So, it was then that I started to make a net for your uncle Isaac. I made my first net and it was for your uncle Isaac. I said to him, "I will make a net for you." He was still very young at that time. He was thankful for the net. I managed to finish it before everyone headed out for inland again. Your grandfather always had me making a net for them. He used to say to me, "I am very happy after you made a net for me. Your nets usually catch many fish." Your uncle Isaac told me the same thing. After that, I was always making nets.

Today, I can not do that much because I can not see very well but I am still making fishing nets today. I use my glasses but they do not seem to help. It seems that the more I have them on, the more I can not seem to see after taking them off. I can not sit for a long time to work on a fishing net. I have to take off my glass after awhile.

EM: You are still making nets to this day.

SK: That's true, I am still making fish nets these days. It was told of me that I was capable of being good at doing most kinds of work I tried to do when I still had my good health. I strived to do everything for myself that I was capable of doing. But today, the young girls of today do not seem to want to learn the Iyiyuu kinds of work. They are only being taught the *wamistikusiu* way of thinking and they do not know the Iyiyuu way of thinking and being. As for the kinds of teachings and learning that I had to do when I was growing up, there was not much that I could not do for myself that an Iyiyuu needs to know and do to survive, that an Iyiyuu woman needs to know how to do or make. There was not much that I could not do because my mother taught me all these things as soon as I was capable of learning and doing.

EM: You learned all this before you were married?

SK: Yes.

EM: Did you know how to set traps before you were married?

SK: I certainly did. That is one of the first thing I had to learn was to set traps. Today, I still set traps when we are in the bush. This fall when we were in the bush, I caught four martens. I could have gotten more because there were

quite a few marten tracks around that area if I could have walked further away from our camp. There was a lot of snow falling earlier than usual this fall, therefore, there was deep snow sooner than expected where I stayed this fall. But when I was still capable of walking far, I would walk quite far whenever I did my walking about. Even before snowshoes were needed during the fall season, I would still walk far from our camp. That was my usual practice.

EM: While you were growing up, what do you remember wearing as clothing? I imagine that there were no store bought clothing to be had.

SK: That is certainly true. There was nothing ready made at the store in the way of clothing. My clothes were all made by hand even before I was able to make my own clothing. My clothing were always made, clothes like the ones I would wear in the winter, like my winter coat and my footwear and my stockings. There no ready made stockings from the store. There were no knitted stockings or socks available at that time. Something else was available that was used to make stockings with. It was a material the same type as a blanket. It was very warm. That is the material that women used to make their stockings with. The stockings were made very long. The stockings were decorated with beads. The young girls had bead-decorated stockings and the old women, too, had bead stockings for special occasions. The old women's stockings were also beaded for them. The men's stockings wer also beaded, a long time ago. It is said that their stockings were also beaded. Their stockings were also very long. Their ammunition bags were also beaded and the strap of the ammunition bad was all beaded. Their mitts were also beaded. That is how the Iyiyuu of long ago dressed.

EM: I see that the kind of life the Iyiyuu lived, they had to do everything for themselves.

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. The Iyiyuu did everything for themselves. There was nothing in the store that one could bring home and just put on. There was only material that was sold that could be made into clothing. The women just made whatever clothing they needed - like her skirts and everything else. There was some material which mitts were made out of and socks. There was no such thing as short socks like we have today. There was just the material to make stockings with.

Today, the Iyiyuu make the same kind of mocassins that they used to make in those days. Their mocassins were always gathered at the front. That is how the moccasins were made. They hardly made their mocassins like these flat tops like my mocassins. It is only these days, that these flat top mocaasins are made like this. The woman could make whatever kind of

clothing they imagined. Some women were very good at making original clothing of their own imagination. The women of long ago would make their clothing as they pleased. They would dress themselves however they liked and how they liked it, like people do even today. They dress themselves the way they would like and how they liked to be dressed. That is how they were.

EM: I gather some women's creations stood out and were known to be the best at making one thing or another?

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. Certainly, many people...women and men, too...were very good at making things. The men were the same way. They were very good at making the things that the Iyiyuu used in their lives.

EM: Like the snowshoes, snow and ice shovels and toboggans?

SK: Yes, that is true. They had to make everything like that. The Iyiyuu would stay in one camp during freeze up when they could no longer use their canoes. In these camps, the toboggans and snowshoes would be made for everyone. After the freeze up once the toboggans had been made, the camp would be moved a little ways away from the freeze up camp. Then, everything else would be made as they went along in different camps, like the snow and ice shovels and snowshoes.

EM: Did the women sew the clothing at this time, too?

SK: Yes, certainly. Some of the women made beautiful things. The women and the men had...I used to think about it. I used to think, the women and men, too, would probably like to have and wear coats the way they used to be made long time ago, the way the winter coats were made. These coats were made out of tanned caribou skin but not smoked. The caribou skin was made very white. The winter coats were made out of this very white tanned caribou skin and it was decorated with *wiimin* [red ochre] and something yellow and red colour. The men's coats were very handsome looking and the young boy's coats were also decorated. The coats were very beautifully decorated. I used to think the Iyiyuu of today would love these kinds of coats and most likely the *wamistikusiu*, too, the way the coats of the Iyiyuu were fashioned, the way they were decorated.

Our grandmother *Chuskuminas* and another one called, *Anikawaakiniskwaau* who you probably did not know...You know *Kamani* [Mary Shem, David Shem's wife], their mother, she was called, *Anikawaakiniskwaau* and their father was called, *Anikawaakin*. *Anikawaakiniskwaau* was very good at decorating a

coat like that. Do you know the one called *Wamistikusis*¹³? She made a coat for him. She decorated the coat made out of a very white caribou skin. She painted the coat. The coat was very long. The coat was as long as the long coats that are being worn today.

EM: Was the coat an outer coat for the outside? Good for the winter, too?

SK: Yes, it was an outer coat. Certainly. That is how the coats were made long time ago, it is said. It is said that the *wamistikusiu* really liked these kinds of coats when they saw one. The women's long coats were made out of thinly haired caribou skins. The skins were gotten after the caribou had shed their winter hairs and the new thin hairs were on them. The hair on the caribou skins were made shorter than they were but the hair was not too thick at that time of the year. The caribou skins were also made very white on the side where the hairs were not on. It was made very white. In this way, the colours painted on the caribou skin stood out. I used to think, today, when I thought about the kinds of coats made in those days, that the *wamistikusiuch* and the *wamistikusiskwaauch* [Non-Native men and women] would probably like to wear these kinds of coats. The coats were very beautifully made. The painted designs were made quite higher up.

EM: Their clothes must have very beautiful.

SK: Yes, their clothing were beautifully made. Some were very good at painting the designs on their clothing. Others really liked the clothing the Iyiyuu used to make, the other Iyiyuu from other places. It was the Iyiyuu from here, Whapmagoostui, that were very good at making women's clothing out of caribou skins. They said that the Iyiyuu women from the south were not very good at making these long caribou skin coats. The Iyiyuu from the south used to meet up with the Iyiyuu from here out in the interior of this land and they used to admire the clothing of the Iyiyuu from here. That is what was said of them. They also would request clothes like that to be made for them. Even if the Iyiyuu came from far away from our area, they would still admire each other's clothing. They would ask each other to make clothes like the others clothing. That is what was said of them. They liked the way the Iyiyuu made their clothing because they did not know how to make clothes like the Iyiyuu from around here. Even the Iyiyuu from Chisasibi liked the way the *Waapmakustuskwaaau* [Great Whale Cree woman] made the clothes. They did not know some of the ways the women from here made the clothing, or the style of clothing. They really liked the way the women from here fashioned the clothing [out of caribou skins].

¹³*Wamistikusis* refers to Harold Udgarten. He was a Hudson Bay post/store manager who spent many years living in Great Whale and is fondly remembered by the Whapmagoostui Cree.

EM: Was it because it was mostly out of caribou skins?

SK: Certainly. The clothing was made out of tanned caribou skins but not smoked skins. It is when they saw clothing made out this kind of skins, they greatly desired to have the same kind of clothes because they admired these kinds of clothes. The *Chisasibiwiyyuu* really admired these clothes made out of white caribou skins with grea designs. Their women did not know how to make these kinds of clothing, and other things that a man uses. The women used beads to decorate their men's ammunition bags and the strap of this bag and their mitts. The women from here always had a lot of beads to work with. The others were not like that. Our grandfathers, the ones called, *Chisamantasiich*, their wives were not very good at making these kinds of things like the way the women from here made them. Whenever we would see them out on the land, they admired our clothing. They ask us to make them clothes like we had and other things that they did not have like we did. They liked our kinds of things and clothing.

EM: What about long time ago, was fur used to make clothing with?

SK: Yes, it is said that the animal fur was used to make clothes with. I did not see that myself but it is said that the Iyiyuu wore fur clothing. I did not see that happening as I was growing up or when I was making clothing myself. It is said that the people of long ago liked to wear fur clothing. They made clothing out fur as they liked. Some were very good at catching fur-bearing animals. It is said that the *Ausawaauwiyyuuch* really liked to have clothes made for them by the women from around here. It was the Iyiyuu from that area who greatly admired the *Iyiyuuskwaau's* [Cree women] way of making clothing from Whapmagoostui. The women were also fast at making these things. So, the *Ausawaauwiyyuu* always asked for clothing to be made for them or asked to have the clothing that was already made whenever they met up with the Iyiyuu from Whapmagoostui. The *Ausawaaskwaau* did not know how to make the same kind of clothing as the women from here.

Some of the Iyiyuu from that area were called, *Waapinutawiiyyuu*. These Iyiyuu had different language. We could hardly understand them when they talked. The Iyiyuu from here hardly understood the *Waapinutawiiyyuu*. They were like the Iyiyuu from *Musuunch* (Moosonee/Moose Factory, Ontario), the way we do not understand too well when they speak. That is the same way the *Waapinutawiiyyuuch* were. We could hardly understand them when they spoke their language.

EM: Did your mother have a caribou skin for a coat dress?

SK: Yes, she did. I remember when she still dressed like that, when she had a

caribou skin dress. She had a long dress made out of tanned caribou skins. It was very beautiful. The caribou skin was tanned very white for clothing. Her dress was also decorated with painted colours. The men also had long coats made from caribou skins and were decorated with paint. The children had clothing like that, too.

I remember having a coat made out of caribou skin with the hair still on. When the caribou shed their hair, the caribou skin looks very nice with the short hair. The coats made out of the short-haired caribou skins, the coats are not heavy and they are very soft. The women were good at softening the caribou skins. Our grandmother *Chuskuminas* was very good at doing this, softening the caribou skin. My mother's mother was very good at doing this, too. They were fast workers. They worked fast whenever they decorated the caribou skin clothing with colours.

EM: What did they use to paint the clothing?

SK: They used red ochre, some ink, and pike roe. The pike roe was very good to use as decorating paint on the clothing once it was mashed. The pike roe is mashed very fine and it turns into a thick liquid. The implement used to apply the colours on the clothing is dipped in the mixture. The implement was made out of sticks and fashioned just like a pencil. The tip was cut at an angle which made applying the paints easier. The youth also had coats that were decorated beautifully. The male youth had beautiful coats, too. My grandmother used to decorate my brother Luke's coat. Her design on his coat was some Iyiyuu paddling in a canoe. That was the scene she painted on his coat's edge. She did a beautiful job on his coat.

EM: Were some of the decorations of animals?

SK: Yes, certainly! They used to make all kinds of painted designs on the coats and dresses. They were very good at this kind of work. I used to think, 'I wonder if the *wamistikusiu* and the *wamistikusiskwaauch* would admire these caribou skins coats and dresses if they see them as they were made in those days gone by. The caribou skin was tanned very white. *Wamistikusis* [Harold Udgarten; past post manager] used to ask for these coats to be made for him. I wonder if some of his nephews still has these coats somewhere. His nephews used to ask for these beautifully designed coats through him. The caribou skin was almost pure white the way it was done. *Anikawaakiniskwaaau* used to make these coats for him. She was very good at painting designs on the skin coats. Many of the old women were very good at painting designs on the coats. It was the old women whose job it was to apply the painted designs on the coats.

EM: Were the coats and dresses the only clothing that had painted designs on them? What about the mitts?

SK: The mitts also had painted designs on them.

EM: What about caribou skin leggings?

SK: Yes, they were painted, too. Everything had painted designs on them. The caribou skin was tanned very white and the painted designs stood out which was beautiful to look at. A whole caribou skin was always worked to be very white. It was scraped very well. In this way, it was very soft and white. The softer the caribou skin was made, the easier it was to apply the colours on it.

MEDICINE¹⁴

EM: What were you saying about *wisiichipikw* [Labrador tea; found in abundance locally].

SK: It is said that the *wisiichipikw* are quite helpful medicinally, if it is not the treated person's fate to die then. When a sick person is treated with the *wisiichipikw* and it is seen that they do not work on him/her at all, then it is known that this person is not going to get well.

I have seen this happening to a man that lived with us. He was my oldest daughter's husband. He did not like this treatment at all. Your grandfather¹⁵ said that when someone does like or does not want this treatment, then it is certain that this person will surely die.

That is what we tried to do for him. We tried to make a poultice of the *wisiichipikw* but he absolutely refused them. He was sick on this side. (Points to her back.) He had the pus-in-the-lungs-sickness [TB]. He coughed alot. He refused the poultice of *wisiichipikw*. We had just put it on him and then he told us to take it off of him. "Take it off. I feel as if it is actually burning me." We could do nothing else but to take it off. That is how I know that this treatment was not going to work for him. That is why he felt like the way he did.

EM: You told me once about an Iyiyuu who made you well when you were kind of

¹⁴There is a large and extensive Cree pharmacopoeia; Suzanne Kawapit only mentions a few of the many remedies that were harvested from the land and animals (see e.g. Marshall & Diamond 1989 *Healing Ourselves, Helping Ourselves - The Medicinal Use of Plants and Animals by the People of Waskaganish*. Val D'Or: CRA).

¹⁵She is likely referring to Sam Mastey.

sickly as newborn child.

SK: Yes, that is true. The Iyiyuu was a grandfather to me. I was told he might have saved my life. My mother told me that I was quite sick when we saw them. I was still wrapped at that time. My mother told me this story. "I unwrapped you from you wrappings in the morning. I unwrapped. You did not move at all. Children usually stretch or move upon waking when they are unwrapped. I said to your grandmother *Chuskuminas*, '*Nimisa*, look at my daughter. She looks like she will not make it.' She bolted from her place and came over to us. She took you in her arms. The other Iyiyuu from Chisasibi lived in the other dwelling. They came running over to our dwelling, both the men and women. They all took you to say farewell in a way. The old man took you and worked on you. His name was *Uschikwaans* [lit. Little Head]. He checked you over. He gave you everything new to wear. They were quite rich by Cree standards at that time. He gave us new cloth and asked that new clothes be made for you. He instructed, 'Make new clothes for her and put it on her as you finished.' The women took up the new cloth and each made a certain piece of clothing for you. They had to sew all this by hand. 'Put the clothes on her as you finished.' He also gave you a beautiful scarf which was put on you. As soon as this was done for you, your breathing became regular again. You started to get better. That was the beginning of your good health." I guess he made me well in his own way.

EM: Did they know what was wrong with you?

SK: No, they did not know. Maybe I was having convulsions. They did not know exactly what was wrong with me. Most young children who died in those days, died fast and some died from convulsions. My mother told me that was the beginning of my recovery.

LIVING ON THE LAND - CHILDHOOD

EM: Can you tell me how long the Iyiyuu spent the summer at Great Whale from what your mother told you? You have also told me that the Iyiyuu spent very little time here during the summer.

SK: Certainly. That is certainly true. That is what we used to do. We used to spend the spring breakup far inland. After the spring breakup, we would then travel down to the coast. We would travel down this river [Great Whale River] in our canoes. When we reached the coast and this place [Whapmagoostui], we would probably just stay here about a month. Then we would travel back inland. We would travel back to the place where we had spent the spring breakup because that is where we left all our winter equipment like the traps and ice-chisels. These things would all be stashed in one place. We would travel back to that place to pick up our winter equipment. We did that all the time. My family [parents] used to travel the same route each year to get to our territory which is *Ipisikimis* [L. Bienville]. That is where my father made his home.

EM: When your parents were growing up and yourself, did they and you witness when the Iyiyuu would kill whales while you here during the summer?

SK: I certainly did see when the Iyiyuu would kill the whales. I have seen this hunting activity all the time. That is about the only kind of food that was eaten when the Iyiyuu stayed here in the summers. No one hardly ever ate anything from the *wamistikusu*. The whale was the only thing that would be eaten in the summer. The whale fat was also eaten. The whale oil be collected in the dried whale's stomach. The whale oil would be about the only thing that would be taken back inland when Iyiyuu would go back up inland. Whenever we would travel inland again, my father would buy some tea and some amunition from the store. He would not buy much flour before we would go inland again. He would buy just one bag of flour. We probably thought that we had a lot of *wamistikusiumichim* [white man's food] when we had bag of flour with us as we traveled inland. We would take only one bag of flour. We would travel up this river untill we reached *Ipisikimis*. It is a very big lake. After a time, we would be on the west side of the lake where the source of the lake empties into *Ipisikimis*. That is where we would be later on.

During the winter time, we would travel about the lake. We travel from one fishing spot to another on the lake. There are some known good fishing spots on the lake. We would travel to these fishing spots on the lake during the winter time. There are many islands on this lake. We would camp on the islands and fished in the straits of the islands and the mainland. They liked to fish in these places. These straits are also not frozen too thick. That is

where most of the fishing was done during the winter time. The fish used to be found in those areas.

Further in the past before my time, when the people did not have much in the way of fishing equipment and other hunting equipment, I used to hear stories where a whole families would be found in their dwelling that have apparently died of starvation. I have heard many stories like that. That is how scarce hunting equipment was at times. This was before there *wamistikusiu* in this region that could supply hunting equipment.

EM: What about even further back, before there were any *wamistikusiu* around here? What did the Iyiyuu use as fishing hooks?

SK: The Iyiyuu used to make their own fish hooks with a stick and a bone. They would use a bone to make their hooks with before there was any metal available. A caribou bone would be used as the sharp point. It would be cut in strips and pointed. The bone can be very sharp when it is honed and whittled down like that. This was used as a hook. The sharpened and pointed bone would be placed on stick which was split part way and the bone would be inserted into the crack of the wood. The pointed part would stick out of the piece of wood. After the sharpened bone had been inserted into the split piece of wood, it would then be tied down. The wood would be carved to resemble a small fish. This wood would be in two pieces and the sharpened bone would be inserted between the two pieces and tied together to hold the bone. The sharpened bone which stuck out of the fish-shaped piece of wood would be the one that would catch the fish.

EM: The bone would get stuck in the fish's throat when it swallowed the wooden fish.

SK: Yes, that is correct. It would swallow the wooden fish. The Iyiyuu were very ingenious in the ways they fished and hunted for themselves and survive for the most part, in those days.

EM: You told me that you used to get to the source of the *Ipsikimis* [L. Bienville] after leaving the coast, how long did it take you to get there from here to there? Did you try to get there fast or did you take your time to get there?

SK: Sometimes, we reached this place sooner than other times. Other times, we would not get there for a long time because of hunting and fishing done along the route to the source of *Ipsikimis*. Other times, we would travel further away and past the source of *Ipsikimis*. Other times, we would reach the outlet of *Ipsikimis* and travel to the south of there around the lake I mentioned

before, the one called, *Naanasiusakiikin*, where my brother Luke and I were born. That is the name of the lake. There is another lake near there and it is called, *Minawaan*. It is called that because someone was wanted to pick eggs on an island that is situated in this lake.

The story is that there was an Iyiyuu who wanted another man's wife. An Iyiyuu wanted to take another man's wife away from him. He kept bothering the other man and his wife, trying to take the woman for himself.

Ater a while, the married man was being harassed by the other one decided to leave the group and go on his own with his wife. They left the group of Iyiyuuch. After a day's travel, the couple stopped. Unfortunately, the man landed the canoe on the same side of the river as the group from which they had left. The other man who wanted to take the man's wife started to run after them on land. He ran after them!

The married man killed some caribou after landing his canoe. He and his wife transported the caribou to their campsite. They did not expect the man to find them. After they had transported all the caribou to their dwelling, the man said to his wife, "I am going outside to chop the antlers off of the caribou heads." The man went out. "As soon as my husband was outside, the man reached our dwelling without our knowing he was there. I heard a shot ring out. I heard my husband falling outside. I ran outside. I screamed. The man who had been bothering us came out of the woods. He said to me, 'Stop your crying. Why do you cry so? I am going to live with you from now on.' I had no idea what to think or do. I entertained the idea of doing away with him right there and then. I had to think. I began to think about what to do.

I thought of the island that was out in the lake. It is a small island with rocks only. There are no trees on this island. I said to him, 'Let us go paddle over to that island. I am going to look for some eggs. I would like to eat some eggs.'"

I guess this was in the spring time. I imagine there were still some eggs that had not hatched at that time of the season.

"When we got to the island, I said to him, 'I will stay inside the canoe. You go and look for the eggs.' He tried to pick up his gun but I said to him, 'Do not take your gun with you. Just go on.' He went ashore. There is quite a big pile of stones in the middle of the island. In fact, it can be said that there was rocky hill on this island. That is what the island looks like. He was soon out of sight behind the rocky hill. I pushed off the canoe when he was out of sight. He came walking into sight again. He called out to me, 'Why

are you leaving without me? Do not do that. Do not leave me here.' I do not heed his words. I just kept on telling him off and what I thought of him. I said to him, 'Do not ask me to come and get you. I will not come and get you. You have made me furious for causing me to feel this pain and sorrow when I did not expect to feel such pain this day. Do not even think that I will come back for you.'"

It was a round lake that they were on. The group of Iyiyuuch were quite near where she was. She went back to the group. She saw them. She told them of what she had done to the man and that she had not killed him by her own hand.

The relatives of the Iyiyuu went to see him by canoe. The man had on his caribou skin coat. That is the only thing they found on that island. It was believed that he tried swimming ashore and did not make it. He certainly could not be married now, he who really wanted to get married.

EM: So, the name refers to the act of picking eggs off that island in this lake, *Minawaan*.

SK: Yes, that is the reason why the lake is called that, *Minawaan*, which refers to picking eggs off of the island. There is another one called, *Minawaanis*. This lake is to the west of *Minawaan*. But there are no stories attached to the other lake close by but it is still called, *Minawaanis*.

EM: Are eggs found on this island or did she just say that to get rid of him?

SK: There are certainly no eggs on this island. I guess she only said this to fool him into going there to look for eggs!

EM: I would like to ask you something else. Sometimes, I am going to ask you some specific questions in detail. I have asked you about your childhood and the things you were taught as a young person. You also have told me that *Ipisikimis* was your home territory. You have also mentioned to me that when the caribou were gone from that area and this part of the country, *Ipisikimis* ensured your survival because you knew where the good fishing spots were in and around it.

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. It was my father who knew all the good fishing spots around that lake. That is where we usually stayed all winter long. We would just move our camp from good fishing spot to another. After my father died, we continued to stayed around the shores of *Ipisikimis* during the cold months of the winter. During the coldest time of the year, it is very hard to catch fish than it is when the weather is warmer. The fish were easier to

catch when the weather started to warm up. That is what happened with the fish. Other times, it was extremely hard to catch fish during the coldest time of the year. It was during this time of the year that we were quite hungry for a long time. I remember these times even before I was capable of fishing. We used to have a hard time catching fish and we would get into a desperate situation because we had nothing to eat. Sometimes, that is how it was. Other times, we had good fishing results. When periods of unsuccessful fishing happened, that is when we got very hungry for long periods of time. There were hardly any ptarmigan in that area, at *Ipsikimis*, during the winter time. It is a wooded area and the islands are very wooded. Grouse could be found there. Sometimes, grouse were quite plentiful. It was only sometimes that even the grouse were not there to feed us. But it was the ptarmigan that were not around at all at *Ipsikimis*. Also, the rabbits/hares are hardly ever found there. It was just on few occasions that rabbit tracks were found here and there. The rabbits are hardly ever there, anyway. You know, the *wischisk* [low laying trees], okay...do you know what I mean by *wischisk*?

EM: Yes.

SK: The rabbits eat the branches and leaves of the *wischisk*. There are no *wischisk* at *Ipsikimis*.

EM: What about other kinds of animals? Were there plenty of marten in that area?

SK: Certainly. Marten were quite plentiful at *Ipsikimis* long time ago. When we were starting to hunt and trap, sometimes, we had a hard time finding marten or their tracks. But it is told that the marten tracks could be found all over the place at *Ipsikimis*. I guess this was before the time of intense trapping for marten for trade happened. It is said that the martens were plentiful at the source [*asachiiuch*] of the *Ipsikimis*.

One time, your grandfather¹⁶, my late husband, quoted his father as saying, "One time, I was here during the fall." One of the tributaries that empty into *Ipsikimis* is on the south side of the *Ipsikimis* [*aukikam*]. The stream is called, *Maskuwaapimikusiipiis*. This what the little stream is called. "It is there, where there is an *atiwaachiun* [cove], I spent the freeze up. There were a lot of marten there. I didn't leave my freeze-up camp until I had trapped one hundred marten." I guess he saw a lot of marten that time. "After I had trapped one hundred marten, I did not try to trap much any more." I guess

¹⁶According to the Cree rules of etiquette and respect, all elders are referred to as a younger generation's grandparent. In specific areas of the text, when Suzanne Kawapit is referring directly to EM's maternal or paternal grandparents, their specific names are given.

he had thought he had trapped enough marten [to trade with]. "The marten used to come around to my dwelling during the night. I would hear one camping up on top of it."

This was before the marten were skittish about human presence. Other times, the marten does not want to be trapped and does not touch the bait in the traps. That is what it sometimes used to do. That is what the marten does these days. It does not go to the traps. Sometimes in the past, that is what it would do, too. It would not even go near the traps. When the traps would be set for it, the people would say, "The marten did not even touch the traps." Other times though, a trapper would successfully trap marten.

EM: What about otters?

SK: Yes. Your grandfather, my husband, used to kill quite a lot of otters. Sometimes, he would kill twenty otters in a year. One time, he killed thirty otters. We were at *Ipisikimis* all that time. There are great number of islands at *Ipisikimis*. He used to see the tracks of otter between the straits of the islands. He would always find otter tracks on the straits [ASIIPAWAAYAICH]. He would find a family of otter living in one place in these straits. The otter would stay there all winter before it gets warm again in the spring time. It does not run around before the mild weather comes. It will stay in one place it had chosen for the winter. It will stay in it's burrow in the ground. It sometimes will make a burrow in the snow and use boughs to line the bottom of its burrow. That is what it does.

One time, when my oldest daughter was young, she found one of the places where the otter had made its burrow. She called out to her father saying, "Father, look at this! Whoever is this who has this very small dwelling site?" She had found the boughs on the ground where the otter had lined its burrow with. "Whoever this is this who has this small dwelling site."

EM: Could you tell me the story about when you were young and fell asleep at the fishing hole, the same story you told me a while ago? Tell me the story again. You moved camp.

SK: Yes, we moved camp very early that morning. We made camp at the end of the day after a long journey. At that time, I was not capable of chiselling the ice to do some fishing. My father used to chisel the ice for me and I would just sit there and do some ice-fishing. He would drag some PUSCHINAAU [trees with the branches still on] onto the ice to make shelter for me while I sat there to fish. He would put a blanket on the ice where I would sit and cover my feet and legs.

We had broken camp very early that morning. I must have had fallen asleep while I was sitting to do some ice fishing while my parents were erecting our [new] dwelling. My father was on his way to check on the other fish lines when he come to check on me. He woke me as he called to me with such alarm in his voice. He woke me up from my sleep: "*Nitaans*, you are giving me a scare!" It was snowing that day. "You are all covered with snow when I saw you. You had not moved for a long time. I was relieved to see that you moved when I called to you."

My fishing hole was already frozen over. I broke the ice through to free my line. When it was free, my line was moving about. I had caught a fish while I was sleeping at my fishing hole. I pulled it out of the water. That was when I scared my father.

That was the usual habit. Everyone awoke very early in the morning when they wanted to travel to another place. The dwelling had to be erected before dark. When people reached the new campsite the first thing they would do would be to build a great big fire. The snow was panned away where the fire was going to be built. The children stayed near the fire while the dwelling was erected by the parents. It is only when the dwelling was finished that the children could enter it. That is how hard the life was in those days. The men set the fish lines and the nets in the ice. The women erected the dwellings. They also chopped the firewood. The men did not help them much while they worked on the dwelling and firewood because the men were out hunting and doing the fishing. The men would be out hunting ptarmigan. That is how much work there was in one day for one person. It was during the short days that the journeys would start very early in the mornings. Sometimes, it was still night when the journey began especially if the destination was far from that campsite. When the destination is reached, the men would set about setting the fish lines in the ice and the women set about erecting the dwellings. It was only sometimes that we had a tent for a dwelling when some things like that were available at the store. We used a tent sometimes. When we used a tent for a dwelling, it seemed that the dwelling was erected quite a bit faster.

EM: What about you when you were younger, did you ever use a tent?

SK: Yes, we would used a tent. Only sometimes. We lived mostly in a *iyiyuu-kimukw* [tipi] with an open fire. There was not much that could be used to make stoves with, any kind of metal that is. Sometimes, stoves would be made out any kind of metal. The stoves were very small and sorry looking. That is about the only kind of stoves people had.

It was during those times that times were hard. The men were always out

hunting even though times were hard. They did not stop carrying on their hunting pursuits even during the times of great hunger. There were times when not one fish could be caught. There was nothing to eat, not even fish. I saw it happen many times when it was very hard to catch fish. The fish lines would be set. It was always the women who would get up first thing in the morning and check on the fishing lines to see if there was food to be had, before they did anything else. Sometimes the water was heated in the pot while the women were out checking the fish lines or nets. In this way, if there was a fish, the family could have a meal more quickly. But, it happened many times that the water could not be used to cook fish because there was no fish to cook. Then the water would be thrown out because there was nothing to cook in it. It was during those times that people were very poor.¹⁷ They would just get very skinny. The reason why they got very skinny was because they were always out there chiselling the ice to try and get fish. It was the ones who were always chiselling the ice who got skinny faster. It was the women who were always tending to the fish lines and the men would tend to the nets during those times. That is how it was.

This was also during the time when there were hardly any caribou in this area. It was only rarely that caribou tracks would be sighted. When the caribou tracks were sighted, they would be followed relentlessly. Sometimes, it would take the men many nights just following the caribou tracks. Even if they pursued the caribou, sometimes, they still would not be able to catch up with them. They would return without ever seeing the caribou. That is how hard it was at times. These desperate times with food are gone these days when they were in the bush. I have heard many times, grandchild, that whole families used to die of starvation. Some families would not be found for a long time.

For example, one of those families were your relatives, our relations. His name was Sam. Sam was an uncle to Joseph Sheshamush and your mother [Anne Sheshamush-Masty]. His whole family was lost to starvation. No one really knew what happened. It was thought that the man had had an accident for this to happen to his family. He was making his way to *Waapmakustus* [Little Whale River] when the post was still there. He was making his way. It was already spring time when he was making his way there.

These were just theories that the Iyiyuu came up to try and make sense of what might have happened to this family. It was theorized that he did not come home one day because of an accident he might have had. His wife was never found. His daughter and a son were found. Their bodies were found

¹⁷The use of the word "poor" primarily indicates lack of food as this is the key indicator of affluence in this context.

somewhere along the way.

You know the *Waapmakustus*. On the north side of the river is where the high rocky point is. It is a high point. The children's bodies were found on top of the rocky point. It must have been almost summer when they made their way there. It is said that the young girl had taken a small dwelling covering. She must have been a little older than a little girl because she had taken a scissors and needles with her on this journey she and her brother must have undertaken. She must have been old enough to have the consciousness to take these things with her. I guess she was a little older. But her mother and her father were never found. No one knew exactly what happened to them. Some of her siblings were never found either. There were many siblings in that family. These were the only two people from that family whose bodies were found and the rest, no really knew what happened to them. The girl was the oldest amongst her siblings and her brother found with her was the second oldest. Her body and her brother's body were found by Inuit women. The Inuit women found the bodies of the children while they were berry picking in the summer time. They found their bodies.

The man whose family all died was named Sam. He had another brother who died not far from here, at the second point to the north of here. His brother just could not go on any more there. He was with his younger brother. I wonder what his brother's name was. I think he was called Joseph. The man did not think to make a fire. I guess he thought it was quite near to the post anyway. He sent his brother on his way to get help at the post. There would only be Inuit at the post and the other one who must have been there was the one called, *Wamistikusis* [Harold Udgarten]. When the younger brother reached the post, the Inuit left with their dog team right away to fetch the older brother. When they got there, the man had already died. He was your grandfather [mother's father's brother]. His name was John. John died at the second beach to the north of here.

That is where the Iyiyuu used to land their canoes that ones that would come from the north coast to the post here. He was found among the trees that were close to the beach.

EM: Were Sam and John the sons of *Kapapichauchiit*?

SK: They were his sons. His sons were, your grandfather David [Sheshamush], Sam, John and another named *Chusipis* [Little Joseph]. He was the youngest, it is said. *Chusipis* drowned. He did not have a canoe during the spring time. He was using a block of ice as a canoe to tend to his net. The ice broke and he drowned. That is how he died.

EM: There must have been many sorrowful times like that in those days.

SK: There certainly were. Many people died of starvation. There was another man who was called, *Miiywaaunu*. His whole family was never found. I heard that he had seven sons living with him and there was his wife and himself. There was a daughter. He had only one daughter. There must have been ten of them. All of them died of starvation. Only three of their bodies were found and they were the man's, his wife's and the daughter's. They were the only ones who were inside their dwelling.

EM: Who were *Miiywaaunu*'s relatives?

SK: I think his relatives were from Chisasibi. I am certain that he got a wife from Chisasibi. He was a relative of *Kapapichauchiipit*. There were many brothers from that family. *Kapapichauchiipit* had many brothers.

EM: Was *Miiywaaunu* one of *Kapapichauchiipit*'s brothers?

SK: Yes, he was a brother of *Kapapichauchiipit*. It is said that they were many brothers in that family. They had come from the south [Eastmain]. That is where they grew up. Then they moved here when they got older. The whole family came here when their father died.

Some Iyiyuu used to do that. They would travel to another area to do some hunting for some years. Then they would go back to their home areas after some years. This was a usual practice of the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu*. Some of the Iyiyuu from here made the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* territory their home. They never came back here to this area again. That is what happened all the time. Some Iyiyuu from here also travelled to the southern areas and never came back here again.

An example is *Kinuwaapinwaaskum*'s grandfather. He stayed in the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* for a long time. He came back here and died a few years later. Almost all his children had fatal accidents.

Kinuwaapinwaaskum's father died as a result of a gunshot accident. His mother, drowned in a tipped canoe. His father died of a gunshot wound. His uncle, Job, drowned as a result of an overturned canoe. Job's wife also drowned.

Kinuwaapinwaaskum's mother was travelling with Job and his wife when their canoe overturned and they all drowned. Yes...and their children.

When his father died from a gun accident, his mother Marianne and his

siblings lived with their uncle Job. Marianne was my younger sister. Marianne and her children lived with Job and his family. They were trying to make to the Great Whale River system.

It was the old man [Job's father] who told them to take Marianne to this area so that she could see her parents. Our parents were still alive at that time. Shortly after he had Marianne as his daughter-in-law, his whole family travelled to the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyuu*. By the time, she was being taken back to our area after her husband's tragic accident, she had four children. The ones still living are *Kinuwaapinwaaskum* [Adam Mamianskum], Maggie [Mamianskum-Rupert] and Abraham Mamianskum. There was another. She had four children. She did not have any children yet when her husband's family moved to the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyuu*. After her marriage, she never saw our mother and father again.

It was only after her husband's tragic death that the old man decided that Marianne should go and see her mother and father. It was then that the old man instructed his son Job to take Marianne and her children to *Ipsikimis* where our parents were living. *Ipsikimis* was a place where you would find *Iyiyuu* from here all year round. He instructed his son Job to take his grandchildren to *Ipsikimis* to their other grandparents. The old man kept with him Maggie and *Kinuwaapinwaaskum*. He let Abraham and the youngest son who was still in his swaddling to go with their mother. Maggie was the only girl and the rest were boys. He [*Upistikwaayaachisayu*] told his son [Job] to take Marianne and the two youngest sons to our parents. He had said to them...

Your grandfather [Sam Masty] had seen them that year, the old man and his sons and their families. His son who was my sister Marianne's husband was named William [Mamianskum]. Your grandfather, your father's father, had invited William to come and travel with him back to the territory of the *Whapmagoostuwiiyuu* [Great Whale River Cree]. William had been very receptive to the invitation. But your grandfather *Upistikwaayaachisayu* was totally against the idea of his son leaving their family group. He had said to William and he was very truthful in saying that he would take all his family to Whapmagoostui so that Marianne could see her parents while they were alive.

It is said that your grandfather [Sam Masty] had said about the old man, "He so wanted to have his way about his son not to leave them just yet that he would point towards the sky and say, 'I am telling the truth as God is my witness.'" That is what he [*Upistikwaayaachisayu*] said, your grandfather was to have said. His son really wanted to travel with your grandfather [Sam Masty]. But the old man was absolutely against his son leaving them just

then. That is why he was making all these promises because he had to have his way. But it was only after his son William's fatal accident that he started to think about travelling to the Whapmagoostui area. He had only thought to have my sister come and see our parents then. He only sent his son to take Marianne to visit with our parents. He did not even to think to come and visit my parents himself.

The day his son drowned, he had told him that they would spent the freeze up where they were camped. "Leave your traps here. Come back after you have seen some Iyiyuu from there. Leave Marianne with anyone you meet and tell them to take her to her parents." Job left with his family and my sister's to come and see our parents. I have seen the place where their camp was. They had been living in tents. There is a high mountain there. It was very windy the day they left. They were living in tents.

He had told his son to leave his things and his ammunition, "You can come back without much to hinder you." They left in their canoe. Job's fishing lines were still in the water. He had told his father, "I will take off my fish lines on my way."

There was a peninsula near them. They were soon out of sight as they rounded the peninsula. They did not see their camp as soon as they rounded the peninsula. When they were out of sight, he said to his wife [who was not his children's mother], "I am going to check on Job's things. They might burn if he has not put out their fire properly."

It was a windy and clear day. The vegetation around their campsite was quite dry. "His things might burn. He might not have put out the embers from his stove when he doused it with water." That is what he said about his son. "Their dwelling had been far away from ours. We had to get in the canoe to reach it faster. As soon as we reached their dwelling, Job was already quite far out in the water. As soon as we rounded the peninsula, we heard their screams for help. We saw them in the water. Their canoe was upside down in the water," said *Kinuwaapinwaaskum*.

There were three children in the canoe, including Job, his wife and my sister Marianne. Job had a daughter. The other children were Abraham and his baby brother, my sister Marianne's children.

They were quite far out in the water and it was very windy. It was quite amazing that Abraham was still alive when they reached them. Their canoe was upside down. Your grandmother said, "I righted the canoe when we reached them. I saw Abraham hanging on. I pulled him inside our canoe. As soon as I placed him in our canoe, he started screaming." He was the only

one who had not drowned. The old woman found the baby still stuck inside the bow of the canoe. It was the usual custom to place the bundled up small child in the bow of the canoe, either laying down or in a standing position. That is what my sister must have done with her child. She had placed him inside the bow of the canoe and had covered his face. The baby had already drowned when they reached them.

Your grandmother said, "The woman had already drowned, too. Their bodies were on the surface of the water because their long dresses were ballooned out." That is what she had said about her two daughters-in-law and her grandchild, Job's daughter. Job was the only one who was not seen from the start. They did not find his body. The old man and woman tried their best to look for their son's body. The others were drifting away. They took the rest of the bodies to a nearby point. They went ashore. Your grandmother had said, "I made a huge fire."

In those days, when people had a canoe accident or drowned by some reason, they would be draped over a big rock on their stomachs and their backs were heated. In this way, the water they swallowed would drain out of their mouths. When their bodies were heated through to the inside of their bodies, the water would come out and sometimes, their breathing would come back. "That is what we did to them," the old woman had said. Job's wife had been pregnant at that time. She was due any moment.

This happened when Job was on his way to take my sister to our parents. The old man did not remember his promise and the way he had made the promise. He had promised that he would take my sister to our parents while they were still alive. But he just sent my sister to her parents and he did not even come on the trip. Many of them drowned at one time. The old man had not kept his promise. Some people had said of him that he was shown something for not keeping his promise and by the way he had sworn to keep his promise. He had said that God was hearing him make this promise and that is why he was going to keep it.

Your grandfather [Sam Mast] had said that Marianne's last baby had been born in early spring. It was the very beginning of spring when the baby was born. It was then that William really wanted to travel and live with your grandfather [Sam Mast]. William has also thought that my sister would be able to see our parents.

Your grandfather continued, "We were living with them for quite a while that winter. We had made a trip to the inland post. We would eventually part ways. It was still quite a while before we were to part when William said to me, 'Brother-in-law, I was looking in the direction you will go once we leave

you and you go back to your home territory. I looked in that direction for a long time. I thought to myself, 'My brother-in-law will disappear from me in that direction. I was unprepared for the tears that flow as I looked in that direction.' When I think of that time, I felt an enormous regret that he could not come with us. I wished that he had let his son come with us because William so wanted to come with us. It was then that the old man was making his promise that he would all see us in Whapmagoostui in the summer time."

But the old man did not nearly do half of what he had promised to do. It was shortly after your grandfather [Sam Masty] had left them that William's fatal accident happened. Job was not with them at that time. He was still somewhere. William and his family were the only ones who stayed with his father. William really wanted to be with your grandfather [Sam Masty] but the old man did not let his son go. "It was already the spring time when we left them." *Kinuwapinwaaskum* was already able to handle a gun and killed some ptarmigan. He was a youth by then.

He had told this story. "I presume that is the reason why my father did not kill anything after Sam Masty left us because his death was so near. He had not been like that at all during the winter. He did not kill anything after the departure of Sam Masty. There were many ptarmigan about but he did not even kill one. I was the same way. I did not even kill any ptarmigan even though there were many about. I would shot them but always missed them. Even if the ptarmigan were near and just running about, I would shot them but I would miss. My bullet would be where it had landed even when I shot the ptarmigan."

I think that they had moved camp twice since they left your grandfather that *Kinuwaapinwaaskum* resumed his story. I heard this story on a cassette that he taped.

"We made camp that day. My mother check the fishing lines in the late evening. When she returned, she said, 'I see an otter running across the way.' There was an outlet at the end of the elongated lake we were camped on. My father left to go after the otter. We did not know that this would be the last time we would see him alive. He left. He did not come home. It was quite near where the outlet was. He must have seen the otter near there. No one knew exactly what happened. No one knew if he had shot the otter or if his gun went off by accident." Your grandmother said, "The bullet entered his chest and came out of the back of the neck." She said that she was baffled about the gun. "I was very amazed by the gun. There was a rock nearby. The gun was propped up on the rock. It looked as if the gun was placed there and was standing there. I did not even take the gun."

She was the only one who looked after the body. "The gun looked like it had been propped up. I was the only one who looked after the body. I made sure I knew how the bullet had entered the body, I knew that I would be asked exactly what I had observed about everything. I had to know how the bullet went."

Your grandfather [Sam] had said, "I was very sorry about my friend's death. After this event, I often wondered, would my brother-in-law have lived longer if he could have come with me like he wanted to? It had not been tens days yet since the last time I saw him and then he had died. He was fine when I last saw him but the only thing that was not right was that he was always crying because we were to part with his family. He was crying the last time I saw him. I used to wonder, I wonder if my brother-in-law would have met this kind of fate if he could have had his way. The old man did not want any of his children to make their plans about their lives."

The old man and his family made their way to their canoe after the death of William. I do not know where it was, whether it was near or far from where they had started from. Fortunately, they were able to get to it before the break up. They reached their canoe and it was only then they were able to get to people and told what had happened to them.

EM: Was it only he, his wife, grandchildren and Marianne who were left to get to the canoe?

SK: Yes, that is true. They started travelling to their little *Waskaikin* [Fort McKenzie]. It was there that he asked his son Job to live with him and Paul, who was your grandmother's son.¹⁸

Do you remember Paul? I didn't think that you would remember him. He was already an adult when they were here last. He wanted to marry someone from here before they left for the Schefferville area. But he could not marry the one he had wished to marry. They left here and travelled to the *Aus-awaauiiyiyuu* territory. They did not come back here again.

She had two daughters. They were already married when they left this territory. Both her daughters had already married and that is why they were not living with their mother.

¹⁸Trans. note: *Upistikwaayauchisayu*'s first wife was *kinuwaapinukwaaui* who was the mother of Job and William. His second wife was Maggie. They were already middle aged when they married. Paul was the son of Maggie, from her first marriage. Paul had a sister who was Lucy Mamianskum-Kash. Maggie and *Upistikwaayauchisayu* had one child together.

EM: What was *Upistikwaayauchisayu's* last wife's name?

SK: She was called Maggie. She was named Maggie, *Kinuwaapinwaaskum's* grandmother.

EM: What was his first wife's name? William's mother.

SK: I do not know what her name was but the only name I have heard was *Kinuwaapinukwaau*. She died when they were. Then he took your other grandmother [Maggie] as his wife.

EM: Was it Maggie who looked after the bodies of her husband's sons when they died?

SK: Yes, yes, she was the one. She looked after the bodies.

EM: It must have been very hard.

SK: I thought that too. It must have been very hard for him to face what he had to face. If he could have kept his promise, maybe he would not have seen those things like he was shown. He might not have seen those hard times.

EM: You have told me before that your brother Luke is buried at *Matawaausipis*¹⁹.

SK: Yes, that is where he is buried. I wonder if his grave is still visible.

My brother Luke never left our parents side all his life even after his marriage. But that year he died, the one called *Waatachikwaautiu* [Jacob Rupert] coaxed him into staying and travelling with them when they met them that fall. They had spent the freeze up together. He coaxed Luke into coming with them to the coast, saying, "We will make a trip to the post. You can get some tea for your father." He managed to convince him to go with them. Luke left our parents for the first time in his life. They travelled to the coast. They reached the coast exactly where he is buried. Fortunately, he was not sick long when he died.

I imagine that he did not have the same care he did with our mother. He was always cold. That is what my fellow old woman [Maggie Sandy] and *Waasipapinukwaau* [Jacob's wife and Maggie's sister] said. They had said, "We presumed that he was cold for him to have that sickness. He was buried right where he had taken sick. He came back from hunting ptarmigan and fell sick. He started to have a high fever. He was not sick long when he died."

¹⁹Trans. note: This is an area of potential hydro-electric development.

He never saw our parents again. He had left them when it was summer time. He would not see them again. They had spent the freeze up apart but they were able to visit back and forth. My brother Joseph would visit them where they were camped for the freeze up. Joseph would see our brother from time to time.

Luke had a great sadness come over him all of a sudden. He had wanted to go and see our parents but he had a feeling that he was going to be overcome with grief even if he did see them. That is how sad he was feeling for no apparent reason. But Joseph would go and visit them. My mother had said, "He has not come to see us since he left us." Joseph quoted Luke as saying, "I just can't bring myself to go and see our parents. I have a feeling that even if I did see them, I would never see them again. That is what I am feeling. That is the reason why I just can't go and see them. I also feel that even if I did see them, I would feel more sad and terrible. That is what he said to me."

He did not see our parents again. He fell sick when they reached the coast at the *Matawaausipis*. They could not even go to the post yet when he fell sick. But *Nipinwaaskum* and *Waatachikwaautiu* had already gone to the post ahead before they had reached the coast but Luke had not had the chance to go yet. They must have had brought a little food to the group.

It was almost always the case that a person would not be given much in the way of food if they did not bring many furs with them to the post.

It was shortly after they came back from the post that Luke got sick. *Waatachikwaautiu* and *Nipinwaaskum* went back to the post again to try and get some medicine for him. They were not back for quite some time when Luke died. He had convulsions because he had a very high fever. That is what the ones who saw him, namely *Waasipapinukwaau*, said. His clothing would be soaked even shortly after they were changed. He was sweating a lot. He had convulsions shortly after that. His back would arch when he had the convulsions. He died soon after.

Waatachikwaautiu and *Nipinwaaskum* went back up inland after they buried Luke. They could not bring themselves to go and tell my parents that Luke was no longer alive. They could not go and see them. It was only when we got to the post that we heard of his death. They just did not want to tell my parents about my brother as soon as possible even though they could have if they tried.

They did the same thing about my sister's death. They kept it from parents. *Chisamatiu* married my younger sister. My sister was named Caroline. She was younger than Marianne. They did the same thing about my sister's

death. They had seen where my sister Caroline had been buried by accident but they did not tell my parents about it even though they had seen them. They had paddled by where my parents had been but they kept this information from my parents. They, meaning, *Waatachikwaaautiu*. It was only in the summer time when they got to the post that my parents found out about my sister's death.

EM: What was the cause of her death, your sister Caroline?

SK: She died accidentally. It is said that a felled tree hit her. It was Maggie George who had cut the firewood and the felled the tree which fell on my sister. The tree fell on her head. She must have had a serious head injury.

It was felt that the family could have done something for her. The accident took place at *Maasimakus pischistwaakinch* [Richmond Gulf area] when the *waskaikin* [trading post] was still operating there. That is where they had been. We had travelled ahead up the Little Whale River.

After the accident my sister had terrible headaches. The people wondered what these people were thinking. *Chisachiims'* [James Mamianskum] father was called *Chisauchimakan*. *Chisauchimakan* had seen see them and saw how sick my sister had been. There was a boat that was leaving for Chisasibi while they were there. The boat belonged to *Itawaasiu* [poss. George Papp]. If they were thinking, they could have asked for her to be taken to Chisasibi on the boat. There were no planes coming that way. The Roman Catholic Fathers were already there. They were good medical people. Maybe she could have lived or even been taken to Moose Factory.

It was her head injury that killed her. I guess she went crazy at the end. Her head never stopped hurting after she was hit. It sort of drove her crazy in the end. It was suspected that her head injury somehow got infected inside her skull. She could not eat after a while - the pain in her head got worse and worse. She died from the accident. She was a healthy woman. She was hardly ever sick. It was suspected that maybe she had fractured her skull. It is very dangerous for anyone to have a blow to the back of the head. That is what was said.

My sister had had quite long hair. Her hair started falling out. It started to fall off very easily. Yet they still took her into the bush. She died on the *Achikunipiy* [Lake Mintu]. They were already on the *Achikunipiy* when she died.

They say it is hard to recover from a serious head injury. I am thinking of your grandmother who passed on this summer [1993; Eliza Masty snr., her

sister-in-law, and the wife of her brother, Joseph Masty snr.]. She died very suddenly. It was said that she must have hit her head when she fell. She was found laying on the landing at the bottom of the stairs. Annie, my sister, found her on the landing when she went into their house. She said her name. Annie said, "She responded only once when I said her name. When I said to her, 'Sister-in-law, what happened to you?' She did not respond to my question." She never regained consciousness.

The nurse is always afraid that this might happened to me, that I may fall down the stairs. She always tells me never to be alone in the house. She tells me that I should always have someone in the house with me. But there is no one person who can be with me all the time. All of my grandchildren go to school and Agnes works all day.

EM: You told me once that you had another sibling who was very little when she died. Am I correct in thinking that four of your siblings are no longer with us?

SK: She was a female sibling. She was also called Annie. It was known at birth that she had some kind of an infirmity. She was born in the winter time. She had a big bump on her lower back when she was born. There was some kind of a liquid just below her skin. The bump was jellylike to the touch. Later, they decided to punctured the bump. They kind of had an idea that the bump was just filled with water. They did just that. They punctured her skin with a needle. The needle was sterilized first. They did this a couple of times. After a while, the liquid seeped out. The liquid did not look bad. It was a sort of a clear liquid. After a while, the bump was emptied of the liquid and no longer visible. Her skin began to settle but there was a visible dent on her back where the liquid had been. But when the bump was gone, another thing happening to her. It appeared that her head did not have any bone structure. Her head was growing bigger and it was soft and jellylike to the touch. They left her head alone. She was born in January. As for her bump on the back, it was fine. Her skin just shrunk back to normal on her back. The liquid never came back again. There were no doctors around here at that time. The only person who was able to work as a medical person was the manager's wife. The manager we had at that time was here for a long time.

EM: What did the Iyiyuu call him?

SK: *Kaayuwaaapit. Kaayuwaaapit.* Yes, that is what he was called. His wife spoke Cree very well. I don't know what she wanted to do with her head. She said, "I was going to try to help her, but my husband told me not to touch her and to let nature take its course." My sister's head began to grow bigger. It felt like there was no bone. It just seemed to swell up more and more. "It could

be that something in her head is growing, inside her head," she had said. She might have been helped if there had been a doctor then. There were no doctors around those days.

EM: What was *Kaayuwaapit*'s wife's name?

SK: I wonder what her name was. I think her name was Emily. She spoke Cree very well. She spoke the language like a Cree person. Her father was from an Iyiyuu family. He was called *Kakiyaakwaau*. I think her father was the only male sibling in his family. He only had sisters.

EM: Did your sister die here when you stay here for the summer?

SK: Yes, that is true. Her health just kept on deteriorating. She [Emily] would come and see her frequently. We just let nature take its course. She could not touch her at all. She said, "The manager told me not to do what I had planned to do to try and help her. He was afraid that I might kill her if I try to do anything to help her because I do not really know what to do."

EM: Did she cry a lot?

SK: No, she did not really cry a lot even though she was like that. She was like that from birth - she did not cry very much. The only thing that we noticed was that her head was getting bigger. That is how knew something was wrong with her. Emily said, "Maybe something was growing inside her head. Sometimes, something grows in people's head that is like a balloon. For some, when it bursts, they die fast."

It is said that is what happened to the old man who was David Shem's father. It was when he got older that this happened to him. Before there was anything wrong with him, he was a very kind and sympathetic person. That is what he was like. It was when he was getting older that he started to be afraid of people, even the people he knew. He got older. His wife had died then. When this condition got worse, he wanted to be alone as he went about his hunting. He lived alone.

The year he died, they had been hunting and trapping south of *Ipisikimis*. That is where they spend the freeze up. David Shem had already remarried after his first wife's death. He had two male children by then.

When his condition got worse, he decided he should be alone, especially after he had seen his grandchildren. That is what was said of him. He absolutely wanted to be alone. He would have his own dwelling away from his group. His sons would always go and see him and try to bring him home but they

could not budge him. They could not bring him home. His sons said, "The time came for us to come down to the post for the summer but we could not make him come with us. We had to leave him be." They could not bring him home to their dwelling. "He had said that he would follow us by looking at our trail. That is why we left him alone." That is what his sons had said.

We were living around that area, too. There is a river going by there....

EM: You saw his trail as he made his way down, the old man? What was his name?

SK: His name was Jimmy. He was quoted as saying, "When I was a young man, I was called James. As I got older, I was called, *Chisachiimi* [The Elder Jimmy²⁰]." That was what he was called as he got older, *Chisachiimi*. The other one was called, *Chisachusiip* [The Elder Joseph]. That was his brother. His name was Joseph. They had the same parents.

His trail was already quite old when we saw it last. We left the river. He had followed the course of the river. He seemed quite fine from what we saw by his hunting activities. He had felt that he was fine and his mind clear when he did not see anyone near him. The *wamistikusiu* had said that, "he must have felt very afraid whenever he saw people or was near them. There must have been something growing inside his head which resembled a bellow. Whenever someone has this condition, when they are very frightened, this thing sometimes it may burst. When this growth in the head bursts, the person dies very quickly." That is exactly what happened to him, it is said.

We continued travelling down the course of the river. We saw his trail for a time as we followed the course of the river. We saw two places where he had made a camp. In one of his camps, he had found two porcupines. The bones of the porcupine were quite big. He had also set a net in the river. He had worked like someone whose mind was alright. He had set the net and his fishing lines like any normal thinking person. His work was very well done. We left the river at that point. He had come to the river again quite a bit further down. He joined the river again. He did not quite know the winter route. It was the first time that summer that he had travelled the river from the post. He did not grow up here. So, he was travelling up the river and had seen the area for the first time on this inland travel route. His mind seemed to have worked alright when he was alone. He did not lose the way where they had travelled that summer upriver. He was following the same route that they had taken that summer and was retracing the summer route. He had been fishing in the places where fishing was good.

²⁰*Chisa* as a prefix to one's name indicates elder status.

We left the river after a while. We were only getting our cache of supplies. That is the reason why we had seen his trail.

EM: Who did you go with?

SK: I was with your grandfather [John Kawapit, her husband], my brother Luke and my sister Marianne who was *Kinuwaapinwaaskum*'s mother. There were quite a lot of supplies that we had cached. There was sugar and tea and other kinds of store-brought supplies. My father had many furs in those days. That is the reason why he had many supplies when we travelled up inland. I still remember when I was young the things I did for my survival and the way I helped my parents as they worked for our survival. I really tried to do my best to help my parents to help us. I was the eldest in our family. My brother Luke was the second oldest. Our parents taught us everything they knew about how to survive in these parts. Our father taught us how to work the trap line and we always went with him whenever he was working on his trap line. He always taught us how to work with the traps. He really like to work on his trap line.

Whenever we waited for freeze-up, we would set our traps as far as we could walk on foot near our fall camp. When the traps yielded nothing, he would say to me, "et us go on a trip. We will walk until nightfall and spend the night. I want you carry a small dwelling cover on your back." That is what he would say to me. "Carry the dwelling cover. You will erect our dwelling for the night." That is what he would say to me and that is what I would do. He taught me a lot and all kinds of work one needs to know to live on the land. That is why I knew what to do for my family even when I was not living with them after I got married. I do not forget all the things he taught me and how to do them. I did not forget the plans he made and what I should be doing as time went on. That is what I did while I had clarity of mind.²¹

When he would tell me what I should be doing tomorrow.... He would tell me what I should do the next day. Once, when he told me what I had to do the next day, I could not sleep well because I was itching to get going and do what he had asked me to do. Even if I did fall asleep, that would be the first thing I would think of upon awaking - what I had to do when the day came. That is what happened to me. I never thought to do otherwise than what he had planned ahead of time - what I had to do. It was the usual practice for me to wake up and make the fire while it was still dark before morning. I would get up even if it was not morning yet. I did not have a watch in those days! I would go outside after I had dressed. If the *uchakitiku* [constellation,

²¹Trans. note: She chuckles when she says this.

possibly the big dipper] were visible in the night sky, I would check what position it was in and that would tell me how far away the daylight was. That is what I used to check the time. Sometimes, I would see the sliver of dawn visible on clear mornings. I was happiest when I was already walking to do my work on the land before the sun came up and I watched the dawn as it grew lighter.

EM: Even if you were alone?

SK: Certainly! I would go alone to do some of the work on the land [checking traps/fishing] most often.

EM: Was this before you were married?

SK: Certainly! I would go alone all the time.

EM: You certainly had a brave heart.

SK: What would I be afraid of?

EM: I don't know. I know I would be afraid.

SK: I would also walk far into the night on my way home many times.

My father would say to me, "Do not walk in the night." I would not be able to do that sometimes, especially if I had been after some kind of a game that kept me from heading on home early before dark. I did my best to keep and remember everything that he taught me to do for myself to ensure my own survival and those around me. That is what he would always teach me.

My mother would say to me, "You habits of hunting are not much different than most men who are good hunters, especially that you get up early to go out. Sometimes, you even get up and get going while it is still dark outside."

My parents taught me everything that I did and I did my best not to forget what they were teaching me. My father would tell me what I should be doing and what I had to do. Naturally, our grandfather [*Kamichapaut*] who was much older would also tell me what I had to do and what I should try to learn and do. He would caution me not to have accidents when I am alone. He would say to me, "Do not cut yourself with the axe when you chop wood to make fire." But I did not like to stop and make fire to eat or drink when I was alone as I went about my work on the land. When I started going with my younger brother, he would say, "Let us stop and make a fire. I am very hungry." He would say this, especially, if he knew that we had food in our

packs. I did not make a fire when I was alone but Luke would ask that we make a fire and eat what we had in our packs.

EM: Did you ever spend the night?

SK: Naturally, even if I was alone, I would spend the night.

EM: That is when I would die of fright!

SK: They would have said, "I guess she has died of fright because she did not come home"!

EM: You were very strong.

SK: Yes, I was. I was never afraid of anything - whatever I had set out to do. Even if I walked home in the night for a long time. My father would say to me, "Try not to come home too late from your outings. We get very worried when you do not come home for a long time at night. We think that you might have cut yourself with an axe. That is what he would say to me. Our grandfather would say the same thing. He would say to me, "Take care not to cut yourself. Do not make your hunting axe too sharp. You will have a bad cut if it is too sharp."

EM: Is it because they were afraid that you might freeze before they could get to you?

SK: Yes, that is certainly one of the reasons. They probably thought of other things that might have happened to me if I were not back by early in the evening.

LIVING ON THE LAND - YOUNG ADULthood

EM: You have told me some adventures you and your family did before you were married. I would like to ask some more of the same. I am sure you have not told me everything that happened while you were growing up. Could you tell what you did in one particular year?

SK: Okay. My family and I were always alone as a family as we trapped in our trap line before I was married. We used to live with our grandfather [Kamichapaut] after the death of our grandmother [Chuskuminas]. We were the ones who looked after her. He lived seven years after her death. We lived with him for quite some time after her death.

We used to live and trap in and around *Ipisikimis*. We always lived and stayed there at *Ipisikimis*. I was born and lived there during the times when there

were hardly any caribou around in this area. We ate caribou only on very rare occasions when they were found at that time while Grandfather was still with us. My father used to kill a bear in the summer occasionally. I remember only on two occasions that he found a bear after it had settled down in its den for the winter. I guess that is about the only times we had big game to eat. Other times we were quite hungry. We hardly ever lived with other families especially after my brother and I were able to hunt - and your grandfather Sam Mastay. Grandfather *Kamichapaut* raised him. He used to live with us, too. After he got married, he would go and trap somewhere else. He was the only family we would see occasionally during the winter.

Anyway, that was the practice. The family groups would break up for a while during the winter to set traps in other places. We would tell each other ahead of time when and where we would meet again in the spring time. Your grandfather would join us in the spring again for the trip down to the post. We would live with him again. It was only in the winter time that we would separate just for trapping some fur-bearing animals in other areas of the territory. That is the only the only reason why our families separated in the winter. Sometimes, we used to separate before the freeze-up and spent it away from each other. That is what your grandfather Sam and our family used to do.

The other family who used to live with us for a time was *Atwaan* and his family. After all, *Atwaan* was our grandfather's son-in-law. He and his family used to live with us and our grandmother, my mother's mother. *Atwaan* and my mother had the same mother. These were the people who usually lived with us.

Whenever we travelled down to the coast, we would meet up with our group along the river route. We would meet many other groups of families at *Wiiminipis*. This was a meeting place for the groups as they came from all parts of the territory on their way to the coast. Sometimes, many families would travel down to the coast together after meeting up with each other at *Wiiminipis*. There would be many canoes of us as we travelled down. It was only the ones who had gone to the post earlier that we did not meet up with. As for those of us who had stayed far away at *Ipsikimis* we reached *Wiiminipis* later than most because the ice stayed on the lake for a long time [because of the size of the lake]. It was only when the ice was gone that we would start travelling down. Those were the times when we would be very sleepy in the early mornings when we had to travel. It was the usual custom that the travellers would wake up earlier than usual to travel. Sometimes, it would be windy along the river and especially on the big lakes along the way on the river. There were many times that we would not be able to travel because of the strong winds. It would be very windy at times. Our canoes were quite

small. These canoes were also made by each family. There were no ready made canoes like we have these days. That is the reason why we could not travel on very windy days because our canoes were quite small. We would wait out the wind and would only travel on calmer days. Sometimes we would meet others along the way as we made our way down. Many groups would meet up with each other at *Wiiminipis*. Sometimes, some people would make a special trip to the post for some supplies. Sometimes, when some people had very poor canoes because the canvas covering was too broken, the people who made a trip to the post would bring yards of canoe canvas covering. Canoes would be made there at *Wiiminipis*. When the canoes were finished, then we would travel down together. We would travel to the post together. We hardly ever brought food with us to the post. We would be out of food by the time we got here because we would have travelled far and would not have been able to fish much because we would be travelling on good days until sunset.

The whales would be hunted once we got here to serve as our summer food. Sometimes, the whales got here much earlier than expected. Some men killed many whales. It is said that in the past, whales were the source of food when the Iyiyuu spent their summers here before and after the post was built here. But during my time, there were not too many whales. Not many whales were killed. Before I was born and into the past, the Iyiyuu killed many whales when they reached the coast. There were many whales here in those days it is said. That is why the little stream across the [Great Whale] river is called *Sasapimakwaanistukw*. That is where the Iyiyuu would camp to make whale oil. They would render the whale blubber into whale oil. That is why the little stream is called that. The Iyiyuu would live on each side of the stream. The dwellings were very huge by the looks of the old sites. These dwellings were from the days when the Iyiyuu hunted whales for food. Near the mouth area of the river is the area called *Aupituwaamiskach* where the other little stream comes into the river is another area where the Iyiyuu camped for the summer.

One time, when we were here for the summer we saw whale bones about midway up the bank of the little stream. The bank of the river had broken off and that was where we saw the whale backbones. I guess these bones came from the time when the whales were hunted and eaten as summer food. I imagine these bones were kept in one area when the meat had been taken off of the bones. The bones must have been covered up by the sand as time went on.

Anyway, that is the reason the stream is called that, *Sasapimakwaanistukw*. Beginning at the mouth of the stream *Sasapimakwaanistukw* and all the way over this way along the shore of the river, the area is covered with old dwell-

ing sites. The dwellings must have been very big by the looks of the old dwelling sites.

One of the dwellings the Iyiyuu erected to live in when they were many are called *saputiwaan* which is a long dwelling with entrance ways on both ends of the dwelling. These were some of the kinds of dwellings we saw and they were all very big. The dwelling bases must have be dug deep where the structure was built over them by the looks of them.

EM: Grandmother, you told me that you knew how to trap fur-bearing animals even before you were married. Did you trade the pelts yourself?

SK: Yes, certainly! My father never used to tell me what to do with my pelts. I used to trap more than ten martens at a time when we went to the post. I trapped some mink and foxes, too. My father always could pay up his debts at the store [with the pelts that he trapped]. I never once helped him pay his debts. As for me, I never had any debts. I used trade my own pelts. But my father helped me choose what I should buy. I would tell him whenever I wanted to buy something. By the end of the summer, sometimes, I could not use up all that I had with my pelts. I still had some credit left from my pelts.

EM: I imagine you used to buy things that you liked, like material and beads. Were there beads that were used decoration on clothing?

SK: Yes, certainly! There were beads for trade. There were also beautiful shawls and material. There were sewing machines, too. I bought myself a sewing machine. I bought many things. I bought myself a gun, too. My father never used my money that I got from my pelts. He would suggest something I should buy. He always had pelts of his own. He never said that he could not pay up all his debts at the store. I never ran up debts, either. I never had to charge anything. I had no debts. My father never asked me to help pay his debts.

EM: I imagine you dressed yourself the way you wanted to. There must have been some who were jealous of you.

SK: I am certain there was someone! Some people were poor, especially the women whose territory is to the north. They used to ask me for my long skirts.

EM: I am certain that you never turned anybody down.

SK: No, I never turned anybody down when they asked me for my clothes. There were many girls who were my age at that time. I really liked to

be with them.

Maggie Sandy was the same way with her trapping. She was as capable as a man in her trapping.

They used to say this about the *ochimau* at that time...He really liked Maggie and me because we always had furs to trade with. He was quoted as saying when he learned that our marriages were being arranged, "Why should they marry off these girls, they are not poor." I guess he was just thinking about the furs we were trapping on our own. "The girls are not poor," he was quoted as saying. I guess that is the only thing he considered as a reason for getting married.

EM: When you were still living with your father, did you make trips to the post during the winter time?

SK: We used to go to the post for supplies sometimes. We did not go there many times when I was still living with my parents. We used to make the trip from far. We would start out from below *Ipisikimis*.

EM: Were you and Luke sent to the post by yourselves?

SK: No. We never went by ourselves. There was that one time that I went with *Atwaan* and his wife. We started out from near *Ipisikimis*.

EM: How many nights did it take you to get back home?

SK: I do not remember exactly. It may well have taken us one month to complete the trip. It is when we were returning home that we could not walk fast because of our loads of supplies.

EM: You must have walked far each day when you made your way down to the post without loads.

SK: Yes, that is true.

EM: When you went with *Atwaan* and his wife to the post. I assume you were not married yet when you made that trip.

SK: No, I was not married.

EM: Can you tell a story about that?

SK: There is not much to tell. We walked all the way with our loads. We had

nothing in the way of mechanized vehicles to take us home. We slept when it got dark. I do not know how many nights we had to sleep until we reached our camp. We would make our dwelling when it was quite dark. I think we slept six times on our way to the post. This was without having to pull heavy loads on our toboggans.

On our way to the post, we met some Iyiyuu. It was *Chiisapau* and his family. He was still alive then. He would die that year or maybe two years later. They were on their way inland from the post. They certainly fed us bannock that time. They had a lot of flour still.

We also met our grandfather *Anikawaakin* along the way. He and his family had already made their trip to the post.

We finally reached the post. On our way back to our camp, we met up with our grandfather *Katikwiiwaasit* at *Wiiminipis*. We met them there. They were on their way to the post. We passed them after a brief visit and kept on going towards our camp. Finally we reached our camp at *Ipisikimis*. It was situated at

After a while, your grandfather Sam Masty wanted to make a trip to the post, too. He made the trip but he could not make it back to our camp. The spring overtook him. He got stuck at the place called *Yachisaakw*. They had reached this place when spring overtook them. The spring was unusually short that year. When the spring thaw came, it was never cold after that. Spring turned into summer in a very short time. They could not move from where the spring thaw found them. The river broke up after the spring thaw. Fortunately, there were some Iyiyuu nearby to the south. The Iyiyuu had a canoe. That was how he was found. The Iyiyuu heard a shot when they were in their canoe. They decided to go and visit whoever was shooting. The Iyiyuu found him. He told them that he could not make it back to his camp. The Iyiyuu invited him to come to their camp. They were going to help make a canoe to go home in. That is what they did. In those days, the men could make a canoe very quickly if they wanted to. The Iyiyuu he met up with were our grandfathers *Anikawaakin*, *Katikapusit* and *Chiisapau*. There were many men in that group. They were very fast at making his canoe. There were many of them who worked very quickly all together to cut the pieces and shave the planks and other pieces of the canoe. There was no ice in the river when they took his canoe to the river. That is how he and the others were able to make it back to our camp in a canoe when they had started out on foot.

EM: Were you there at the camp at that time?

SK: Yes, I was there.

EM: Was he not married yet at that time?

SK: Yes, he was already married then. Your uncle Isaac [his first child] had already been born.

EM: Did you have an idea what had happened to him?

SK: No, we had no idea what had happened to him. It was only when he came back in the canoe did we know what had happened to him - that spring [thaw] had overtaken him somewhere along the way.

EM: Were you worried about him?

SK: We certainly were worried about him. We had thought all kind of things about him. One of the prevailing thoughts that we had was that maybe some Iyiyuu had seen them and knew what was happening with him. That is what happened. The Iyiyuu had found him. It was not long after the breakup when he reached us, too. It is said that the Iyiyuu could make a canoe in a matter of time when they wanted to make it fast. They were very fast, especially if there were many of them.

EM: Were they fast even if there were only two men working on it?

SK: I am certain that they were also fast. It is said that the Iyiyuu in those days could make the frame of the canoe anywhere and anytime. What they did was discard the frame where they could no long travel by canoe and stripped the frame and just take the covering. The man just keeps the covering because they could make the frame anytime. Men was fast at making canoes.

For example, there is a story about one of our grandfathers. He was known as a person who was very fast in most things he did. He told this story. "We made a trip to get our canoe where we had left it. We came atop a hill and looked down upon the river [*Mistisipiy*]. There was no ice on the river at all by then. My wife asked me, 'What are we going to do?' I said, 'I will make a canoe for us.' She said, 'What will the children eat in the meantime while you are making the canoe?' We had no food at all. I said to her, 'We will see how long it will take me. I will do my best to finish the job in a shortest time possible.' We had only one axe. She made our dwelling first with the axe. After she was finished with the axe, I picked it up to set about my work. I cut the trees and made the planks needed for the canoe. The sun had not set yet when I had the frame of the canoe in place. The only thing to do is to cover the frame with the canoe covering. In the morning, my wife used the

axe first to chop the firewood. When she had finished, I picked up her axe again. I started chopping the small trees for the ribs of the canoe and other small pieces of the canoe. I bent the ribs in place. I stopped when I knew there would be enough ribs and the other parts. I put them in place on the main frame. The sun was not half way down I had the ribs in place and the other parts."

I imagine he did not put the frame in the hollowed out sand as it was done sometimes. It is said that sometimes when the canoe was not made in the sand, it was made on level ground.

"I placed the ribs and other parts of the canoe on the frame where they should go. I tied them with tree roots." It did not even take him three days to finish the canoe. "It was evening when I finished. I covered the seams of the canoe with the tree gum." I imagine it was his wife who had gone to gather the tree gum. "I placed the gum in the areas that I knew would leak. While I was doing this, I said to my wife, 'Get the net ready to be placed in the water. We will set the net.'"

I guess he carved their paddles, too. "Soon, I was paddling about in the water. We left in the morning."

The group of Iyiyuu he was living with was downstream. He had walked to try and get his canoe but the river had broken before he could cross it. His canoe was on the other side of the river from where he was.

"We rounded the bend and there was one of my married sons. Here was *Chischaimiiku*. He was trying to push his raft into the water. He was trying to set his net. He saw us paddling towards him. He called out to his sister *Mananiis* who had come with us on this trip, 'Where did you get the canoe you are paddling in?' My daughter *Mananiis* replied, 'Where would we get it? Naturally, our father made it.' 'He made it! He must have made it very poorly!'

We landed the canoe. He abandoned his raft and got into 'the poorly made canoe' to set his net." This man was noted to be a very fast worker in most things he worked at.

EM: What was his name?

SK: *Mitaskunans*. He was one of our grandfathers. He was an older brother of our grandfather *Kamichapaut*.

EM: Did they have the same parents?

SK: No, *Mitaskunans* was *Kamichapaut*'s uncle's son. They were first cousins. *Mitaskunans* was one of our relatives.

EM: Speaking of our grandfather *Kamichapaut*, what was he noted for in work or in hunting?

SK: He was spoken about being a very good hunter. He was a skilful hunter. He was a successful hunter. This was when he was still hunting. That is what was said about him. He also had a lot of songs. He sang many songs about the animals that he hunted successfully.

EM: That is right. You did tell me that he was noted to be a very good singer, too.

SK: The Iyiyuu loved to hear him sing his songs. It is said that the Iyiyuu would say whenever a drum would be made, 'I wish *Kamichapaut* would sing with this drum.' The Iyiyuu really liked to hear him sing. The same thing was said about my mother's father, *Nutachikwaau*. He was also a very good singer, it is said. They got most of their songs from their hunting experiences. They made songs about the thoughts they had about their hunting and the animals they were pursuing for their survival. That is where they got their songs it is said of them. They sang about the animals they were hunting. That is where they got their songs.

It is said that the Iyiyuu who was a skilful and successful hunter had many songs to his credit. Most of his songs came from his hunting experiences and the animals he had gotten in his life. He had songs about his thoughts about the animals and his skills.

EM: What did you say about our grandmother *Chuskuminas*?

SK: She was also a very good singer. She was one of the woman who was very good at tanning caribou skins. She was a noted skilful caribou skin tanner. She was a skilful caribou skin tanner and had songs for doing this kind of work. She also had songs for all the other kinds of work done with animals that a wman cleans.

EM: I imagine it was the women who made up songs for each of their children out of love for them.

SK: Yes, that is true. The women also had songs to do with the kinds of work they did and things like tanning caribou skins.

EM: When you were still living with your parents, did you ever go on a trip to the post during the winter?

SK: Yes, I would go on that kind of a trip as I got older. I used to go on any kind of long trip even the ones where hunting was involved. I was always asked to go on these kinds of long trips from the main camp. I also went on trips to the post for trade and supplies.

EM: Did you ever go on a trip for supplies to Fort Chimo?

SK: No, I did not go on trip to Fort Chimo but I did go to the little post that was built just a little ways from Fort Chimo which the Iyiyuu called *Nuchimiyuwaskaikin* [Fort McKenzie]. It was also called *Waskaikins*. I went there on a trip for supplies. My sister, *Kinuwapinwaaskum's* [Adam Mamianskum's] mother and I went with the others on that trip. After he got married, they stayed around that place for a number of years. In fact, she died around that area. She could not see our parents after she got married. It was only the first year that she got married that her new family came to Great Whale River post for the summer. After that they did not come and stayed at the *Waskaikins*. The family she married into had a job where they transported the supplies from Fort Chimo to *Waskaikins* during the summer time. The supplies they transported to this inland post would be used during the winter time by the Iyiyuu. They transported the supplies from Fort Chimo [where the boat bringing the supplies from the south anchored each summer]. Before the inland post was build on that spot, it is said that the caribou herds used to go past there on their way south or north. The summer the building was erected, the caribou did not come there at all. There were no caribou at all. It seemed that the caribou were being stopped from coming there by the building. The caribou never came there again. It was the beginning of the time when caribou did not come to these parts anymore. Some pockets of caribou could be found where there was no building nearby. It was only sometimes that some caribou were killed. It is said that the caribou passed right on that place during it's migration, right on that river. The caribou crossed the river right where the building was. It seemed that the building stopped the caribou from coming there anymore. There were no caribou anymore. Before that, there were plenty of caribou, it is said. They would cross the river right on the spot where the building was during their migration. The caribou stopped coming there after the building was put up, it is said. The caribou completely stopped coming to that place after the building went up, it is said.

EM: Was that beginning, then, of where the Iyiyuu started to be poor because of lack of food?

SK: Yes, certainly! The Iyiyuu were very poor. It was the beginning of starvation. Some Iyiyuu starved to death when the caribou no longer came around that part of the country. The *Waapinutawiiyiyuu* were the hardest hit. There was

massive starvation at times. I wonder what would have happened if there had been no building there. The Iyiyuu determined that the caribou stopped coming there because of the building. It was like the caribou were barred from coming there anymore. Today, it is known that the caribou are migrating again like they used to in those days. I do not know if they are running past the same place again where the building was. Maybe they have taken a different route rather than go there. I imagine that the building is not there anymore.

When the building [Fort McKenzie] was closed, the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* left that area and made Schefferville their home from then on. They left that area for good - where they used to hunt. That is where they [Naskapi] are now, all of them. Also the *Waapinutawiiyiyuu* [Montagnais] and the *Waasawiiyiyuu* [Innu of Labrador] are there, too. I guess that is where they all are together where they moved after Fort Mckenzie.

EM: I gather there had been three different groups of Iyiyuu there [apart from the occasional *Waapimakustuwiyyiyuu*]. Who are they again?

SK: Yes, that is true. They were *Ausawaawiiyiyuu*, *Waapinutawiiyiyuu* and the *Waasawiiyiyuu*. Some of the Iyiyuu hunted and lived around the *waasau* [on the coast of Labrador]. There were three groups of Iyiyuu there. I imagine they are together at Schefferville. The *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* moved there. I imagine the other groups moved there, too.

EM: Were these the three groups of Iyiyuu you used to meet on the land?

SK: Yes, we used to see these people from time to time. We would meet them whenever we went travelling from here. We used to travel to the area where some caribou could be found when it was abundant in hopes of them coming around again. But the caribou did not come there anymore. After a while, they were not there anymore. After many years of waiting for the caribou, these three groups of Iyiyuu moved to the southern areas. I guess some of them used planes and others might have used canoes to travel to the south. They stayed there for good, it is said.

At the time of the Iyiyuu moving to the south [of the Fort McKenzie area], your grandfather, *Kinuwaapinwaaskum's* [Adam Mamianskum's] grandfather was not there anymore. He had moved to Whapmagoostui. He had come home. If he had not come back here, he might have moved to the south of there, too.

EM: Was the old man called *Upistikwaayauchisayu*?

SK: Yes.

EM: What was his *wamistikusiu* name?

SK: Johnny. He was called Johnny.

EM: He was called Johnny Mamianskum?

SK: Yes.

EM: So, it is the present-day Johnny Mamianskum's namesake [great-great grandfather].

SK: *Chisachiims*'s [James Mamianskum's] father was the oldest of the brothers. He was named John. His brother, *Upistikwaayachisayu* was named Johnny. John Mamianskum's Cree name was *Chisauchimakan*. These are old men of long ago.

Our grandfather *Kamichapaut* was older than them and our grandfather *Nutachikwaau*. These are old men of those times.

Some of the *Iyiyuu* who are living there were from here at the beginning, it is said. They used to travel to the area where there used to be caribou from here and stayed around that area for good when caribou were still around. Some old men stayed there for good.

There was an old man who was called *Kawiichipitwaasit*. He was from Chisasibi when he was a young man. After he got married, he came here and travelled to where the caribou used to be. He became an *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* from then on. He never came back here. He died there. It is said there are many old men who stayed there who were from here.

One of them was *Kawiichipitwaasit*. In those days, the young men and adult men did not smoke until they were quite old. It was only when they were middle aged that they would start smoking. Even after marrying, they still did not smoke yet. Anyway, the same thing happened to that old man. He was married and still did not smoke yet. One day, he started smoking. I guess he was liked the taste of tobacco. He was quoted as saying, "Now that I am smoking, I will like smoking it seems." That is the reason why he was called that *Kawiichipitwaasit* [Likes-To-Smoke].

Another old man was called *Imiskwaapas*. He was further in the past than *Kawiichipitwaasit*. Our grandfather *Katikwiiwaasit*, I suppose you do not remember him.

The one called *Imiskwaapas* did not have any children. He was very big, it is said. He had a brother called *Chachakwaapau*. His other brother was called *Atiskimichiskum*. These are the names given to these three brothers. They used to live together all the time. It is said that *Imiskwaapas* and his brothers were very successful hunters. They used to trap a lot of beaver when they were still to the south of here where there were beavers. When animals were still very abundant [before the trading started], the beavers were abundant, it is said. They came from the south, these three brothers.

The woman who was a white woman who we lived with, I told you before, had said... she spoke Cree very well. My husband had asked her, "We heard that there are some *Iyiyuu*, in the south, who are very big. Do you think they are still alive?" She had replied, "Yes, they are still alive. They are living in the real south. They are living apart from others. They are very big."

The three brothers, *Imiskwaapas*, *Chachakwaapau* and *Atiskimichiskum*...It is said that these very big people who were in the south married some women from this area. Their wives always died upon trying to give birth to their children because the babies were too big and could not come out of the birth canals. One time, there was a woman who was critical of the women who could not bear children for the very big men. She had said, "Why they can not give birth to the children of their husbands, I do not know. I would not be like that if I were to marry one of them." So, it was arranged that she married one of the men who were very big. It came true what she said. She had three children and was alright. They were three sons. The children were very big, too. They were bigger than any of the *Iyiyuu* from here. The children of that woman were very big - they were the three brothers, *Imiskwaapas*, *Atiskimichiskum* and *Chachakwaapau*. They used to come around here and made it their home. It is said that *Imiskwaapas* was still here after his brothers died. It is said that he is buried here at the cemetery. He was much taller and bigger than the other *Iyiyuu* from here it is said.

EM: What about his other brothers, did they have children?

SK: I do not know if they had children. He was the one mentioned who did not have any children.

Your grandfather used to say, "He had come from the *Mamisichistu*." The ancestors of *Imiskwaapas* were called *Mamisichistuch*. I guess they had children with their women from that group.

EM: When *Imiskwaapas* and his brothers were alive, did you see them?

SK: I must have seen *Imiskwaapas* but I do not remember him. My brother Luke

must have seen him. My mother had told me this story. "Luke was born shortly before we met *Imiskwaapas* and his group. We caught up with them along the travel route. I guess *Imiskwaapas* knew that Luke was a newborn baby because of his size. He said when he was given Luke for a kiss and introduction, 'This looks like a recent arrival.'"

EM: I guess you were not aware of him too much because you were so young?

SK: Yes, that is true. I was not aware of him at all. I do not remember him. I must have been very young when I saw him.

EM: Was he very old when he died?

SK: Yes, he was very old when died. There came a time when he could no longer walk because of old age. He could not be carried during the portages because of his size, so he just crawled along the portage trails when he could no longer walk. They had spent the spring breakup at *Wiminipis*. When they travelled to the coast, he would crawl along the portage trails. There was no one strong enough to carry him on their back. When he came here that time, he stayed here at the post. I do not remember how many years he lived here when he died. I suppose he died soon after that. Our grandfather *Nutachikwaau* died before this old man. He used to live with the old man. Our grandfather *Nutachikwaau* and his wife used to live with *Imiskwaapas* and his wife.

EM: What was the name of the wife of *Imiskwaapas*?

SK: She was called *Waapistanis* [lit. Little Marten]. They did not have any children but they lived and raised some children. One of them was *Waapimakustuwiyyuu* [John Kawapit, Suzanne's late husband's father], it is said. The other one was *Waatachikwaautiu's* father. His name was Rupert.²² I do not know what his Cree name was. He raised them to adulthood.

Nutachikwaau died before *Imiskwaapas*. *Imiskwaapas* was very old when he died, it is said. He could not walk a long way to be in the bush anymore because of old age. But he was able to go outside from his dwelling. He died then at that age.

EM: What about *Nutachikwaau*? Where is he buried?

SK: He is buried here at the cemetery, too. *Nutachikwaau* was my mother's father. These were the old men of long ago.

²²Origin of the Rupert families of present-day Whapmagoostui.

The one I told you who was called *Kawaawiipikapuut* was also very old when he died, it is said. He could not walk because of old age, too. When he would try to get up, his legs would shake and wobble. That is why he was called *Kawaawiipikapuut* at the end of his life. His bones just started to break down because of old age.

EM: He was one of the ones who did not use a ski-doo to go hunting.

SK: How absolutely true. He certainly did not own a ski-doo. As for *Imiskwaapas*, how big a ski-doo would be able to carry him. He must never have seen anything motorized. I guess he saw a boat when it came here.

HARVESTING WHALES AND WHALE OIL

EM: Before there were white people around here, did the Iyiyuu still make whale oil? What did they use to make oil with as a pail to heat the blubber with?

SK: Yes, they made whale oil. I wonder what they used as a pail to make the oil. They must have had some kind of a container to heat the blubber in. I imagine they used stone pots, some of which must have been very big. There is kind of stone that was always gotten from *Atuwinipakw* which was called *uspwaakinsini* [pipe stone]. It is this stone that was used to make pots with long time ago, it is said. This was before the whiteman were around here. At *Wiiyasakimi* [Clearwater Lake] - one of the big islands there was called *Uspwaakinsiniuschikw aastach* [lit. where the stone pipe pots are]. These pots were made out of the stone used to make smoking pipes with, a long time ago. It is said that there were many of these pots at that place. I imagine that the owner lived there a long time or it could be that he died there, which would explain why his pots were there.

The reason why the stone was called *Uspwaakinsini* is because smoking pipes were made out of that type of stone. The stone was softer than other types of stones. The pipes looked like the pipes we see today but it looked different. The container was higher in height. The holes were made at the side near the bottom of the body and the stem was inserted into it. The stem was made out of wood. Anyway, that is what is referred to as *uspwaakinsini*. The stone was soft and was good to use to make pipes out of. The pipe did not break from the heat of the pipe. Naturally it eventually broke after being used for a long time.

I remember our grandfather *Kamichapaut* having a pipe made out of this stone. The pipes were called *isiniuspwaakin*. The stem was long and the body was tall. It was decorated on the outside of the stone pipe by etching on the stone. It looked good the way it was decorated. Some of the stone was

reddish in colour and some stones were blueish. These coloured stones were used to make the pipes. The white quartz was not used to make pipes. The white quartz was more fragile than the other kind of stone. The stone that was used to make the pipes with was called *uspwaakinsini*. The pots that were seen on an island at *Wiiyaskimiy* were made out of *uspwaakinsini*. I imagine the owner of these pots died there on the island. They were many of those pots which were called *uspwaakinsiniuschiikw*. I guess the person made his own pots out of *uspwaakinsini*. The island was called *Uspwaakinsiniuschiikw aastach*.

I did not see much of that area in my life. I was there couple of times in that area. I have seen *Wiiyaskimiy*, the south side of it. The islands on the south side of *Wiiyaskimiy* were very big. *Wiiyaskimiy* looks like it is two lakes. I did not see the north end of this lake. They say that the north end of the *Wiiyaskimiy* has hardly any islands. It is the north end of the lake that did not freeze for a long time. When it did freeze, it would take a long time. I guess the reason why it took a long time to freeze was because it did not have many islands. The side where there were many islands froze faster.

EM: Were some of the pots smaller than others?

SK: Yes, some of the pots were smaller. They made any size they wanted to. I guess some of the pots were big. They must have been very good at making whatever they wanted to since they had to make everything they needed in those days. They had to make the stone pots. They would make any size they wished. When the whiteman first came here, they had pots to sell but they were not like the pots we see today. The pots were made out of red metal [copper]. It was reddish in colour. I do remember seeing pot such as this one. It was told to me that the first pots were like those. The pot got bigger towards the top. It was smaller at the bottom. The pots were very good cooking pots. I guess the pots were thick. These kinds of pots were called *aiischikw*, it is said. Some of these pots were very big, it is said. These big pots were owned by the old men for their big game feasts.

In the days when caribou were abundant, the caribou lard used to be made and contained in the old man's pot for his feasts. That is what they said. Sometimes, the caribou lard would come up to the top when it was all done. These pots had narrow bottoms. Therefore, the caribou lard was easy to get out of the pot once it had set completely. The lard was very heavy once it was removed from the mold of the pot. That is how big the pots were. I guess there were different sizes but the main feature was that the metal was reddish in colour.

EM: You have told me that the Iyiyuu in the past lived mostly on whales during the summer. How did they use the whale skins?

SK: They would use it as they saw fit. The whale skin was very good after it was tanned. The whale skin was like a caribou skin once it had been tanned. That is what they said. The women in those days were very good at softening the whale skins like they did caribou skins. Once tanned, it could be used for anything [such as clothing and dwelling coverings]. The other use was as lacings for the snowshoes when caribou skins were not available. The whale skin lacings were very good once they were cut into lacings. The whale skin was very white once it was fixed. These were the uses.

One time, an Iyiyuu told another story about one of his fellow Iyiyuu. He told that the Iyiyuu had whale skin lacings on his snowshoes. The Iyiyuu and the other one with the whale skin lacings went to follow some caribou tracks. There were many caribou in the herd.

In those days, the Iyiyuu always took care to make the most functional and the best looking snowshoes. The lacings and the overall snowshoes were decorated artistically. Anyway, the Iyiyuu had whale skin lacings on his snowshoes. They went after the caribou. The ones with caribou lacings had a hard time walking fast because of their snowshoes. The one with the whale skin lacings was being hindered by the others so he walked past them and then ahead of them.

The others told this story. "He walked on the side of us all. When he was beside us, he looked over to us and said to us, 'It is possible you who have artfully decorated snowshoes to leave me behind if you want to.' He continued on walking past us and was soon far from us."

EM: I imagine that the whale skins were also used to make moccasins.

SK: Yes, that is true. Footwear was made out of the whale skins, too. The tanned whale skin must have been like tanned caribou skin and used as such. I imagine that sometimes some people could not kill much caribou even though there were still some in the territory. These things did happen that they could not kill much caribou even though they were around. It was during these times that the whale skin was used just as caribou skin would be used. The whale skins would be used to make footwear.

EM: Did they use the whale skins as dwelling covers?

SK: They used the caribou skins as dwelling covers but I do not know if they used the whale skins as dwelling covers. The caribou skins were used to make dwelling covers. The dwelling covers were very white. The women in those days were very good at a tanning the caribou skins. They used to make the caribou skins very white. They would sew up the pieces of caribou skins.

The caribou skins would be cut along the edges and then it would be patched up in some areas so that the whole caribou skins would be sewn up together to make large pieces of dwelling covers. They must have been very good at it. It was said that it would take twelve big caribou skins to make the size of a dwelling cover especially made for the elders of the group. Each elder in each group had the biggest dwelling cover.

It is said that when the dwelling covers had been all sewn up they would be immersed in some water. I do not know what kind of water but I believe it could have water mixed with the caribou brains. This was done to make to straighten up the sewn up areas. After this was done, then the dwelling cover would be placed in place on the dwelling. There were many strings attached to the new dwelling cover all over the place even along the bottom of it because the dwelling cover had to be stretched as well as it could be stretched. The bottom hem of the cover would not touch the ground when it was first placed around the dwelling structure. The dwelling cover would just dry and it did not dry hard. The cover was very beautiful after it was finished.

EM: [Our talking has] got me thinking about the way the Iyiyuu used to live in those days. I was thinking that if *Imiskwaapas* was a harpooner when the Iyiyuu still hunted the whales, his throw must have been powerful.

SK: Certainly! His throw must have powerful. The spearhead was attached to a stick which was called *ntukin*.

The *ntukin* was attached to a bone. The bone was attached to the stick. It was a long stick. The rope of the harpoon was also very long. The rope was forty yards long. The whale unwinds the forty yard rope and there was another rope attached to this which was called *pikwaapachinikinatu*, it is said. The stick that was attached to these ropes where they meet was looked for after the whale had been harpooned. The stick would come to the top of the water when the whale touches the bottom of the water. When the stick is seen, the people paddle to it and rewind the rope. The *ntuyayapi* is also pulled and rewound. It takes a long time to do this because the ropes were very long. The one attached to the spearhead was forty yards long. As the rope is being pulled up, the whale is pulled up along with it. Then the men started to spear it with their hand-spears. They stabbed it with their spears until it died. Then the whale is towed towards the shore and pulled onto the beach and butchered. The Iyiyuu used the *ntukin* to kill the whales. Later, the *ochiamau* wanted people to kill a lot whales. He only wanted the oil from the whales. I wonder how it was used. The whale oil was needed far away from here. The whale oil was made here. The blubber was rendered into oil by heating it in large vats. I do not know what they used it for. He wanted a lot of the whale oil. I guess they used to oil other things. After a while, he

killed a lot whales. They must have killed a lot of whales. When they killed a lot, he would give some of the whales to the Iyiyuu, the *ochimau* who wanted the whales killed for him. He gave the old men one big whale each. He must have killed a lot of whales. There must have been many whales here at one time. It is said that when the whales entered the river here, they covered the mouth of the river. They swam up to the first inlet upriver when there were a lot of them, it is said. The rest of the river was full of them up to the inlet. Some people stayed upriver during the night when the whaling was done at night. It is said that the *wamistikusiu* used nets to catch the whales. The net was stretched across the small part of the mouth of the river. When the people upriver could hear the whales upriver, then they made a signal to the ones at the mouth of the river by lighting a fire. I wonder how the net looked. It is said that wooden barrels were used as buoys. They did not put the buoys on at first. When the ones upriver made the signal, then the ones cross the river mouth lifted the net from the bottom of the river. Then the others paddled to the net and attached the wooden barrel buoys on top of the net. He must have killed a lot of whales. They must have smelled like a whale.²³

It is said that some Iyiyuu tried to steal some of the whales blubber because they thought they were not getting enough whale blubber for themselves even though they were given one whale each. The young men were give smaller [younger] whales [*pitapimakus*]. Yet, some tried to steal more blubber. So, it was that the whale blubber was taken across the river and was processed there. Hence the name of the stream at the mouth of the river, *Sasapimakwaanistukw*. The whale blubber was rendered into oil and put in wooden barrels. They must have killed a lot of whales. I imagine that the flies laid their eggs all over the place because of the amount raw meat handled each day. It is said that there were rolling hills across the river at the mouth of the river. The Iyiyuu would dig deep holes in the sand where they kept the oil and meat that they could not take with them into the bush. The containers of oil which were made out of the dried, blown-up whale stomachs were buried in the sand for future use. The bottom of the hole in the sand was lined with the softest baby moss. Then the containers were places over it and planks of wood were placed over the hole. Then it was covered up with rocks. That is how it was stored it was said.

²³For a discussion of the whaling industry and uses of the whale oil see: FRANCIS, Daniel and Toby MORANTZ 1983 *Partners in Fur: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600-1870*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press; MARSH, G. 1988 *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, 2nd ed. s.v. "Whaling" by Daniel Francis. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishing.

LIVING ON THE LAND - CARE AND DISTRIBUTION OF FOOD

EM: What did your mother teach you about handling the caught animals for food? How should you handle the food that you have caught and your husband's catches? How should you distribute to others?

SK: When the big game is caught, sometimes, the woman did not have a say in how it should be distributed even if it was caught by her husband. He gave the whole thing to an elder to be in charge of the distribution of the big game among the people in the group. That is how the big game was handled. When a woman's husband killed a caribou, beaver and bear, she was not allowed to be in charge of it. It was the man who killed the big game who decided which elder should be in charge of the big game. He decides which elder should be in charge of it. As for the smaller game, the woman does what she wants to do with it and shares it with whomever she wants. She was in charge of the small game and shared with anyone she saw fit.

In the past, the Iyiyuu were always in need of food to eat. Some people almost starved to death. When they see other Iyiyuu who were in the same predicament, they really helped each other and shared their food as much as they could. Sometimes, a person would be saved from starvation by another Iyiyuu. The starving Iyiyuu would be taken care of by the Iyiyuu who took him in until he was better.

EM: There must have been a reason for the Iyiyuu to have a rule that the game be taken care of and handled well whenever it is caught.

SK: Yes, certainly! That was a decree that was to be upheld for all time for the handling of all animals and fish. Every kind of animal and fish that comes into the woman's domain has to be handled with the utmost care and dedication. She was to devote her time to the fixing and taking care of the caught game at all times whenever her husband catches the animals and whatever animals he has caught. Nothing was to distract her from this work until it was done.

There were times when the woman was sick and could not fix and clean the game. This happened quite often. But if she was well, she was to fix and clean the animal[s] until they were all done. When they were alone as a family, she had to work hard in fixing and cleaning the animals even if there are many of them. But if she is with other groups of Iyiyuu, she would distribute the food as much as possible, especially if she sees someone in need of food desperately. The woman distributed the food her husband caught.

When the pelts were used to trade with at the store, then people could not give each their pelts freely. They kept the pelts themselves but shared the

meat. But there were times when a man would give some pelts to another family if he sees that these people were really poor and needed pelts to trade with to better their situation. He gave some pelts in this circumstance. The Iyiyuu were really kind to each other. They helped each other in any way they could. It was very right that they did this for each and treated each other in this way. They were very helpful to each. What they did not know is that God thanks them for this kind of goodness to each other. They always helped each other this way.

I have seen many times when some Iyiyuu were very poor and almost starving to death. For example, not far from here is where your grandfather almost starved to death. It is certain that he would have died if he had not seen the Iyiyuu when he did. This was *Kinuwaapinwaaskum's* grandfather. It was certain that he would have died if he did not reach the Iyiyuu. He barely reached them, too. It was already late evening when he reached them. He already could not speak. He could not even speak to the Iyiyuu when he reached them because his mouth was all dried up inside. It was certain that he would have died.

It was your grandfather, your father's father who saved this man's family. He brought them back to health with his care. The old man barely made it to the Iyiyuu. If he had not, his whole family would have been lost, too.

Chiisapau and his family were the ones that the old man reached. When the old man reached them, he started walking during the night to tell the other group of Iyiyuu about the old man. Your grandfather [Sam Masty] also started walking in the night once *Chiisapau* had told them the old man's story. He was trying to get the old man's family.

It is said that if *Chiisapau* had his way, the old man would never have caught up with them. *Chiisapau* wanted to continue walking into the night to try and reach the other group of Iyiyuu that were near where Sam Masty was. He did not want to make camp when evening came.

Chiisapau's mother knew that someone was following their trail. She was quite old by then. The old woman knew that someone was following them. She said to her son, "Son, please do not travel any more. I can not walk any further. It is not because I am sick but I have a feeling that someone is following our trail, someone who can barely walk. That is what am feeling. It is for this reason that I fell - I can not walk." It was already quite dark when she said this to her son. That is what my late fellow old woman had said, Moses Sandy's mother [Maggie Sandy]. "It was already quite dark when the old man reached our dwelling. He could not enter our dwelling walking but he crawled inside. He just barely made it to our dwelling. He could not talk

at all. Some water was warmed for him to drink. Some of this warm water was poured into his mouth. He was able to speak then. That is how he barely made it to these people."

If the old woman had not been able to persuade her son to camp, it was certain that the old man and all his sons would have starved to death. His oldest son was already married. I do not remember how many children he had but they were all with him, including his wife. They were still all alive when your grandfather Sam Masty reached them. It is said that if your grandfather Sam Masty had not walked in the night to reach the others, he might not have saved all of them. Maybe some of them would have died had he waited till the morning to get to these people, especially the children - by the state he found them in.

It is quite near here where they would have all perished. It is somewhere along this river. If *Chiisapau* had not made camp, the people would have died for certain. No one would have found them for a long time. The group of people that *Chiisapau* had gone to tell about the old man, most of the men had gone to the post. The only one there was your grandfather Sam Masty. He was able to get to the Iyiyuu. It was during Easter when he reached the people. If the old man had not reached the people when he did, he and his whole family would have all died of starvation.

It was quite hard as far back as I could remember but it has always been like that even before I was born and further in the past, that some Iyiyuu died of starvation.

EM: I have heard it said that when there were only Iyiyuu living in this part of the country, there were hardly any Iyiyuu who died of a sickness.

SK: Yes, that is what had been told. Not many people died of some kind of a sickness but most died of starvation. They also died from accidents like drowning.

LIVING ON THE LAND - HUNGER

SK: My fellow old woman Maggie also said...in the past, the first guns were the flintlock guns. The powder was kept in a container which we called, *piichipikwaan*. That is what it was called, where the powder was kept. It was ready-made from the store. The *piichipikwaanch* always came on the boat. The gun powder could never get wet when it was in there. It was a good container. The container was made out of an animal's horn. It could have been a steer horn. Some of them were very big. If someone thought that the horn was too long, they could cut it down to the size they preferred. It was easy to cut down. They could do whatever they wanted to do with their gun powder container.

EM: Didn't you say that your father cut your gun powder container to a smaller size.

SK: Yes, that is true. He cut my *piichipikwaan* to a smaller size. A piece of wood was used as a stopper. The powder could never get wet even if the *piichipikwaan* was placed outside for a long time. Sometimes, the *piichipikwaan* would be hung on a branch when the Iyiyuu were doing work outside.

Anyway, my fellow old woman had said, "We found a *piichipikwaan* once. We found one at *Yaachisaakw*." *Yaachisaakw* is situated just upriver from here. The first portage where the first rapids are is called, *Maach Kipitaakin*. The second rapids are called, *Isini Amisinuut*. These two rapids are quite close together. Further up the second rapids is the place called, *Nistuuchiun* [lit. where the rivers meet].

"It is there," she said, "on the north side of the river. That is where we found the *piichipikwaan*. We suspected that it might have belonged to a person who had died there from starvation. It was sticking out of the grass."

Many men would not come home from hunting when hungry times struck the people. The term used is *nuhtaasin*. The Iyiyuu would die because of [lack of] food and not because of sickness. It was always like that, it is said.

EM: What about grandfather *Kamichapaut*? Where is he buried?

SK: His burial site is very far from here. It is far inland from here. He is buried south of the *Ipisikimis*. There is river that belongs to the *Chisasibistukw* [LaGrande River system]. The *Chisasibistukw* has many rivers that feed it. One of the Chisasibi rivers, one of those that is closest to the *Whapmagoostustukw* [Great Whale River system] is where he is buried.

EM: What is the name of the place where he is buried?

SK: It does not have specific name, only that it is referred to as *Chisasibistukw* [to the Iyiyuu from Great Whale]. There was no specific name right where he is buried but is on the bank of the river referred to as *Chisasibistukw*. But there is a huge mountain close to the place where he is buried and it is called *Kanaauchimusiwaau*. The river where he is buried runs by this mountain on the south side of it. That is where he is buried.

He was still able to work quite a bit the last year he was in the bush. He was still able to set his traps and chisel the ice and set a net the last year he was alive. He died because of an illness that he had. He would still have been able to work quite a lot by the way he was if he had not been sick. It is said that he was an energetic and industrious worker in his day. It is also said of him that he had great strength when pulling a heavy load. He was able to pull two adult caribou on his load when caribou were being transported to their dwelling after a kill. My father had said that he had injured something in his body [*kausikut*] during one of those times when he was pulling two caribou. He injured himself. It was on his side. We could see on his side where he had injured himself. The doctor saw him after he recuperated from his injury. The doctor had said that he had injured something to do with his heart. No wonder he was sick from that. My father had said that we did not live with anyone at that time. My father was still young at the time of his injury. They did not live with any other families when his father had the injury. His father must have killed many caribou at that time. He had said that they lived in that one spot for a long time until his father recovered from his injury. He could not be moved for a long time. The only thing he was treated with was *mituchisan* [heat treatment; sweat lodge].

Mituchisan was used to treat some illnesses. The heated stones were covered in wet swamp moss. The *mituchisan* is filled with steam and heat.

There was a bump on his side where he had injured himself. That is where his injury was. "He could not be moved, so we stayed in the same camp for a long time," he had said. My father was the eldest male sibling.

[Speaking now as if she was her father:] "One of the other things that happened after his injury was that he could hardly eat. He did not know what he could he eat. We tried to catch some fish for him. After a while, he mentioned the porcupine. 'I think I would be able to eat porcupine if I could have some,' he said one day. I went hunting for porcupine during the days. The days were getting longer at that time. One day, I found a porcupine that was very big. It was female porcupine. After I hit it on the head and killed it, I turned it on it's back. I saw that one of it's legs was gone." It is said that sometimes a porcupine would be found with one leg missing. It was born that way.

"This is one was born that way. It had been born with one leg missing. It was a very fat porcupine. So it happened that he was able to eat it quite a bit. A piece of the porcupine would be cooked for him whenever he wanted to eat. The fat of the porcupine was also saved for him.²⁴ The gall bladder of a caribou was filled with air and dried. The oil that was skimmed off of the cooking pot whenever the porcupine was cooked for him was poured into the dried gall bladder, which looked like a balloon. After a while, the gall bladder was full of porcupine oil. He would be the only one who eat of the porcupine oil [with other meats]. He got quite well after eating all of his one-legged porcupine.

"He used to say to us, 'Whenever you walk across a lake which you have not walked on before, make sure you leave a marker indicating where we are camped.' That is what he used to say to us. He got better as time went on. After some time, our grandfather *waapimakustuwiyyuu* walked past one of the tree markers but did not see it, we found out later. He had planned to go atop a small rock hill but was distracted by something else and did not climb the hill. 'If I had climbed the hill, I would have see the tree marker from the hill.' I do not know what it was that had prevented him from climbing the hill like he had planned.

Anyway, it was quite warm already into the spring when he got much better. That is why we were able to move down to the coast when the time came. We were not hungry the whole time he was an invalid because he had killed many caribou before he injured himself." I guess they just probably dried the caribou meat as much as they could.

I believe *Kamichapaut's* mother was still alive. His mother lived for a long time. I imagine his mother used her powers on him.

EM: What was *Kamichapaut's* mother's name?

SK: I have no idea what her name was. I do not know what her name was.

EM: Even her Cree name?

SK: Yes. I think her name was *Sakutayapinukwaau*. Yes, that is true, I believe that was her name. I do not remember what her *wamistikusu* name was.

That was the normal practice in those days that the Iyiyuu had only Iyiyuu names and no *wamistikusu* [or Christian] names. But today, the Iyiyuu

²⁴Fat is an important food for the Cree and the fat of particular animals is understood to have medicinal properties.

children of today only have *wamistikusiu* names. Our previous priest, the one we call *Katachipwaapaut* [Bishop Caleb Lawrence], said, "It is a good thing for the Iyiyuu children to be given Iyiyuu names. That would be a good thing." But today, sometimes, I do not even understand the name of a child even if I am told what their names are, especially my grandchildren. For example, the grandchildren of Lucy, I understand only one of her grandchildren's names: Jamie. It is only this name that I understand quite well. When her first grandchild was born [Samson Rupert's child], I requested that he be named after his late grandfather Job. But they did not do what I had asked them to do.

Katachipwaapaut had said, "It would be better if the Iyiyuu children had only Iyiyuu names."

(Her grandson Paul asks for the time and it is 9:25 pm. and Suzanne remarks that Paul should be asleep by now and continues...)

That is their [the children of today] habit these days. They go to bed very late. They do not seem to sleep. Don't the ski-doo's keep you awake?

EM: Definitely, definitely!

SK: I can not sleep for a long time because of the ski-doo's. Sometimes, they come very close to my window.

I have heard the by-law that will be in effect some time which says that ski-doo's should not be driven around at a certain time. Do you know what time they are talking about?

EM: I believe it is eleven o'clock at night until the morning.

SK: I have doubts that they could do it because of how they are driving around all night long.

EM: They said that if someone has to go to the clinic at night after that time, they would not be fined or something like that.

SK: That is fine because I hear that some people had to be taken to the clinic during the night.

EM: Maybe the children will stop driving around at night because they are only playing with the ski-doo's at that time.

SK: That is quite true. They only play with the ski-doo's. I have great fears about

my son's son, the young one, Allen and his grandson Losty, the who does not speak, they always try to start our ski-doo. I have fear that they might succeed some day and hurt themselves with it. They do not listen even if they are told not to touch the ski-doo.

I was waiting for you and expecting you. I told Lucy to go to the community meeting without me because I was waiting for you. I told her, 'She said she was coming again tonight so I will wait for her.' Doe your mother go to the meetings?"

EM: Yes, she goes sometimes. Usually, she seems to be more informed than us and she tells us what had been said at the meetings.

SK: I suppose she does remember what was said because she still has clear memory, not like me. I usually forget what was said quite fast. I can not remember much these days.

EM: You are wrong to think like that! Look how much you remember of the past and what had happened!

SK: I suppose you are right. I do remember the things I used to do and hear a long time ago.

Another person that I know who died there was *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu*'s son. He died there of starvation. *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu* also died of starvation. His wife lived and a young son who was still nursing at that time. All his other children died. He had had four sons and the youngest one was the only one spared from starvation. The youngest son was still nursing when this took place. One of his sons was already very weak when they left us to travel somewhere else.

The common practice was that the people would go anywhere they wanted to. There are many water travel routes onto the land. People could take any one of the travel routes to do their hunting wherever they chose. We left in the morning and they went the other way. I think it was the same day that we left and where they made camp for the night was where he died. His son had been sick for a long time. Our grandfather *Kapapichauchiit* were living with them and Sam Atchynia's father. They were travelling to the south of here. After a while, *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu* was travelling to areas he did not really know, places he had never seen. His family had gone somewhere else because they did not know the route and missed where the other people had gone. They spent the freeze up somewhere.

It was said that he should have left the area sooner than he did and travelled

back closer to this area. He had been making his way to the post when starvation overtook them. His wife had said, "He had found porcupine in the fall. He also killed many ptarmigan."

There is a place called *Nasakaau*. "We saw where he had made his camp at that place. He seemed to be okay when he was there. He had been collecting some birch bark by the look of the trees around his camp." That is what they said of him.

I guess it was after leaving this place that he started to have problems finding food. It is said that he would have been okay if he had kept on travelling while he still okay with food.

There is a place called, *Yachisaku Asachiiuch*. It is here that he could no longer walk. He then told his wife to go on and get their cache of food. His cache of food was at *Nistiuchiun*, the one that is closer from here. When the water route is ended, then the portage called *Chinusasiukipitakin* is reached. It is here where he had left a large [50 lb.] bag of flour. It is said that he should have thought to try and reach that before he got too poor without food. He should have moved closer during the fall, closer to his cache before it got too cold in the winter. That is what they said about him. It was a the large bag of flour that he had left and some lard.

His wife went with their oldest son who was almost an adult by then. This son died along the way from starvation. His son died at *Chinusas*. She must have left him there. That is where he is buried.

There are many people there, too. The other person who is buried there is *Atwaan* [Edward Natchequan]. And Sandy's first wife, my brother Sandy's first wife is buried there, too. Her name was Sarah. She had given birth to one child already when she died. She is buried there. She had gotten sick. They had spent the freeze up at that place, at *Chinusas*. The father [Sarah's father] who was called *Chisanuuk* [Luke the Elder] had lived with them. *Chisanuuk* lived with his daughter Sarah. Annie was living with them, too.

My sister Annie was very sick at that time. Her husband left her here at the post because she was going to be taken to the hospital by the boat that came here in the summer. She got better and was brought back here late in the fall by a bush plane. When she got here, she lived with *Nipinwaaskum* and his family and your grandmother *Waapistaniskwaau*. These people were living at the post at that time.

Sandy and Luke came to the post before freeze up. Annie was already here when they got here. When Sandy went to their camp, he insisted that Annie come with them. That is how Annie got to be with them. They spent the

freeze up at *Chinusas* that fall. Sandy's wife died at that camp and that is where he is buried. Sandy's wife had been coughing up blood. This is what killed her.

"We had tried to make it to *Wiiminipis* to spend freeze-up but Luke requested that we spend freeze-up at *Chinusas*. That is where she died. The water was already frozen when she died." That is what Sandy said. She is buried on the spot where the shore is reached when travelling in the winter time. That is where she is buried.

LIVING ON THE LAND - ILLNESS AND DEATH

EM: What about you? When you were still working on the land full time and when your children were small, were you ever sick where you could not do much work at times?

SK: Yes, it happened to me. One time, I must have been close to death. Do you remember *Ausawaautwaams* [Thomas Sandy]? He almost died that year. There was a very bad sickness that happened to the Iyiyuu. He almost died. He got better from this sickness. It is said that his father's death caused him to get better and live some more. The old man gave himself up instead. The woman was the one who tended to her husband and son while they were sick. The man said to his wife, "if I am the one to live, it is our children who will die." They had many children.

EM: What was the old man's name?

SK: It was *Ausawaautwaams'* father who said that. His name was *Kautasiu* [lit. Owns/Wears Stockings]. That was the old man's name.

EM: What was his wife's name?

SK: *Michistikwaanakin* [lit. Messy Hair²⁵].

Their son was near death. He could not eat anymore. *Kautasiu* said to his wife, "I will let myself be the one to go because our children will all die if I am the one to live." He had many children. He had seven sons and two daughters. "If I am the one to live, all our children die. But if I die, all our children will live."

The woman did not say anything to her husband after he said this. He continued, "In the morning, you will make something for our son to drink."

²⁵She likely got this name because her hair was curly and this just looks messy to the Iyiyuu whose hair is rarely naturally curly.

After you have prepared his drink, you will gave it to me first. I will drink it myself."

That is what the woman did. After she finished making the drink, she gave it to her husband and he drank it. Having done this ritual - it is like he took away what ailed his son. After this ritual, his son got better. He got sick instead. They could not move yet from where they were camped when he did. *Kautasiu* took his son's sickness into himself and he died instead.

It is this sickness that came upon the *Iyiyuu* and it stayed among the *Iyiyuu* for a long period of time. It must have been twenty years later that his son died. It must have been twenty years later when a sickness came to the *Iyiyuu* again. It is from this sickness that *AUSAWAAUTWAAMS* died. I guess that was his time to go then.

I caught the sickness. I was really, really sick. I did not recognize my children. Agnes was still young when this happened to me. She is my youngest child. She was still in her swaddling when this happened.

The nature of the sickness was that if you were sick, you ached all over. You did not think to eat. You could not eat. When I was able to eat a little, I started to get better.

It was that time that *Ausawaautwaams* died. They were quite near where we lived. He died at that camp.

EM: How many people do you know of who died that time when this sickness hit?

SK: Many people died, it is said. Many of the *Auswaauiiyiyuu* died, too, it is said. Many people here in Whapmagoostui, too. Many women died.

EM: How many people do you know of who were from Whapmagoostui died from that sickness?

SK: Philip Natchequan's first wife died and your late uncle Isaac's first wife. *Waatachikwaauiiu's* [Jacob Rupert's] daughter died and your grandfather Rupert George's daughter died, too.

The same thing happened, it is said over where the *Ausawwawiiyiyuu* lived, that it was the young women who died off more than any age group. Many young women died there, too. They must have had the same sickness over there, too.

EM: Was it the only time you were really sick like that? How many days were you sick?

SK: I was sick for a long time. I had to be carried in a toboggan when we travelled for some time. We moved from camp to camp many times and I had to be carried.

EM: Who used to carry you in the toboggan?

SK: My husband used to carry me in his toboggan. We had one dog at that time who helped pull me and the load. The Iyiyuu always had at least one dog help them pull their toboggan load. We had a strong dog and it helped pull the load. They could not have many dogs but the Inuit had many dogs. Sometimes, an Iyiyuu would have two dogs but that was a lot. They mostly had one dog and sometimes two dogs.

The Inuit used to live with the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* when they went inland. The Inuit would take their dog teams into the bush. The Inuit would come from Fort Chimo and go inland from there with the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu*. The *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* would have many dogs, too. But the Iyiyuu from here did not have many dogs. They would travel inland with their dogs. Sometimes, the Inuit would give a puppy to an Iyiyuu. They would raise the puppy in the bush and carry it inland in their canoes, if the Inuit gave them a puppy.

EM: Were the puppies a trade item between the Iyiyuu and Inuit?

SK: Yes, it was. Even a very young puppy was for sale.

EM: What did the Inuit want for their puppies?

SK: They would ask for almost anything they wanted for their puppies that was agreeable. They used to like to trade things with the Iyiyuu because the Inuit were much poorer than the Iyiyuu. The Inuit ask the Iyiyuu for lots of things. They would ask for anything they wanted for the puppies. They also traded sealskin boots and sealskins. The boots were not too expensive. The Inuit who ventured into the bush were not too skilled in making snowshoes. They would ask the Iyiyuu for snowshoes. Some of the Inuit were good at using snowshoes. The Inuit would hunt in the bush sometimes. I have heard stories where some Inuit had starved to death because they had not seen any Iyiyuu who could help them to live in the bush. They would starve to death when they would run out of ammunition. They were found in the bush where they had starved to death.

EM: I presume that was the only time that you were that sick in your life?

SK: Yes, that was about the only time where I was that sick for so long. I must have been sick for about a month. That same year, *Chisamushus* [Moses

Kawapit] died. He died that year from that sickness and so did *Ausawaautwaams*. The sickness was devastating to the Iyiyuu. I had a dream before I got sick... Also your grandmother named *Waapistaniskwaau* died that year from the sickness. *Waapistaniskwaau* was my *nisikus* [cross-aunt]²⁰.

I dreamt this dream before I got sick. I dreamt that they came into our dwelling. I dreamt this before I got sick. I dreamt that Moses and *Waapistaniskwaau* came into our dwelling. *Waapistaniskwaau* said to me in my dream, "*Nusims* [grandchild], come with us. We are leaving now." I dreamt that I replied, "I can not go with you now because the work that God gave me to do is not over yet. The work he gave me to do in my life is not finished yet." I dreamt that there was a pail standing nearby which was the same size as a barrel and look similar. I pointed to the pail and there was still something contained in the large pail. There was still a lot inside the pail. I dreamt I said to him, "Look at what is contained in here. This is the work God gave me to do in my life. It is not finished yet. It is only when I have finished the work that I was given to do will I die then." "Alright," he said to me. "We two will go then." I found out later that they had died, both of them.

EM: Were they still alive when you dreamt this dream?

SK: Yes, they must have still been alive when I dreamt that dream.

EM: I gather that you did not live with them when you dreamt about them.

SK: No, no. No. Moses and *Waapistaniskwaau* were inland but not where we were. Anyway, I dreamt about the work I had been given to do. I worked many years after that dream.

EM: You are still working this very day. You are still working by telling the knowledge that you have acquired and the history you know. You are working by teaching what you know.

SK: Certainly, certainly! I told Lucy that, "She told me that what you are telling will be written down and it is going to be big."

²⁰Cree kinship follows the Iroquois system of recognizing cross and parallel kin members. A cross-cousin is the offspring of a parent's opposite sex sibling, e.g. one's mother's brother's children are one's cross cousins. In the same way, one's mother's mother's children are one's parallel cousins. This is a significant distinction, since one's cross-cousins are potential marriage partners, whereas one's parallel cousins are considered to be like brothers and/or sisters. Hence, Suzanne is indicating that this is someone to whom she would have shown a high degree of respect, since a cross-aunt is a potential mother-in-law.

EM: I am sorry for taking you off the track when you were telling the story of the old man *Chisachiimi*. When did he die?

SK: He had been following the trail of his family. He had kept on the route which took them inland in the summer. He kept to the same route as he came towards the coast. He came onto the *Whapmagoostusibi* [Great Whale River]. They travelled to the south after leaving the river that summer. He came to the river again from the south. He reached the river.

When we saw his dwelling sites and trail, he did not look like someone who was sick. He seemed energetic as he went about his hunting and fishing. That is how we read the signs he had left behind on his trail. I think he died in April or March.

When his family got closer to the post, they came for some supplies. *Atwaan* and our grandfather *Katikwiiwaasit* and our grandfather *Anikawaakin*, *Kamanii's* father [Mary Shem's father] had gone to the post. *Kamanii's* mother was still alive that time and her younger sibling named Luke. *Waatachikwaautu* was with them at that time. They were many of them in that group.

Anyway, the old man kept following the same route they had used when they went inland in the summer time. He reached the river. There is an island on the river where he had reached the shore. He had made his dwelling on the island.

When the group were going back to their camp after leaving the post, the man saw his father walking on the river near the island. The son had gone to see what was happening with him on their way back. He saw his father walking on the ice. He went to him.

"He seemed very conscious and his mind very clear," said the son. "I told him how many people were living with me. I told of the old men who were living with me. He seemed very happy about the news. He said, 'I will be very happy to see these people.'"

The old man's son did not take a small pail with him. He said to his father, "I am going to go and get a pail for some tea." I guess he did not have some tea. Maybe the old man still had some tea because they had found a bit of tea along the way. I guess his son was going for some bannock to share with his father. Their dwelling for the day was not that far from where his father's dwelling was situated. "I will come back to see you," he said his father. "His dwelling was just across from where we met. I will come and bring some tea. He seemed very happy about it. He was saying, 'I am fortunate to see some Iyiyuu.' I went across the river."

It was not far from where they had made their camp on the river. He took the things he wanted to take to him. He had seen him going to his dwelling and had caught up to him before he was able to reach them. He had turned around to get the things for him right where they had met. Upon his return, he saw something dark on the ice. He did not know yet that it was his father. He went towards the dark object on the ice. He realized it was his father. He hurried on. His father did not recognize him anymore when he reached him. He did not even recognize him. He was still breathing but he was not fully conscious. The man went to get the people at his camp. They went to get him and took him to their dwelling.

"We were living in two big tents which we had joined together. We laid him down in the middle where our dwellings joined together. He did not recognize us."

He was alive all day. His breathing was laboured all night. The old men stayed up and sat with him. Our grandfathers looked after him. It was daylight when his breathing stopped.

It is said that the doctor had said about him...the doctor knew why he died so quickly. It was then that the doctor had said this about him, "He must have had a growth in his brain. That is the reason why he seemed afraid of people. That is the effect it had. The thought of seeing all these people must have frightened him very much. When his fright increased, the growth in his brain must have burst. That is why he died fast. When the growth bursts, they do not live a long time."

That is where he is buried, where he died. That is why the place where he is buried is called, *Chisachiimi Atat*. That was a long time ago. He died a long time ago.

My father told us when he was still alive that he and *Upistikwaayauchisayu* would try to go and pay him a visit. I guess when the old man's illness started, they kept him in the bush. My father had said, "The last time I tried to see him, I could not find his dwelling. He had the habit of erecting his dwellings in a place where it was hard to see, for example, in the middle of a thick growth of willows."

Upistikwaayauchisayu said the same thing. He could not find him when he looked for his dwelling to go and visit him. I suppose his burial site would still be visible if they had really marked his burial site. The place where he is buried is called *Aiyatiwaakimiiyutaukuch* and the other name is *Chisachiimi Atat*. These are the two names.

Further downstream this part of the river is some rapids. Our grandmother *Chuskuminas* is buried near these rapids.

Further downstream from these falls is another burial site. A young child died there and is buried there. He must have been the same age as Lucy's grandchild, Melvin [Rupert; 9-10 years old]. The boy had already killed quite a few ptarmigan by then. He died of starvation there when they were making their way to the post. They were near starvation so they tried to make their way to the post but he did not make it. He died there, it is said.

It was a frequent occurrence, it is said, in the past. One time, my fellow old woman Maggie Sandy quoted a woman as saying, "We were spending freeze up at *Wiiminipis*. We tried to make to the post when we got very hungry. Many of the people in our group died as we made our way here. Many of them could not walk along the way." Many of the people died along the length of the river as they made their way here.

EM: This is the last question I will ask you. Some of these questions will seem tedious and disrespectful but there some things I must know to tell your story.

Where is our grandmother, your mother's mother buried?

SK: She is buried at the place where we used usually these days at *Wiiminipiis*. She is not buried right on the lake. She is buried somewhere in the middle of the portage. That is where she is buried. She died of starvation. She could not walk any more when they were on the portage. She could not make it to the post. She died along the way. She was living with her son *Atwaan* at that time. Philip was with them too.

Philip certainly has seen a lot of suffering in his time like he is going through now.²⁷ There were couple of times in his life where he almost died of starvation, too. It happened to him many times. For example, he almost died at the same place where our grandmother is buried. The name of the hill on the portage is *Wiiywaapiskw Aapich*. There is a hill there. It is over this hill where the portage goes.

"It is here where we had made camp," she had said. "We had nothing to eat. His father did not kill any ptarmigan. He could not get up in the morning. His mother tried to give him some water to drink but his jaws were clamped tightly shut. She could not pry his mouth open. 'I said to her,' (said our grandmother who was telling this story,) 'Try prying his teeth open with the

²⁷Trans. note: Referring to the fact that Philip's adopted daughter died April 1993.

spoon. Once it is open slightly, pour some water into his mouth.' It happened that they had a can which had not been washed yet where the sweet thick milk was. There was still some milk stuck to it. His mother heated some water in the can and this she poured into his mouth. She could hardly open his mouth. If this could not have been done, he would surely have died that time."

It is very near there where our grandmother is buried. Her grave site is to the north where they were camped on the same portage. He was a youth when our grandmother died. It was they who pulled her on their toboggan, he and Albert [Natachequan]. They would pull the toboggan together. As they were travelling, they noticed that our grandmother was not breathing any more. It was the spring time. They left their toboggan to catch up with their parents. That is why she is buried somewhere in the middle of the portage. The name of the portage is *Kawaakuwiiu Kipitakin*. At the end of *Wiiminipiis*, there is a small stream that comes into it. The stream is part of the travel route. We paddle up this stream. The source of the stream is to the west. There is a portage somewhere along this stream [before the source]. There is a sandy hill along this portage. There are a lot of trees somewhere along the way. The hills are easier to walk on than the wooded area. The hills are to the north and the portages goes along these sandy hills. The mountain is avoided. These hills were smooth and void of even willows. It is there where she is buried between of the sandy hills.

It was not long ago, in fact two summers ago, Isaiah had said, "Our grandmother's grave site is still visible. Someone had placed another cross on her grave quite recently. The cross is quite still visible."

There are many people near this area. There is a child buried at the outlet of the stream. I do not know whose it is though. There are many people buried there. Many of *Saans'* children are buried there. He had many children with his first wife. Also the son of *Chisanaicha's* oldest son is buried there. There have been many people buried there over time.

There was also another youth I know who is buried there. He was about the same age as Lucy's grandson [9-10 yrs. old]. This young boy was Sam Atchynia's younger brother. His mother had died by then. The youth was living with his grandmother. He did not want to live with his father at all. His father had already remarried. His father had married Martha George [the late Rupert George's wife] by then. He absolutely did not want to live with his father. He had preferred to live with his brother Sam who was looking after their grandmother at that time. He really wanted to live with them. His father let him have his way. His father took the northern route to the north. The youth died that year. No one really knew what happened exactly. We

were portaging on the *Wiiminipiisiukipitakin* [*Wiiminipiis* portage]. It was a very hot day. There are many portages here and they are very long. *Katikapusit's* daughter Jane who was married to Sam Atchynia at that time told me this story. Jane was Sam's first wife. When Jane died, he married your aunt Edith [*Sheshamush*].

"We were portaging through this portage [*Wiiminipiisiukipitakin*]. There were many of us in the group. He went with the ones who were transporting the things before we broke camp for the next day."

He was of the age to do this kind of work. The youth who were capable of carrying things on their backs for long periods of time would help with this kind of work. This portage is very long. Anyway, the youth took his grandmother's pack and left to portage it. He was portaging his grandmother's belongings, the one he lived with. I guess no one was really taking care to see how he was on this portage. He had a nosebleed somewhere along the way. It was later found out that he could not stop his nosebleed all day long.

Atwaan said, "I climbed this rocky hill. I saw him walking along the trail. He looked as if he could hardly walk. I thought to myself, 'He looks as if he is very weak.' I went over to him. He said to me, 'Grandfather, my nosebleed has not stopped all day long.' He had on a cardigan which had pockets. He had filled up his pockets with moss to wipe his nose and as a plug for his nose."

He finally reached their camp which was on the lake. *Atwaan* had told him to go on home. He had seen him quite near their camp. There is an area there called *Aasiwaaskwaasiich* on the portage near the shore of *Wiiminipiis*. This is where the belongings were kept. They had said of him, "he dropped off the pack he was carrying at that place and made his way home from there."

He reached their camp. He barely made it home. The other *Iyiyuu* who were living with his family in the same dwelling did not mention this to the others. *Chisanwaati* [*Lotty Quito*] and her family was living with them.

At the first light of day was upon us when my sister-in-law Martha came into our dwelling. She was the one who was married to my brother Luke. She said, "The youth we are living with is not doing very well. My mother says that she thinks he might not make it." Your grandfather Sam Masty went out right away. He went to check on the boy. It was not long after that we heard them crying. The youth had taken his last breath. I guess the youth had lost too much blood. There had been no one to really take care of him on the trip or no one noticed. I guess his grandmother had looked after him when he got home. That is where he is buried at that portage.

There are many people who are buried there. There was a nice sandy hill at the beginning of this portage. People used to make their camps there. There was a nice hill at the end of the mountain and that is where the Iyiyuu used to camp. It was a good camping area. Some other people told me that there are many people who died there and are buried there over time. I have not seen all the grave sites that they have mentioned to me.

EM: Could tell a story about the time Agnes was in the hospital?

SK: She was in the hospital for two years. She was taken by plane then. I went to the hospital, too. I had been feeling sick. We went together to the hospital. My son Isaiah was quite young and he came with us for medical reasons, too. He must have been the age of my grandson. As for Agnes, she was still nursing from time to time when she was taken to the hospital. She went to the hospital because of her back. Her back looked as if it was broken in half. That is the reason why she was taken to the hospital. When she came back from the hospital, her back was almost straight like anyone else's than what she looked like before she was taken to the hospital. When she got to the hospital, it was decided that she will have an operation on her back to correct it. There is a big scar on her back from the operation. Her spinal bone was sawed off at the place where it broke. The crippled part of the bone was sawed off. She was gone for two years. Isaiah was gone for almost two years, too. They were still young when my children went to the hospital.

I suspected that it was her sibling who broke her back accidentally. You know how children play and are just fooling around. Agnes was very tiny and was tiny when she started walking. One time, my other children were fighting over her because each wanted to be the one to play with her. They literally were pulling her between them. That is where I suspected that this happened. One of them pulled her from the head and the other one was pulling her from her feet. It was from then on that she had a crippled back.

EM: Why was Isaiah taken to the hospital?

SK: I do not know exactly what kind of illness he had. I guess it was quite big because he was gone almost two years, too. He did not have TB, though.

James was the one who had TB. He was gone for two years, too, at a different time. He was a young adult then when he went to the hospital. He was living here in town that year. It was the year when my grandson James, Andrew's son, was born when James, my son, was brought to *Ipisikimis* by plane where we were camped. He came there to join us. He told us he was feeling sick. He had had TB then without us knowing about it. When he got sick, I would start to treat him as best as I could. I would make poultices of

Wisichipikw [Labrador Tea]. He used to cough a lot. We noticed that he was getting sicker as spring went on. We came back here in the early summer. There was a nurse here by then. There was no X-ray here then. The nurse said, "I have no idea what is wrong with him. He will have to go somewhere for an X-ray."

I guess there was an X-ray machine already at Moose Factory. Most of the sick people were sent to Moose Factory. He quoted the nurse as saying to him, "Maybe you will come home soon. I have no idea what is wrong with you. Maybe it will not take long and you might come home soon."

He left for the hospital. He wrote to us. There was no phones or radio for talking to people in those days. He wrote to us. He said in his letter, "I am told that I can not come home. I am very sick, I am told. I have TB. My lung has quite a big hole in it, I am told." Naturally, he did not come home.

That same year, I was sick again when we were out on the land. I was taken to the hospital by plane when we got here in the summer. James was still in Moose Factory when I got there. He said, "I am told that I can not go home this summer again. I am going to have to stay here one more year. 'Your lung already had a big hole in it. It is only when your lung has completely healed that you can go home.'" That is what he said. It was in the late spring of the second year that he was brought back here from the hospital.

EM: As for you, did you come home that same summer?

SK: Yes, I came back that same summer. I was taken there twice. I stayed there for quite some time the first time I went there. I went there the first time when I went with Agnes. That was the first time. I came home when it was late fall.

EM: What kind of illness did you have?

SK: I had a back problem. I used to get injections in my back. Each time, I came back here in the late fall.

EM: You must have been sad to leave your children in the hospital each time you came back home.

SK: That is certainly true.

EM: So, Agnes came back home.

SK: Yes, she came back home after two years. She could not walk when she was

taken away from here. She could not stand up straight. She could only walk by holding onto things. We were told that if she was not taken to a hospital, she will not be able to walk at all. We consented to her being taken away. That first year, we were told that her back had been fixed but she could not come yet. "She will be able to come home in two years," we were told, "her back will be strong then where she was operated on." That is what happened to her. She came back in the late fall of the second year. She was gone a long time. She could not understand us when we spoke to her when she came back from the hospital. She gradually spoke our language again. We left for the bush after she came back.

Isaiah was gone for almost two years, too. He did not speak our language when he came back, too. The doctor had said that he would speak Cree again once he hears it and is spoken to in Cree all the time. He should be spoken to in English also. He cautioned that he should not lose the English language that he had acquired. That is what happened to him. We could not speak to him in Cree and understand. He was gone for over a year. The three of us left for the hospital the same time. I came home in the late fall of that year. Isaiah came back after a year and Agnes came back after two years. James was also gone for two years when he went to the hospital. James had gone to the hospital years later after Isaiah and Agnes came back. I have told you that my grandson James was born that year James got sick. He was here in town part of the year. He was working in town. That is why he could not come with us when we left in the late summer. He joined us later that year. I guess he caught the sickness while he was here in town. He went to the hospital and was told he could not go home for two years.

Your father's illness must have been very bad for him not to be helped. He had been in the hospital a couple of times in his life and was helped.

Your father [Samson Mast] left on the same plane when Agnes, Isaiah and I were taken to Moose Factory, Ontario. He was taken further south by train when we got there. I think he came back the next summer. He was here just one year and he was sent out again.

I guess his later illness could not be helped like the other times. Your uncle Isaac could not be helped too when he got sick. He died from his illness.

THE LEGEND OF THE BOY WHO MADE HIS GRANDMOTHER POOR BY NOT LISTENING TO HER²⁸

EM: Have you finished the story about the old man? I wanted to ask you this. You have told me legends and myths some time ago on another project but today, I am only interested in hearing about your life. Anyway, the legends and myths you have told me before, who told you these legend and myths?

SK: I heard them from different sources but I heard them mostly from my father. He really liked to tell legends and myths to us.

EM: I wish he were still alive. He could be taped while telling the legends!

SK: He would be a good person to tape as he told the legends!

EM: Did he tell you the legends after you had gone to bed?

SK: Yes, he used to tell us the legends after we had settled in for the night. He used to say to us sometimes, "You fall asleep too fast whenever I tell you legends."

Your grandfather, *Kinuwaapinwaaskum*'s grandfather was another person who really loved to tell legends and stories. Sometimes, we used to live with them during the freeze up. He was quoted as saying.... Whenever someone tells a legend/myth, the speaker tries to make others laugh when he tells the legends. I guess his audience did not hear him when they fell asleep! He was quoted as saying, "Whenever I tell legends when everyone has gone to bed, I can hear my listeners as they all fall asleep. When I know that everyone has fallen asleep, then I really tell the legends." I wonder who he was telling the legends to!

EM: When you were young, which legend did you like the best?

SK: I do not remember which legend I liked to hear the best. There were many legends I liked.

One time, my son James' daughter's son came to see me. I had not noticed when he got here. He was just in the house, running around when I noticed him. I said to him, "Here is my grandchild! Who brought him here? Maybe it is *Chiichiiuchans* [legend] who brought him here!" I did not expect him to

²⁸This is just one of the many rich and evocative stories of the supernatural as well as historical past of the Iyiyuuch. Myths, stories and legends have been passed down orally from one generation to the next and only recently have we begun to write them down (see e.g. Emily Mastay & Susan Marshall 1993 *Native Dreams: Stories from the People of Whapmagoostui*. Val D'Or: CRA).

answer me but Curtis replied, "It is not *Chiichiiuchans* who brought me here. Andrew brought me here."

EM: I wonder if he knows who *Chiichiiuchans* is. [Curtis is four years old.]

SK: Maybe he does know. My grandson Paul [6 yrs. old] used to say to me when we were in the bush, "Grandmother, tell me a story." He used to like to sleep with his cousin Peter. He used to sleep near him. He would say to me once they had bedded down for the night, "Grandmother, tell me a story." I would start telling him a story but soon he would be sleeping deeply. I would always comply with his wishes but he would fall asleep even before I could finish one story.

No one is here to visit us. That is always the case, they do not come and see me often. I hardly ever have my fellow women visit me. Listen, I feel that it is my sister who should be coming to see me more than anyone else. My sister Annie also has been alone for quite sometime, she should be coming to visit me. She has not come to see me since she has been back from the bush. She was not like that to me before I was widowed. Maggie hardly ever comes to see me.

My brother George had asked me, "Do our sisters Annie and Maggie come and see you often?" I had to say, "no." He had asked me this when our sisters got here from the bush. I said to him, "I would not have seen them yet if I had not seen them in church. I would not have seen them if I did not go to church often. They never come and see me." I had to tell him that. He was very surprised when I told him that. He said to me, "I am very surprised at them. I was certain that they were visiting you all the time." But they have never come here to visit me yet.

EM: Are you the only three female siblings that are left?

SK: Yes.

EM: Grandmother, I used to think that whoever thought about the legends was a very creative and imaginative person since they say that the legends and myths did not really happened. Whoever thought them up first was really imaginative.

SK: Your grandfather, my husband, used to be asked to tell legends/myths and they were taped by a lot of people. He did that all the time. *Tauchiisikwaaskum* is still alive today and lives in Chisasibi. He told me, "we still hear his voice on the radio from time to time when one of his taped stories is aired. His stories that were taped are still in use. We hear him

talking all the time." Joseph Pebanano and my sister-in-law *Kachisaiskwaausit*'s husband really liked my husband's stories. They would ask him to tape some stories for them to listen to when my husband was still alive.

I am going to tell a short story about an old woman. One time, there was an orphan. He had only his grandmother to take care of him. He began his hunting career when he was of age. Their dwelling used to fly from place to place whenever they moved to a different location. It was his grandmother's doing. His grandmother used to caution him, "Do not ever try to watch me when I construct our dwelling." Whenever you have selected the place where we will camp for the night, I want you to go hunting while I tend to our dwelling."

One day, the youth could no longer do what his grandmother had asked of him. He began to wonder about their dwelling. He looked at one of the dwelling poles inside their tipi. He thought to himself, "This pole looks like the one who had from our other camp site. I wonder how my grandmother does." The more he looked at their poles, the more he realized that they had used the same poles for a long time. He wondered, "I wonder how my grandmother does it? I think I will check how she does it. I will try to watch how she does it."

The next day, he made the trail for his grandmother like he always did. When evening came, he selected a spot for them to camp for the night. He went off to hunt. He thought to himself, "I will watch to see how she does it." He stood nearby but out of sight. Soon, he heard his grandmother singing. After a while, he saw their dwelling moving amongst the trees. He saw their dwelling from behind the trees. When it was out in the open where he saw all of it, their dwelling fell to the ground. It was totally wrecked. His grandmother knew what had happened. He heard his grandmother saying to him, "Alas, Grandson, you have looked at me. Now you will have to erect the dwelling yourself. It is only after you have erected our dwelling can you go off hunting from now on. You will have a tough time of this."

They started to put their dwelling together. From then on, he had to get everything to make a dwelling with before he went off hunting. Even if he was certain that he had brought everything for his grandmother to use to erect the dwelling, she would still be at it when he came home from his hunting. He has made his grandmother poor for not listening to her wishes.

EM: Did his grandmother do this because she had powers?

SK: Yes, she was able to do this because of her powers. The youth was quoted as saying, "The entrance cover was pushed to one side and she was sitting on the

pole before the entrance. She was singing, 'I am flying about.'" When the dwelling was in his full view, their dwelling crashed to the ground along with his grandmother. He sure made his grandmother poor by not listening to her.

EM: When I hear some stories, it occurs to me that some of the women had great powers, too. Is that right?

SK: Yes, some old women had great powers, too.
What will we talk about now? What other legend can we tell?

EM: I have heard that in the past, the Iyiyuu always had their dwellings facing the west.

SK: Yes, that is true. The Iyiyuu had always made their dwellings to face the west. The dwellings never faced the East.

EM: What is the reason for this?

SK: The reason for this because it was told that the food comes from the west. In this way, the food would enter the dwelling without obstructions. That is the reason why the dwellings faced the West all the time.

THE FIRST PLANE

EM: How old were you when you saw your first plane did you say? How many children did you have already when the planes got here first?

SK: My daughters Martha and Lucy were had already been born and my son Andrew. I already had three children when I first saw a plane.

EM: What did you think when heard that a plane was coming here?

SK: I wondered what it would look like. The Iyiyuu were told. "Do not be afraid but a plane will come here. This thing will be flying in the air. It will be something you have never seen before." That is what we were told.

We were across the river getting firewood as usual when it came that day. In those days, it was always the women's job to get firewood from across the river. Groups of women would go across the river in canoes to get the firewood. That is what we did that day.

While we were chopping the trees for the firewood, I suddenly heard something. Right away, I thought about the news that a plane would come. There was a small hill there, I ran atop the hill. I said to the women, "Listen to sound! It is coming from that direction." I was pointing to the south of us. "I heard it coming from that direction. I guess that is the plane we were told that was going to come." I did not feel afraid. Sure enough, we finally saw it as it came up from behind the mountains. It flew around the river. Finally, it went lower and lower and touched down on the river. We saw it pulling up on the sandy beach on the north side of the river. We continued on with our firewood.

We used to land our canoes just before the place where the old dock was, where the boat used to anchor. That is where the plane was docked, too. I guess we were a bit apprehensive about the plane. When we came home from across the river in our canoes, we did not land where we used to land our canoes. We landed our canoes at the place where we used to get water from at *Muschiunipakw*. Our dwellings were just above where the dock was. We had to carry our firewood to our dwellings from further than we used to. I suppose we were a bit afraid of it. We used to land our canoes just before the dock on the bend.

Some canoes used to be landed at the *Muschiunipakw*, though, and where the bend of the river was. There were many trails leading down to the river from the top of the sandy cliffs.

Anyway, the plane landed. The Iyiyuu were told what the pilot was saying that he wanted to fly all around the coast of Northern Quebec: "I want to see how big the land is and see if I can go the length of the coastline." He took off again in his plane. He headed for the north. He flew along the coast. He landed at the mouth of *Mistisipiy* where Fort Chimo is situated. He landed there.

It is said that there were always blocks of ice coming in from the bay into the mouth of the river. It would also be carried ashore on the banks of the *Mistisipiy*. The water is very fast as it comes into the mouth of the river. The mouth of the river also has sandy beaches. Naturally, the pilot landed his plane and beached his plane. He was warned about the ice that is usually carried in with the tides. He was told that his plane might get damaged by the floating ice. But he did not listen to the people and left his plane where it was.

It is said that the water comes in very fast and flows in like rushing rapids in some areas therefore the icebergs and floating chunks of ice are carried every which way. The current is very strong as it rushes in.

Anyway, the ice broke his plane. He found out in the morning about his plane. A very big boat used to go to Fort Chimo. The pilot was told to wait for the boat. His plane was to be put on the big boat so that it could be repaired somewhere. That is what was told to him. That is what he did. He got back to wherever his plane was to be repaired. The next summer he came back to try again. It was the same *wamistikusu*. They quoted him as saying, "I am trying to make the trip I had set out to do last summer." He went on his trip again. This time, he crashed somewhere. Pieces of his plane was seen floating on the bay and his body. Nobody knew what happened to him whether he had ran out gas or something else. He could not do what he wanted to do. He was found dead in his plane. I guess he crashed.

I presume that it was the beginning of when the planes everywhere would be abundant. It must have been the beginning when they were making a lot of planes.

One time, when we were out on the land, we thought we saw a crashed plane. It was in the winter while we were at *Ipsikimis*. Later, we found out that a plane had been lost in that part of the country. We thought it could have been the one we found. At that time, my husband and I were living with my parents, Sam Masty, *Atwaan* [Edward Natachequan] and our grandfather *Kamichapaut* was still alive then. It was during the coldest time of the year. We had gone somewhere for a brief trip. We were on our back to our main camp. We followed the same route we had taken when we made this trip. This trip was to set up the trap line. I had set my traps, too. It was a Saturday when we made that camp. My father said to me, "I will check on your traps that you set on the way." I set only two traps.

There is a cove beside where we were camped. We had come onto the lake from the other end of the lake when we were transporting the caribou back to our main camp. There are lot of trees there. It had been a beautiful day as we travelled. It had been a clear day. That night, a storm arose. The winds were very strong and it was very stormy in the morning. We could not see far even on the ice.

When my father got back from checking on my traps, he had said to me, 'You had marten in both of your traps. There are many marten tracks around your traps. One of the trapped marten had been eaten by the other martens. I can not set up again because I have no bait. I also realize that you can not go and check them soon after we leave here.'

We waited out the storm. It was only in the evening when I notice a change in the storm - in the early evening. There were brief moments when looking onto the ice that I could see further than I did in the morning. The storm

was dying down somewhat. The sun was visible for only brief periods. The storm went on.

Someone suggested that I cut more firewood. There was not much firewood where we were camped. We had camped in a new growth of the forest. We had not planned to set there for too long anyway. I went to get firewood and I kept walking towards the east to look for dead trees. I was quite far from our camp. As I walked, suddenly I smelled a strong smell of something. It was being carried by the wind. It smelled like gas or burning gas. In those days, there was type of matches that we called KAPIMI IWICH [The ones with oil]. They looked like the candles. When the matches are lit, they had a strong smell to them. The smell that I smelt that day was just like the matches when they burned and the smell they gave off. That is what I thought. I went further towards the smell and it got stronger. I thought to myself, "I will tell them about the smell." Then I thought again, "Nobody will believe me. I will keep it to myself." I thought of your grandfather Sam Masto, he used to tease about things that I would say or do. "He would not believe me even if I tell him," I thought to myself. So, I did not talk about it.

In the morning, it was a beautiful day. The sun was out. My father said, "We will continue with our trip." If my father had had set my traps again, I would have gone in that direction to check on them before we continued on. I would have gone there and would have seen what smelled. When we got to the other side of the lake, we saw something on the ice that had not been there the day before. From the distance we were looking, it looked like felled trees laying strewn about the ice. I guess what we saw was the broken up plane on impact. The men saw the thing on the ice too but they did not go and look at it. *Atwaan* thought about looking at it through his binoculars but he changed his mind. We did not stop to check what it was. From where we were, it looked like felled trees that were strewn about on the ice. I guess that it was a broken up plane and the pieces in some standing position. I guess that is what we saw as tree markers.

We travelled far that day. We made camp for the night. They talked about what we saw then. They wondered, "Whatever is it that we saw on the ice? What is it that looks like that?" There had been many of us walking on the ice when we went to get the killed caribou on that end of the lake. There had been nothing there on the ice when we walked there not even a tree. My father said to us, "Why don't you go there in the morning and check what it is? Find out what you saw on the ice."

During the night, it started to storm again. The snow was blowing on the ice and we could not see very far because of the blowing snow. My father said to us, "Never mind the trip I wanted you to make. It is too stormy." That is

what we did. We forgot about it.

When we got here to the post in the summer, the men told *Wamistikuisis* [Harold Udgarten] what we had seen. He knew most things that happened in the *wamistikusiu* world. They told him about the thing we had seen.

He told them, "It was a good thing you did not go and see it. It must have been the plane that had been lost. If it is the plane that was lost and you had gone to check it, you would have been blamed for it's demise. It was a good thing that you did not go to it to see what it was." That is what he said to us. No one knew what it was that we had seen. People presumed that it was the plane that had been lost. It must have crashed.

The next year, we went back to that same area at *Ipisikimis*. Your grandfather Sam Mastay was the only one who went back to the lake where we had seen the thing. We did not live with him. He and his family were the only ones who went there. He had said, "I went to the place where we had seen the things but there was nothing there." We had seen the things in the middle part of the lake at that end. "I went to see it but there was nothing there." The lake must been deep there and that is why there was nothing sticking out of the water or the ice once it sunk in the spring time. We had no idea what it was then. Anyway, *Wamistikuisis* presumed that it was the same plane that had been lost that year around this part of the country.

They said that *Wamistikuisis* had said, "If any *Iyiyuu* sees a plane that had crashed, they are not to tell anyone about it. They will be blamed for the plane crash." He told this to the people once there were planes around this area.

I have heard of another time when some *Iyiyuu* saw a plane that had crashed. It was the *Ausawaauiyiyuuch* [Naskapi] who saw the plane that had crashed. They told the *wamistikusiu* about the plane. The *wamistikusiu* asked them to take them to the crash site. I do not know how they understood what the *wamistikusiu* wanted but I believe one of the *Iyiyuu* spoke same English. When they got to the crash site, the *wamistikusiu* told the *Iyiyuu* to go to the crashed plane. They saw the dead *wamistikusiu* laying there near the crashed plane. The *wamistikusiu* said to them...I guess they understood what he was saying to them. They did not go to the crashed plane. The *wamistikusiu* just left again in the plane.

The *Iyiyuu* told another *wamistikusiu* about this incident. The *wamistikusiu* said to them, "It is a good thing that you did not go to the crashed plane. If you had gone there, they would have killed you. They must have suspected that somehow you were the cause of the plane crashing."

LIVING ON THE LAND - ADULTHOOD

EM: You said that you used to be happy when the days are like today whenever you and your family were out on the land?

SK: Yes. I was the happiest at this time of the year as we went about our business on the land. I used to feel that my work was so much easier because the days were getting warmer and longer. I was never at loss as to what I should be doing even if your grandfather, my husband, did not give me any specific instructions about what to do for that day. I did everything on my own with the knowledge and skills I had learned up to that time. Sometimes, I used to think when I thought of the things I wanted to do for that day, "I do not think I will have time today to do all I am thinking of doing." I never found myself not being able to do what I had set out to do even though there was so much to be done in hunting.

EM: What did you used to do in a day [when you were not travelling]?

SK: First thing in the morning, I would go and check the fishing lines. If there was fish, I would cook it. After my husband had eaten, he would go out to do his hunting. He would be gone all day. After he left, I went outside to haul and chop the firewood. I made sure that we had enough chopped wood for the day. While chopping wood, I would think that I should be checking the fishing lines again. Most of the time, there was a net in the water also. I would tend to the net and fish lines after I had chopped the wood. I was very good at setting the net myself. That used to be my job, setting the net[s].

When I was able to do all that I could for the day, I was happy because I knew that I had help from above. There were times that I felt I could not possibly do all that needed to be done in a day because I felt sick or weak from hunger. I used to think to myself, "Even though I am feeling this way, I will be able to do all I need to do with God's help." Having these thoughts to fortify me, there were very few times that I could not do what I had set out to do. I was certain that it was with God's help that I was able to do my work even though I had had so much work to do in a day. This was especially true before my children were of age to help me with the work. I was also alone all day long to do all this work and care for the children while my husband was out hunting. We hardly ever lived with other groups of people when I first got married. We were alone as a family most of the time because my husband was all over the place trapping the fur-bearing animals. That is the reason why we were always travelling here and there most of the winter.

All of my relatives were like that, including your father and your cousins. They were the same way. They really liked to hunt and pursued their craft relentlessly.

EM: When your children were younger, like you told me, and while your husband was out hunting most of the day, I imagine that you used to take your young children with you wherever your work might take you?

SK: Yes, that is true. I would carry one on my back and carry the others in the small toboggan or all in the toboggan. If I went far from our dwelling, I would make a fire upon arriving at my destination where I would chisel the ice to put my fishing lines in. I would make these trips where I would be gone all day to do some fishing for the day. I would be near my lines in and check on them during the day. Then I would go home at the end of the day. That is what I would do. I would make a fire for them and kept the fire going all day long where we would wait. I would keep feeding the fire with the firewood. I had to haul and chop the wood before I did anything else upon our arrival at my fishing spot.

I would do the same thing when we arrived at a new campsite after travelling all day. My husband did not help to erect our dwelling. He would choose the campsite spot and continue to do his hunting. It was up to me to construct our dwelling. This was when my children were still very small. By the time I had three children, I was still doing everything by myself because my children were still too young to help me. My first three children were two daughters and Andrew. They were still not able to help in any of the outside work.

The first thing I would do when we reached our campsite was to make a fire outside. I would place the children near the fire. I would keep feeding the fire until I had erected our dwelling. I would start the fire in the stove after I had placed it inside our dwelling. Then I would take the children inside the dwelling after it warmed up. I believe I had a lot of work to do in those days.

But today, I think that there are not many women who could do all that I did in my day.

EM: You certainly are right! Who can ever top what you did in those days?

SK: I guess there is no one. There will be no one else who will have the same kind of work and lifestyle that I had in those days.

EM: What sort of a dwelling did you have in those days?

SK: We used to live in a *wiskichanchiwaap*.²⁹ Sometimes, we would have a small

²⁹This is a style of winter dwelling which looks like a tipi that has been flattened in the middle, or a tipi with flat ceiling.

tent. Whenever we had a tent, it used to be faster to erect than the other dwelling. As soon as I had erected our dwelling, I would then chop firewood for the stove. Then I would arrange the carpet of boughs over the rough first layer of boughs that had been trampled on first over the snow base of the floor of our dwelling. There was certainly a lot of work that I had to do when I was still working.

EM: Whenever you travelled for the day, did your husband go out hunting right away?

SK: Yes, that is true. Sometimes, he did not even pan the snow away where our dwelling would be erected over. I would pan the snow away myself. He would go hunting straight away especially if we had nothing to eat that evening. He would go out looking for game before sundown. There were also times where he does not even set the fish lines and I had to do that also before nightfall. I would chisel the ice and set the fish lines after I had made fire where the children would wait and warm themselves. Having done that, I would tend to the construction of our dwelling. After I had done that, I would check the fish lines. Sometimes, there would be a fish already on the line. That is how we were able to have supper then.

EM: Did you say that you set the fish lines before you made your dwelling?

SK: Yes, that is true. First I would chop some firewood for the fire and the stove. Then I would set the fish lines and then construct the dwelling. I would keep the fire going outside where my children were. I certainly did a lot of work in those days.

EM: I imagine that you tended to getting some moss for your children's diapers from time to time.

SK: Yes, certainly! I never used Pampers™, only moss.

EM: You knew where to look for the moss in the winter time?

SK: Certainly. I looked for the moss where there was a swamp or where there were swamp trees. That is where the baby moss is always found. Sometimes, I would find the best moss possible. The best swamp moss for a baby is the one that does not freeze thoroughly. This is the best kind. The moss is found by poking around in the swamp with a pointed stick. When the stick goes deeply into the ground, then it is certain that there is baby moss there. Some of this moss will stick to the stick and one can tell what kind of moss it is.

Whenever I ran out of moss, I dried some right away. After I brought some moss from the frozen swamp, I would heat some water on the stove. I sliced some of the moss from the frozen chunks and put it into the heated water. Sometimes, it is easier to pull the moss into pieces if it is not frozen solid. Usually, the moss is not frozen solid. It is this kind of moss that is put into the heated water. In this way, the moss thaws very fast. After it thaws out, the moss is placed in a towel and wrapped. Then it is wrung out to get rid of the water. It is wrung out as well as it can be done. Then it is dried near the stove. It dries very fast when this is done. The moss is usually ready for the next diaper change. It dries fast when it is placed in heated water first to thaw it out fast and wrung out. That is what I used to do if I wanted to dry the moss fast. I would make a platform over the stove and place the wrung out piece of moss on the platform to dry. In this way, the frozen chunks of moss thaw out fast and dries fast if the dwelling is kept hot.

When I would find the best moss one could find, I would take as much as I could and dry it. The moss can be packed down once it dries and it is very light. When I would stock up this way, it would take a long time to use up the moss.

EM: Were there times when a child runs out of moss that the used moss would be washed and used again?

SK: Yes, I have heard this to be done sometimes but I hardly ever did that. I always made sure that my children had plenty of moss for their use.

EM: And you had many children.

SK: Yes.

EM: You did amazing things.

SK: Well, yes, that is true. I do not think you could do what I did.

EM: How absolutely true!

SK: You could not match how much moss I must have chopped out of the swamps and then dry it when I did that kind of a job. I would gather a lot of it whenever I found the best moss for a baby. This kind of moss is very fast drying, especially if there are no roots of plants growing in it. It dries fast.

EM: I am sure you have had this experience where your husband had to go on trip and not come home for a few days while he is doing his trapping or when he chases caribou far away. Can you tell me of one such time when you were

alone with your children for a couple of days or so?

SK: Yes, certainly, that always happened to me. One time, he was gone for three days and he had not indicated that he would not come home when he left in the morning.

EM: How old were your children?

SK: James was still in his *waaspisuyan*. Andrew was already walking. Lucy and her older sister Martha were of some help to me in my work. They were quite helpful by then. They were able to check the fish lines when it is not cold outside and if the fish lines were quite near the shore where our dwelling was.

EM: Can you tell me about that time and what did you think?

SK: I was desperately worried about him especially because he had not said that he would not come home. He usually told me his plans before he left. Anyway, I was always worried that he would get into an accident especially if he was alone and if he was late just a couple of hours but three days was too much. Three nights had gone by and he was still not home. He finally came home.

He finally came home after three nights. He had killed three otters. He really liked to hunt otters. He would chase them down and did not mind going far from our camp to get them. If the otters went into the water, he would wait for them until they showed up again even if it took days for the otters to show up. It was only when he got the otters that he would come home. This is what happened that time he did not come for three nights. It is the otters that made him not come home many times over the course of our life together. He would sleep where he last saw them until they showed up again. He would sleep outside, even during the coldest time of the year. He would sleep inside a small dwelling that he made out of small trees with the boughs still on and would of course the floor with boughs. That is what he would make even if he did not have a dwelling cover and he would sleep there. I could never get used to this habit of his, spending the night wherever he wanted to even if he had not planned it. I was always deathly worried whenever he did not come home from his outings. I would especially worry if he did not come home when I knew that he did not have any food with him when he left.

We never had tea to last the whole winter. There were times that he did not even have tea with him when he would go hunting. We hardly ever went to the post for supplies in the winter at that time. Sometimes, he would take a fish with him. He would boil a piece of the fish at a time and drink the fish

liquid. He always had a small pail with him. We usually had porcupine to eat. Whenever we ate a porcupine, I would crush the backbone of the porcupine. He would take these crushed porcupine bones and boil them to make himself something nourishing to drink. I would put the bones in a small bag. He would only boil a handful at a time whenever he made a fire to have a meal or something to drink. The liquid was a nourishing drink. This is what he would take with him when we did not have tea. He used the bones to make himself something to drink when he was out hunting. The liquid yielded after the bones had been boiled is quite nourishing. The boiled bones yields some fat.

The Iyiyuu liked to use the crushed bones to make nourishing drink with while they are out hunting.

EM: Were those the only bones that were used like that? Were the caribou bones used like that, too?

SK: The caribou bones were also used to make a drink with. Whenever we had some caribou, the crushed caribou bones were kept a long time for that kind of use. The crushed caribou bones can be boiled over and over again and still yield some nourishing liquid. The porcupine bones were the same way. They were kept quite some time. They could be boiled more than once and still yield some nourishing liquid to drink. But I have not crushed otter bones for this purpose or the beaver bones. The only bones I crushed for this kind of use were the porcupine and caribou bones. These are the only animals that are used like that. I have never done it but I have heard other women saying that they used fish bones in this way. They would crush them and pack them for their husband's journeys out on the land.

EM: Was it the fish backbones that they would crush like this?

SK: Yes, they would crush the fish backbones to make a nourishing drink. They would crush the fish bones. The fish bones yielded a nourishing drink after being boiled.

EM: Were the fish backbones used after the meat on it had been cooked and the bones were cooked?

SK: Yes, the fish backbones can be crushed and boiled again for a nourishing drink.

For example, *Chisachiims'* [James Mamianskum's] wife told me this story. "One time, we were very hungry. My husband wanted to make a trip to the post. There was no food to take with him. The only thing I had left were

some fish bones. Each time we ate fish when food got scarce, I froze the fish bones together. When he wanted to go on this journey to the post, I crushed the fish bones. That was the only thing he took with him on his journey in the way of nourishment."

EM: Which wife told this story?

SK: His first wife told me this story. Her name was Maggie and was better known as *Makiich*.

He had three sons from his first marriage and one daughter. He had four children from his first marriage, *Chisachiims* [James Mamianskum], that is. His son was already quite grown up when he died. He was about the same height as Peter then [grandson Peter Kawapit, Suzanne's son James' son.] His daughter was already married at that time.

EM: From what you have told me about your children, it seems to me that you were only with them for a time where they helped you with your work and then they got married.

SK: Yes, that is true. They helped me a lot when I was still with them. They learned fast all that was taught to them what a woman has to know about work. They learned fast. They were very helpful.

EM: I imagine that your male children were always out hunting and learning to hunt and didn't stay home much.

SK: Yes, that is true. When my girls were capable of looking after the firewood, I was freed then to tend to my fishing on the ice. I would set the fish lines and the nets. It was quite hard in those days when the caribou were not around. The ptarmigan were quite scarce, too. The ptarmigan were as scarce as they are now, where the men have to go very far and wide to look for some ptarmigan. At that time, the ptarmigan were quite scarce, too, along with the caribou. Most years, the ptarmigan were scarce. But sometimes, the ptarmigan were found here and there. There were times when the ptarmigan were searched in vain. It seemed that when someone is very poor because of food, even the ptarmigan were very hard to find.

EM: When you were still with your parents and even after you were married, did you used to take some whale oil into the bush with you? I seemed to recall you telling me that at one time.

SK: Yes, the dried whale stomach container of oil used to be taken into the bush. The whale stomach after it is blown up and then dried, it could hold a lot of

oil. The oil is poured into it. The bag where the oil in the whale stomach container was kept used to be big. Other kinds of animal stomach containers were used. When the *wamistikusu* was around, then some metal containers were used. Sometimes, the lard we got from the store was mixed with the whale oil. In this way, the whale oil used to freeze or set. It was easier to handle, without the fear of the oil spilling or leaking.

One time, *Atwaan* broke *Nipinwaaskum's* whale oil container. Sometimes, when there are a lot of people travelling together, they would help each transport their belongings on the portages. In this way, people grabbed what they could and sorted it all out at the end of the portage - which belonged to who. That is what *Atwaan* did. Anyway, *Nipinwaaskum* put his whale oil onto *Atwaan's* back. It was a huge container of oil in the whale stomach. *Atwaan* dropped the oil accidentally as he walked along the portage trail. The whale oil container burst open. There was a lot of spilled oil.

EM: Were they able to save some?

SK: Yes, some of it could be salvaged. The dried whale stomach container, full of whale oil, was wrapped in a mesh wrapper. When it dropped and burst, streams of oil were trickling out of the mesh wrapping. They placed some pails where it trickled out from to catch the oil and saved as much as they could. But he lost a lot of *Nipinwaaskum's* whale oil. He could have eaten from it for a long time.

The portage is quite short. After this incident, the portage was referred to as *Apaschiwiikuiyaasinaniwiich*.

EM: I assume the other *Iyiyuu* knew why this portage was being called that.

SK: Yes, the other knew who usually used that route knew the story about it.

EM: Is it the same portage that I heard someone else refer to as *Katunimach Kipitakin*?

SK: Yes, it is the same portage [*Kipitakin*]. Some other people called it that. He had wrapped his whale stomach container in a burlap sack and then the mesh wrapping. He had to throw away the burlap sack and left it right on the portage. The sack was very oily. I suppose that is the reason why it was called that, *Katumach Kipitakin*.

EM: Was the whale oil used as dip with other kinds of meats?

SK: Yes, that is true. It was especially good as dip for dried fish. It was also used

to make a pemmican with powdered fish [and other kinds of powdered meats]. I really loved pemmican mixed with berries. It used to be very good when pemmican was mixed with blueberries. There were a lot of berries inland all the time. It is said that *Ipisikimis* was the only place where the berries would grow if the berries did not grow much elsewhere. There were years that the berries did not grow well but *Ipisikimis* was the only place where they grow well and grew every year. That is what was said as far back as anyone could remember. I suppose the reason why is that there is always moisture from the lake because *Ipisikimis* is a big lake. That is the reason why the berries grow well there, it was said. There were patches and patches of berries on the mountains.

EM: Were there red berries, too?

SK: Yes, certainly. Red berries [cranberries] could be found there, too and blackberries and *sikutaau* [bakeapple berry].

EM: Were the berries ever dried and then kept for a long time?

SK: No, I have never heard of this being done. But berries used to be gathered a lot and frozen when the weather turned cold in the fall. The berries would be thawed out when they were needed to mix in a pemmican or to make *sikumini* [cooked fish mixed with berries]. The berries were kept outside. The red berries used to be mixed with the powdered fish. The powdered fish would be already have been mixed with red berries. All one had to do is add some fat to this mixture when they wanted to eat pemmican. The red berries could be used this way and not go bad but blueberries were not good to use this way. The blueberries would go bad soon if this was done because the blueberries are too delicate.

SK: My sons [now] know where the big fish and porcupine are [They know the area around *Ipisikimis*]. They know where these places are. My sons saw those places when they were growing up - where the big fish used to be fished. One of the places is never frozen very thick. There is a long strip of this area where it is never frozen too thick. It is here where it is very good for winter fish lines. This lake is called *Atwaanisi Atat*. This place is more like a river and it winds about. It is here where we used to be able to catch big fish. *Atwaan*'s youngest brother is buried there. He was the last child. He is the one who was called *Atwaanisi*. He was already an adult when he died.

EM: What was the cause of *Atwaanisi*' death?

SK: It is said that his sickness was centred in his lower back. He could not walk. He fell ill very suddenly, they said. He could not walk at all when he fell ill.

They used to carry him on their toboggans. He got sick while they were still in the territory of the *Ausawaauwiiyiyuu*. He got sick fast. He could not walk at all when he got sick. We came back from that area, he was being carried in the toboggan. He died when we got to the place, the one I called *Atwaanis Atat*. It was already in the spring time when he died. There were big patches of exposed earth and the geese had already arrived on their way to the north.

EM: Even after you got married, did you continue to trap fur-bearing animals like you did with your parents?

SK: Yes, I continued trapping fur animals. I used to set my traps like I usually did. I have been trapping all my life and even during my marriage. I caught a few fur-bearing animals. I did not think to stop trapping just because I was married. I continued on doing what I did when I was still alone. I did my best to trap furs. I have done that all my life, traps furs.

EM: Did you say that you caught something in your traps this past fall [1992]?

SK: Yes, I caught four marten. But three [other] marten got away. I could have gotten seven in all.

EM: Is it you who set the traps?

SK: Certainly, it is I who set my own traps and I check on them. I had set my traps near our dwelling. But when I was still able to walk far, then I was able to set them far from our camp. But these days, I set them where I can get, as far as I can go, which is quite near our camp. That is where I set my traps. The lake where we camped is quite big. When my husband was still alive, we would go in our canoe and paddle around the lake, setting our traps.

Recently, the year I told you I saw your father at the hospital. I almost died that year. It was the time I saw your father at Chisasibi when they had to Medivac [emergency evacuate] me there from our winter camp.

I was sick very suddenly. I did not feel anything when I got up that morning. My husband said to me, "Let us go and check on our traps by canoe. We will put fresh bait on them." "Alright," I replied. We went over land to the lake. We got into our canoe. The ice had already formed around the shoreline. We broke the ice as we headed for the open water. As I was doing this, I suddenly felt pain on my side. I told him about what I was feeling. I could not paddle at all. One of my traps was quite near. We went to it. I tended to it, righting it and placing it securely. The pain on my side was

getting worse and worse. I finally could not sit up. I said to him, "I can not sit up any more." "Let us go on home," he said. We went paddling home. I was just barely able to get off the canoe. I tried walking home but I just could not move to do it. Fortunately, my grandchildren were home. John, Isaac and Peter were all living with us at the time. My husband called to them. They just started running when they heard him. They reached us. I said to them, "Why did you not bring the sleds?" We had a ski-doo and sleds to go with it. "Why did you not bring the sleds? I cannot walk." They went to get the ski-doo. They put me in the sleds. They carried me inside our dwelling. I drank something. I did not feel any better. I tried to lay down on our bed. We were living in a small shack. When I lay down, I lost consciousness. I fainted from the pain.

When I came to again, they had taken off my footwear. I clearly could hear Isaac talking to his grandfather. I guess they had already called to the nurses through the bush radio. Isaac said to his grandfather, "Grandfather, a plane is on the way to pick up my grandmother." "Okay," he replied. I was feeling quite alert then. They gave me medicine from the "bush kit" [emergency first aid kit]. They said that they were told to give me this pill which was for the heart. They dressed me back up. They said, "it is going to be here soon. It is coming from Chisasibi." Soon, we could hear the plane. My granddaughter Vera was living with us, too. She came with me on the plane. I was taken to Chisasibi.

When I got there, the late Harriet Blackned translated for the doctor. Harriet said to me, "Aunt, they are going to take you somewhere to take your X-ray." I had not eaten all that day yet. She said to me, "Do you think you can eat?" "I might be able to eat a little. I have not eaten all day," I said to her. Harriet said to me, "The doctor said, 'I do not think she is going to be here a long time. She looks healthy.'"

The X-ray technician took my X-rays. She took many of them. Harriet said to me, "Aunt, this is the sixteenth X-ray she had taken." The X-rays were done. Then they took me to my bed. I was given some food. I was able to eat. In the morning, the doctor came to see me right away. The doctor said to me, "You certainly were very sick. It was a close call. You will have stay here quite some time." They put four [intravenous] needles in me.

EM: What was the nature of your illness?

SK: I must have had convulsions inside my body for me to loose consciousness like that. I lost consciousness without warning. I did not feel I was going to faint. I just went out. It was then that I could have died.

EM: Then you regained consciousness. I suppose it was not your time yet to go.

SK: Yes, I suppose that is true. In the morning, they told me that a decision would be made from Montreal whether to take me there or not. After a while, they said to me, "Montreal only sent some pills for you to take. You will use those first." They gave me the pills. After they had given them to me, I was shaking all over.

EM: Did the doctor know what this medicine was doing to you?

SK: Yes, he knew. He told me that the pills were doing that to me. I was feeling better after that. The doctor told me that I would not be able to go home before Christmas. So, I spent Christmas in the hospital.

EM: How long were you there, how many weeks?

SK: I do not remember how long I stayed there. I came back here after Christmas.

EM: I am thinking about you when you were in the bush and when your children started coming, besides all the work you had to do, you also had to sew clothes for them as they came.

SK: That is certainly true. For example, one time, we did not live with other Iyiyuu when we were waiting for freeze up. It was still summer when we last saw people - it was your father's father, your grandfather Sam Mastey. We were quite hungry at that time. We left for a place called *Anatwaayach*. We set our nets there but there was no fish there. My husband left to do some hunting. He was spending the night out. He came home the next day. He said, "I did not see any caribou tracks." We were out on the area where there were hardly any trees. He said, "Let us leave this camp. Let us go travel downstream."

There were many rapids on this river we were travelling on. My late daughter Sarah was still unable to walk in deep snow. That is how young she was then. There was deep snow [which had fallen] quickly before the waters froze.

When we got to the rapids, he said, "I will travel down the rapids with Sarah. I will only take Sarah with me."

I walked with Lucy and Andrew on the land. We were to meet him downstream of the rapids. There was a high mountain blocking the way to go along the shoreline. We climbed the mountain. We saw the rapids going a long way downstream. My children were having a hard time to walk in the

deep snow. We finally climbed down to the shoreline where there was a small river. I said to my children, "I will make a fire here. We will have something to drink."

Meanwhile, my husband had reached the end of the rapids. He decided to walk back upstream to meet us. First he had made a fire and had said to Sarah, "I am going to meet your mother and siblings. I want you to stay here by the fire. Do not leave the fire." He reached us along the way. He said to us, "I left Sarah at the fire. I hope she does not decide to leave."

He took up some of our load and started walking back. He was walking fast. He was worried about Sarah. Fortunately, it was quite near where the rapids ended.

He told us when we reached him, "When I got here, Sarah was not where I had left her beside the fire. She had started following my trail. The snow was very deep. I was coming back another way. I followed her. After awhile, I heard her crying. I brought her back to the fire." She must have been afraid when her father left.

We all got into the canoe again. We travelled down and came to a place where there was small lake. We camped there. We managed to set a net in the cove of the lake. We set the net there. I erected our dwelling.

"I will go walking again tomorrow," he said.

There were other rapids downstream from us. He said to us, "Look for porcupine across the river with the canoe tomorrow." He left in the morning. He did not come home that night. The next morning, I told my children to go ptarmigan hunting. I decided that we should go across the river in the canoe. I told them to go ptarmigan hunting. My son Andrew was able to handle a .22 rifle. I was still chopping firewood when I heard a shot. After the shot, I heard someone calling. I recognized my husband's voice.

I heard him calling to the children, saying, "Come here. We are all taking a walk." I walked back, too. I reached him. He said to me, "I have killed a caribou. We have to transport it by land. We will walk over to where it is."

We took the nets out of the water first. There were two nets. We started walking. It was still early in the day. We carried our dwelling covers. We hung our nets in the tree. We walked. He said, "We will make camp where it will get dark." That is what we did. It got dark as we walked. We did not have any snowshoes yet. The snow was already quite deep.

When we reached a cluster of tress, he said, "We will make camp here. These are the last trees in this area. There will be no trees any more after this crop."

We set up camp there. It was already dark when we made camp. We hurried. He had not slept all night. He had walked home in the night. He picked the boughs as I worked on the dwelling. He brought a bunch of boughs and set them down. He sat down and bowed his head. He was soon fast asleep. He had brought some of the caribou, his *aputaanh* [special, select part of the caribou brought back with the hunter].

We continued walking when dawn came. We reached the caribou that day where he had killed them. There were no trees there. There were only small tamaracks and low-lying tree shrubs. That is the kind of boughs we used. We used the small tamaracks as poles.

He had killed three caribou. One of the caribou was huge. One of the caribou was a female caribou and the other was a young caribou. We camped there.

In the morning, we fixed up the caribou and packed them. The next morning, he said he was going to climb the mountain. He came home when it was still day. He said, "I saw five caribou and I killed them all."

Towards the mountain, on an incline, there was a crop of trees. There were many of them. But there were no trees where we were camped. I had surveyed the area and said to him, "I wish we had our camp there where the trees are." He replied, "It is where we will camp because that is where the caribou are laying. That is where I found the caribou."

In the morning, we set out with our belongings. I could not fix the biggest caribou skin yet. I had managed to scrape off the inner part but I had had no time to scrape off the hairs. We left our food. They transported the food we had left to our new camp. They made many trips carrying the other caribou to our new camp.

It was not long after that he killed two more caribou. We transported the caribou to our camp. The snow was getting deep now. When we got to the caribou, he looked all around with his binoculars.

He said, "I see a trail of caribou. The trail is leading this way. I am going to investigate. You and the children go on home. Whatever you can't carry home, cover with stones."

There were no trees where he had killed the caribou. I covered up the rest of the caribou with stones and vegetation. We left for home. As for my husband, he had seen two caribou. He had killed both of them. They were very big caribou. The caribou he had killed were two male caribou we call, *minustinaau*. The male caribou are called this shortly after the mating season. He killed both of them.

He did not kill anymore caribou after that. The caribou were very scarce in those days. It was only very rarely that someone was able to kill some caribou. We had food for a long time from these caribou. He must have killed about twelve caribou that time. We had food for a long time. We could not fish though because there were no lake nearby.

One day, he said, "I saw a lake not far from here. We will travel over there."

We had seen the lake before and had known it to be a good fishing place. We travelled over there and camped for a long time. We managed to reach the lake with all our food. We backtracked our route to our canoe from this lake. We were crossing the river on our toboggans. He suggested that we travel northward after crossing the river. That is what we did. We reached another big river. We crossed it. We came to a stream and travelled upstream, following it. He had seen this area before and he was travelling to a lake he knew about.

He has said, "There is a lake I know about. We will travel to it. We will fish in this lake." We finally reached the lake. We set up our fishing lines. The fish were big and beautiful.

My husband announced, "I am going to look for some caribou tracks. I am going to take our daughter and Andrew with me. We will go and look for some caribou tracks." They left on their trip. The day started out beautiful. The sky was clear but it did not look very clear. It was a prelude to the storm that was to come.

My husband saw some caribou tracks. There were seven caribou and he killed five of them. He wounded two of them. He made a dwelling for the children for the night. He had decided to go after the wounded caribou. He spoke to the children before he left them in their dwelling. He told them that there was a storm coming. "There is storm coming but do not go anywhere when the storm hits before I come back. You will not be able to see anything if you go away from here."

That night, I heard the wind blowing very hard. I could tell from the sound of the trees. After a while, I could hear him as he banged on the toboggans to

shake off the snow. I knew that he had come back. I made the fire.

He said, "There is a problem. I lost my way. I walked the wrong way from our dwelling where I left the children. I could not see anything in front of me." He just happened to walk right into our camp, fortunately. "We will travel in the morning. Take out the fishing lines before we leave," he said.

When we got up in the morning, it was still very windy with blowing snow. We could hardly see anything in front of us. He had been carrying his *aputaanh* in a small caribou skin. He brought this food home. We ate some of the caribou pieces he had brought home. We were very worried about our children who were spending the night out there in this terrible storm.

EM: Was it Lucy, your daughter, and Andrew who were left in the dwelling by themselves?

SK: Yes, that is right.

EM: What happened to your oldest daughter Martha?

SK: Martha was with her brother Andrew. She was the oldest of my children. Lucy was with us back at our camp. Lucy was younger than Martha. Martha was the oldest and then Lucy was born. Andrew was the third youngest. At that time Lucy was with me [and Sarah].

In the morning, we couldn't see anything. We had no idea where to go to get to the children in the dwelling where they were. The second morning, there were periods where the storm let up a bit. My husband decided he was going to look for the children anyway. "I am going anyway," he said. He left. He managed to walk right to where he had made the dwelling for them. The children were not there when he got there. The children had left the dwelling. He could see where their tracks were leading to. He had instructed them to walk to the little stream to guide them home if he should not come back for a long time in case something happened to them. The children's tracks were leading to the stream. The children had reached the stream without wandering astray from it. He caught up with the children in the trees that grew along the stream.

It was a terrible storm that time. We had been very worried about our children. We were thinking that they would do just that, leave the safety of the dwelling before the storm let up and if they did not leave the dwelling, they could freeze to death if they ran out of wood to make a fire. These were the thoughts that were going through our minds.

They had left the dwelling when their father did not come back. They thought that their father was lost in the storm and that is why he could not find them. That is why they left. They had stayed one day and one night in the dwelling. They had decided to start for home the second day.

My husband said, "They walked right to the trees. They were making a fire when I found them." He was able to catch up with them. "I saw some trees ahead of me as I found their tracks. Fortunately, their footprints were still visible and they were leading towards the trees. When I got closer to the trees, I saw the smoke from their fire."

EM: It sounds that they had been thinking about what to do.

SK: Yes, that is true. My husband had said, "I had told them what to do if they did not hear from me for a long time. I told them what they were to do." They were following my instructions.

EM: What is the name of the place where you were at that time?

SK: These places were not named by the Iyiyuu from our area. We were in the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* at that time. The rivers were in the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu*. I have no idea what they called them. The rivers emptied into Ungava Bay. My husband must have known what they were called.³⁰ There is one lake that I knew the name of which was far from the river we were. It is a lake and situated on the river we were on and the lake is called *Natwaakimiy*. We were around that area.

Our grandfather *Katikwiiwaasit* died at that place. He is buried there at *Natwaakimiy*. The other person who is buried near there at *Natwaakimiy* is the old woman who was called *Kachisaiskwaausit*. She was Maggie Sandy's mother. She is buried near that river. These rivers are in the territory of the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu*.

It was fortunate that my children had kept and remembered what their father had instructed them to do. They managed to find the little stream in that terrible storm. Their father had told them that if they followed the course of the stream upstream, they would eventually find our dwelling. We were camped on the lake where the stream empties out. "Once you find the stream, do not leave it and just follow it upstream."

That is what they did. They had gone to the stream and were following it upstream. Their father reached them while they were on the stream. They

³⁰Suzanne Kawapit's husband grew up in the Naskapi territory.

were quite hungry by then. Their father had said, "Andrew had written a note inside the dwelling. I felt very emotional about his note. He had written, 'I went hunting but I did not find any ptarmigan.' I realized then that they were very hungry." When went looking for them, he took cooked food with him. They ate the food their father brought with him. "I increased the size of their fire to give more heat and to warm the food. They ate and drank after I had warmed the food for them."

They came back with their father. That evening, the storm cleared just when I had stopped worrying. It was had been so bad earlier and now it had cleared up.

EM: You have told me that there were hardly any caribou at that time. Did you think that you had a lot of caribou that year considering that the caribou were so scarce?

SK: I certainly did! He had killed seven caribou that time. We left that place after we had fixed the caribou. We travelled to the west. They took another trip after that. This time, he killed nine more caribou. We had a lot of food that time.

EM: I am certain that you made all kinds of clothing for your children with all the caribou skins.

SK: That is certainly true.

EM: I presume you had fixed and tanned all the caribou skins.

SK: Certainly! I prepared all the caribou skins.

EM: Were some of the caribou skins made for snowshoe lacings?

SK: Yes. My husband kept some of the skins for snowshoe lacings. The rest I tanned for clothing and footwear. I was capable of fixing and tanning caribou skins by then. One of the caribou skins was very big and thick but it was soft after I had finished with it. I made moccasins and mitts for all of us from this one caribou skin.

EM: You really had a lot of work to do -

SK: Certainly. I also had to cut the untanned caribou skins into thin strips to be used as lacings for our snowshoes. I helped my husband lace up our snowshoes, the front and the back parts of the snowshoes.

- EM: I suppose that is where you spent the freeze-up? Were you there the whole year?
- SK: Yes, we spent freeze up there but we did not stay there the whole year. We travelled to our area, pulling our canoe with us on a toboggan. We also had to transport our food. They made trips ahead to transport our food before we would break camp each time.
- EM: Did you see some Iyiyuu after a while that year?
- SK: Yes, we saw them. We saw your grandfather Sam Masty and his family. He was around there, too.
- EM: Did you bring some of the caribou fat here for the feasts?
- SK: Yes, we did. We also brought some fresh-water seal fat. We had eaten some that year, too. I really loved the taste of fresh-water seal when I was still living off the land full time. I loved to dip dried fish in the fresh-water seal fat.
- EM: Is it true that the fresh-water seal fat tastes like fish oil?
- SK: Yes, that is true. The fresh-water seal fat tastes almost like fish oil. My husband used to kill fresh-water seals whenever we travelled and hunted in that area, in the north. When we did not live with other people, it took us a long time to finish one seal. The seals were fat and yielded a lot of oil. The fresh-water seals seemed bigger than the adult marine seals. It seems that most of the seals killed out in the bay are small but the seals killed at *Minaskwaa-uwaachikunipiy* [Upper Seal lake] were hardly ever small. The seals there were big.
- EM: Even the ones that were not adult seals yet?
- SK: Yes, that is true.
- EM: I imagine that the adult [fresh water] seals were much bigger than the adult marine seals. Is this true?
- SK: Yes, the adult seals were bigger than the adult marine seals. They were much bigger than the seals out in the bay. They tasted real good. I loved the taste of the fresh-water seal intestine very much. The bigger intestine used to be turned inside out and pieces of the seal fat would be pushed into the intestine. It is really delicious when it is cooked like that.

Your father [Samson Masty] was crazy about that when we lived with them. Your father and uncle Isaac used to say to me, "I would like you to prepare the seal intestine for me." I would make one for each of them. They really loved the taste of fresh-water seal. They could tolerate a lot of fat from animals like the freshwater seals because that is what they usually ate. They used to eat them occasionally because your grandfather [Sam Masty] used to kill freshwater seals. Naturally, when they had become able hunters, your father [Samson Masty] and your uncle [Isaac Masty] used to kill the seals themselves. I imagine your grandfather used to eat seals when his sons killed them. His sons were skilful hunters and killed more game than he did as he grew older. His sons were skilful hunters. They were very good people when they were still alive. They were good and skilful hunters.

I have heard your grandfather's songs. He liked to sing. One of the ways men got their songs is while they were making something like snowshoes and toboggans among other things. That is where they usually got many of their songs.

EM: I really love to hear more of your adventures out on the land.

SK: It was summer time when we last saw them, your grandfather and his family. They had gone through the same hunger as we had. We had been very hungry when we were still living with them before the freeze up. They had killed one caribou while we were still living with them. After we parted, they got hungrier than us. It was that time when I told you that we had gone walking to get to the caribou my husband had killed. There was a river flowing there. We had seen it from a distance. We had no way of knowing that your grandfather was on the other side of that river. In this part of the country there are some crops of trees around the mountains and up the mountains there. A crop of trees can be seen from a long distance on the barren landscape. The crop of trees on our side must have been quite visible from across the river. They had said, "The trees where you must have camped and eaten caribou were visible to us."

We had no way of knowing that they were there or they, us. It was only after Christmas when your grandfather saw some caribou tracks on one of his outings. He killed the caribou but I do not know how many he had killed.

Your father told this story...I do not know if your grandfather had already seen the caribou tracks and was out tracking them down. Your father [Samson Masty] said, "We killed quite a few ptarmigan while my father was gone. He did not come home for a long time into the night. He was not usually this late without a cause. I was hopeful about his hunting expedition. When the ptarmigan had been cooked, I could hardly eat because I was so

anxious for my father to come home. I was anxious because I wanted to hear if there was a good reason for him to be so late. Finally, he came home and had good news. He had killed some caribou."

I do not know how many caribou your grandfather killed that time. That year, it was the first time we saw a plane flying in that area. The lights from the plane were visible at night. We saw the plane's lights.

Your grandfather had seen the same plane that night he was late and told this story. "I was walking home after I had butchered the caribou. I was carrying the *aputaanh* on my back. I sat down to rest for awhile. I watched the plane as it flew and watched its blinking coloured lights." That was the first year that we saw planes overhead in our territory.

They had gone travelling downstream from where they had been. We had gone upstream where we had the other caribou. From there, we travelled downstream and got onto the river. My husband saw signs of them travelling down-river quite some time before. We were still transporting the food before we actually moved. They had eaten the caribou quite some time ago when we saw their trail. They had come back to *Achikunipiy* to do some trapping. That is where the otters and martens could be found. I imagine that is the reason why they had gone back to the *Achikunipiy* soon after their caribou hunting up on the barren lands - to do some trapping for fur-bearing animals.

That is what my husband did, too. We travelled back to the *Achikunipiy* to do some trapping. When we got to the river that empties into the *Achikunipiy*, there is a lake nearby and that is where we camped. We saw signs of otter there. I imagine that my husband was hunting otters to his heart's content. There were many signs of otter activity around that lake. The lake has many islands. The otters had trails leading from island to island. There were many burrows near the shoreline where there was a lot of activity. There were many burrows there. My husband killed a freshwater seal while we were camped at that lake. There is a mountain there called *Wiiywaapiskuchiy* [Quartz Mountain]. That is where we were camped, to the east of the mountain. Your grandfather were to the west of the mountain. They had killed another caribou.

EM: Is *Wiiyaskimiy* situated near the *Wiiywaapiskuchiy*?

SK: No, it is not. The lake called *Kaminapiskwaasiy* is there. It is a very big lake. *Wiiywaapiskuchiy* is situated to the east of *Kaminapiskwaasiy*. The reason why the mountain is called that is because most of the stones on that mountain are *wiiywaapiskw* [white and red quartz]. Some of the quartz is red. They were beautiful stones. The children liked to play with them. The mountain is

covered with white and red quartz. Some of the stones are flat.

James was still young at that time. He would go to the areas where there was no snow to pick these stones. He had no pockets but he would fill his mitts with stones. He would say, "I only looked for the reddest stones and took only those." He would take as many as he could and bring them to our dwelling. He would do this whenever we lived near the mountain and if there was exposed earth already. He would spend the whole day picking and bringing the stones to our dwelling. He loved to play with the coloured stones. The stones were nice for children to play with.

Our grandfather [*Kamichapaut*] used to stay around there. He would trap to the west of there. They used to kill many otters from there.

EM: I remember once when we were there. My father had killed many otters. My mother had cooked the otter livers so they would not spoil. I must have eaten them while she was out chopping wood. I got very sick from them.

SK: You must have been quite sick. You are not supposed to eat a lot of the otter liver. If one eats too much, they usually end up with a headache. You must have eaten more than you should have and you being too young to eat much.

One of the ways to eat them is to mixed them with some red sour currants. The berries would be from summer and would still be good from last summer [because they freeze before over-ripening in the fall]. They would be picked in the areas where the earth was exposed. The otter livers would be crushed and then the sour currants would be added and mixed and would be eaten like that. I imagine you did not do that.

Your campsites must be looking very old by now. You and your family used to hunt around there, too, at *Wiiywaapiskuchiy*. The lake is quite big to the south of the *Wiiywaapiskuchiy*. That is where your grandfather [Sam Masty] used to hunt.

One time, your mother told me this. "One time, when we were camped there, we used the large pieces of flat stones as counters for our things. They fit nicely on the inside edge of our dwelling. My father-in-law [Sam Masty] brought in his flat stone to use as a stand also. The children, his grandchildren, were running about as usual. He said, 'I wonder why I put this stone here like this? My grandchildren might trip and fall on it.' Having said this, he picked up his stone counter and threw it outside. He certainly could not keep his counter very long!"

EM: My mother used to say that he taught them - his daughter and daughters-in-

law - how to look after their children. When our children had just started walking, he would fell trees and place them across the path leading to place where we would get the water in summer and winter. This was to prevent the children from going there and falling into the water.

SK: He really loved his grandchildren.

Today, your grandfather George [Suzanne's brother] came in to see me. He said to me, "I have come to see how you are. I am very unhappy when I know that you are sick and it seems to be quite often these days. I told my daughter that I would come and see you and see how your health is. I do not forget you. I often wonder how your health is." He stayed a while and then he went home. He said he would come and see me again. I told him that I also worry about him and think of him. He is also quite sick sometimes. He gets sick quite suddenly with his illness sometimes. It was suggested that he not stay far from the village after what happened to him in the fall. He was quite sick and he had to be Medivac'd [emergency flight] from his camp. He is poor for worrying about me and being sickly the way he is. He said to me, "Do our sisters come and see you?" He meant Maggie and when Annie was still here. I had to tell him that they have not come and see me. I said to him, "I would not have seen them yet if I did not see them in church since they have returned from the bush." He said, "I am surprised at them. I thought that they would be visiting our sister and talking to her." But they never come and see me. He is usually the one who comes and see how I am. I feel sorry for him. Naturally, I never hear from Sandy. He never comes to see me. My children are the same way. Peter's father [James] is the only one who comes to see me every night to say evening prayers with me and for me before I go to bed. He is the only one who does that for me. But the others, they hardly ever come. I do not remember the last time I saw Isaiah. My son Andrew comes and sees me sometimes. Hi son James comes and sees me, too. He usually gives me some game that he kills - like ptarmigan and fish. He gave me some fish recently but they did not bring any porcupine. They said that the porcupine must have all been taken by the Chisasibi people. There are many trails made by them. "Whenever we see some trees eaten by porcupine, someone has already been there. That is why they could not find any porcupine." Isaac went with the chief to his camp. He did not sleep there. He found two porcupine. The chief had said to him, "Give one of the porcupines to your grandfather, meaning the chief's father [John Mukash] and give the other one to your grandmother [me]." That is what Isaac did. I feel that many more porcupine had been hunted this winter than the previous years. Recently, Lucy said, "My son Samson said, 'Steven, Mary Kawapit's son, found a porcupine. It is the first time that I have seen a porcupine that size. He did not take out it's intestine before coming home. It sure was heavy.'" The porcupine must have been very fat. Lucy said that they did not

give her any. But they had said that the porcupine was very fat.

EM: I feel quite hungry!

SK: I wonder when the last time was that I ate porcupine. I wonder who it was who gave me some the last time.

EM: You told me you were far from here, in the barren lands.

SK: Yes, that is true. We were around the place where the rivers flow the other way, into the Ungava Bay. That is where we stayed at that time. I have told you that there is a lake right on the big river which is called *Natwaakimiy*. I have not seen it myself. It is there where our grandfather *Katikwiiwaasit* died and buried. The other person is an old woman called *Kachisaiyskwaausit* and my late husband's father who was known as *Waapmakustuwiiyiyu*. He had told me that they were further downstream from the river when his father died and is buried. These people I have mentioned are all buried on the same river but not necessarily in the same place. There are more of our relatives buried out there, the ones we have known and heard of and others we have never even heard of. They are all buried out on the land.

EM: Could you tell me more about your adventures on the land when you and your husband were raising your children there. Were there times when you did not have anything to eat for a long time?

SK: Only sometimes. Sometimes, it happened to us. But we were not very devastated by lack of food when my husband and I were the providers of our family. We were never so very hungry. But some Iyiyuu were devastated by lack of food at times. I do not remember if there was a time when we were very hungry as a family when we could not feed our children for a long time. I suppose it was because both of us were constantly in pursuit of food for our family all the time. As our children grew older, they began to help in the hunting and the work. We seemed to get better once our children helped in our survival. My eldest son [Andrew Kawapit] was a successful hunter early in his life. He would go with his father every day, all the time, when he went hunting and tending traps. He learned from his father. His father taught him all he knew. I have heard him recently talking about what his father had taught him how to hunt and what to do. He mentioned the amount of knowledge his father taught him throughout his life. He does not forget what his father told him and taught him.

EM: I was just thinking from what you have told me about yourself that your husband was a successful hunter because you did not hinder him in any way because of your knowledge in what to do with your children and your home.

He was free to hunt and trap all he wanted and did not have to worry about you because of your skills.

SK: Yes, certainly, that is what I did. Sometimes, when we were to move camp, he would just go out of our dwelling as soon as he had finished dressing to make the trail. I would be the one to take down our dwelling and pack our things and just follow his trail until I got to where our next camp would be. He would make a marker to show where we were to make camp. I would construct our dwelling myself because he would already be gone himself to do the hunting and trapping when I got there with our belongings and children. There were also times where he did not even put fishing lines in the water and I would have to do that. I would put in the fishing lines first and then start in the erecting of our dwelling. After I had finished our dwelling, I would go and check the fish lines. There were times that there would already be a fish on the hooks. I would go inside then and cook supper. Many times, he would come home in the night and not bring something to eat, not even a ptarmigan. I would be the one to fill his stomach and appease his hunger that day. He would not bring something to eat most of the time because he was setting up his traps. That would be the reason why he did not bring back something to eat.

EM: He left the fishing up to you while he tended to traps.

SK: Yes, it was only sometimes that he would put in the fish lines and we would put in the nets together. But most of the time, he would leave me to do the fishing. I was the one to put in the fishing lines and the nets most of the time - even in the winter time which meant that chiselling the ice was also up to me. Many times, I did that.

EM: You also told me that you used to take your children somewhere else to do some fishing the whole day.

SK: Yes, that is what I would do when they were small. When my eldest daughter and Lucy were getting older, they would be the ones to go and set some fishing lines away from our camp and come home in the evenings from setting the fishing lines and nets. Sometimes, they would sleep out there to tend to the nets when the days were not very cold. We always had two stoves. One of the stoves was small and this is what they would use in their small dwelling.

EM: When you had caught a lot of fish, did you dry some of them?

SK: Yes, I would dry some of the fish for future use. I would make some fish powder, too, to make pemmican. I would make the fish powder if there was

enough fish to do it with. Many times, we would camp at a lake for a long time where we found it to be a good fishing place. We would set our nets all about the lake which we had found to be good. We would take off the nets in one spot and try another spot. We would catch more in different spots. We found these lakes to yield more fish than others when we were far inland. It is these lakes we would travel to most of the winter. We did not make long trips over long distances in the middle of the winter. We moved from one lake to another which we had found to be good fishing places. It was during the coldest time of the year where a main camp would be set up and the men would go on long expeditions themselves to set their traps. We women would stay in our camp and tend to the fishing and hunt other small game. It was during this time when the caribou were not coming to this part of the country. There were hardly any caribou.

EM: Were the men gone for many days when they set their traps in different places?

SK: Yes, that is right. They would be gone for many days to set their traps. Sometimes, they would be gone for many days when they would make trips to the post at Fort Chimo for some supplies and trade. They would be gone for many days if they made a trip over there. They walked over there. Sometimes, they would start out at *Ipisikimis* and walk over to Fort Chimo to trade. They were gone for many days when they would start out from *Ipisikimis* and walk over to Fort Chimo and back with heavy loads. They would be gone for days to set up their trap lines and check them for a couple of days before coming home. In those days, there were hardly any porcupine, either. It was only sometimes that they were found. Beaver were not abundant in those days, either. There was a time when the beaver was no longer a trade fur. No one bothered to trap beaver that much. If someone found a beaver lodge, it was left alone. If we were not very hungry, we did not disturb the beaver lodges that we would find from time to time. We would trap the beaver when we were quite hungry. It was trapped then. I wonder why they did not take the beaver as a trade item then.

EM: I heard that the *wamistikusu* did not want the beaver pelts anymore at one time because they had all the beaver coats and beaver hats they needed. The trapping of beaver was very successful and was no longer desirable when they had all they wanted. The beaver skins are much bigger than the other kinds of fur to make clothes from. It did not take as many skins to make a beaver [fur] coat as a mink coat. As you have told me that the *Iviyuu* villages to the south and the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* trapped beaver for trade, too and it was more abundant to the south. I guess that is where the over-trapping happened. There was a great surplus of beaver pelts after many years of trade with the company.

- SK: Yes, I see. It is said that there was an abundance of beaver to the south of *Ipsikimis*. I guess that is where the beaver was mostly trapped. But to the north of *Ipsikimis*, there were hardly any beaver living there or growing there. I guess the habitat of the beaver was more to the south of the *Ipsikimis* and around it.
- EM: I would like you to tell me more stories about you and your family's adventures. You have told me that since you got married, you and your husband and children hardly ever lived with other families all year round while you were out on the land.
- SK: Yes, that is true. That is what we always did when my husband and I were still in great health to do all kinds of work required of one in this kind of life. We hardly ever lived with other families. Your late grandfather [Sam Masty], your father's father, was the same way. This was when his wife was still alive. He continued on this way even after the death of his wife. He only lived with your father [Samson Masty] and his other children who were his daughters and sons. It was a common practice where the childrens' winter clothing would be made before he left the post and the Iyiyuu. Their moccasins would be made and other clothing which their father kept until winter. They used to live and hunt alone as a family even though your grandfather was the only adult. The eldest daughter [third child] was first of his children to die after his wife. The mother of your grandmother [Sam's wife] also died quite soon after her daughter. She lived two years after the death of her daughter [Sam's wife]. Sam's children grew older. Your father [Samson Masty] and your uncle [Isaac Masty] were the first two children who learned to do all kinds of work. They also learned the women's work. They were very good at skinning animals like otters, beaver and marten and all other kinds of fur-bearing animals. They also learned to sew their clothing. Your uncle used to say, "What I do when I have holes in my moccasins, is sharpen the needles. I make sure that I have an easy time at sewing my moccasins." They were skilled at many kinds of work at an early age [by necessity; after their mother's and grandmother's deaths]. Naturally, they did not live with other families when they got married. Your aunt, Margaret's [Sheshamush-Audlarock's] mother also died at a young age. I wonder how many they were when their mother died. I think they were only two of them, Margaret and Lucy. Their mother was sent to Moose Factory and that is where she died, your aunt.

IYIYUU SPIRITUALITY - CARIBOU MYTHOLOGY³¹

EM: I suppose that when the caribou disappeared from this area and there was hardly any hunting and fishing equipment to trade with, is when the Iyiyuu were in a period of hard times.

SK: Certainly, certainly! That is when the Iyiyuu were very poor as they lived on the land.

EM: Did the Iyiyuu know why the caribou disappeared from this area?

SK: It is said that some Iyiyuu knew why the caribou were not there anymore. Some of them knew, mainly the old men. They were the ones who had great knowledge about most things and why they happened. They were the ones who knew why the caribou were not there anymore.

It is said that the caribou had a dwelling [*wiich*] where they lived. It is said that the caribou live inside a huge mountain. It is said that when a ship sails around this piece of landmass and when it is on the east coast [*wapinutach*], the mountain can be seen from the ship. The mountain can be seen from the ship when it is on the west coast. That is the home of the caribou it was said. The mountain looks like there is snow on top of it but it is not snow but it is the hair of the caribou that makes it look like that when it sheds its fur in the summer. That is why the mountain looks like there is snow on it but it is only their shedded hair. The entrance way of the mountain is facing the east [*wapinutach*; lit. where the sun comes up], it is said. The *utitikumaa* [trail made by many caribou] that leads inside the mountain is deeply grooved into the ground. It was said that a big caribou's antlers would just be barely seen when it walks inside the deep trench in the ground made by the caribou as they went in and out of their dwelling inside the mountain. It was that when the caribou all went inside their home inside the mountain, sometimes, they did not come out for a long time. The caribou were not around this area when this happens, when they go inside their dwelling. That is what was said. After some time, the caribou come out of their dwelling again and then their presence on the land was seen again. They were there again. But they did not come out every year or summer. But if they come out every summer and winter, I suppose then there were many caribou on the land.

It was said that long time, a very long time ago, an Iyiyuu became a caribou. It is an Iyiyuu who made this happen. It was an Iyiyuu who became a caribou.

³¹For the northern (orig. barren land) Cree, the caribou represents the highest order of animal in a system of spiritual hierarchy that parallels the (tangible) value of the animal to the people. Thus, many origin stories and key legends from this region place the caribou in a highly esteemed position.

It is said that, a long time ago, a man had a time like a woman does when she has her menstruation. It is said that a man had the same thing happen to him. One time, when this man had his "time", his father made a small dwelling for him away from the main camp. While he was living inside his little dwelling, he felt the presence of another person other than his father. His father was the only one who could come and see him. His mother was not allowed to come and check on him.

As for the man, he would feel someone else coming to his dwelling during the night. He thought that this person who came at night was calling to him. He would rush to see who it was but he did not see anyone. This was happening to him because a caribou wanted him as a son-in-law.

One night, he got ready for the person who spoke to him during the night. He had his bow and arrows ready. He got ready to go as soon as he would hear the person. He watched the night as it progressed and waited for the time when the person would come. The time came closer. He would hear the person calling his name.

Finally, the time was upon him and he heard his name being called. He bounded out of his dwelling. He saw a caribou turning around away from the entrance of his dwelling. He tried to shoot it with his arrows but he could not take a good aim because the caribou would run behind the trees. The caribou was a *pinuu*. Sometimes, he could almost let his arrow go. After a while, the caribou came to an area where there caribou tracks all over the place. The caribou kept on running. Suddenly, he came upon a dwelling, a dwelling like an Iyiyuu would have. The caribou ran into the dwelling.

He heard the caribou saying once it was inside this dwelling, "*Ntanisa*, go and bring the man I brought home for you to marry."

A woman came out of the dwelling. The woman was like and dressed like any other woman. The woman took him inside the dwelling. That is how the Iyiyuu came to live with the caribou. He lived with them a long time.

After a long time, the older caribou knew that the parents of this man were missing him a lot. He said to his daughter...The man could understand the caribou when they talked because they spoke the same language as he did, the Iyiyuu language.

The Elder caribou said to his daughter, "*Miya, Ntanis*, your husband has to leave you. His parents really miss him. He will have to go back to his parents." The daughter started crying. Elder Caribou said to his daughter,

"*Ntanis*, do not cry so. He is not going to leave us for good. He will always come to see us because this is where we will always live."

The man left and went home to his parents. Before, he left his wife had said to him, "Whenever you are hungry, come back to where you last saw me." That was what the man would do. Whenever the *Iyiyuu* were hungry, the man would go and see his wife. There were always caribou there. When he would go there, he would see them living in the same dwelling and in the same places inside the dwelling. He would always get some caribou for the *Iyiyuu* to eat whenever he would go to this area. That is how it was.

Naturally, there must have been one person who was jealous of the man who always got some caribou whenever he would set out to get some at that place.

The man always said to the *Iyiyuu* whenever he went to gather up the caribou to chase toward their snares, "Let the *nusatikuuch* [female caribou] and the *ipisatikus* and *itikus* [both young caribou] get out of the area where the snares are." He said this because these were his wife and child.

The *Iyiyuu* who was jealous of the man said, "I am going to go to this area before he does. He always wants to be the first go to this area to get the caribou." The man who lived with the caribou knew what the other man was thinking and saying about him. The man said to his father, "I will not go to the place I used to go. I have heard that someone else is going to go."

The jealous man got home and said, "There is no sign of caribou anywhere where they used to be. There is no dent in the snow where they used to be found." The man used to find the caribou on the lake beside the mountain where the caribou's dwelling was.

The man said to his father after the other man came home, "Father, I am still going to go where I usually go even though someone else has already gone."

He left and came atop the hill where he used to look down upon the lake. Whenever the lake came into his full view, he would see the caribou all sitting together like they usually did inside their dwelling, his wife and her family. A woman would come walking towards him even before he reached, especially if he was hungry. The young caribou would come with her.

The woman say to him, "Let it be that the *ipisatikus* and *itikus* pass through the snares and that no attempts are made to shoot them with arrows." That is what the woman said to him, she who was his caribou wife. The woman would give him some food, like dried caribou meat, consisting of one whole

caribou's back. His wife would say to him, "Take this and eat it when you get home." That is what he did.

The jealous man said this about the man, "I am going to shoot all the caribou that I can with my arrows. I do not know why he always says to let some of them get through and not be touched. I am going to shoot the caribou that will not be caught in the snares." That is what the jealous man said.

The caribou snares were put up along the shoreline in the trees. The caribou were chased to the snares. As always, two of the caribou got through. It was amazing how these two caribou could not be caught in the snares. That is how it always happened. And so it was this time too. The two caribou got through the snares and were not caught.

The jealous man shot the caribou and killed one. He killed the caribou that the other man said not to touch. One young caribou got away. He could not shoot this one.

The man knew that his caribou wife was killed. He did not come to the snares but kept on walking to go after his son, the young caribou. He knew where the young caribou would go. He followed it and reached him.

The other Iyiyuu followed his tracks when he did not come back. They found his snowshoes along his trail after reaching the young caribou's trail. He had taken off his snowshoes. He had stepped inside the young caribou's footprints. He had not taken many steps when he himself was making the tracks of male caribou. The Iyiyuu had become a caribou forever. That is how the Iyiyuu became a real caribou.

I imagine that is the small dwelling where the Iyiyuu lived with the caribou where the caribou used to come out of that mountain.

There had to be one person who spoiled it with his jealousy of not being able to do the same as the other.

EM: If the other had not been jealous and did not kill the female caribou like the man asked, would there have been caribou all the time when the Iyiyuu would look for them?

SK: Yes, that is what had been told. The caribou would always come. The caribou did not come back to where it was always found after this incident.

Much later, another Iyiyuu tried to get back the caribou. The Iyiyuu said he would go to this mountain where the caribou lived. I suppose the mountain

where the caribou lived had already been known and seen by the Iyiyuu. The Iyiyuu left to go and see the caribou. I do not know if he was gone for two nights or one night on this mission. I think he was gone for two nights. He had been traveling in the air all this time because of his powers. When he came back, he told of what he had seen inside the home of the caribou. The Iyiyuu was quoted as saying, "I went around the mountain and looked inside. It is enormous inside the mountain and there are many, many caribou inside it. At the back of the area sits an Iyiyuu." It was presumed that it was the Iyiyuu who married the caribou who is sitting at the back of the home of the caribou. "The Iyiyuu who became a caribou lives there," the man was quoted as saying. I guess that is the reason why the caribou did not come out because the Iyiyuu had been with them all this time.

EM: Is this where the caribou had taken him when he first sought him out as son-in-law?

SK: Yes, certainly, that is where the Elder caribou had taken him. After that, he lived with them forever. That is the reason why the caribou came back again, it is said, and was in this area after that.

I told you about the home of the caribou that is situated inside a mountain. It is told that the entrance of caribou dwelling is facing the West. It is told that the entrance of the dwelling is very deep into the ground. The antlers of the biggest caribou barely can be seen at ground level when they come out of their dwelling. That is how deep the entrance way is.

There was another time, long time ago, when the caribou did not come out of their dwelling. There was another who had powers. He told the people that he was going to the home of the caribou and get them to come back to them. He knew that there was an Iyiyuu living with the caribou. He left, airborne. The Iyiyuu was gone for three nights. He just kept flying about.

When he got back, he told his story. "I finally saw the dwelling of the caribou. I just flew around the mountain once. I just went around the mountain. I saw the dwelling entrance as I flew by. I saw the Iyiyuu sitting at the back of the dwelling. That is where he is sitting. He is completely naked." The Iyiyuu he saw must have been the Iyiyuu who turned into a caribou and lived with the caribou. It was said that the Iyiyuu was there and living with the caribou inside their mountain dwelling. The Iyiyuu had become a real caribou.

The Iyiyuu who had gone to see the home of the caribou returned to his camp after a while. He flew home. He fell outside the entrance of their dwelling.

It is said that when someone was flying around by his own powers, he/she falls at entrance of their dwelling when their trip is over. The fellow dwellers hear him falling at the entrance way. The traveller is taken inside his dwelling.

Anyway, the Iyiyuu was taken inside the dwelling and was laid where he usually sleeps. After a while he moved. He regained consciousness. He was given something to drink.

Later, he said to the Iyiyuu in his group, "I think that we should have some hope of seeing some caribou. I feel that I have seen the home of the caribou. When I was coming home, I think some caribou followed me home. I believe some caribou followed me home. But it will be a while before they reach our territory." And so it was. It happened like he said it would. They saw some caribou later on.

It was from that time on that the caribou came to their area every year. They caribou returned. It is believed that it was this Iyiyuu who brought the caribou back to the Iyiyuu territory.

I remember when I was young hearing about a time when the caribou did not come back to this territory. I also heard about the time when the caribou returned to this area. There were many caribou then. It also returned during the summer time. The caribou came here when it was at its fattest during the summer time. The caribou came here, *wiskuuch* [when the caribou's antlers loose their velvety covering], *wiaskuuch* [male caribou during mating season] and *nusatikuuch* [female caribou].

It is said that many caribou were killed in those days. It is also said that the *Waapinutawiiyiuyuuch* were not very careful about the caribou. They were absolutely disrespectful to the food whenever they killed it, it is said of them. They would leave the food which they did not need at the time. Whenever they killed many caribou, they thought that they will never be hungry again, it is said of them. That is the reason why they did not think to show more respect to the animals they killed, it was said of them. When the caribou did not come one year, they were very poor and hungry. There were times when the caribou did not show up for one year. They were very poor and hungry during those times. They were always starving to death it is said of the *waapinutawiiyiuyuuch*.

They made themselves very poor because they did not seem to care to take good care of the food when it was there for them.

IYIYUU SPIRITUALITY - DRUMMING, SONGS, AND DREAMS

SK: I am just thinking about the ones who used the Iyiyuu drums these days. I am reminded about the drums of the past. It is said that the drums of the old people in those days were louder. The drum was louder especially when the cover was made out of caribou skins. The way they made them, the drums were very loud. But today, the way they make the drums are not the same as the ones made by the Iyiyuu of the past. Sometimes, the drum had only one skin surface and they were very big. The drums of the elders were very big. The drums were very loud, too.

The drum was as pleasant to hear as any musical instrument that we might hear these days. Some of the Iyiyuu were very good at working with the drum, the elders. When the elders wanted the people to dance, they would drum a different tune. They would drum so that the sound of it would want to make you dance. But today, the ones who sing/chant with a drum do not come close to the way the elders of the past used to use the drum.

EM: Did the drummer just drum and sing at the same time when he wanted people to dance?

SK: They would sing, too. They would sing. That is the reason why the drummer was said to *kichaskuum*. That is how they knew it was time to dance because the drummer is drumming and singing a different beat. When the Iyiyuu hear this kind of a beat, the ones who wanted to dance would get up and make a circle around the hearth and danced around it. That is what they did. The old man would beat his drum differently for the dance. His drum would sound good enough to make you want to dance [*naasch a chi miywaawaapiich*]. The old man who drummed was very careful in how he handled the drum and how he wanted to make the drum sound. The Iyiyuu of the past drummed differently and handled the drum in a different way. They were very careful with it. The way they drummed was very pleasant to hear. When an old man wanted to people to dance, he would announce, "*akuhi cha kichaskuuman* [I will sing a dancing song]." He would say this because he wanted people to dance. The ones who wanted to dance would make a circle around the hearth of the dwelling. The women would also dance. They danced around the hearth. I wonder how the dancers did not mess up the floor of boughs! Their dance steps could not be heard.

The dancers would listen to the way the old man was singing and drumming and danced accordingly. When the old man changed his beat and song, the dancers danced a different dance, too. That is how the drum was used.

EM: Did you ever see these dances?

SK: Yes, I have seen some dancing in my day. When we lived with our grandfather *Kamichapaut*, that is when I would see some dancing. We used to live with other old men from Chisasibi and other *Chisasipiiwiiyiyuu*. It was during these times that drumming and dancing would take place. It was not just here that we would meet the *Chisasipiiwiiyiyuu*. We would meet them out on the land. We would also meet some *Nichikuniiwiiyiyuu* and *Waaskaikanisiwiiyiyuu*. The old men from these groups had drums, too. These are the times I would see some dancing take place, also.

EM: Did you used to get up and dance, too?

SK: No, I did not get up and dance because I was very young when these dances took place. It was the only the adults, old women and young girls who could dance because they knew how to dance. The old women used to dance, too, it is said.

EM: It sounds very exciting and fun.

SK: It was a lot of fun and exciting to see the dancing, singing and the drumming. I was very young when I saw this take place. I am just barely remembering these times when the *Iyiyuu* could still dance and use the drum. I barely remember these times when the Elders had drums. There were different size drums. Some Elders' drums were bigger than others. They would use these drums to sing and for the dance.

EM: Did they make up these songs?

SK: Yes, that is true. It is the old men who compose their own songs to sing. It is said that the *Iyiyuu* really loved to hear our grandfather *Kamichapaut* sing his songs. He would sing about the animals that he hunted. That was what some of the elders' songs were about. It is said that he was a good singer and song composer. It is also said of him that he was very good at drumming. He knew how to use the drum.

Our grandfather *Nutachikwaau* had the same reputation with his composing, singing and drumming. The other old Grandfather who had the same reputation was *Imiskwaapaas*. I do remember some of the old men of the past but I do not remember how they looked. I barely remember having seen them.

It is said that the old women were very good dancers, too. I suppose it is because they were able to do this most of their lives. They were able to dance. The old women, young girls and the old men were able to dance. The young men danced too.

EM: Did the youth have girlfriends and boyfriends?

SK: I am sure that they did!

EM: Didn't the Iyiyuu also use the drum to give thanks and show gratitude to the Creator of things after and before feasts?

SK: Definitely, definitely! That was one of the uses of the drum, to give thanks after the feast. I have seen this being done. After a feast, the old men would sing to give thanks and after that there would be a dance. This was to show happiness and gratitude for the food.

EM: I would think that it was much more calm when the drum was in use for these things than the whole range of instruments used when dancing in the *waamistikusiu* culture.

SK: That is certainly true. It was more calm in general in those days. It was much more soothing when only the drum was in use and the singing. Things are not as tranquil when today's musical instruments are used for singing and dancing.

The Iyiyuu composed their songs from the activities they did while out on the land. They sang songs about the things they made to use in their lives like snowshoes and toboggans. They also composed songs about their hunting and trapping. That is where they got their songs from. They sang about everything they did, every kind of work they did.

The snowshoes were very beautiful when they were done. The toboggans were the same way. They were also made very well and decorated beautifully. The snowshoes and toboggans were always painted with *wiimin* as beautifully as one could. The snow shovels were also decorated. That is how a man made his wife's snowshoes, toboggan and snow shovel. The man created his own songs as he worked to make these things for his wife and his own and for others he made for. He would create his songs as he worked to get the animals for his survival and sang songs about the animals in his domain. He would get his songs in all that he did in his life. That is the reason why it was easy for them to sing. It was the job of the old men to sing. They sang about everything. They got their songs from everything in their lives. They liked to sing, too. The Iyiyuu were happy to sing. Even the young men had songs of their own.

It is said, some of the songs came from their dreams. The Iyiyuu would create songs about their dreams and how they dreamt about themselves. Some of the songs of the Iyiyuu came from their dreams. That is why it was

easy for them to make their songs because of the things they themselves experienced.

EM: Did the women have songs, too?

SK: Certainly! The women had their own songs, too, especially the old women. The old women were the ones who were very good at making songs or had great songs. They also got their songs from the work they did in their lives. They got their songs from tanning caribou skins and helping their husbands to lace the snowshoes. They had a lot of work in their lives. They certainly had a lot of things to sing about and got their songs from all of that.

EM: Did the women use the drum, too?

SK: Certainly. The old women used the drum to sing, too, it is said of them. They would use the drum to sing, too.

In those days, the Iyiyuu used to live in big groups. Sometimes, there were many dwellings in a camp. They said that everyone would gather in the largest dwelling and that is where the people would sing their songs. After all the old men had sung, then all the women would sing. The old women would be the last ones to sing. That is what they did, it is said. Some of the old women were known to be very good singers. Some were very good at doing everything. People loved to hear their songs when they sang them. They also had songs to dance to. They had dance songs.

When an old person finished their songs that they wanted to sing just for listening, he would tell the others, "I will now sing a different song. *Aku cha kichaskiiman*." This was an indication that he wanted people to dance because he was going to sing his dance song. He would say, "*cha kichaskiiman*" to indicate that he would be beating the drum to a dance beat. He would sing a different song because he wanted people to dance. He would beat the drum differently than he did when he was just singing for listening.

It is said that our grandmother *Chuskuminas* was a very good singer. She was also known to be very good at tanning caribou skins. People loved to hear her sing. Most of the old women had songs deriving from tanning caribou. They were experts at tanning the caribou skins. They created their songs from tanning caribou and from all their work.

Naturally, the women also knew what to sing about from their dreams. Some of their dreams tell of 'someone' talking to them as if in a waking state. Other times, the songs came from when a person is awake and feels that 'someone' is talking to them. Their songs would tell of these experiences and in the song

would be what the 'someone' was saying to them. This was true for both men and women.

EM: When the Iyiyuu dreamt like that, who was talking to them?

SK: Sometimes, a person will dream that someone is talking to me like anyone would be in a waking state. It could be anyone seen or unseen. They would make songs out of what the person was saying to them. They would tell their dreams that had meaning to them through songs. That is where some of the songs came from.

EM: Who did they think was talking to them?

SK: It was the animals that were talking to them. Some people would think in their dreams that someone is talking to them just like a person is talking but actually it was the spirit of the animal that was talking to them in their dreams. It was the spirit of the animal[s] that was talking to them in their dreams.

EM: They certainly did amazing things.

SK: That is true. They did some amazing things in those days. Most of the time, a person knew what to do with things or what to do because 'someone' had talked to them and gained knowledge about certain things that way. They would think that this 'someone' has spoken to them just like any other person and heard clearly what the 'someone' was saying to them. It was not just a thought. They would take what that 'someone' was saying to them and would make their songs as such. Sometimes, they would dream that someone is telling them something. That is how the dreamer would know what to do. It is said that it is the spirit of the animal that is talking to the dreamer.

It was said that when a person died suddenly when they were not known to be sick, they died because the spirit of the animals had left them suddenly. All the animal spirits that were in him left him and the hunter dies, too. I guess it was deemed that the spirits of the animal that had sustained him while he was alive had left him, therefore he dies, too.

For some, it was seemed that singing came very naturally to them. Their songs were very clear to all who heard them. It was the spirit of the animal that helped to be that good. I have heard many times about an Iyiyuu who everyone liked to hear sing. Some of his songs would be in a story form and would be understood that they got this story or information from the animal spirit world. In their songs, they would tell exactly what the 'someone' was saying to them in their dreams. They were certain that the 'someone' was

talking to them directly just like the waking people do to them in their waking states. That is how clear the information or story was in their songs.

[With contact,] that was the beginning of how the *wamistikusiu* came to know about the Iyiyuu and that they had songs to sing.

The Iyiyuu got their songs from their very own way of life. He got his songs from the things he made. The women were the same way. Some of them were very good singers. Some men were more skilled than others in the things they made and so were the women. They were more skilled than other women in making some things. It is the ones who were skilful makers of certain things and all things who had many songs.

EM: Did your husband have some songs?

SK: Yes, he had songs of his own. He had many songs. He was like the Iyiyuu of long ago. He had songs for everything and whatever that he made [e.g. toboggans, snowshoes, snow shovels].

The songs of the Iyiyuu came from their work and what they thought about the work they were doing. That is where they got their songs.

The Iyiyuu would sing after a feast. People would take turns singing after a feast. The old people who knew how to sing well sang after the feast. The drum would be hung above them. The old people would sit in a circle inside the dwelling.

EM: I imagine that they did this because they were grateful for the food they were given?

SK: Yes, that is true. As it is still done when there is a feast. We gave thanks for the food. That was the same thing the Iyiyuu were doing. They were happy and grateful for the food they got successfully.

EM: The religion we have today, there are specified times where we can go to church together. Am I right in thinking that the Iyiyuu gave thanks anywhere and anytime when the occasion arose?

SK: Yes, that is true. The Iyiyuu would give thanks and pray anytime and anywhere. When this religion came to us, it was then decided what days of the week we were to have church. It was decided that we were to gather in church every Sunday. In the past, there was no such thing as counting the days in weeks. It was when the minister first came here that he taught the Iyiyuu how the services would be conducted in church and when during the

week. There was to be church every Sunday. He taught about the measure of days in weeks by teaching that God had made the earth in seven days. On the seventh day, he made it for himself. He did not want any work to be done on that day. But today, this teaching is not taken seriously anymore. The people do all kinds of work on Sundays and work at anything they please. It was not like that in the past. Sundays were observed seriously.

IYIYUU SPIRITUALITY - SHAKING TENT³²

SK: It is said that the minister who thought that everything the Iyiyuu did was sinful also thought the designing of the clothing so elaborately was evil. Many of his fellow ministers did not agree with his treatment to the Iyiyuu in some aspects of his teachings, it is said. He told the Iyiyuu, "You are conjuring when you do that."

EM: He also stopped the Iyiyuu from decorating their clothing?

SK: Yes, that is true. He stopped that. The Iyiyuu stopped doing that. There was not one thing that he thought that was good. He stopped everything that was decorated that the Iyiyuu used even though the Iyiyuu took great pains to make their clothing beautiful and they were well made. The only thing that the Iyiyuu did not stop decorating was their snowshoes and toboggans. He did not see those in production because the Iyiyuu made those in the bush where he did not see them. I guess he did not see these products. The Iyiyuu made beautiful snowshoes. Whatever did he think for stopping the Iyiyuu from doing them? He used to say to an Iyiyuu if they tried to decorate their clothes and other implements with colours was, "You are conjuring [*chi kusapitan*]!"

EM: I guess he just did not understand.

SK: Naturally, he was totally against the shaking tent [*kusapichikin*]. He naturally stopped this when he got wind of it.

I do not know if I ever saw a shaking tent. My father had said, "The last time I remember seeing a *kusapichikin* was somewhere along this river. There is a landing place called, *Aisiwaayapiskach*. It is here the last time I saw a *kusapichikin*. We were very hungry when we got there. It was during the summer time. We did not see any game at all. The one who conducted the shaking tent was my brother-in-law. He is the one called, *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu*."

³²Shaking tent ceremonies were used in the past for a number of reasons, and in particular, for divining information about where to find game. For a discussion of the shaking tent ceremony see: R. Preston 1977 *Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series.

He is the one who conducted the shaking tent. My father knew that *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu* was capable of conducting a shaking tent. My father did not conduct a shaking tent. When we got very hungry, my father said to me, 'Tell your brother-in-law to conduct a shaking tent.'

It must have been very close to the time when the minister would stop the *lyiyuu* from conducting the shaking tent.

"I went to see *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu* and said, 'my father is asking you to conduct a shaking tent.' He knew exactly why my father was asking him. He understood that my father was asking him to contact the animal spirit to give some food to us [*cha chi pipaumiichimat*]. He replied, 'Okay, I will conduct a shaking tent.'

He conducted the shaking tent when we got to *Aisiwaayapiskach* after we had landed our canoes. His *mistaapau*³³ entered the shaking tent right away. His *mistaapau* started talking."

My mother used to say about *mistaapau*, "You would be able to hear *mistaapau* as he talked. The only thing is that you would think that his voice was very deep. He spoke just like an ordinary *Iyiyuu*. The only thing was that he sounded very big. He told what should be done. He did not talk for a long time. That was the last time I have seen anyone conducting a shaking tent.

"The *mistaapau* talked about fish first because we were very hungry. *Mistaapau* said, 'You will catch two fish and three otters. That is what you will get in the morning.' In the morning, my father went to check his net. He caught a *kukimaau* [a large lake trout] and a *chinusaau* [pike]. The pike was very big. They also saw the three otters and my father got them all.

"I left on my outing for the day. My brother-in-law [*Nichikuniwiiyiyuu*] had not left yet when I did. I went on walking. As I was walking, I noticed a pond through the trees. I went towards it. I saw some willows that had been pulled out by a beaver. The tracks of the beaver were very recent. I saw its lodge. The ground was slightly powdered with snow. I kept on walking, thinking that I would tend to the beaver on my way home. I went atop a rocky hill. I had barely gotten on top when I heard a shot ring out in the direction where I had been coming from. I ran back down my trail. When I got to the beaver lodge, I saw my brother-in-law standing atop my beaver lodge. He had seen the beaver inside the lodge and shot it. He saw me. He started to reprimand himself, saying, 'I hope I have not impeded you with your hunting. I did not see that this lodge is new.' There was some snow on

³³This is the intermediary spirit being with whom one communicates inside the shaking tent.

the ground. He killed the beaver that he had shot. We did not see anything else that day. We went on home. The beaver was very big. We got home. He said to the people, exaggerating how he hindered my hunt, 'I did something to hinder my brother-in-law's hunting when he found a beaver lodge.' They had not cooked the fish that they had caught. They had only cooked the otters. And now we had the beaver to eat, too." I guess they had a lot to eat that day.

"The *mistaapau* had said we would catch big game later on after we had had what we had caught that day. We were coming back to *Wiiminipis*. We followed the course of the river towards *Wiiminipis*. We landed our canoes on the south side of the river. My brother-in-law and I went out hunting. We saw some caribou."

I think there were about ten caribou in all. It was still during time of year when the caribou are quite fat. "They fixed and cleaned the caribou. We transported our caribou ahead of our journey."

There is an island at the outlet of *Yachisaakw*. It is a small island. "Our belongings were at that small island at *Yachisaakw*. Our grandfather *Imiskwaapas* was at *Wiiminipis*."

Imiskwaapas lived at *Wiiminipis* when he got very old. He could not travel that much any more. He would be left there for the winter when the rest of the *Iyiyuu* made their journeys for other parts of the interior. *Wiiminipis* was a very good fishing place in those days. It had a lot of fish in it. I guess *Imiskwaapas* was given quite a bit of food before they all left to go further inland. *Wiiminipis* used to have a lot of fish in it. It was a very good fishing place.

It is said that the one living in the water [merman³⁴] is living there at that lake. There is an island there. It is a rocky island with a face cliff on the west side. It is said that an old man called *Kamiywaaitakusit* was pursued by a mermaid all his life. It is he who said that the entrance to the home of the "fabled marine people" who lived in that lake was on the cliff side of the island. The island has a rocky hill. The name of the island is *Awipuschinikach*. The island caught fire twice. The name of the island refers to its blackness after the fire swept through it. It burned twice. The trees would grow and it would burn again. That is the island that is called *Awipuschinikach*.

EM: When *Imiskwaapas* was left there, with whom did he live?

³⁴It is believed that there are/were underwater beings in particular waters or under falls in Cree hunting and travelling territories.

SK: He lived with his wife and a young man. He used to be left there at *Wiiminipis*. I guess he and his wife, our grandmother, were still able to tend to their net. It is said that our grandmother had a very dark skin. Her name was *Waapistanis* [lit. Little Marten]. She was equal to men in her hunting skills and work when she was still a young woman. That is how capable she was, it is said of her. That is *Waapistanis*.

EM: So, your father and *Nichikuniwiiyiyuu* saw the caribou?

SK: Yes, and they killed the caribou. There must have been about ten caribou. They had to stay at that place until every caribou was fixed and dried for future use. The *Iyiyuu* were very fast at cleaning, fixing and drying big game in those days. They dried the meat and put it in containers for future use. I guess they just made forward trips with the food before they would move their camp. They followed the river route inland. After a while, they reached our grandfather *Imiskwaapas*.

He was a huge man, it is said of him. I do not remember him at all. It is said that he was huge and very tall.

It is said that there were some *Iyiyuu* who were very tall and big. He came from these huge *Iyiyuu*. The *ochimau* called him "big man". He called him that because he was tall and big.

EM: So, your mother heard a *mistaapau* talking?

SK: Yes, she said that she heard a *mistaapau* talking inside the shaking tent. She is the one who told my brother Joseph that, "you would be able to understand the *mistaapau* as he talks in the shaking tent". She told this story to them when I was no longer living with them. "You would be able to understand the *mistaapau* as he talked," she said to Joseph. "The only thing you will notice is that he will sound very big because of his deep and powerful voice. That would be the only thing. You will understand everything that he names and his instructions."

Whenever the *mistaapau* talks of food that the *Iyiyuu* were getting, there were certain animals that he absolutely instructed that they be handled with great care and respect. That is what he would instruct whenever he gave food. He would instruct that the food be handled with great care and made beautiful [skins]. He was very good at giving food to the *Iyiyuu*, it is said of *mistaapau*.

EM: I wonder why it was so bad when someone conducts the shaking tent for food?

SK: Truly! It was not bad. He [Rev. Walton] was the only one who said that. There was no other minister who was like him who thought that everything that the Iiyuu did was evil. He really hated to hear the drum being used. The Iiyuu were given this kind of life to live. The drum was a kind of a musical instrument that Iiyuu used it in this way of life. The Iiyuu was given the drum to use as a musical instrument.

MISSIONIZATION³⁵

EM: Why did the dancing and singing stop?

SK: It stopped because of *Mistiwaatin* [Reverend Walton]. It is said that *Mistiwaatin* stopped a lot of the things the Iiyuu did to entertain themselves. He completely stopped the use of the drums. But some of the ministers knew that he was wrong to do this. He saw it as sinful when he saw the way the Iiyuu used the drum. He threw away a lot of the things - things used the way of the Iiyuu.

For example, it was he who this story is told about. "One time, when the Iiyuu were here for the summer, *Mistiwaatin* heard an old man sing his songs after a feast. He went to the dwelling where the drumming was coming from and entered it. He saw the drum hanging from the pole. Without saying a word, he went to the old man's drum and tore it from where it was hanging. He threw the old man's drum into the fire. The old man did not say anything to him and just watched as *Mistiwaatin* did these things.

When the drum started to burn along with his drum stick, *Mistiwaatin* pointed and said, 'This is the Devil.' The old man replied, 'How fortunate for me! I am very fortunate to see the Devil burning. Now I will have nothing to fear any more!'" Some of his fellow ministers did not like what he had done, for stopping everything that the Iiyuu used as a means of entertainment. That is the reason why the drum is not used any more.

³⁵The Anglican missionaries followed the posting routes and went first to Little Whale and eventually to Great Whale River in the mid to late 1800's. Conversion to Christianity was accomplished largely as the result of the work of two missionaries. Edmund Peck and W.G. Walton exerted a profound moral influence over the people in this region. As Leith and Leith noted in 1912, "[k]nowing every individual Indian...dependent on Fort George and Whale River posts, and much of their family history and having gained their confidence and respect, Reverend Walton exercises a benevolent despotism over them which extends beyond spiritual affairs. Anything he says goes" (Leith and Leith 1912 *A Summer and Winter in Hudson Bay*. Madison: Cartwell Printing Company, p. 47).

See also N. Adelson 1992 (*Being Alive Well: Opposition as Belief Among the Whapmagoostui Cree*. Ph.D. McGill U: Montreal, QC.) and D. Preston 1977 (*Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events*. Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series) for their separate discussions of the syncretic forms of Cree-Anglicanism.

It is said that some of his fellow ministers did not agree with what he did. It was wrong of him to do this to the Iyiyuu. The drum was the same as any musical instrument that the *waamistikusiu* uses for entertainment [or worship]. The Iyiyuu was given the drum to use for entertainment. That is what some of his fellow ministers said.

EM: I sometimes wonder, was it any different or was there a big difference between the 'someone' that was talking to the Iyiyuu and the 'someone' who was talking to the people in the Old Testament. The Old Testament is full of stories where God would talk to the people even though they could not see him but could hear him clearly, like it says that Noah heard God talking to him to build the Ark.

SK: Yes, certainly, certainly! The same thing happened to the Iyiyuu even before they had any concept of a different religious system [such as Anglicanism]. They knew some of the knowledge they had because of the workings of God. They must have gained some of the knowledge they had through dreams because God contacted them through dreams. Just like Noah, he knew that God was talking to him even before anyone knew about Jesus and had seen Jesus. It seemed to be the same thing. When someone is known to be a great thinker and seemed to have great knowledge about things and what to do, it is God who gave the person the spirit to know these things.

EM: I guess it is the same when someone is known to be better at something than anyone else. You have told me that some Iyiyuu were known to be better at doing at least one thing than others or known to be best at one thing at least.

SK: That is true. Some Iyiyuu were better at doing things than others. The talent came from God. It is well known that when someone does not think about what they are doing, when they do not think to really know what they are doing, they are not good at whatever they want to do. But when God gives knowledge to a person, they know many things. God makes known to the person what to do and how to do it well.

We have heard about the first man that was made by God. The Devil did everything to try to make the man do wrong and not follow God's will. The Devil led the man away from God.

We also heard about Mary when she was told that God was going to give her a child. God was going to put his son on earth through Mary. We hear that Mary had replied, "How can I have a child when I did not lay with a man?" But she was told that what God had planned and said will come to pass if she believed what she was told. It was not long after that when she knew that she

was having a baby. It was then that she knew what she had been told was right.

There was the other old woman who was told that she was going to have a baby. At first, she did not believe what she was being told. She laughed when she was told. She said the same thing, "How can I have a child?" She told how old she was and how old her husband was. But she had a baby in the end. The one talking to her had said, "You will see this happening because it is God who has said this will happen." In the end, she did see her baby.

All these people, even though God was actually talking to them, they still did not really believe at first at these things told to them.

EM: You were born and lived when the present religion was in use. When the Iyiyuu were out on the land, is it they who conducted the prayers?

SK: Yes, certainly! That is what was done all the time. The Iyiyuu would conduct their own prayers. When the minister was around these parts, he instructed that the Iyiyuu should pray and conduct services all the time and that is what they did. Some of the Iyiyuu embraced Christianity very readily, some men did. They knew very fast how to talk to God. They knew how pray to God for help. I have heard many times that a person was very sick when they were out on the land. The Iyiyuu did not have any medicines for that person. It was during these times that a man or woman who was known to be a true believer was asked to pray for help for the sick person. These men and women had no doubts that God would help them. They would do as they were asked. They would talk to God and the people sometimes saw that their prayers for help to God did work. That is what happened sometimes.

I have seen many times that a person would be sick and it was certain that this person was going to die anytime. I have seen a woman who was like that. By the way she looked, people were certain that was it for her. There was a man in our group who was my uncle. He was the son of our grandmother *Chuskuminas* from her first marriage. He was known to be a true believer in God. The minister had said about him that he believed the first time he heard that there was someone who will save everyone when he heard it. He believed right away that someone existed who will save us for all time. He was there. I remember that time. The woman and her group reached our camp. She was very skinny by then. She could not eat for a long time. She was being carried on the toboggan whenever they travelled. My uncle David saw the woman. He prayed for the woman that she might get well and live. The woman was getting better each day after he prayed for her. The woman

was quite old by then. The woman lived but my uncle died before the woman. *Mistiwaatin* had said that David died soon after he helped this woman because he had no doubt that God would help the woman as he had prayed for because he asked that woman live some more years after seeing her and felt sympathy for her. He knew without a doubt that God would help him because of his clear and true belief that God would help him if he prayed to Him. He had no doubt in his mind. He prayed that the woman live. The woman got better and lived. The next winter, my uncle died. The minister *Mistiwaatin* had said that their lives are like the way they were. He had prayed for the life of the old woman when it was her time to go. His days were given to the old woman, the days that he had left that were his own. That is why the woman lived and he died, that is what the minister said about him, it is said. The old woman got well and she lived a long time. It is said that she was very old when she died. She was unable to walk because of old age when she died it is said about her. *Mistiwaatin* had said that, "The old woman will die when David's days have been used up." That is what happened to old woman. She was so old that she could not walk and do anything for herself any more when she died, it is said. That is what happened in the past. I have heard that this happened to many people when they got sick out on the land. This was before doctors were around here. The sick person would be prayed over to get well. God was asked for the person to live some more years. Some of the prayers worked, especially if the one who prays has no doubt that God will grant him his request. That is what the Iyiyuu did, it is said. I have heard many times that a person's prayers were granted. The sick person who was on their deathbeds would get well again. These true believers believed that God would surely give them what they asked for and therefore their prayers worked. The person praying had no doubt that his request to God will be given and help the friend/relative he was praying for.

We are told that everything that we think is stronger than anyone on earth is nothing compared to God's strength. There is nothing stronger than God. It is said that God is strongest. God will give anything anyone asks for him. He is also very merciful, we are told.

EM: Since you were all out on the land most of the year, was it only when you got back to the post in the summer that he taught you about God and the Bible?

SK: Yes. There was already a minister here when I was born. We came from across the river when we reached the coast. We had been staying around the *Chisasibistukw*. That is where we had come from when we travelled down to the coast.

It was when we got here that *Mistiwaatin* [Rev. Walton] came here that summer. He baptised me that summer. He always came here in the summers.

The Iyiyuu from Chisasibi would bring him here in their canoe. They would paddle all the way from Chisasibi. The men brought him here. Once he got here, he would baptise all the newborn babies of that year and married anyone who wanted to get married. He came here every summer by canoe to do his job.

EM: I presume that the Iyiyuu in your parents' generation and then when you were growing up - that it was the Iyiyuu themselves who conducted their own church services and the Bible readings during most of the year since the minister only came here briefly in the summer time.

SK: Certainly! It was always like that. That is what the Iyiyuu did. When the Bible became available, the Iyiyuu were given it to use to help them conduct their services when they were out on the land. The church services were held as soon as the minister gave the Bibles to the Iyiyuu. They used them.

EM: Isn't it quite recent that we have a minister here all year round? [1940s]

SK: Yes, it is quite recent. *Mistiwaatin* was the first minister who stayed here a long time. He was very young when he was brought to Chisasibi. There was an *ochiamaau* at Chisasibi and *Mistiwaatin* lived with them when he first got there. The *ochiamaau* had many daughters. The daughters also were fluent in the Cree Language. Naturally, *Mistiwaatin* did not understand a word of Cree when he first got in this territory. The *ochiamaau* thought that it was a good idea for *Mistiwaatin* to learn the Cree Language. He volunteered one of his daughters to teach him the Cree Language. He was to walk with the daughter whenever she went outside to learn the names of things and everything. That is what they did. I guess *Mistiwaatin* picked up the language quite fast. He was very good at speaking Cree. He sounded like a Cree person whenever he spoke the language. He spoke Cree quite well. When he got older, he became a minister. That is why he stayed here. He was already an adult when he got here. Anyway, he married the *ochiamaau*'s daughter who taught him the Cree Language.

He knew that he was going to get married some day but it had to be a person chosen by God. He had thought, "I will only marry the woman whom God has chosen for me." So it was that he knew that this was the woman he was to marry. When the realization came to him, he told the girl what he was thinking. He told her that he wished to marry her. He told what he had been thinking all his life that he would only marry the woman that he knew was chosen for him by God. That is what he told the girl.

The *ochiamaau*'s daughter told her parents what *Mistiwaatin* had said. She told them that he thought that God had chosen this girl for him. The girl told her mother this.

Mistiwaatin then told the parents that he thought he has found the girl he was meant to marry which was the *ochiamaau*'s daughter. The *ochiamaau* agreed that his daughter should marry *Mistiwaatin*. The parents asked him if it was true what their daughter had told them. He replied, "That is what I thought. I think I have found the girl God meant for me to marry." The *ochiamaau* told him that his wife agreed that he would marry their daughter.

They were quickly married. That is how he got married. I guess they got married where there were ministers. I imagine they went to the south somewhere to get married. There were only boats and canoes that were used to travel long distances in those days. The *ochiamaau* travelled by boat only whenever he wanted to go somewhere. There were no planes around here at that time. I guess they travelled to the south by boat where there are a lot of ministers.

EM: I guess he could not perform his own wedding ceremony!

SK: No, he could not do that.

CHANGES

EM: I wanted to ask you about the changes you have seen that has happened in the recent past and today that you did not see in the past. You have told me one thing which was that the children of today do not seem to listen to elders and their parents when they want them to do something or to behave.

SK: Yes, that is true. The children of today do not listen even when other people speak to them. In the past, the children really listened with respect when other people spoke to them. They listened enough to show that they were doing what the other people told them to do or to behave for their own good. Today the children are very good at arguing with adults when they speak to them. They are very good at talking back to the adults. The children of the past were not like that at all. They did not think to talk back to the adults. They listened with respectful fear when other *Iyiyuu* spoke to them about how they should behave for their own good and others. But today, some children do not seem to even hear what the adult is saying to them. That is what some of them are like. I suppose we can not be the same. Some of the children are very disrespectful.

EM: What other things have changed? There must be many things you have seen that have changes since you were a child and an adult.

SK: Yes, that is true. There are many things that are different that the Iyiyuu did not do in the past. One thing for sure it the behaviour of children today. They are very disrespectful to all who are adult. Have you heard the latest? I heard that the youth are being very disrespectful to the property of others. The youth have been going to the dwellings of the Iyiyuu that camp across the river and around. They go there when the people who own these dwelling are not there and during the night, too. I heard when Peter Sandy talked about what he had found in his dwelling. I heard him on the radio. He had said that some youths had been in his dwelling. He was sharing the dwelling with another person. It sounded as though the dwelling was quite big. He was saying, "We left a lot of food there. We cleaned it up and tidied up before we left it. We had put away our food and the mattresses. By the looks of things, some youths must have spent the night there. They had eaten most of our food and our firewood has been almost all used up. I am very upset about this. The inside of our dwelling was really messed up." It would have been a shame if they had burn his dwelling down. "We took time to clean up before we left the dwelling." I do not know who he was living with. They used the dwelling to make snowshoes. "What is really upsetting to me is to know that some children are capable of doing this to other people's property." That is what he was saying.

The youths do not seem to have any inkling that it is wrong to show such disrespect to others. In the past, the children were very respectful to others and to their property. Today, the children have no qualms about talking back to an adult when the adult tries to tell them not to do something that is wrong.

EM: I presume that is one of the most important teachings that children received as they grow up, to respect and show respect to parents and others.

SK: Yes, certainly, that is true! That is what the women taught their children - to show respect to their grandfathers and grandmothers and all elders. It was absolutely forbidden for children to show any kind of disrespect to their grandmothers and grandfathers. But today, this teaching is not there any more - when the mothers watched their children's every move. You must know what happens when we are in church. The women do not seem to see how their children are behaving in church. The children are everywhere and crying. But in the past, one of the requirements of the mothers was to look after their children very well in church and teach the children to listen very carefully to the service. That is what the women did for their children. But today, look how the mothers are. They do not seem to notice what their children are doing during the church service. The children even run over to where the minister is officiating the service. It was not like that at all in the past. The women really looked after their children. They were very watchful

that their children do not show disrespect to the elders.

EM: What about marriages? It is different than it was in the past?

SK: It certainly is. It has gone all wrong. Some people leave their wives. They marry them and then they leave them. This was not like that at all in the past. After they got married in church, they only left each other through death. But today, people do not listen when they are told about the teachings of God. It is like they do not hear what God wants them to do. They are to look after each other all their lives once they marry. It is the man's duty to look after his wife once they marry. It is only death that should put them apart. That is what it says in the vows. The husband has to respect his wife all the days of their marriage. That is what the man was taught to do. The woman in turn used to be told to show respect and respect her husband for as long as they live. But today, the teachings of God for married people is not followed any more. It is not used at all any more.

EM: I do not know if I asked you about the building of dams around here. Do you know this well? Do you hear much about it?

SK: Yes, I know it about it. I only hear about it from time to time because I can not attend all the meetings. But from what I am hearing, I am extremely unhappy about it. It is not God's will that the land be destroyed like that. He has given each of us - groups of people - lands to live off. He gives a different piece of land to the *wamistikusiu* and different area of land to the Iyiyuu to live off.

When the first humans were here, the *wamistikusiu* were given many lands in which to live. This was long time ago. The *wamistikusiu* were numerous in the past. The Iyiyuu were numerous on this part of the world even though they had different habits and behaviours than we have today, we have different behaviours and habits. We have different cultures. The *wamistikusiu* were the same way. They were different from each other, with different dispositions and cultures.

When I think of the proposed destruction of the land, I am very unhappy.

God has given the Iyiyuu their share of the land and He gave the *wamistikusiu* their share of the land. The land that was given to the Iyiyuu was very beautiful. It was very beautiful before the *wamistikusiu* came to the land of the Iyiyuu. God did not let it be known to the *wamistikusiu* that there was a land where the Iyiyuu lived. The *wamistikusiu* did not know that there was another land which was given to the Iyiyuu for a long time. They did not know that there was another land where the Iyiyuu lived. But later, they

found out there was a land where the Iyiyuu lived. They then began to look for more Iyiyuu when they found out about this land we live in. One day, they found this land were the Iyiyuu lived.

It is well known in the past, the only thing that was there to transport people long distances was the boat. It is told that the *wamistikusu* saw a bough of a tree floating on the water while they were in their boat. Upon seeing the bough they knew there was another land somewhere. They had never seen this kind of a bough on a tree before. It was then that they really tried to find the new land. They knew that there was another land somewhere. Finally, they found our land. They found the Iyiyuu on the land the found. It was then they found out that God had put the Iyiyuu in this part of the world to live on this land.

In the beginning, we are told that God made only one man. The man saw the birds flying together. He was alone for a long time when he was first made. The man thought to himself when he saw the birds being together, "I wonder why God did not give me someone to be with. I am alone." God knew what he was thinking. The story goes that the woman was made. The story goes that God made Adam sleep deeply and took one of his ribs to make the woman from his rib. The story continues. He saw the woman upon waking up, sitting beside him. When he woke up, he saw the woman. Adam asked, "What will be her name?" "She will be called Woman." That is how Adam came to live with the woman. God gave them a beautiful place to live in. They really loved each other before there was the Devil. They were not shy or embarrassed even though they were naked. But the Devil tried his best to turn them the other way. They lived in a beautiful garden with fruits growing all over. But God had told them not to eat the fruit of this particular tree. "If you eat this fruit, you will die." That is what God told them. They did not eat the fruit. God made himself different to go and see the couple. He was really trying to turn them away from God and not obey him. The Devil said to the couple, "Why don't you eat this fruit? Look how good it looks." The couple told the Devil what God had told them that, "If you eat this fruit, you will die." The woman looked at the fruit. Because God was in them, they knew many things. But the Devil tricked them saying, "You know a lot of things. But if you eat the fruit, your knowledge of things will increase." That is what he told them. The woman looked at the fruit. She saw that it did look good to eat and desired to eat it. She took one and ate it and gave some to her husband. As soon as they had a bit of it, they knew right away that sin had come into them. That is how much the Devil wanted to turn these people away from God, even though God took the greatest care to make these people happy and not want for anything. These people would never have known any mercy if they had kept what God had asked them to do. The woman got overpowered by the Devil and took the fruits. It is said that

is when sin started because the Devil really worked at those people to make them not do what God had wanted them to do.

EM: What about the Iyiyuu of the past? What was their belief about how we came to be? Did you hear any story about that?

SK: No, I did not hear any story about how we came to be. The only thing I heard is that the first people on earth had a different culture and subsistence than we the Iyiyuu have. Also, the *wamistikusiu* and the Inuit came into being with different cultures in different places. They all had different cultures than us.

There is another story in the Bible about Noah and how the different languages came to be. He did not wait for God to tell him what to do. He did not let God tell to build the building that was very tall. He wanted to make very tall. He wanted to touch the building to the sky, thinking that there was another land there. God had told him that he was never to be afraid of the land being flooded again.

EM: I wanted to ask you this. What would you like your grandchildren to know and what would you caution them about?

SK: I have and I am always talking to my grandchildren to take good care of themselves in all that they do and to take care not to have accidents. I have always cautioned them about accidents. We always hear that some youth has had an accident of some kind. I am always thinking and hoping that my grandchildren would look after themselves the way they should all their lives. I think of that all the time.

EM: In what ways do you want them to look after themselves?

SK: I would like them to look after themselves in everything that they do in their work and especially in their hunting activities. We have heard many times that some youths have had fatal accidents while hunting. I am always anxious about them that they do not have accidents like that when they are hunting.

EM: In the past, what warnings did the youths have when they would go hunting?

SK: The youths were always reminded to look after themselves and be very alert to the teachings they received about possible dangers in their hunting. I have seen many times that youths have fatal accidents while hunting. I am always anxious that my grandchildren might have one of these accidents ever since they began hunting. I am always telling them to look after themselves while they are hunting. I have seen many times where some youths have drowned

while hunting. Some youths would go through thin ice while walking and drown. Others were in overturned canoes and drowned. I have seen this happening where some youths had overturned canoes and drowned. I am always afraid that this might happen to my grandchildren that I see around me. I always talk to them about being careful and their grandfather did the same while he was still alive. Their grandfather taught them how to be careful while they were hunting. He always cautioned them.

EM: I have not heard many stories about youths having accidents with their hunting equipments [guns, etc]. Did this happen in your time?

SK: I have heard that this happened to someone. He was tending to his fishing lines and he went through the ice and drowned. They could not find his body. They did not know where he went through the ice.

EM: What about a gun?

SK: I heard that a woman was killed by a gun accidentally. She had gone ptarmigan hunting. I have heard of other times where someone was killed by a gun accidentally. For example, *Kinuwapinwaaskum's* [Adam Mamianskum's] father was killed by a gun accidentally. His mother [who was Suzanne's sister] drowned because of an overturned canoe. None of his parents died of an illness. They all died because of accidents. His uncle, his father's brother, and this uncle's wife and their children all drowned at the same time. There must have been five of them in the canoe and only Abraham Mamianskum survived the overturned canoe. He was the only one alive in that canoe.

EM: You have told me once that not many of the Iyiyuu died of illness before there were many white people around here.

SK: Yes, that is true. Not many people died of sicknesses. But since the arrival of many white people around here, then there have been many kinds of sicknesses.

EM: How would you caution your grandchildren, for example, Rachel about raising their children?

SK: The only thing I can teach them is to take great care for their children. I am always doing this to my grandchildren who have babies now. I have many grandchildren who have children. I am always telling them to look after their children as well as they can and to do for them the best they can for their children's well-being. Even if the parents are sick, they still have to look after their children as best as they can.

EM: I am certain that when you were growing up and raising your children, you did not see the problems that are happening today because of drinking.

SK: That is true. As far back as I can remember, no one had any drinking problems. It was only before my time that some old men used alcohol [which was sold at by the Hudson Bay Company]. I do not remember the time when Iyiyuu used alcohol. But I know that my father and my grandfather did not use any alcohol. I do not remember any alcohol being used as I was growing up. I have heard that the *Ausawaawiiyiyuu* used alcohol early on and a lot of it. Sometimes, it was not real alcohol. They drank something that they made themselves [home brew].

EM: What do you think of the way the food from the animals is being handled these days compared to what you were taught about respecting all animals and food?

SK: I was always taught, as I was growing up and even when I was married and had my own family, to take good care of the food and not to waste any and to show great respect for it. It is wrong to think that just because you are having a lot of food and are not hungry that you do not have to look after the food as well as you can. That is what some people in the past did. It is those people, like women, who did not know how to handle the food properly who did not take good care of it. There were some women who did not know much about how to look after the food and the work that went with it. It is because they had not been taught properly how to take care of the animals. As for myself, my mother taught me everything very thoroughly. She taught me how to clean and fix the animals very early on in my life therefore I was capable of this kind of work very early. That is what I was always taught.

Today, some of the children have no respect for other people. Some children are like that. When I was growing up and still living with my parents, it was always stressed to me that I should never to show disrespect to anyone as long as I lived. That is what I was always taught. My father always told us never to show disrespect to anyone.

EM: I imagine that is what you in turn taught your children and your grandchildren.

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. I am always trying to tell them what I know but they can not behave the way I would like to have them behave. Fortunately, I do not hear or know if they are being very bad to other people. I do not know of them to be like that, the ones that I have raised that is, my grandchildren. My children are the same way. Their father taught them how to always be respectful to others.

EM: Do you sometimes think about this one company that is trying to build dams on the land where the Iyiyuu hunt?

SK: I feel great sadness whenever I think about what the *wamistikusiu* is trying to do to the Iyiyuu. I feel great sadness about the lack of respect they are showing to the Iyiyuu by trying to destroy the land the Iyiyuu was given by the Creator to be and exist. I feel very unhappy about it when I hear that he ["white man"] is trying to destroy the land. He has been told that we are not for that but he keeps on saying that he will destroy the land. That is what makes me very unhappy. I am always hoping that the plan to destroy the land does not take place. If the Creator does not want the land to be altered the way He intended, He who designed, He did not mean for anyone else to alter the way He had designed it. It is only when He decides that the earth will no longer exist, then it will be no more.

That is what he said to Noah that he spoke to when he made the Ark. When the water receded, he tried to build a very high building. He expected that the land would flood again. God had not told him yet that there would be no flood again. While he was trying to make the building, the people and he did not understand each other suddenly. That is what is said. He stopped what he was doing because he knew that God did not want him to do it. God did not want him to do it. God told him then that he should never worry again about a flood because this would never happen again. God had said to him, "I will not use flood when I want to destroy the earth. I will use fire. There will be nothing left."

When I think of what God told Noah, I know that the *wamistikusiu* can not do what he wants to do to our land if God does not allow it to happen. If the land is destroyed, there will be nothing left. It is only God can destroy the whole earth. When I think of this saying, I think that maybe the *wamistikusiu* can not destroy the land like that because God did not mean for him to do. He can not do anything if God does not help him to do it. It is said that the Devil is very strong but God is far more powerful than the Devil. When God destroys the earth, the Devil and evil will be destroyed along with it. Later on, God will make another earth which will be very beautiful. In this new earth, there will be no evil whatsoever. It will not be like this earth where there are a lot of bad things happening. As time goes on, we see more bad things happening every day. God had said that things will be getting worse and worse as we live. Things that have never happened before will happen. That is what he said. Everything that God had said will come to pass.

RELATIONS BETWEEN IYIYUUCH AND NON-NATIVES

EM: Who will not believe us then if we claim that this land where we are is ours? Our relatives are buried all over this land.

SK: That is certainly true. Yet, the *wamistikusiu* thinks that he owns it and can say what goes on it. He was given different kind of life and land. It was not made known to him that there is a land where the Iyiyuu were given to live on. He did not know for a long time there were Iyiyuu on this land. He still thinks that he owns this land.

EM: Look what they are trying to do now.

SK: Yes, that is true. They are trying to come here and destroy our land.

EM: If he is not taking it, he destroys it.

SK: True. He just tries to destroy our land and does not do the same in his own land. It would be better if he destroys his own land.

This winter, I heard it said that a ship was destroyed and many animals perished from this [oil tanker spill]. The *wamistikusiu* were shown that what they are doing is wrong and yet they do not stop what they are doing. He was shown in plain view and think about what he is doing. It was said that many kinds of animals died from it.

EM: We know that *Ipsikimis* will be directly impacted if they go ahead the way the Hydro Project is designed. The *Ipsikimis* will be raised. When the water level is raised, the fish will not be able to stay in the same places where they used to be found. The animals who inhabited the shoreline will no longer live there, too. You have told me that you lived and hunted along the shore of the *Ipsikimis* for fish and other small game all your lives. You told me of the otters and martens that are plentiful there. Were there muskrats there?

SK: Certainly, there are muskrats and other kinds of animals. The beaver was plentiful there, too, before it was over-trapped during the fur trade. The beaver were plentiful at *Ipsikimis* and to the south of there. Our grandfathers who we did not see were the ones who had plenty of beaver to eat from and could clothe themselves with its fur. It is said that they caught a lot of fur when the trade started. The marten was plentiful there. It was wooded then like it is today. There were a lot of marten in and around *Ipsikimis*. Where *Ipsikimis* ends inland, it is not far from there where the rivers flow the other way. It is there, between *Ipsikimis*, at the rivers, where the beaver and martens were also plentiful. They killed a lot of furs around that area when trading was more plentiful. Some men were noted to be more skilful hunters

than some and they were the ones who trapped a lot of fur-bearing animals. It is those men who made a lot of money. They made a lot of money for the [Hudson Bay] company with their trapping skills.

This happened when the *wamistikusiu* traded some items for fur to the Iyiyuu. He³⁶ liked the look of the fur the Iyiyuu were able to get for him when he first saw the Iyiyuu. He liked the kinds of fur the Iyiyuu were able to provide for him. This is when he first saw the Iyiyuu here. He asked for all the kinds of fur that he saw the Iyiyuu wearing and had in their possession. He took the fur back to their country where they had sailed from. In those days, the *wamistikusiu* had ships with sails only. It was from then on that he made all sorts of efforts to find out more about this land and the Iyiyuu. He saw the kinds of fur the Iyiyuu were getting from the land. All the fur that the Iyiyuu was getting from this land was usable to the *wamistikusiu*. He liked what he saw and he immediately thought to take it from the Iyiyuu.

EM: Before the *wamistikusiu* was here to take the fur, did the Iyiyuu only trap what they wanted to have as clothing and to eat the meat of the animal?

SK: Yes, that is certainly true. That is what they did. They killed the animals for food and made clothes for themselves out of their furs. The Iyiyuu got and used what the land could provide for them. They caught beavers and otters and all kind of fur-bearing animals like marten and muskrats that they saw on the land. They got these animals for their meat and to make clothes for themselves before anyone came around to trade with them.

EM: Their clothing must have been very warm.

SK: Certainly. It is said that when the *wamistikusiu* first found the Iyiyuu around here, he asked the Iyiyuu for all the clothes he saw him wearing for clothing. From then on, the *wamistikusiu* told the Iyiyuu not to use the fur for clothing anymore but to trade all fur to the *wamistikusiu*. That was the beginning of the fur trade. It was then that the Iyiyuu really set about trapping all the fur they could get and give it to the *wamistikusiu* what he asked from them. They trapped all kinds of fur for the *wamistikusiu*.

EM: It is well known that the Iyiyuu gave more than what they received from the Iyiyuu. The *wamistikusiu* did not trade what the fur actually was worth to the Iyiyuu.

SK: Yes, that is what was said.

³⁶The use of the word "he" indicates the association of the trading post manager with the Hudson Bay Co. and with "white man", in general.

EM: The trade items of the *wamistikusiu* did not compare to the wealth of the furs the Iiyuu were giving to them. I suppose about the only trade item that was worth something was the gun.

SK: Certainly. The first time Iiyuu got guns was when the *wamistikusiu* knew that he was here.

There was a *wamistikuskwaau* here. She spoke the Cree language very well. She told us what happened when the *wamistikusiu* first saw signs of the Iiyuu on this land. She said that the *wamistikusiu* in their boat saw a branch of a tree that did not resemble any trees from their land. That is how he realized that there was another land which he did not know about before. He kept trying to find the land. Finally, he came upon this land after looking for the land. He saw the natives on this land.

It was then that the Iiyuu saw the ship out on the water. The *wamistikusiu* wanted it to be known that he was there so he fired a canon. The Iiyuu heard the canon shot. The Iiyuu could not go to the ship because he was afraid. The Iiyuu conducted a shaking tent to find out who or what was out there. The Iiyuu conducted the shaking tent. The *mistaapau* entered the shaking tent. It said, "Do not be afraid of him. He is looking for you. He is here to be certain if you are really here on this land. The sound of the thing you heard, meaning the shot, if you can go to him, he will give you what you heard. This thing can help you to get food with great speed." He meant the animals that the Iiyuu hunted.

I guess this happened to one family. They saw the ship out on the water. They heard the sound of the canon from the ship. The old man said to his sons, "I will paddle over to the ship. I will go alone."

The *wamistikusiu* saw the Iiyuu coming in his canoe. When the Iiyuu got nearer to the ship, he stopped paddling. He could not go closer because he was afraid. The Iiyuu paddled all around the ship but far from it. The *wamistikusiu* waved to the Iiyuu to come closer. They let him know that they wanted him to come closer. He got closer and they were able to get ahold of his canoe. They took him aboard along with and his canoe. That is when the *wamistikusiu* saw how the Iiyuu was dressed. They saw his clothing made out of fur. The *wamistikusiu* asked for his clothing. He must have known what they asked of him and complied. They took him inside the cabin. They took off his clothes and gave him their kind of clothing to put on. He was also given a gun. They showed him what to do with it. They showed him what to do with it. He must have known what they were saying to him. They gave some alcohol to drink, unfortunately. They didn't give him enough to get drunk on. They told him he could go home after he was given the gun and

ammunition. He knew what to do with the gun. They gave him a hat to wear, too. In those days, the hats had wide rims. They had given him alcohol to drink but not enough to get him drunk. They put him back in his canoe and away he went back to his family. He paddled on. He started to feel the effect of the alcoholic drink even though he was not completely drunk. When he felt the effect of the alcohol, he thought of his songs and started singing. The sons had been watching their father. They saw him paddling back in his canoe. They heard their father singing as he paddled towards them.

They said to each other, "It looks like they did something to him. He never sings like that. They must have done something to him." That is what they were saying about him. He came ashore. After a time, the effect of the alcohol left him. He told his sons what he thought the *wamistikusiu* was saying to him. He conducted his shaking tent again and invited his *mistaapau* to enter his shaking tent. His *mistaapau* told him what to do with the gun. His *mistaapau* told him that he was given the gun to help in getting his food speedily whenever he sees the animals that gave him sustenance. That was the beginning of the contact of the *wamistikusiu*. The ship went back home. It tried to come back to see the Iyiyuu the next summer. The woman had said, "The ship went back but it could not find the same place where he had first seen the Iyiyuu." I guess the ship came ashore in a different area than the first time. She said, "The *wamistikusiu* always paddled inland to look for the Iyiyuu once they come upon this land. He kept looking for the Iyiyuu by paddling inland, going along the river routes." I suppose that is how the *wamistikusiu* came to be friends with the Iyiyuu. I imagine that he came to understand his language.

EM: What was the name of the *wamistikusiskwaau* who told you this story?

SK: I do not know what her name was. It was a long time ago. She told us about it quite some time ago. My husband was still with me for a long time yet when this story was told to us. She spoke Cree very well. She is the one who told us how the *wamistikusiu* came to know the Iyiyuu were here on this land.

EM: We have talked about how much of the land where you used to live - and still do - and was raised on, would be destroyed if the [Hydro-Electric] project happens. I wanted to ask you this. What would you say to the Premier if you talked with him, one to one, about this? What would you say to him to tell him to stop doing this?

SK: I would tell him that the Creator of this land did not design it to be destroyed. He had told what to do with it. The Creator of this earth took great care of this land. He did not let the *wamistikusiu* know about this land

of the Iyiyuu for a long time. There were only Iyiyuu on this land. It was a land for the Iyiyuu. There were no *wamistikusiu* on it for a long time. When this land was first made, there was no one on it. There was only the birds and the animals. That was the only living thing here. The Creator did not want the *wamistikusiu* to know about this land and that is where he put the Iyiyuu. He wanted only the Iyiyuu to know about this land first and that is where he put them. That is why the saying goes that the land where the Iyiyuu was put to live was the most important piece of land when he was first made. The Creator did not want this land to be used wantonly or with disrespect. It was to be very important. He put everything on it that the Iyiyuu would need to live on. But today, look how it is being used. The most important piece of land he made is now being threatened. The Creator did not plan for the land to be destroyed. He gave the *wamistikusiu* a different piece of land for them to be on. He provided the Iyiyuu with a way of life on the land he designed for them.

EM: This way of life is good for us.

SK: True, true.

EM: It is good for you and your generation because you are still living in that way. As for us, people my age, we are obese and have diabetes because we eat the whiteman's food more than we do our own food.

SK: Yes, it is true that their food does not sit well with us. I have heard it being said that there is an old Inuk who is hundred years old but he does not seem that old. He is said to have never used the whiteman's food but only used the food that was meant for him to use.

I have heard it said that he was over hundred because he did not use the whiteman's food. Yet, he did not seem that old because he was still very active. He did not use the whiteman's food all his life. His food was good for him. That is what some people would be like if they used the food meant for them. I am certain some would be very healthy if they did not use the whiteman's food.

EM: I gather from what you told me that the Iyiyuu of the past did not count how old they were. So we do not know if there were some Iyiyuu who lived to be a hundred and still very active.

SK: The Iyiyuu did not count the years they lived. They just got very old.

EM: You told me once about an old man who was called *kawaawiipikaput*. I wonder how old he was.

SK: Yes, who knows how old he was. He was called that name because he was very old. It was because he was so old that when he stood up, his legs shook and could hardly stand up. He seemed to shake whenever he tried to stand up. It is because of old age why he was like that, it is said. I am certain he was very close to one hundred years if he was not over.

It is said that, long time ago, an old man or and old woman would become blind as they grew older. That is what happened to some of them. It is because of old age that people became blind. Maybe some of these old people who lost their sight as they got older were close to one hundred years old. Some of them were very old.

It is said that the Iyiyuu of long ago were not like the Iyiyuu of today who are sick all the time. The Iyiyuu of long ago, before the *wamistikusiu* came, were hardly ever sick. The only thing that seemed to slow them was their old age. They could not work because of old age. No one knows how old people were when they died because it was not important for them to know how old they were.

EM: In the past, did the Iyiyuu ever bury dried caribou meat and covered it up with rocks?

SK: Yes, that is what they would do sometimes. They would bury their dried food in sandy ground and place planks of wood over the hole and then cover it up with rocks.

One time, an Iyiyuu did that to his dried caribou food. This was during the time that some *wamistikusiu* travelled on the land and bothered the Iyiyuu from afar. He had amassed a lot of dried food, he buried some in the ground before travelling to other parts of the country. He placed the planks of wood over it and covered it with rocks. While he was doing this, some *wamistikusiu* were watching him from afar. The Iyiyuu was living with an old man. During the winter, he went to get his cache of food. It was all gone when he got there. His cache was empty. The old man was his brother/cousin.³⁷ He told the old man that his cache of food was all gone. This was during the time when the Iyiyuu were still practising the shaking tent.

The Iyiyuu said to the old man, "My elder brother, can you find what out what happened to my cache of food? There was nothing left and I had cached a lot of it. I will make a shaking tent for you."

He made the shaking the tent for him. The *mistaapau* entered the shaking

³⁷Reference here is to parallel cousin. The term of reference, brother, indicates the sibling-like relationship that is shared between parallel cousins.

tent. He spoke to the *mistaapau* for quite some time. I guess he wanted to know everything that happened. He told the old man exactly the place and what the surroundings looked like: "There was a mountain across the lake where we had camped. There is a big rock atop the mountain."

They had lived across the lake from that mountain. He had cached his food on his side of the lake. The *wamistikusiu* could not go to him because they were afraid of him.

His elder brother said to him, "My younger brother, someone had taken all your food." He was able to see all that happened through his shaking tent. "Some people were watching you while you cached your food. They were very hungry at the time they saw you. They could not go to you because they were afraid of you. After you left the area, they went to your cache and took everything."

They should have left some for him. They should have thought how disappointed the Iyiyuu would be when he would go to take his cache.

"He is the one who took your food." The Iyiyuu knew then that it was the *pwaat*³⁸ who took his food. This event took place at *Achikunipiy*, at *Musawaau Achikunipiy*. There is a lake before this one. It is called *Kapaachiskitaukakimau*. It was on the portage of this lake is where this happened.

EM: I wonder what the *wamistikusiu* were doing there?

SK: I suppose they were just being *pwaat*. I guess that is the only thing they did. It was said about them that they used to be very hungry at times when they wanted to hunt for themselves as they travelled around in their canoes. They were travelling around like that just to be *pwaat*. One time, some of them were found where they had starved, it is said. I guess there had been many of them. Only one of them lived. He made it to the post. He told their story that all of his other companions had starved to death. Their boss was dead, too. He told that their boss told them to leave him where he was before they all starved. They left him. The Iyiyuu who had been with them and who told this story was quoted as saying. "We left our boss. Not far from where we left him we saw a ptarmigan. We killed the ptarmigan. We ran to it. We tore it apart and ate like that." They must have been poor. "The other one

³⁸*Pwaat* refers to a feared stranger (non-Native) and usually refers to those who are not well known to the Cree and who may potentially do them harm. The origin of the term, as Suzanne alludes to later, is possibly based upon those men who travelled the waterways mapping the region well over 100 years ago. Today, the term is used to refer to any (non-Native) person, or hint of a person, considered as a possible threat.

who was with me soon could not walk." I think it might have been the second in command who was with him. "He could not walk anymore. I left him, too. Soon, I found some geese." I think it might have been the fall already when this happened. I think he killed two of the geese. That is how he could make to the post. "I was walking along the course of a river. There was a point on the river. I thought to myself, 'I will make a fire there.' I carried the wings of the geese and the rest of the geese. I left my gun on the point. I thought to take a look around. There is cove on the other side it seemed to me. When I looked at the other side of the point, I saw a boat. I did not expect to see a boat at all. I was quite startled. I did not think of my load and my gun, I started running around the cove. I saw the buildings. I saw a young girl with a sibling on her back. She saw me running along. She ran inside the house. Shortly after, a woman came out. I said to her, 'My companions have starved.' She said to me, 'Come inside.' I looked terrible. Most of my clothing were in shreds. I wondered at my sanity for declining her invitation. I said to her, 'No, I can not come in yet. I am going to go and get my load and my gun.' I was going to go and get my load of what was left of the geese which were the geese feet. Having declined the invitation at that moment, I started running to where I had left my gun and load. I came back. She must have prepared the food she was going to serve me while I was gone. I entered her house. She said to me, pointing to a room, 'Go inside the room where you will find some clothes. Put them on. Take off all of your clothing.' I did as she requested. 'There is water there for you to wash. After you have washed and dressed yourself, come out again.'" She must have laid out the food for him. "I did as she asked me to do. I went out again. I looked at the clothes I wore. They sure looked dirty and tattered. I thought to myself, 'How could I have wore these for so long.' She said to me, 'There is your food.' There was a room where she had laid out the food. She closed the door behind her. When she knew that I was finished, she opened the door again. She took away the plates. After she had taken away the plates, she placed a chair near me. She sat on it and said to me, 'Tell me your story.' I told her my story. I told her how I left my boss while he was still alive and my other companion."

That is how he was able to live. It was far from where he had come from. He told where they had left their boss. I guess he was told that they should go and get him by canoe. He knew the way. They reached where he had died. The boss had died a long time before. I do not know what they did to the other one. The Iyiyuu was quoted as saying, "He had lived quite some time after we left him. He wrote about the days he lived after we left him."

I guess these were the ones who were *pwaat*. The Iyiyuu told stories of *wamistikusu* who were *pwaat* long time ago. The *pwaat* used to travel the waterways. Sometimes, they were found where they had starved.

EM: What does it really mean, *pwaat*?

SK: I do not really know. All I used to hear is the word *pwaat* and it usually referred to *wamistikusiu* who came on the land of the Iyiyuu. I do not know what they did on the land. It is the *wamistikusiu* who were called *pwaat*.

EM: Is it because they hid from the Iyiyuu?

SK: Yes, they used to hid from the Iyiyuu. It is said that the *pwaat* used to bother the Iyiyuu from afar. The *wamistikusiu* are still doing that to the Iyiyuu. It is said that they always travelled the water routes out on the land. The Iyiyuu used to feel their presence on the land.

Today, the *wamistikusiu* are trying to destroy the land of the Iyiyuu.

I am very unhappy when I think of how they are trying to destroy the land we were given to exist on. They were given a different land to be on. He was given land where they were to live and the Iyiyuu was given this piece of land. The *wamistikusiu* did not know that there was another land where the Iyiyuu lived. They did not know about the Iyiyuu for a long time. The other lands were given to the *wamistikusiu*. One day, the *wamistikusiu* came upon the Iyiyuu in one of his voyages on their ships. A piece of bough was seen floating on the ocean. The bough was like the trees on our land. The bough looked different from *wamistikusiu* was used to seeing. They knew that there was another land somewhere that they did not know about before. They saw that the bough did not look like the trees from their land. It was from then on that they started looking for this land. One day, they came upon it. They saw some Iyiyuu were they landed. That is how they knew that there were Iyiyuu on this land. The woman who spoke Cree very well told us that. She said, "The *wamistikusiu* did not find the same place where he had been the first time. They set out again to go to the same place but they came to different place. He lost the first place where he had gone to." I guess they found the Iyiyuu again because they kept looking for them.

A long time ago, when legends were told, it seemed it was about the *wamistikusiu* waging battles against each other. The characters in the legends have different names from the Iyiyuu. I suppose they were thought of as Iyiyuu. One of the legends was *miikiuchiu* and the other one was *kichunau*. I wonder what that one was.

Yes, naturally, the other one was *Chikapas*. It is said that *Chikapas'* and *Kichunau's* medallions/headstones [*upiywaapiskumuwaau*] were found. These

legends are very old. I guess they were thought of as *wamistikusiu*.³⁹ It is said that is where the *wamistikusiu* came from them. It is said that whenever they came here, they were always trying to kill the Iyiyuu. Some of the Iyiyuu were skillful warriors even though they did not have guns. They used the caribou to kill the enemy who had knives. *Kichunau* was one of the old ones in his time.

EM: Was he an Iyiyuu or a *wamistikusiu*?

SK: He must have been *wamistikusiu* by the story. I guess these people were the first ones that were on the land that was given to them. The story goes that they were the *pwaat* of their own land.

But it was only when this land - where we are - was reached by them that they found out that there were Iyiyuu on this land. The *wamistikusiu* did not know about the Iyiyuu for a long time. I guess it was not meant for them to know about the Iyiyuu for a long time because they were always trying to kill each other.

EM: Were *Miikiuchiu* and *Kichunau* the ones who had [long] knives when they fought their battles?

SK: Yes, *Kichunau*, *Miikiuchiu* and *Chikapas* used knives when they fought their battles. That is the names of the people in the legends which are about battles.

EM: The Iyiyuu at that time of the legends took place, the Iyiyuu did not have knives. Is this right?

SK: Yes, that is right. They did not have knives. The Iyiyuu used bows and arrows to fight their battles before they saw the *wamistikusiu*.

EM: Do I understand correctly that these legends of *Kichunau*, *Miikiuchiu* and *Chikapas* existed before the traders came to our part of the country?

SK: Yes, that is true.

EM: The *wamistikusiu* history says that there was another group of *wamistikusiu* who

³⁹The stories to which Suzanne Kawapit is now referring are legends that go back further than the more recent encounters of "white men" of the last two centuries. The stories include discussions of swords and possibly have their origins among the eastern coast of Canada (e.g. Labrador) and relate to stories about encounters possibly with Vikings.

came here first long before the Europeans ever came here.⁴⁰ These *wamistikusiu* only had swords for their battles and they sailed only with sails and oars. Maybe these stories came from them.

SK: I suppose that is where the stories came from.

EM: The homes of these *wamistikusiu* were unearthed around the are where the *Waawawiiyuu* live [Labrador], on the other shore where we are. Maybe *Kichunau* came from these *wamistikusiu*.

What about the legend of *Mamiitaau*? Were these *Iiyuu*?

SK: I guess they were like the *Iiyuu*. I suppose they were like the *Iiyuu* but they were not very nice people. They were always trying to kill each other.

It is hardly ever clear when I try to look out the window. The windows are always frosted over.

It has been very cold this year. It is not remembered when the last time it was warm. Since the freeze up where we were this fall, there has not been any rain. Half of March is gone and it is still bitterly cold.

I am very anxious for my teeth to be fixed. It is going to be long time before they are fixed again. They brought a pair for me but they did not fit me. They were too big. They ordered another pair. They told me, 'You might get the new pair in the summer. I am very anxious to have them. The dentist had said that I could chew my food with these false teeth once I have them.' That is why I am very anxious to have them. All of my teeth are gone.

EM: Did you have sore gums after they were taken out?

SK; No, I was not sore after they were taken out. I have seen many doctors. They told me that I would be very sore if all my teeth were taken out and that this could not be done. They asked for me again one day from the south. The dentist who took off my teeth was fast. He took off all my teeth. He told me that they would be very careful when they wanted to place the false teeth on me. They told me that the dentist was asking about me this winter. He instructed that they be very careful when they place the new pair on me. But the ones he gave me did not fit me at all. The dentist here worked on the new pair. She also said that the false teeth were very long for me, too and they did not fit me. I am very anxious to have my new teeth.

⁴⁰Possibly referring to stories of Vikings.

Grandchild, I am always thinking about John, Isaiah's son, who we lived with in the fall. I am always thinking of him because he mentions that he misses me a lot. He was quoted as saying that "I will be gone for two years." Recently, Agnes had quoted him as saying, "My sentence has been reduced to one year." He is in the town where my teeth were taken out. That is where he said he would serve his sentence.

EM: Were you given medicine to help you sleep when your teeth were taken out?

SK: No, I was not made to go to sleep. The dentist was fast when he pulled my teeth.

EM: So, they just give you injections in your gums?

SK: Yes. The young man who translated for me quoted the doctor as saying, "She must have been very strong and in good health when she was younger because this amount of pulling does not make her ill or give her much pain." The young man said to me, "You could have been given medicine to make you sleep for the pulling of your teeth." I did not feel him as he pulled my teeth out.

EM: You must have a great resistance to physical pain.

SK: I was not given medicine to put me to sleep when I had the cataract operation, either. I was told I would be put to sleep but they did not do it at the end. I was alright even though I was not given medicine to put me to sleep. The doctor told me the same thing - that I was doing very well with everything. It is not easy not to move when you have eye operations. They told me that I was doing very well and did not move at all during the operation.

Anyway, the dentist told me that I must have been very healthy when I was much younger.

EM: You must have liked that because you lived the Iyiyuu way of life.

SK: Certainly. I was living the Iyiyuu way of life all my life. I hardly used any kind of *wamistikusiu* food when I was born. I was born in the fall. Where I was born, my brother Luke was born near there, too. My son James was also born near there and my grandchild, James' son was born near there, too. My sisters Maggie and Annie were also born near *Ipisikimis*. Elijah Kawapit was born near there, too. We are all people of the land because we were all born on it.

EM: It means that *Ipisikimis* is your town!

SK: Yes. Ann Sandy and Paul Dick were born near there, too.

EM: The way I understand it is that your parents must have left the post early in the summer to be there where you were born already at that time of the year.

SK: Yes, that is true. I was born south of the *Ipisikimis*. The children who were born on the other side of the river were the only ones I know where most of them were born, only as far back as I can remember. I was always asked where someone from the north was born but I did not know about them. I did not know when they were born.

CHAPTER FOUR LIFE HISTORY: AGNES KAWAPIT

EARLY CHILDHOOD - ON THE LAND

EM: [Interview conducted in Cree.] Where were you born?

AK: I was born in the bush. My mother told me that the place where I was born is called *Yachisakus*. I was born during the Christmas week. I was born December 29. She told me that we had camped with other families at that time but the Iyiyuu did not come to deliver me. I was born in a hurry. They did not have time to tell the other families that I was about to be born when I came. I was born before they could tell them that I was about to be born. I guess my father was kept busy tending to my mother and did not have time to inform the other dwelling of people. It was only when they heard me take my first cries that they knew then that my mother had been in labor and that I was already born. The other people in the other dwelling knew that I had already been born when they heard me crying. My mother told me that I was born very fast. It took about half an hour or so from the time she started feeling the contractions and then I was born. She told me that I was very small. I was not premature but I was just a very small baby. She carried me full term but I was just a tiny baby.

My father gave me my name, Agnes and my Cree name. My Cree name is *Nanimaskumikukwaau*. My Cree name relates to the "caribou imprints on the soft ground during the summer time." That is how my father explained it to me. Something about the signs of ground disturbance made by the caribou in the summer or by other animals I guess but most likely by caribou.

I remember, one time, I was very sick. I do not know how old I was then. I almost died that time. My mother had told me that my brother had already die that year when I was very sick. I must have been around two years old at that time when I was very sick.

I remember that time when my brother died but it seems like it is only a dream. All I remember is that a lot of people used to come into our dwelling because the prayer services were held in our dwelling. I guess it was the burial, I remember I was in our dwelling with someone looking after me. My parents were being led out by the people. I guess that when they attended the burial of my brother who had drowned. This seems like all a dream to me. I must have been two years old at that time.

This other experience is like a dream, too, what I experienced. I do not know why I was very sick. My mother told me that I was very sick during the month of December. My brother who was nine years old had drowned in August of that year and now it was December when I got very sick. My sister

Sarah was fourteen years old had died that spring in May or June. I think it was in May that my sister Sarah died. It was the same year and it was in August that my brother drowned. It was in December of the same year that I got very sick. I almost died, too.

At that time, I do not know why I could not forget this dream that I had. Every time, my mother talked about the time I almost died, I always remembered this dream that I had. I feel that it was a dream. In my dream, I saw this big beautiful tree. Beside the tree, on the other side, a path was leading away from it. It was a beautiful path. I remember seeing grass and flowers along the path. The path was made of pebbles. I was about to follow that path...I saw that it was brightly lit at the end of the path. It looked very beautiful. Before I could get on the path, I heard my mother calling my name. I looked back and I saw our home. I turned around and entered our home. I always remembered that dream. I spoke to a woman about it, Eliza, I told her my dream. She was talking about people who experienced death that they can never forget it.

I had said to her, "I wonder if that is what I experienced." She said to me, "Maybe that is what happened to your. Probably your spirit left your body. You will always remember this dream that you had as long as you live. That is what happens to every person who experiences death, if there spirits had left them even for a little while." She told me that the tree.. "It is said in the Indian teachings that there is a tree of life and when someone reaches the tree of life, they are given another life to live on the other side. The tree of life gave you another life to live here because you turned back after you have passed it a bit. You were given that. One parent did not want you to leave them yet or both of your parents did not want you to go yet."

After she said all this to me, I remembered something. I spoke to my mother about what she had said to me and about my dream. She told, "When we were certain that you were about to die at that time you were very sick, your father said to me, 'Take her in your arms and try to hold her as long as she has breath in her.' By this time your breath was coming at long intervals. I did not say anything to him and I just took you in my arms. After I took you in my arms, I started remembering my other two children that I had lost very recently. I honestly thought that I could not go through another death of one of my children. You were also my last child. After I took in my arms, I prayed very hard not loose me. As I held you, I noticed that your breathing was becoming more regular. Your breathing was becoming stronger."

When I think about it, in a way, my father was sort of instructing her to let me go because I was suffering. Instead, she prayed for me to live longer.

It was so strange when I thought about my dream that I heard my mother's voice calling me. She told me recently what she did at that time when I was very sick and near death. It all connected with everything. I remember my dream very well but I do not remember much from around that time and not very clearly anyway. I do not remember after the time I got well. My mother told me that I was sort of sickly for two years after that. She told me that I had convulsions from time to time. They were afraid I might die during one of the convulsions because the convulsions were strong and left me very weak.

One time, I must have started talking, maybe the second year since I got sick, my mother told me. "I was carrying you in my toboggan during one of our trips. It was a beautiful. Your face was not covered. I had stopped walking and was just standing there to rest awhile. You started to make noises to me and said, 'Mother.' I went to you and asked you, 'What is it?' You said to me, 'Use those on me,' as you pointed to the *wischipikw* that were sticking out of the ground. You said to me, 'I would like to used those.'"

I do not know how I knew these were medicinal. My mother took up the idea right away and thought to treat with the *wischipikw*. She had said, "It seemed that you were telling me what to do to treat so that you might get well from your sickness. I started collecting the *wischipikw*. I used to have you drink them. You did not seem to mind the bitter taste and drank the liquid down. After that you were sweating all the time having drank the *wischipikw*. I started to notice that you were getting much better." That is how I got better.

My father believed that the *wischipikw* is strong medicine. He said, "When a caribou is wounded and followed, if it is seen that it had been eating the *wischipikw*, it is certain that it will not die from it's wound." That is what is told about the caribou. It uses the *wischipikw* to cure itself from its wound.

Anyway, that is all I remembered from around that time. The other event I remember is when our grandmother died. I remember when things like that. I remember when your mother's mother died. I remember when she died. I remember her barely.

EM: Yes? I remember that time, too. You were there? I do not remember you. I remember Margaret being there.

AK: I do not remember you either. I remember that we used to go and see our grandmother when she got sick. It was at Richmond Gulf. I used to go with my mother when we went to see her. I remember the day she died. I remember that clearly. I seem to remember things like that, when some had died, more than other events.

I remember...I do not know if it was morning or the evening but someone came to tell us that she had died. Someone came to tell my father and mother that she had died. My mother had started crying. I was frightened to see her crying. I had always felt afraid when I saw my mother crying. I always wanted to comfort her. I would go to her or sit close to her. I remember doing that. I went to her. I remember her telling me, "Your grandmother that we used to go and see is no longer here." I remember that my sisters sat with me while my parents went to the burial. I remember that children were not allowed to go to the burials. The children used to be looked after in one dwelling while the adults went to the burial. That is all that I remember about that time.

I also remember when we first got here from Richmond Gulf. I remember walking from the second beach to the village. I barely remember that. We had traveled from Richmond Gulf. I do not know if it was the same summer that our grandmother died. Anyway, it was 1955. We arrived here.

EARLY CHILDHOOD - HOSPITAL

It was the same summer that my mother and I were sent to Moose Factory Hospital. I remember that I was very unhappy. I was very scared. I was very scared and unhappy. I knew that I would not see my mother once I got to the hospital. I used to wonder what they were going to do to me. I remember thinking about that. I had no idea how long I will not see my parents. I knew that my mother was going home before me. She was sent home after her treatment. I remember when she went home. I was very sad. I cried when the nurse told me that my mother was leaving. I remember that the nurses were trying very hard to be nice to me. Even though I could not understand them, I still knew somehow what they wanted me to do. After a few months, I understand them talking to me in English. I never saw an Iyiyuu from then on. I never heard anyone speaking the Iyiyuu language. I do not know how I survived, not hearing anyone talking in Cree. I guess that is how I learned faster the English language. I was forced to speak it, too. How did I do it? I used to walk around when I was still with my parents but as soon as I got to the hospital, I was not allowed to walk at all. I was always laying in my bed. Even after I got to the hospital which was near Hamilton, I was not allowed to walk. I stayed at that hospital. I was not even allowed to sit up. I always laid down. At the beginning, I could not stand it because I was always told to lay still. They did not even want me to sit up. I felt fine when I would sit up.

Anyway, my grandmother, my mother's mother and Eliza Masty were with me when we were sent to southern hospitals. My mother's mother's name was Anne [Masty]. There was someone else. I think it was Mary George, Jane's mother. I do not know if it was her. There was another woman in that

hospital. Our grandmother and my aunt Eliza used to come and see me when I was in the hospital. My brother Isaiah must have been in that same hospital but I never saw him. I was taken away from that hospital and taken to Toronto. I left the others wherever it is we were together for a time. After I was taken to Toronto, I never saw another Cree for a long time.

I do remember some good things that happened to me. I remember the good things. I remember that from the time I did not see my parents, there was always someone there who comforted me. For example, when I just got there, there was this woman who came to see me. I do not know why she came to see me but she used to come and visit me. When parents came to see their children in the hospital, this woman used to come and visit me then. She must have been a volunteer. After awhile, she brought her husband with her and her children. I think she had three children. Two of them were all quite grown and the one was just a little girl. They treated me like the parents treated their children. They would come on special days and would bring me gifts and things.

I began to understand the English language because I was only staying with English-speaking children. There is this one kid, a girl, that I remember very well. I remember her well because she used to lie a lot and was very mean. I guess she thought I could not understand but I knew what she was doing and saying. We were in a place which was more like a foster home. We were not in the hospital but sick children were looked after there. The kid used to mess around and make a lot of noise even after we had gone to bed. The nurse would come and say, "Who making this noise?" If the kid knew one of us was not asleep yet, she would accuse us. She would pick one of us and say we were making the noise even she was making all the noise. One time, she did that to me. I could not sleep because she was keeping me awake with her noise. I just lay in bed.

I could not get up after going to bed because I used to be strapped in bed across my chest. They did that because they did not want me to get up or move much [after the back operation]. The only time I would be unstrapped was when it was a mealtime. I would be propped up in bed then.

The nurse came and asked who was making all the noise again. I could not sleep because she was making too much noise. She got into her bed when she heard the nurse coming. I guess she knew that I could not sleep.

When the nurse entered the room, she spoke up and said to the nurse, "Agnes is making all the noise. I can not sleep because she is keeping me awake." That is what she told the nurse. The nurse came to my bed and shone her flashlight on me. She had told that nurse that I was sitting up and standing

up on my bed. The nurse pulled down my blankets and saw that I was still strapped down. I guess the nurse knew that the kid was lying. She asked me, "Did you talk?" I said, "No. But I can not sleep." She asked me, "Why?" I told her, "Because she is keeping me awake."

I told her the same the kid was saying to her about me. The nurse did not say anything to me. She just fixed my blankets and said, "Okay. Go to sleep now." The nurse said to her, "Do not do this again to other kids." The nurse spanked her bottom. "Go to sleep." She cried. She was also the type who cried easily. "Be quite and go to sleep," the nurse said to her.

I certainly made her angry at me. She was angry. When her mother came to see her, she told her stories about me. Her mother had come the next day. The nurse who had seen this happened to overhear her telling these lies about me. The nurse had started her shift just then. The nurse told her parents what had been happening.

The nurse said, "How did I know she was lying about Agnes? Because she is strapped down for the night so that she cannot move her upper body while she sleeps. There is no way she can get up and stand around in her bed."

Anyway, she was gone from there early. I always remember her because the way she was. She used to get me angry, too, because she would accuse the other kids and me of things that she did. The other kids would get the reprimands. She was very good at lying. I was the only Native child there.

The woman who used to come and see me taught me a lot about the English language. She and her family used to bring me books and other things for me to use like crayons and stuff like that. They would also bring me toys even though I could not move to play with them at the time they came to see me.

Later, I was taken to a hospital and I was told I was going to have an operation. I was admitted to a hospital. The woman and her family told me that they would not able to come and see me often after I was admitted into the hospital. I guess they lived near the foster-type home I was in before my operation.

I do not know what she said exactly but I understood her saying, "We can not come and see you often when you are in the hospital but we will come." I said, "okay." I was very bored and I missed them a lot when I was in the hospital.

I remember another woman who used to come and see me when I was in the hospital. She was in a wheel chair. I do not know if she could walk. I think

she was a patient, too. She used to come and see me every day once she knew I was in the hospital. I would be told to have naps. Upon waking from my naps, she would be there already, waiting for me to wake. She made me so comfortable by what she did for me. She prepared me for my operation by the way she talked to me. She told me what would happen to me.

She said, "When you are being operated on, you will be put to sleep and will not be conscious during the operation. When you wake you from your operation you will be sick. The reason why you will not feel very good will be from the anaesthetic. You will be put to sleep. You will be alright. Do not be afraid." She was always talking to me and telling me not to be afraid. I remember that because she really helped me by treating me like she did.

That morning I was going to be operated on, I think she was the one who was told to sign the consent forms. I remember the doctor bringing the forms and she signed them. She was always there beside me even when I was taken to the operating, she came with me. When they were about to put the mask on my mouth for the anaesthetic, she took my hand and said, "bye bye for now." That is the last thing I remember - that she was holding my hand.

I do not know how long I was under during and after the operation but when I woke up, she was there. She was the first person I saw when awoke after the operation. I felt very bad and ill. It felt like I was not going to make it. That is how sick I felt. She took my hand right away. She told me I was going to be alright. She held my hand. I lost conscious again. When I woke up again, I did not feel that bad. I did not feel that sick as before. I do not know how often I was given painkillers. As days went by when I still felt sick from the operation, the woman was always there.

Much later, I was taken out of the hospital. I do not know who that woman was. I know that she was a patient of that hospital. I was there at that hospital for a long time. One day, I was told that I was going to be taken to the first hospital where I had been before the operation. I was told that I was going to be driven there, near Hamilton.

EM: Do you remember any names of the people you met like the family and the woman in the wheel chair?

AK: I do not remember all their names. I remember one name which was Eileen. I think that name belonged to the woman in the wheel chair. I do not remember of the names of the family. I remember one of the nurses at Toronto hospital was Nancy. She is another person I remember. She used to come and see me even when she was off duty during visiting hours. She used to bring her husband with her. I felt that I made friends even though I could

not speak much to them. I got to know people.

I do not remember but my mother told me that Mary George, Louisa's mother, had said that she saw me in the hospital. She was in the same hospital where I had the operation in Toronto. She had told my mother that they had seen me but I do not remember that time. I cannot recall if I did see her.

EM: So, you got to the hospital near Hamilton after your operation.

AK: Yes. Is there such a place called Craven Hearst? I think that is where the hospital was where I stayed after the operation after I left Toronto. I stayed there one year over one year. I was gone for a total of two years. I was taken back there around Christmas time. I was sharing a room with an Inuk woman whose name was Louisa. There was another woman on the same floor. Her name was Eva. I do not know what she had but she was very sick. She could not use her hands at all. They were swollen up like balloons. They looked very swollen. She could not take or pick up anything with her hands. Both of her hands were like that. They were bandaged. She used to be wheeled to my bed at visiting hours.

After a while, I was no longer strapped down. I used to get up and around in my bed on the soft mattress. I do not know how long I was there when I was told that I could get out of my bed. When I first tried to walk on the floor, I could not do it because I had no feeling in my legs. I used to fall when I tried to stand up and walk on the floor.

Eva's children used to come and see me during visiting hours. They would take turns coming to see me. I do not know what she had but I think she had to be in the hospital all the time. One time, her husband came to see me. I was very sad after that. I think she was transferred to another hospital. Her husband told me, I remember, "Eva can not come and see you anymore." I asked him why. He told me that she was in a new hospital. You can not go and see her. I forgot what her children's names were. I think the boy was Bill and the daughter was Judy. He said, "But Bill and Judy will come and visit you. I have to go and see her." I think that he said that she was going to another hospital. He told me, "I will come and see you when I come driving back here." The children used to come and see me. I would see them often.

After that I was transferred to another floor. The girl used to come and see me. One time, she told me, "I will have to go and see my mom." After that I did not see them anymore. I do not know what happened but I suspect that the woman had died. She seemed quite ill when I first met her.

I used to think that I was lucky to have met all those people wherever I was. It would always happen that I would meet another couple after I did not see the other ones.

EM: So, you were taken to the same hospital where you were before your operation. Do you think that it was the name of the hospital, Craven Hurst/Hearst?

EARLY CHILDHOOD - RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

AK: Yes. I do not know exactly but we were taken back to Moose Factory in September. Our grandmother was not there anymore. I do not know when they came back to Great Whale River. An old man who came back with us to Moose Factory was David Sandy's father [Joseph Sandy/Nipinwaaskum] - but I did not know that old man - and my brother Isaiah. Robbie Dick was with us, too. I did not know Robbie, either. I did not even know that he was from Great Whale River. I also did not know that the old man was from Great Whale River. We were told that we were going to be in the hospital at Moose Factory. Later on, we were told that we will be going to school. We used a train to come back to Moose Factory as we did going down to the other places. The school was in Moose Factory. We were told that we would be at the residential school. We thought we were going to go home but I do not know why we could not go home. Anyway, I suppose that there were no planes coming here because the freeze up was almost upon this area. That is why we could not go home.

When got into the residential school, we were asked if we had been in school before. We said, "no" because we have never been in school. We were put in Kindergarten. We were there for one week or so. I guess they figured we had enough English to be put in grade one. We started grade one. We went to school for one year. It was only when we were in school that I knew Robbie was from Great Whale River. When we were put in grade one, the teacher told the other students that the two of us were from Great Whale River. It was only then that I knew Robbie was from Great Whale River. He told me that his sister was in the hospital at Moose Factory but I did not know who his sister was at that time.

That year, in March, my brother James came to Moose Factory. He came to see me. He was visiting me. I was happy to see him. I remember thinking that he might be able to take me home when he goes home. But he was told that he could not take me home until school was out. When I got home, I went to my room and cried. I cried when I knew that he was going home. He gave me things. He gave me money, too. I did not know who Joseph Sheshamush was at that time but James had come with him to Moose Factory. He came to visit his wife Frances who was Robbie's sister. I remember

that they came to see us when we were in school.

One of the things I remember very well is that we used to be in Church services and say prayers all the time when we were in the residential school. First thing in the morning, we were told to say prayers. After morning prayers we would wash, get dressed and make our beds. Then we would go down to breakfast. We would say prayers again before eating breakfast. After breakfast, we would go upstairs where the chapel was located. We would be taken to the chapel and say prayers again before we went to school. After the services, we would go to school. We would say grace before lunch and supper. It seemed that we were always praying. Naturally, we would also be taught about the Bible and read from the Bible in class. We were in grade one, we were already being taught to read the Bible. That is one of the subjects I remember, that we were reading the Bible. We seemed to be reading or praying all the time. Naturally, we would say prayers before going to bed. We would start all over again the next day.

I was happy in school. I learned to follow orders and do chores. We were still given some chores to do even though we were small children in grade one. We were given chores to do on weekends. We cleaned the residence. Sometimes, we were told to wash the stairs. There would be many of us washing the stairs. Some would clean the gym, the kitchen, bathrooms and the bedrooms. We cleaned the whole residence every weekend.

Another thing I remembered is when a student had some money, the residence workers would look after the money for us. The canteen would be open on the weekends. We were told that we would not be able to go to the movie if we brought something from the canteen. We could not do both even if we had the money. We had a choice. I remember I used to do one thing one weekend and the other the next weekend. One week I would buy something from the canteen and go to the movie the next weekend. In this way, we were taught how to use our money and not to be wasteful of our money.

I made some friends. There was a girl who was my friend. Her name was Sally. I think her last name was Mayappo. She was from Eastmain. She was my roommate. We shared bunks. I remember Beatrice Gunner and Janie Loutitte. I remembered these girls all the time. I do not know why. I remembered them all the time. I met Beatrice last year. She was Beatrice Gunner but now she is Beatrice Petawabino. She is the one who is a CHR in Mistissini. I remember Emmett Matoush, too and his brother George. Emmett was a good student. He must have been because he received many awards when there was a graduation ceremony. That is why I remember him because he received many awards. His brother George...I do not know why I

remember him but I do. Andrew was in our class, too, Andrew Loutitt. Redfern Whiskeychan was also in our class that one I was there. These are the children I remembered who were in the school with us. There was another girl I remember whose name was Susan Bosum. I do not know where she is now.

I wonder if Sally is Kenneth Gilpin's wife today. She is around that age, too. I really liked to go around with her because she was as small as me. We were the same size.

Anyway, in June or July after school was out, I was able to come home then. Robbie and I came home together. We had traveled with the Chisasibi children who had been going to school there, too. I remember George and Emily House. They were brother and sister. I remember Noah Snowboy. These are the children I remembered we came with from Moose Factory.

EARLY CHILDHOOD - RETURN TO WHAPMAGOOSTUI

We flew all day long from Moose Factory. I do not know the name of the plane but it was known as "The Black Plane" by the Whapmagoostui Iyiyuuch.

I remember the day we were told that we were going home. I had mixed feelings. I had been away from my parents for so long. I had not seen them for three years. I wondered what I would feel when I saw them. I was also very happy. I never thought that I would never see them again even though I could not see them for a long time. I used to think, "When I see them, I wonder if I can talk to them?" I still understood some Cree but since I had been in the hospital I had not heard anyone speak in Cree and because of that I did not speak Cree very well. I picked up the Moosonee Cree dialect since I had been there at Moose Factory. I heard the students talking to each other in that dialect and I would speak to them, too, in that dialect. I would speak Cree to them but it was more like the Moosonee dialect.

I used to wonder, "I wonder if my parents will be able to understand me." I thought that as I flew home. I really wanted to talk to my mother. I could not speak Cree very well. I knew that.

When we got here...It was funny, too. I do not know what we were saying but Robbie and I were talking as we flew home. As we flew home, we wondered, "What will they say to us?" We were talking in English.

I remember Robbie asking me, "Do you remember your mother? Do you remember what she looks like?" I said to him, "No. I do not remember what she looks like but I will know her when I see her and my father."

We got off the plane. I saw the people standing there. I could not make out which one was my father. I recognized my brother James because I had seen him recently when he came to visit me. I recognized my brother Isaiah, too. They were the only ones I recognized. I remembered my sister Susan but I did not recognize her. I guess she was quite young when I went away to the hospital. She was seventeen when I came back. She must have been fourteen when I left. I was nine years old when I came back.

When we got here, my sister Susan started kissing me but I did not know who she was. I wondered who she was. I asked Isaiah, "Who is that?" He said, "She is our sister Susan." I did not know her. My father came to me, too and James. My father, James, Isaiah and Susan took me home. We met my mother on the way. She was just coming to meet the plane. I knew who she was right away and my father, too. I remember she and my father were very happy. When we had entered our dwelling, they began talking but I could hardly understand what they were saying. I was trying to make out what they were saying. I did not understand what they were saying. It sounded like they were talking very fast.

I asked my brother Isaiah what they were saying. He said, "They are wondering where you are going to sleep." They were quite poor. They had only two or three beds. I told him right away, "I will sleep with mom." He told them what I had said. "Agnes wants to sleep with you, mother," he said to her.

Before we left the shore where we had gotten off from the plane, I looked for Robbie. I spotted him and he was crying. He was crying. I wondered, "I wonder why he is crying." I wondered if he was disappointed or something.

I really liked going to school. One of my teachers had said to me, "You can come back in the fall and come back to school." But my parents had other plans. They had planned to leave the post for the inland as soon as I got back here. They were not going to let me go anywhere again. We went back on the land again. From there, I remember all that we did.

EARLY CHILDHOOD - RETURN TO THE LAND

We left Great Whale River, travelling in canoes along the Northern coast of Hudson Bay for about a hundred miles until we reached Richmond Gulf and then traveled inland from there, taking the route we call *Pachisi* [or *Pachisis-tukw*; Betsy's River]. We were traveling towards *Ipisikimis* [Lac Bienville]. We trapped and hunted around north of Bienville.

I forgot the place where we were when we parted with my sister Susan and her husband Philip [Mukash]. He told them that we were going to get their

belongings where they had left them years ago. I think the things they had left behind were traps, caribou skins, bullets and ice chisels among other winter stuff. They had left those things far from *Ipisikimis*. I do not remember the name of the place where they left their things but it was quite far from the source of *Ipisikimis*. That is where we traveled. I guess that is where we had spent the spring break-up a long time ago why we left those things there when we were around those parts a long time ago. It was just me, my brother Isaiah, mom and dad who took this trip to retrieve the belongings. We left our things with my sister. We only took a few things on this trip. We had a small tent to use on this trip. I do not know exactly how long this trip took but it could have been about a week or so.

I remember, one day, as we were paddling back to our main camp, we could not travel because it was very windy. We still had not reached *Ipisikimis* when the storm hit us. It was very windy - *Chichiwatin* [direction from where the wind was coming]. We had camped not too far from the shore when we had landed the day before. We could not travel the next day because of strong wind. It was very stormy and there was no way a canoe can be on the water. The water was rising, too. The water level of the lake began to rise. We had camped quite a way from the shore line. The shore was the same distance as Vera's house is [present day comparison]. That is how far the water line was. The water line was rising and coming closer to our entrance way. After a while, the water was almost reaching the entrance of our tent. My father had gone hunting out on the land. When he got back, he told us to take down our tent and move it further inland. He said, "We might get wet during the night." So, we took our tent and moved it further inland. We stayed another day because of the storm. As we continued traveling home, it started to snow. The first snows had come. I think, we were already traveling on *Ipisikimis* when we saw an otter. We saw it running on the land. It was the first time I had seen a live otter. I was very excited and interested. I was very excited and interested whenever I saw a live animal. My brother Isaiah shot it and killed it.

I was very interested in doing whatever I saw my mother doing to clean and skin the animals. I wanted to learn to do it like my mother, including skinning animals. I tried very hard to learn these kinds of things.

My mother told me this story about myself during that trip. Isaiah had shot a muskrat. I asked my mother, "May I skin it?" She said, "Alright." Afterwards she had said, "You took a long time to skin that muskrat." I sat outside as my parents erected our tent and chopped the firewood. I did not help them because I was so busy trying to skin the muskrat. They finished everything they had to do but I was still at it. It got dark as I sat there with the muskrat. It took me a long time to skin it.

After a while, my mother called me and said, "Come inside. You might cut yourself. It is getting dark." I went inside. She had lit a candle. I took off my coat. I sat by the candle and continued skinning the muskrat. I guess I was very determined to finish what I had set out to do. I did not want to stop until I was finished with the muskrat. It took me a long time to finish skinning it. I guess I learned to do things that way.

That is how I learned to skin muskrats and other small fur bearing animals. I tried very hard to do what I saw my mother doing. I always tried even though I was not very good at first but I kept on trying hard to learn and do it.

Anyway, we continued on with our journey home. We came upon some buildings where some *wamistikusi* had been. There was a lot of foodstuff that had been left there. We did not have sugar nor any kind of food from the *wamistikusi* at that time. We found some things to eat in the building. They did not go to the building that was on top of the hill. We only went to the house that was down the hill. There was canned food there. We took some of the canned food. We found some sugar, too. I do not know how much sugar there was but my mother took it all. There was some powdered milk and we took it, too. We thought that we had a lot of food with us when we only has tea that was from the store. We did not have any flour, either. We found flour in that building. We were able to have some bannock. We continued on with our trip. We were still far from where we had left my sister and her husband when my brother James reached us. He had joined us and had come by plane. I do not know how he found us. We had our main camp on a river. He still have found us where we were. He really surprised us. We had not expected him at all. He came to join us by plane. He was working here in town when we left the post. That is why he did not come with us. I guess he stopped working in the late fall. He decided to join us then. There must have been bush planes flying then. He brought some store bought supplies, too. He had bought things for my father and Philip. He had bought me things, too. I was very happy with the things he bought me. I did not have a warm winter coat and he had bought me one. It was very nice. He bought some other clothes, too.

We moved some ways from there and that is where we spent the freeze up at our new camp. As soon as freeze up was over, my father said, "We will start traveling now." We traveled to...

I had to re-learn all these things because I had not been on the land for a long time. When we first started our journey away from Great Whale River, I did not understand the language they were using. When you are on the land, there is a whole different language that I was not used because I had not been

there for a long time. I did not understand new words like "*piitah*" ["put the chopped firewood inside the dwelling"]. When I was told to do that, I did not understand that. I also did not understand when I am told "*siputanh*" ["close the entrance flap of the tent or a tipi"]. I did not know a lot of words associated with a dwelling like "*ikwaawaanipishuih*" [poles that go across the rack over the fire used for drying meat] or "*pimitaskustakin*" [stick that goes across and middle of the width of the entrance flap of a dwelling or a tent.], things like that. I did not know any of these words - "*ipwaanaskuh*" [skewer for cooking meat near the open fire], "*mititaiken*", things like that. I learned all those words/phrases that first year. The second fall, there were more new words to learn. That first fall, when my father said, "*akut cha tikwaakipiikw*" [We will wait out the freeze up right here]. I had no idea what he was talking about. Another word I had a hard time with was with a word used to describe an area on the land or river where there is no snow, only the frozen ice is there, termed as "*susaskuun*". I could not understand that. I used to think that my brothers used a lot of new words that I did not understand when they told of their day after having gone out hunting all day long. I could not make out their stories of their activities. I used to wonder what their stories were about.

I used to spend a lot of time with my brother James. I used to ask him what this or that word meant. I guess he was my teacher. He always took time to tell me and answer all my questions. I was very happy the way he treated me because he always took time for me. I was very close to him. He used to teach me a lot things. Sometimes, he would invite me along to go with him when he did not have to go too far when he went out to do some hunting and other chores. He would ask me to come with him when he wanted to set some fishing lines or check the nets. He used to tell me what things were called. Sometimes, he would play jokes on me and tell names of things which were not the actual names but an entirely different meaning. I used to think that he was telling me a wrong name when he is too tired of my questions. Basically, I had a lot of fun learning. I had also had to re-learn to use snowshoes, pull a load on a toboggan and use the axe to chop whatever was needed for a dwelling. Anyway, that is how I got started living in the bush again.

EM: What year did you come back to Great Whale River?

AK: It was in 1958.

EM: So, you waited until freeze-up...

AK: When we left our freeze-up camp, that was my first experience of traveling in the winter for a long distance. I was very tired that first day, I remember,

when we camped for the day. It was still daytime when stopped to make our dwelling. They erected the dwelling. It was all new to me the way it is done when erecting a dwelling. Everything was new to me. At the beginning of our journey, I had learned and now knew what we had to do to make our camp and living when there was no snow or ice. I knew how a tipi or tent was erected. When we moved our camp the first time that winter, I had never seen a *wiskichanchiwaap* before. That is what they erected that first trip after the freeze up. It was something new to me. I did not remember it. I had seen them before my stay in the hospital and school but I had no recollection of them. I could not remember far enough back in time. We must have had this winter dwelling before I had gone away but I could not remember it clearly. I was amazed at the way it was made. I was wondering how it was going to turn out by the way the poles were placed. It was amazing to me, especially after I entered it. The stove was placed inside this dwelling and not an open fire. We had an open-fire tipi at our fall camp. I do not remember if we had used a stove inside the tipi before we left. I think that it was only when they erected the dwelling that they used the stove inside it. The toboggans were made [by hand, too]. I always watched the way my father made the toboggans. Everything that I saw being done and made always held a great interest for me. I always had a lot of questions I wanted to ask my father.

That first day we moved from our fall camp, my sister's husband, Philip, went off hunting. When he returned and entered our dwelling, he brought in the ptarmigan and rabbit that he had caught on this outing. I had no idea what a marten [*waapistan*] looked like. I do not know what made me say this when I saw the rabbit, "He brought home a marten." It would be the first time a marten was killed. My father said to me, "Bring the marten, I would like to see it." Philip must have heard my father saying this and he moved towards his hunting pack. The rabbit was the only animal I had seen in his pack. I had thought that *waapistan* was going to be an animal with white fur because of the first prefix *waap*. He took out the marten which he fortunately had brought home and handed it to me. He handed me the marten. I was surprised that it was not white. In my mind *waapistan* was a white animal. When I saw the rabbit [*waapush*], I thought that it's name was *waapistan* in Cree. I did not even know that he had brought a marten but I said he did when I saw the rabbit. My father looked over the marten.

I asked him, "Is this a *waapistan*, father?"

He said to me, "What did you think?"

I told him, "I thought *waapistan* was all white."

I remember that well. I used to think, "What if he had not brought a marten that day." I suppose I would have had to explain why I said that. Those are the experiences that I remember from during that first winter back from the hospital.

The next day, we broke camp and traveled again. That day, we reached a place called *Chinusaau-kuskhph*. We made camp there at that lake called *Chinusaau-kuskhph*. It is a long lake. We would be there for a long time. We got there in December. Was it December? It was not cold yet. Maybe it was still November. We had left our freeze up camp right after freeze up. We traveled to this area. We made our camp on an island of that lake. I guess that is where they made expeditions to set up their trap lines - my brothers, brother-in-law and father. They never saw a caribou track all that time. We lived on small game, ptarmigan and fish. Occasionally they killed some otters, beavers and porcupine.

One day, Philip went out hunting. He came back and said, "I found a building. There is a lot of food there." We did not have much whiteman's food then. Maybe we did have just a little bit left. He told my brothers to go with him to get some of the food. They left the next day. The building must have been far away. It was nighttime when they got back. They had loaded up their toboggan with food. There was a lot of food. I remember they brought back a big pail of lard. They must have brought two or three of them. There had been a lot of food left behind. There was sugar, flour and other things like pie filling. They brought a lot of the pie filling and other canned food, like vegetables and some canned meats. We had a lot of these whiteman's foods for a long time.

Later, when the weather turned cold, my father said, "We will move camp again." I guess there was no firewood close by. We moved camp but it was on the same lake. We moved just onto the shore of the lake, across from the island where we had first camped when we had arrived at the lake. We ran out of food again. This was after Christmas.

James said to my father, "I will take the pelts to the post. I will go and see the *wamistikusu* if they had come back to the buildings and ask them to take me to the post." They had already had some pelts. They had seen army helicopters flying about around the building. "I will take our pelts to the post. I will ask the *wamistikusu* if I can go with them back to Whapmagoostui."

He left with their pelts. I do not know if he took Philip's pelts. He had said, "If I am not back in two nights, it means I have hitched a ride back to the post at Great Whale River."

"If I do not come back in two nights, it means that they have agreed to take me to Whapmagoostui," James said. Four nights later, Philip said to Isaiah, "Let's go and check if James was flown to Whapmagoostui." I guess Philip was worried about James, thinking that something could have happened to him. "Let us go and check if he got on the plane for certain."

They left and went to where he had gone to find the *wamistikusiu*. They brought back his toboggan and his snowshoes. James had left those at the building. They said, "We figure he has gone on the plane. He is not at the site. He left his things there."

I do not remember how long he was gone but he did come back early. He came back in a Beaver plane to our camp. It was a small plane. He brought a lot of things. He brought a lot supplies.

It was then that we heard that my brother Andrew's first child had been born. It was a girl. Her name was Nellie. She died at three months.

Another child that was born that we heard about was Mary [Mamianskum-Rupert] who passed away last year. I remember James telling us about the death of Charlotte [George-Mamianskum] after giving birth to her daughter Mary.

Anyway, we camped there for a time. We were still at that camp when my father and my brothers saw some caribou tracks. I do not remember how many caribou they killed that time. He and Philip tracked them down. They were gone a long time. I think it took them a week to track them down. The caribou had run a long way. I think my father killed four caribou that time. We were very happy and excited because there were hardly any caribou around in those days.

We moved camp some time later. That is where the first spring thaw happened at our new camp. My father told us to get ready for our journey to *Ipisikimis* where we would wait for the spring break-up. The spring was coming by then. I do not know if we had seen geese yet at that time. My father decided to go ahead after we had traveled for one day to see where we would make our spring camp near *Ipisikimis*. He was gone all day and into the night. The weather had warmed and the snow softened. We waited late into the night for my father to come back.

Philip said to us, "Go to sleep if you want to. I'll tell you if I hear him coming. I will stay up and listen for him." I guess Philip was worried about him since there was the possibility that my father could have gone through the ice or something. He kept the fire going in the stove. Later, we heard him saying, "I hear his footsteps." My father came back. I do not know what time it was when he came back. He was tireless - no matter what he did. I do not know what time he came back that night. He informed us that he had killed some caribou. It was in the late evening when he shot the caribou. He had killed eight caribou and butchered them all. I wonder how

my father did it. He had taken only eight bullets and had killed eight caribou. On top of that, he had wounded one caribou. He went looking for the wounded caribou the next day. The wounded animal had died. So, he killed nine caribou with eight bullets. I guess he got two caribou with one bullet.

When he told us that he had wounded one caribou, he said to James, "I would like one of you to go early in the morning and track the wounded caribou."

He had butchered all the caribou before he came home. In the morning, he was up and about very early. He must have had only two or three hours sleep when he woke up. We broke camp and were on our way to where he had killed the caribou before sunrise. It was a clear day and the snow was hard. The going was easy. We reached the place where he had killed the caribou. The caribou had been on an island. We made camp there. Philip found the wounded caribou. He said that the caribou was already dead when he found it. I remember very well all that we did that time. I was very happy about the caribou.

There was another spring thaw at that camp. Our dwelling was broken up from the melting and softening snow. We laughed at Philip. He said, "I was cutting the meat from the caribou bones. I did not anticipate anything as I sat, bent over the bones. Our dwelling must have started to break up from the softening snow. Suddenly, one of the poles must have fallen towards me and it hit me on the head. I felt that I was going to faint from the blow but more from the surprise. I thought someone had hit me on the head."

We moved our dwelling to an area where the snow had melted already. It was very beautiful where our new dwelling site was. It on top of hill. We built a tipi. The geese came. They killed many geese.

From there, we continued our to where we would wait for spring break up. Philip went back down our trail because he had not taken off all his traps. He was gone for one day.

One time, I was alone in our dwelling. I do not know where my mother had gone. She was still very strong and healthy at that time and could work all day if she had to. I think she was setting her muskrat traps. I was alone in our dwelling when Philip came back. He said to me, "You ate a pike." He saw the pike skin and bones on the plate. I said to him, "Yes, we did. My mother killed it." He thought that was funny after telling the story to the rest about my Cree.

From there, we moved to the outlet of *Ipisikimis*. I think we paddled to this area to wait for the spring. I remember that time, I used to play by myself because there were no children to play with. I used to play alone.

When I came back from the hospital, my father gave me a watch which he had brought for me before I came back home. It was a small watch. It was a gold watch. It was a beautiful watch. There was a lid on the watch face itself. It was made of gold. He told me that the watch was quite expensive when he brought it to me. I did not wear because it was still a bit big for my wrist. My mother kept the watch for me.

One day, at the place where we were waiting for the spring breakup, I asked my mother for my watch. I guess I was playing "dress-up" or something like that. I played with my watch. I had a little purse. I wore the watch for awhile and put it back in my purse. I put the watch back in its case. There was a place where it rested in the case and there was cover for the case. I put the cover back on after I had placed in its case and into my purse. I am definitely certain that I did all this. I put the watch in my purse. I had been playing inside my own small tipi. I went out of my tipi and into our dwelling. I do not know what I was getting from our dwelling. I remember that time. When I wanted to return to my small tipi, I felt uneasy. I felt afraid for no reason. Something was wrong. I went into my tipi briefly and then I decided to take it down. I decided to put my things inside our home. Before I set about gathering up my things, I opened my purse to look inside before I put back my other things that I kept in it. As soon as I opened it, I noticed something was missing. I looked over my things inside. I realized what was missing. My watch was gone! We could not find my watch anywhere. I told my mother about my watch. At first I was afraid to tell her, fearing that she would reprimand me for losing it. I told her exactly what I did that before I came into our dwelling and where I had put the watch. There was no one outside. My sister Susan had been inside our home all this time. There was no one else around at our camp but the three of us. My father was out with my brothers. They had gone out by canoe. Philip was with them, too. Nobody else was in the camp besides the three of us - me, my mother and my sister. My sister was inside. She was working on something. I think she was fixing some ducks. I accused her of taking my watch. But she said to me, "I did not go outside since you came into the dwelling and after you went back out." I know that what she said was true because she had been inside all the time I was there.

That time or some time later, my mother told me that I was sleep walking. I wanted to go outside our dwelling in the middle of the night. I was frightened by what she told me because I did not remember doing that. She said, "I felt you getting up and heading outdoors."

After I did that, my father suggested that I should sleep between them. I used to sleep between with. Other times, I would sleep on my father's side. Sometimes, he would say to me, "Come and sleep with me." This practice was stopped after we left that spring camp. Anyway, that was my mystery - an "unsolved mystery". We never found my watch. I still think about it sometimes. I really missed my watch.

We spent a few weeks there before we came down to the post. The time came for us to make our way down to the coast, hence Whapmagoostui. We made good time getting here. We traveled by canoes. Our first stop on this journey was at *Atikwaatiwaapiich*. I think that is where we stopped for the night. After a few of days of paddling and portaging all day long, I was really tired out. It was really tiring for me.

There was this place, the place called *Paputatin* [name of the high falls] where the portage was the longest. My father had told me, "You are going to see a small stream." The *paputatiniukipitankin* [portage across the high falls] is very long. He said to me, "You are going to see a small stream which we will have to walk across. You are going see the stepping stones going across the stream. Sam Mastey and I made this stone bridge. We were still quite young when we made this bridge." The stones were long. They must have been very strong when they took the stones to make the stepping bridge across the stream. They made the bridge to make crossing the stream easier.

My father and mother used to tell me stories. They told me that some kind of a presence was felt on that portage. It was felt that the occurrence happening from time to time along the portage was the work of the PWAATICH. "I do not know why the presence is felt there."

My father told me that...I do not know exactly where but I think on the north side of the present portage is another portage. "That is where another path of the portage is. Along this path, at one spot is a smooth rock area. On this rock is an area that looks like a huge pail. It is filled with water. Some people said that they tried to touch the bottom with long sticks but they could not touch bottom. It is very deep. Maybe it is a pool of water. It is located in a smooth flat rock."

He told me another story about the stream which we had crossed. It was a story about a woman but I forgot what her name was. Maybe it was Diana who was *Sans'* [Charlie Niquanicappo's] first wife. It could be her.

"She was quoted as saying, 'I always faint whenever I cross the stream.'" This only happened if she was not with a man crossing this stream along the portage.

Annie Nutachequan is another woman who is like that when crossing this stream. She told this story. "We were coming to the coast with Matthew Natachequan who was still quite young at that time. My husband had gone ahead of us. I was walking with Matthew along this portage. This was the first time that I could remember not crossing the stream with my husband. I just barely made it across the stream and then I fainted on the other side. I felt sick all of sudden just before crossing. I had barely made it across when I realized that I was fainting." These are the stories my parents told me that happened along that portage.

I was still young at that time. The first time I saw the stream I felt very uncomfortable. It happened each time I crossed it. I did not see this crossing that many times in my life, though. But each time I saw it, I was very uncomfortable. I guess it was fear. I always felt that something was going to go wrong. I always felt like that about that place. I remember staying overnight on the shore at the beginning of the portage. I could not sleep very well that night. I felt afraid. In the morning, we made the long portage. When we reached the end of the portage and were paddling away from it, I remember, I felt very relieved. I felt I was getting away from something. That is how I felt. Anyway, after that I was okay. I do not remember another experience like that.

I used to walk with my mother during the portage. My mother told me of her experience, too. It was the same time when we made our way here. I used to walk with her. She always had me walking in front of her. There is a place called *Masimakusich atach*. We made a portage there. She did not tell me what she was thinking and feeling as we made the portage. We landed...we did land that day. Anyway, it was only after we made camp for the night that she mentioned her experience on the portage.

She said, "When we made the portage at *Masimakusich atach* and were walking along the trail, I heard footsteps behind us." You know how loud the footsteps are when someone is walking in wet boggy ground. Some parts of the portage were through areas like that. "I heard someone coming behind us when we were walking on the boggy area. I thought right away, 'it must be one of the family members.' I expected whoever it was to pass us. When they did not pass us I almost called to you to stand aside and let them pass. As soon as I thought this, I stopped moving because someone was holding onto my load. There was no tree nearby for my load to snag on but, instantly, I thought it must have snagged on a branch so I swung it around to free it. When I swung it harder the load seemed to be freed. Having freed myself, I told you to walk a little faster."

I remember that time, too, when she told me to walk faster. Shortly after, my father came down the path towards us. He came to see us. My father said to my mother after she told the story, "It is possible that the PWAAT are bothering us. It must be them that you felt."

I remember that time when my father was talking about what he had thought, saying, "I have never had such an experience myself where I felt an unknown presence. I have been there with others when they felt strange presences but I have never experienced it myself. I had always thought to myself, 'If I ever experience such a presence, it was a sign to me that my time here is almost over.'"

That is what I remember from when that happened to us. It was kind of scary, too. I did not know they [the *pwaat*] were doing that. It seemed that they were bothering us

and we were feeling their presence. It is strange...Not far from this area I am talking about is another portage called *Aisiwaataukach*. That is where my mother's grandmother *Chuskuminas* is buried. She had visited her grave. She was telling me that she was talking to her grandmother while she visited her grave. She said she told her, "We are having hard time these days. Our travel is not going well because it is always windy. We are also having strange experiences. Grandmother, think it so that there will be nice days ahead as long as we are traveling." After that, there were nice days and it was not windy.

Anyway, we continued on with our journey down to the coast to Whapmagoostui. The days were clear day and not windy. Shortly after that we reached the place called *Kawaakuwiiyu* which is past *Wiminipis*. When we reached that place, to the south of there, there was some activity. There were bulldozers there. The truck used to travel to *Wiminipis* from the camp to the south. There must have been other camps to the south.

James had gone out hunting by foot when we landed there. He saw the truck. He waved at them but they did not see him. He followed the truck. He wanted to know what was going on. He wanted to go and see the *wamistikusiu*. At that time, my mother had a hard time walking because one of her legs was very sore for some reason. He was thinking about her - thinking that she would have to walk two more portages before reaching Whapmagoostui. The portages were also quite long. He was anxious about my mother having to walk this distance with her sore leg. He decided to try and see the *wamistikusiu* to ask them if they could take my mother to Whapmagoostui with their plane. He did not come home that night. We were quite worried about him. He came home in the morning. He brought bad news. He told us of the death of my niece, Andrew's first child. He said to us, "A truck will come for you. A plane will take you to Whapmagoostui. Agnes, I want you to go with mother."

Most of the heavy stuff would come with us - like the dried caribou meat and things like that. My father and the boys, Isaiah and James, traveled with my father down in the canoe with the rest of our belongings. The plane was a Beaver.

Philip was quite sick those days. He had big a canoe and he had to carry it on the portages. It made him tired. He wrote to his brother David Mukash who was chief at that time. I guess he asked him to send a plane for him. He was going to wait for the plane at *Wiiminipis*. Philip and Susan waited for the plane there while my father and my brothers made their way to Whapmagoostui.

It was funny. When my mother and I were taken to the camp of the *wamistikusiu*, we could not be taken to Whapmagoostui right away. It was foggy then. We slept at that camp two nights before we could be flown here. It was a Sunday. We got off the plane at the dock. We were about to be driven home when my father and the boys landed their canoes on the shore beside the plane. It seemed that we could not loose

them! They were traveling by canoe and we by plane and yet we reached Whapmagoostui at the same time. So, that is one year after I came back from the hospital. It was a big change for me.

When I was going to the bush regularly with my parents, we would leave here in September and only come back in June. That was the same routine each year that we were in the bush up until I was nineteen years old. Come September - or maybe it was still in August - we would go back up on the land. We went by plane less than half the distance to IPISIKIMIS.

My brother Andrew and his wife came with us that year. They did not have any children yet. They had one but their child died the same year she was born. She was a girl. Their second child is James Kawapit [Jr.]. Then there was my brother Isaiah, me, my father and mother. There were only six of us on this trip. My brother James was not with us. He was working in town. We started paddling inland from where the plane deposited us. I think the name of the place is *Yachisaakw a sachiuch*. We landed on the river. We paddled from there. Andrew was quite poor at that time. He decided he was coming with us even though we were paddling to *Ipisikimis*. They did not have much stuff but they did manage to buy a few supplies before leaving. I do not know where they got the money to buy their stuff. I do remember that my father paid for the two plane trips. He paid for the two plane trip - everything.

Anyway, we paddled following the course of the river. Eventually, we got to *Ipisikimis*. After a while, we were at the source of *Ipisikimis*. As we went along we found some *wamistikusu* camps, where they had built buildings. I think the buildings were built as part of the DEW line. There were things that were left behind at those sites. We used to take the things that were left behind. They left some utensils and other stuff. Our cooking utensils were not very good either and Andrew did not have much of anything, so those things came in handy. Andrew got some things that he badly needed. We made our freeze-up camp upstream from the source of *Ipisikimis*. We waited for freeze up there.

I was still young but I really wanted to know what was used to treat someone who was sick. I really wanted to know these things because my mother was sick from time to time. I was really worried about her. She used to have cramps in her chest/abdomen area. She used to be very sick when this happened to her. Sometimes, it was only after she vomited that she would feel better. She used to have sore back, too. Naturally, there was no ["white man's"] medicine for her to use. Anyway, she told me the uses of the *wisichipikwh*. She told me the many uses of these plants.

I used to go with my mother get firewood at our freeze-up camp. After we finished chopping wood, I used to pick the *wisichipikwh*. After a while I collected many of them. I just collected as much as I could. I pounded some, preparing them to use in a poultice. My mother used to tell me what to do when I made a poultice for her

back. I did this many times for her over a period of time. I would prepare the poultice and place it on her back. She told me that I had really helped her. Her back had been bothering her for a long time but after a while, having used the *wisichipikwh* as a poultice, she did not have any more pain in her back or her chest. She regained her energy and was working hard like she did before her back and chest were sick. She had said that she did not remember the last time she felt good without any pain as she worked. "I really noticed the great difference after you administered the *wisichipikwh* poultices." I do not know why I wanted to use the poultices on her. I guess I just thought it up myself to do this for her. No one had told me to do it. I remembered how unhappy I was whenever she was sick. She worked hard and energetically after that.

My father killed some caribou when winter came. I do not know how many caribou he killed but there were many of them. There must have been over ten of them. He had gone with Isaiah that time. We moved our camp to where the caribou had been killed. I think it was before Christmas when we moved there. We made our camp there - where the caribou had been killed. Everyone was busy doing something to fix and prepare all the caribou for future use and all that. There was a lot of work to do then. I was taught many things there. I was told what to do to help. I was taught how to prepare the caribou meat and all that. I remembered that my parents were very careful where big game was concerned - whenever they worked with caribou and bear. They did not stop working until all the edible parts of the caribou were prepared for long storage so that it would not go bad and therefore wasted. I remembered my mother smoking the meat over the open fire and after the outer part of the meat was dried she would pack it for future use. She would freeze the meat outside. She cut and scraped the meat off of the caribou bones and then froze the bones outside, too. She would do this to all the bones, like the back and lower backbone, leg bones and the other limb bones. These are the bones that are crushed for making broth to drink. It is those bones that have hardly any meat on them but only a little at the ends that she would tell me to cut all the meat off of them. She would bring some bones in to thaw when she was going to be outside for some time. She would tell me to cut off all the visible meat on the bones while she was out. She would cut up the bones like the back bones in smaller pieces for me to work with. I would cut off the meat. She would tell me to cut off and scrape all the meat off of the bones very well because the bones could not be crushed easily. She also told me to cut and scrape off all the muscle on the bones so it would be easier to crush the bones. I did all that she asked me. At first, it was hard for me to cut and scrape the meat off because some of the bones were intricately shaped. I used to try to do them the way she had taught me. I did my best to do it the right way.

Another thing I remembered is...I used to try to mimic everything that they did when working with the caribou and the way they prepared it. Sometimes, the hair on the lower caribou legs are burned off outside where a fire has been built for this purpose. I remembered doing that one time. I was told that these caribou legs were mine so I

had to fix them. I told my mother I wanted to burn the hair off the caribou legs. I made a fire just outside where our pile of wood was. That is where I made the fire. I do not know what happened but I had a skirt on. I guess I was standing too close to the fire but all of sudden the front of my skirt was on fire. I did not know what to do so I just made myself fall into the snow, all the while screaming. My mother came running when she heard me yelling and screaming. She asked me, "What is happening to you?" I said to her, "I am bursting into flames [*nuwitapiin*]!"

We stayed there for a long time. I was very curious about everything. I wanted to know everything. I used to go with my father when he would set his traps close to our camp. I would go with him when he set them and check them. I really liked to watch him as he did things and the way he made them. He made our toboggans at this camp where he had killed the caribou. I went with him when he cut the trees for the toboggans. It took quite some time for him to cut them down and cut them into planks. I made a fire while he was working with the trees. I boiled some tea for him.

I would also go with my mother when she chopped firewood. I would haul the logs on a toboggan to our dwelling. Sometimes, Isaiah would help us to haul the firewood home. My mother taught to use the handsaw so that I could saw the logs into smaller pieces. She taught me how to do it. I got the hang of it real fast. When she brought some logs on her shoulders, she would tell me to saw them into pieces while she went to get some more logs. She would ask me to saw the bigger logs and she would split them.

I would also go with her when she gathered some boughs for our dwelling. I remember her telling me, "You will not gather boughs when it is very cold because the needles of the boughs will come off easily as you handle them." I was not asked to gather boughs during the cold weather. When it wasn't too cold, my mother would say to me, "Gather some boughs while it is not cold again."

One time, my father and the boys set some beaver traps. The traps were quite far from our camp. Once, when he wanted to go and check the traps, I really wanted to go with him. Isaiah used to go with him when he went to check the beaver traps. I do not know how many times he went to check them with Isaiah without catching the beavers.

One time, when he was getting ready to go, I said to him, "Let me come with you instead of Isaiah." He replied, "Alright, then. Let us go. It is not that far where I am going. I believe you can make it there and back." I thanked him for letting me join him.

As we were walking along, he said to me, "We will see what your presence will yield when we check the traps. Sometimes, when a certain person goes with the others to

check on the traps, they seem to have good effect - especially a child. Other times, when a youth goes, the beavers are not caught. So, when a child or an adult is known to have this effect, it is said of the person, 'He/she is not a good person to come trap-checking.'"

It was the first time that I went with my father to check on his beaver traps. We reached his trap. I went with him to his trap. There was a beaver in it. How many did he catch...I think he caught three beavers in all.

After we had made a fire and our meal, he said to me, "I want you to go on ahead with the beaver while I fix my traps." "Okay," I said.

I went ahead. I had a hard time pulling the load of three beaver. It was hard going for me. The beaver were on a small toboggan. When I was very tired, my father caught up with me. He took over. But he had me pulling one of the young beaver on the snow behind me after he had attached a string to it. He told me to pull the beaver. When we got home, I was really tired. I guess one of the reasons why I was so tired was because I had been pulling a load that was heavy for quite some time. I went into our dwelling, I cleaned myself up and then went straight to sleep. It was night when we got home. I was ten years old at that time.

Anyway, it was not long after that when James, my brother's son, was born. He was born on January 10. I guess it did not take him long to be born. Maria, his mother, was not in labour when we went to sleep that night. He was born before morning came. I do not know when Maria's contractions first started or when she started to go into labour. I guess I was sleeping soundly through all this. When I awoke, James was already born.

I remember something else that happened at that camp. My mother had found a beaver lodge. She set the traps herself. But I never went with her to set the traps or check them. I do not know how far the beaver lodge was from our camp. She had found the lodge and set her traps for the beaver herself. She went to check them and caught a small beaver. There were two beavers. It was cold the day she went to check on her traps. That must have been January 9th.

She said to me when she brought them home and after she had something to drink, "I would like Maria to skin these beavers. I am going out to chop wood."

She went out to chop some wood. My father and Andrew were not around that day. It was only Maria and I who were inside our dwelling. I also helped Maria change the boughs on her side of the dwelling. She took out all the boughs on her side of the dwelling. I helped her take out the old boughs. She was really tidying up her side of the dwelling. Her child would be born the next morning before daylight.

After we had finished fixing her side of the dwelling, she said to me, "Bring the beavers here to me. I will skin them now." She skinned the young beavers. She fixed them so that the beavers could roast beside the stove. She placed the beavers on each of the stove. She told me what to do. She told me when to put more firewood in the stove and when to spin the beaver on our side. She looked after the other one on her side of the stove. The beavers were already cooking when my mother entered our dwelling after her work outside. So, it was the next morning, just when the dawn was showing when her child was born. I remember I was really happy to see the baby. It was something new to me. It had been a long time since I had seen a new-born baby.

I was also told what must be done for the baby. My mother instructed Andrew about what he should do. She had delivered the baby herself and cut the baby's cord. There is a certain kind of a dead tree that Andrew had to look for. I do not know what it is called in English but in Cree it is called *kiskischatukw*. It is dead wood and looks and feels hard but can be pounded into powder. This type of dead wood can be crumbled with your hands. They used this kind of powdered dead wood as a powder around the baby's navel to keep it dry and so it would not get infected. The baby's dry cord soon fell off and his navel was soon well.

I wonder what we did next. When we left that camp, we started traveling back to where we had our fall camp. The weather was starting to warm up by then. My father had said that we were to wait for the warm weather to come before we would travel long distances. He had made that decision because of his new grandchild. He was concerned for him and did not want him to get cold unnecessarily while travelling in the cold weather. The baby did not have to be cold. I suppose it was already March when we started travelling back down to where we had our fall camp. We had been living there for three months in one spot. It felt like we had been there forever because we had never lived in one place that long before this. We traveled from there.

The reason why we still had some supplies was because my brothers used to go to the *wamistikusiu* camp which was situated at the place called *Amistipiskwaa-pustach*. That is where the *wamistikusiu* were. Isaiah and Andrew would go and see them. The *wamistikusiu* would give them some food when they were at their camp. They would bring some flour and lard and other things. They really helped, and gave us quite a bit of *wamistikusiumiichim* [whiteman's food] while we camped at that one spot.

I do not know the name of the place where we were when my brother James came to join us. I think it was the first camp we had after we moved from our camp of three months. He came by plane. It was at the end of March when he came to us. I think my father had written a letter to him. The *wamistikusiu* used to take letters to Whapmagoostui when they were asked. Sometimes, they were able to talk to someone

in Whapmagoostui by radio which was in the camp.

Suddenly, James was there. He had come by plane. I guess he knew where we were by the letter. He brought many things. He had brought things for my father and for Andrew. We did not expect the plane. Maria was rushing around, packing some country food to be taken to her parents back in Whapmagoostui. She could only write a few lines to her parents. She sent her son's first baby bonnet to them. I guess she told them that the baby was alright. James was already quite big by then. My mother gave him his Christian name and my father gave him his Cree name.

We travelled again. My brother James was with us then and travelled with us. By and by, we reached the outlet of *Ipisikimis* where we waited for the spring breakup.

James used to invite me to come with him whenever he was waiting for geese to fly by. Sometimes, I would chase the geese to go his way when they were feeding. He taught me how to chase the geese toward him. The geese would go toward him whenever I did that. I learned how that was done.

Then it was time to travel back to Whapmagoostui. We traveled here by canoe all the way. Finally, we got here for the summer.

When we had reached the portage called *Isini a misinuut*, a message had been left there. The message had been left at the end of the portage. The message had been left there for my parents. It told of the death of my grandmother, my mother's mother. She had died that year. Her name was Anne. That is how we knew she had died.

When we got here, we learnt that my sister Lucy's son had also passed away that year. Her son's name was Abraham. Abraham was older than Isaac [Rupert]. She had another son who was named Paul. Paul died that summer. He was not even one yet. Paul and James, Andrew's son, would have been the same age. They had been born almost at the same time. I do not know what kind of illness this baby had but he was very weak. He could not hold his head up. Whenever he was held up, his neck would fall to one side because he could not hold it up. He could not sit up or help himself to sit up and his head would fall to one side. I guess he was sick. He died just before the people headed up inland again.

In those days, there was a summer school for the children who used to stay inland all year round. I went to summer school, too.

When we went back up inland, the third year from the hospital, we lived with Andrew and his family and my sister Susan. Her husband Philip was in the hospital. She came to live with us because she knew that her husband would stay in the hospital for a long time. We went by plane and this time, we landed at *Ipisikimis*. The first flight

was with my parents, Isaiah, Susan and me. One week later, Andrew and his family came by plane to join us.

We caught a lot of fish right away. One week later, my mother had one whole pack of dried fish which she sent to Sam Mastay in Whapmagoostui. Sam used to tease my mother as a brother would a sister. My mother told me what Sam has said to her before we left. Sam has asked her, "Where are you going to land?" "*Nuchimiiupichistuwaakinch.*" "Why land there? It is a poor fishing area."

When Sam saw my mother again, he said to her, "The dried fish you send were very big. They were very good and huge. I told my family, 'She is sending me these huge fish out of spite. I had told her that where she was going to land was a poor fishing area.'" She used to laugh about that!

We traveled to a lake which was north of *Ipsikimis*. That is where we stayed. How did we know...? I think Isaiah and Andrew had gone to see the *wamistikusu*. There was news that our supplies had been deposited somewhere. It was winter by then. The plane had not found us so they just put our supplies on a lake west of where we were. They had put them somewhere. My father told them to look for our stuff: "They might spoil if we do not get to them quickly."

Jones and Andrew Natachequan's supplies and ours were all put together at the same place. They found them: Susan, Isaiah, Andrew and Maria went to look for the supplies and found them. Only my parents and I remained back at the camp. While the four of them were gone, Andrew and Jones reached us. They and their families were quite hungry. My mother fed them and my father gave them some food. We still had some food left and still had some caribou left, too.

Andrew said that they were going to join us. I remember the next morning, he said to my father, "Uncle, we are going home. We are going to try to walk fast to get home. I am very worried about my daughters. I am worried that I might not reach one of them in time because of how long we have been hungry." That is what he said to my family.

We gave them what we could to take home. My father told them about the supplies that were deposited somewhere which included their supplies. I guess that is the reason why they wanted to come and join us so that they could go and get their things from there. So, they came to join us at our camp.

They left and they returned with their families a week later. They lived with us for a time. They went to get their things, too. They left from there to go their way. After they had gotten their supplies, they went back to where they came from. Their traps were still there. I do not know where Andrew went but he left without Jones. Jones stayed near the outlet of *Ipsikimis*. I guess he was waiting for us.

He had told my father, "I thought I would wait for you and to live with you wherever you would choose to spend spring breakup. I am almost certain that we would have starved if we had not seen you when we did this winter. We could not kill anything at all winter."

Their situation changed after they had seen us. I guess that is the reason why he was waiting for us. We reached them there. We traveled with him to the outlet of *Ipisikimis* where we waited for the spring breakup. From there, we travelled down to the coast. Jones continued to travel with us. We met some other groups of *Iyiyuu* at *Wiminipis*, people who had already arrived there. There were many families. They were waiting for some of the people who had gone to get supplies. They were expecting them back around the we reached them. I remember well when we reached the people there at *Wiminipis*. There were a lot of people. Andrew Natachequan was there already. They had huge dwelling. All the brothers were living in a tipi with their mother. There was Andrew and his family, John and his family, Philip and his family and Matthew and his family. But Jones continued to live with us.

There were many of us traveling together from *Wiminipis*. [As you will see] We were not very well coordinated during the course of the journey towards Whapmagoostui. Joseph Masty and his family, George Masty and his family were all there along with the Natachequan families. I wonder if Sandy Masty there, too. I am not sure if Sandy Masty was there. I don't think he was there.

Anyway, we landed our canoes at the same spot at the end of the first day's journey. We portaged the *Wiminipisiukipitakin* and paddled all day. When we reached the next portage, which was *Chinusasiukipitakin*, we all made camp for the night.

The next morning, we continued travelling. We reached *paputatin*. Two families stopped for the night at the place called *Chinusaapichistuwaakin*. They were the first who stopped for the night. My family stopped at *Anaukitaukasiich*. We were two families together. Joseph Masty and his family camped with us for the night. The others stopped at the place called *Nistuuchiun*. We were all over the place by the time we stopped travelling on the second night!

When we reached *Isini-amisinuuth*, we joined up again and reached *Maach-kipitakin* all together. We reached Whapmagoostui at the same time.

When I remember all that we did, I remember that it was nice. There were times that I thought we were having a hard time but that is where I had my best learning experiences upon reflection. I remember all that I was taught as a youth and all that happened during that time was to help me in the future but I did not know it at that time. When I think about the way I was raised, it has really helped me in my life. I was taught to always work hard at what I was doing and not to be idle for any reason. I was taught not to expect to be given something for free but that I had to work hard

for something I wanted or needed. That is what I was told all the time.

"Sometimes, it is only after you have worked hard for something will you be able to attain it for yourself," my father used to say to me, "Do not ever be lazy in your life. You will only make yourself poor if you are lazy."

I used to think about what I was taught but there were times that I did not feel like doing anything. I would go about my work reluctantly from time to time - especially when I was tired. But for the most part, I must have done what I was taught because I survived this far.

Whenever we were here in town during the summer, I would go to summer school. I must have gone to school for about six weeks during those summers.

When James was in the hospital, my father did not think about travelling to *Ipisikimis*. We did not go far into the interior because my father wanted to listen to news about James. James had TB. We stayed south of here, near here. We stayed in that area for two years. My father had said, "We will stay closer to the post so that we can get supplies from time to time and get news about James." The second year we were south of here James came back from the hospital. He had been in the hospital for two years.

The last time year we were south of here, my sister Susan got married to her second and present husband, Job Atchynia. That was the last year we were south of here. It was also the first year that we lived with my sister-in-law Hannah [Mukash-Kawapit]. My sister-in-law's mother died before Christmas that same year. She and Isaiah had been married that summer. She was seventeen when she came to live with us.

Hannah was not very skilled in most things [she, too, had been in the hospital for quite some time, before marrying Isaiah]. She did not know how to skin a beaver yet. She was taught everything that she did not yet know how to do. We helped and taught her all we could. I used to be the one to skin the beavers she should have skinned before she knew how. I used to be the one to scrape and stretch the beaver skins. I had already been taught how to do this kind of work.

It was also the first year that I was taught how to lace up the snowshoes. I used to bug my mother to teach me how to do or to let me do it but she would put me off saying, "The lacing will be uneven if you do it." At those times, she was in a hurry to get the job done and did not have time to teach me. But I used to persist in wanting to learn how to do it. Soon, I was able to do some lacings but it took me a long time to learn. I learned from time to time but no one really took the time to teach me. I continued to try to learn how to lace snowshoes.

I was the one who always did the washing and other chores like that; like getting

water, firewood, boughs and general cleaning in our dwelling. When food was caught, I would do as much as I could to help in cleaning and preparing it. I would do the beaver skins. That is the kind of work I did. I was able to set fish lines by myself during the winter. I used to set the fish lines. But the only thing I was not allowed to do was handle a gun. I did not persist in trying to handle it because I was told not to. I would also tend to the nets by myself and of course, clean the fish. I was capable of tending to the net by myself in the winter by this time.

My mother used to say to me, "Keep the net in the water but put the stone weights on top of the snow. When it is time to stretch the net out again, put three weights and three floaters at a time. Then pull on the string to stretch the net. In this way, the net will not get tangled up. Keep doing this until the whole net is all stretched out to it's full length."

The string was coming from the other end of the net. I was twelve years old at that time. I was eleven years the first time we were south of here at the place called *Pichistipapiis*. I used to go with my mother to set fishing lines. After that, she would send me to go and check the fish lines by myself. The fish lines were far from our camp. She would make a place where I could make the fire and chopped firewood to last a long time.

She would say to me, "You make a fire here when you get here. After you have checked the fish lines two or three times throughout the day, come home then. In the meantime, stay beside the fire and keep feeding it."

That is what I would do all by myself when I was eleven and twelve years old.

One time, when I did that, it was already getting dark when I was walking home. Philip who was still living with us at that time met me on the way. He called out to me, "We have visitors. They reached our camp. Anne Sandy had a baby." It was her daughter Emma who was born that year. "The way they are telling the story, it sounds like as if Anne had a hard time giving birth. She nearly died by the sounds of it." I do not know what happened but I figured she had a very difficult labour.

"Her baby is fine, though," he had continued. "She was going in and out of consciousness. She asked to be heated but Nellie did not really did not want to it. But Maggie Rupert was at loss and did what Anne was asking them to do. She placed a hot water bottle behind her lower back. When this was done, she quieted down. Then her baby was born right after that."

That was the last year we were here living and hunting south of here. We did not go back there again. We went back to *Ipisikimis* after James came back. We went back year after year. When we first went to *Ipisikimis*, we were just living with my brothers and sisters, Isaiah, Andrew and Susan. We flew inland.

The next year, we lived with Isaiah and Susan and their families. We did not live with Andrew and his family that time. Instead, George Masty came to live with us and his family.

Each year, there were more and more people living with us. That third year, Susan came to live with us because her husband Job was in the hospital. During the year, Isaiah came only with his son Isaac. His wife Hannah was sent away to the hospital. Isaac was not two years old yet when his mother was taken to the hospital. My mother kept Isaac from then on. She adopted him as her own.¹ Lydia was born after Isaac and then the others.

Anyway, we were at *Ipisikimis* every year from then on, just like the previous years. Different people came to live with us each year. One year, Sandy Masty came to live with us. It was the year that Isaac was born when we lived with Sandy Masty. We were not living with my sister Susan when her son Paul was born. Paul was already big when he and his mother came to live with us - when his father was in the hospital. He was able to talk then. He did not really speak well for his age. The only thing he was able to say was 'porcupine' in Cree. Therefore, he called all animals and even fish 'porcupine'. He would say to someone who was getting dressed to go out, 'Porcupine?' My mother used to remarked, "He thinks everyone who goes out is going after porcupine."

¹Trans. note: Isaac married on July 15, 1993.

EM: So, Paul thought that all animals were called *kakuh* [porcupine].

AK: He thought everything was a *kakuh*. Anyway, at that time and place when Paul determined that everything was a *kakuh*, my brother Andrew and his family were with us at first. He had left us and was hunting to the south of where we were. We did not see him all winter. Later, when Easter was near, they went to see and check if he was ok. He had no *wamistikusiumiichim* left. Isaiah went to take some tea and sugar to him. I wonder what had happened for him not to have any *wamistikusiumiichim* left. My father told us to go and see him again. He had killed many caribou. He had sent some caribou food to my father. We were told to go and see him. When we got there, I went with them to transport the caribou to their dwelling. He had killed quite a few caribou. He had found the caribou to the south of where his camp was. We helped them transport the caribou to his camp. On our way back, the spring thaw [mild weather] overtook us. The snow was softening when it was time for us to transport our heavy loads of caribou to his camp. It took us a longer than usual to complete this job. Andrew told us to wait for the cold weather return to harden the snow before we went back to our dwelling. We waited awhile. Finally, cold weather came. It was cold. He moved to our spring camp, too. He joined us then. We all spent the spring break-up together.

I do not quite remember how we travelled down to the post. I wonder if a plane came for us or if we travelled in our canoe? I think we were waiting for a plane but when it got too late, we made our way down in our canoes, anyway. I wonder where it picked us up. I am not sure what happened or if the plane did come to where we were.

One time, while we were living at that camp, when James [Andrew's son] was about ten years old, we went on a trip. It was in 1970. Yes, James must have been ten years old because he was born in 1960. His sister Louisa was born in 1970. While we were living there, we ran out of lantern fuel. We had kept some fuel in another camp many years ago. It was the year that I had mentioned earlier when Andrew Natachequan came to our camp. It was at that camp where we had left the lantern fuel. It was far from our camp - where Louisa was born. My father said to me, "go and fetch the fuel that we left in our cache." James really wanted to come along with me. He was still very young. I finally consented that he could come along - after a while. It was not feasible that we could return to our camp the same day because of the distance and because there was no trail to follow. I relied on my memory to guide my way to our cache. I tried my best to remember where we had travelled when we did.

EN: Was this two years previously?

AK: Two years? No, more that. James was only one when we were at that camp where we left the gas. It must have been nine years since we had been to where we had left the gas. That is where James and I were headed. I guess I must have had some sense to be able to remember where to go and where our camp had been.

Along the way, I picked out a spot where to make camp for the night. I said to him, "We will sleep here tonight." After we had our meal that night, I said to him, "I will make our trail for tomorrow. It was clear, moonlit night, tonight." He did not want to be alone. "I will come with you," he volunteered. I agreed. We made our trail during the night. We must have gone half way to our destination when we turned back. While we were walking back, suddenly, he said to me, "Look! There goes a rabbit!" That is how brightly lit the night was by the moon. He could not shoot the rabbit. I guess he had not taken his gun with him since it was night time. We left in the morning. It was an easy going as far as following the trail was. It was not far from where we would head back. We got the lantern fuel. It was still there and had not spilled. We headed back. The sun was just coming up when we reached our little dwelling. We made a fire and had our meal. After we had eaten and drank, we broke camp. I said to him, "We will sleep on the way if we get very tired." We did not have much of a load, anyway. There was some flour and other things in our cache. That is what we had on the toboggan. It was easy going on our way back home because we were just following our trail. We thought we were doing very well as we travelled back. When we got on the shores of IPISIKIMIS, we made a fire. I asked James, "Are you tired?" He admitted that he was tired. I said to him, "We can spend the night when we reached one of the islands on our way. We make camp then." When we got to one of the islands, he said, "Let us keep going. I do not feel like making a camp for the night." "Alright, then," I said to him. We did not make another fire. We kept on walking. It was not night yet when we got home. My mother said to us, "I did not expect you yet. You have walked fast."

YOUNG ADULTHOOD - ASSISTING AT A BIRTH

In the fall, when we went back up inland, we took a plane. Andrew and his family came to live with us. It was the year that Louisa, my niece, was born. She was born at our fall camp. It was the first time that my mother asked me to help her to deliver a baby. I must have been fifteen years old at that time. No, I was sixteen. I was really nervous. It kind of scared me. But my mother did not ask me to cut the baby's cord. She only told me what to have ready. She told me to boil the scissors and the thread. She told me what kind of thread to have ready before the baby came, along with the scissors. She told me what kind of cloth to have ready which was to be the receiving cloth.

I watched everything that she did to the baby with great interest. She patted the baby dry with the receiving cloth. Then she cut the baby's cord. Naturally, she tied the baby's cord before she cut it. I thought that the baby's cord would be long where she was aiming to cut but after cutting it, it sprung back shorter. It was not that long after the cut. It must have been this long after the cut but as she was just cutting it, I thought she was cutting too far from where it was tied. I was really nervous and kind of scared. But after it was all done, I felt really happy because I felt that there was a special bond between that baby and me. After my mother had cut the cord, she handed me the baby. She told me to dry the baby's head with the receiving cloth. I was the first one to hold the baby. While I was doing this, she prepared the swaddling where the baby was to be placed and wrapped. She also prepared the diaper. I held the baby after the cord was cut. I dried her head. Andrew helped us, too. He was warming up the baby's clothing and wraps. My mother prepared the wraps and the *wasipishuyan*. She bundled up the baby after we finished cleaning her.

My mother said that the baby was not to be washed with water right after the birth. The baby is only dried with cloths first. It was only the next evening that she told me to wet a face cloth and to wash the baby with the wet towel.

Louisa was born fast. I think it was around seven o'clock at night that Maria told us she was in labour. It was not ten o'clock yet that same evening when Louisa was born.

My mother instructed us what to do for Maria [post-partum]. She told me, "Heat two medium sized stones. When thoroughly heated, wrapped them in the best baby moss you can and place the stones near her back. As soon as the stones loose their heat, replaced them with other stones." She also told us not to sleep through the night, Andrew and me. "Take turns, to check if the stones are still warm." After a while, I was very sleepy. Andrew must have noticed this and told me to go to sleep. I guess it was way after midnight when I went to sleep. He told me to go to sleep. He had slept for awhile himself already. After I had replaced the stones, he told me, "Go to sleep. I will check the stones myself."

EM: Where did you place the hot stones?

AK: We placed the stones on her lower back and on her side. My mother wanted her heated around her waist area after the birth. The other thing she did was to wrap her waist with a canvas which is a hard tough cloth. She wrapped the canvas around her waist quite tightly. She had said to her, "The cloth will loosen up after awhile but I am going to tighten it around again." After this, her waist was flat after the birth. She had also told Maria, "Your uterus will

shrink to normal size faster this way if something holds you tightly around your waist. It will also help to shrink your uterus to normal size faster if you are heated through with the stones. It will help you feel good when you start walking again." I guess these are the things that my mother knew about women after giving birth. She was born on November 23. We stayed at that one camp the whole time until March. It was only in March that we started travelling again.

YOUNG ADULthood - WORKING AS A TRANSLATOR

Later, a plane came for us, a DC3, known in Cree as *kautapanaskuuch*. Some supplies had been send to us. Someone had asked us, "Do you want a plane to come for you in March?" I think someone had told us that a plane would come for in March and take us back to the village. I wonder why we were told that we were going to be taken to the village at that time.

Anyway, the nurse had said to me, "When you come back in March, come and work for us as an interpreter. Jane [George-Masty] will be going to Moose Factory to do some training. Come back in March and take her place while she is gone." I had complied but I did not know if it was going to happen. "I will work if we come back in March," I had told her. This was my very first job. I worked during the summer as an interpreter. I worked for Jane. I was seventeen at that time.

We travelled to the designated spot where the plane would pick us up. My father had told them where we would be waiting for the time. We travelled to that place. We made camp there. A few days later, the plane came for us. We flew to the village. It was the first time that we used a plane to come back to the village. I worked there until Jane came back.

YOUNG ADULthood - ON THE LAND

We went to the bush when fall came. Andrew was in a different area. He was the one we used to live with. There were only four of us that year, my parents, Isaac and me. Isaac was about five years old then. We hunted and travelled about. We spent freeze up somewhere. That year, I was always sick. I had eczema. It was hard on my face. My face was swollen. I remember twice when I could not get up because I could not open my eye because of the swelling. My face used to swell a lot. My mother used to place a rabbit skin on my face. The skin of the rabbit was touching me, not the fur part. The swelling would go down whenever she did this. I could not go outside. My face would swell up whenever I stayed outside for a long time. After a while, the swelling was less and less frequent. It was at the end of February or the beginning of March when a plane came to us. Andrew's supplies were deposited at our place. The pilot could not find them [Andrew]. They had flown to where he was supposed to have been. His supplies were left at our

camp because the plane was leaving the area. My father said to me, "Go and see Andrew. Tell him about his supplies. He must have ran out of *wamistikusiumiichim* [e.g. flour, tea, canned goods] by now."

We were far from where he was. I said, "Alright." The snow was very soft and I had a hard time making my way to Andrew's camp. I walked for a long time. I was very tired. On the way, I slept for the night. I could not get to them the same day that I left. I found their trail. It was hardly visible. I lost it again. I walked in the same direction, heading south, where we would come from when we were hunting to the south. But I knew the river where they were supposed to be. We had deduced that he and his family must be at that river. We were only guessing where he might be. Soon, I saw trails of his children as they went about their hunting for ptarmigan along the river. I looked around for their camp. Finally, I spotted their tree marker on the river. I went over to it and there was their camp. I spent the night there.

My mother had sent some *wamistikusiumiichim* with me but only what I could carry on my back without hindering me. He was told to come and get his supplies. I was going to go back home the next morning. I do not know why he could not come with us then. He told me to go with James, his son. He had something to do first. He said, "I will come the next day after I have finished what I want to do." He had to do something else. Anyway, James and I left and followed my trail. Andrew had given me some caribou meat and fat to give to my father. We had a heavy load going back. Andrew told us though, "If you find the load too heavy after a time, leave some of it on the trail. I will pick it up on my way there tomorrow."

James and I left the next morning. He showed me where he and his father had gone when they went to get some supplies. After a while, we came to my trail where I had walked past their trail. It was not visible because it was on the ice. I had left their trail on the ice because I had lost it. We came upon my little dwelling where I had spent the night. We picked up my things.

It was still a long way to where we were going. We reached the lake called *Kukimau pichistwaakin*. I said to James, "It is still a long way where we are going. We will sleep on the way if you get tired." He said, "I do not want to sleep. I am very anxious to see my grandmother and grandfather." "Okay," I said to him, "we will be walking into the night, though." The sun was already very low when we reached the lake ice. "We will be walking in the night a long time in order to make it to our camp." "It does not matter," he said.

"Okay." There was an island out on the lake. "Let's make a fire. You will feel better after you have something to drink." We made the fire. I said to him, "I am going to leave one of the packs here. It's getting harder for me to

pull this load." "Okay," he said.

I had not wanted him to pull a load because I did not want him to get too tired. I had not asked him to help me pull the load. He had agreed to stop to make a fire before we went on any further. He was anxious to get going after our drink. He persisted, saying, "Let's get going now." He kept saying this. I said, "I want you to sit for a while and rest. We still have a long way to go."

We kept on walking on the ice of the lake. After a while, we a lit lantern and knew that it was our camp. Even though we saw the light from our camp, it was still a long way to walk on the ice. We could see the light from the dwelling from a long way off when we were on the ice. James looked at the light and said, "Oh, my grandmother is there!"

I found it comical when he got a bit disoriented from walking in the dark for so long. There was no moon. He kept going off my trail. I had him walking in front of me the whole time. I had to keep telling him to get onto the trail again. My trail was visible. I kept saying to him, "James, you have gone off the trail again." I was not really watching where he was going when we got closer to our dwelling. There was a net close to where the trail was. He must have walked into the area where the net was pulled to take off the fish. There was a big dent in the snow where it had been panned away - where the hole in the ice was. The next thing I knew, he was draped over the dent in the snow. He had fallen into the dent in the snow. I asked him, "what happened to you?" He replied, "I have fallen into this hole." He had become disoriented because he had been walking in the dark for such a long time. He was not seeing well anymore.

We reached our camp. My mother must have heard our voices before we reached the dwelling because she came running outside. She called out, "Have you come back already?" I said, "Yes." "I did not hear your footsteps. I went outside just a short while ago to listen for your footsteps but had heard nothing." That is what she said to me. They were very happy to see James.

EM: One time, your mother was telling me about James, how he always asked her and his grandfather to tell him stories and legends. There were times when he would be told not to bother his grandfather when he came home from a long day. [Quotes Agnes' mother:] "Instead James would bug me to tell him myths. Sometimes, I would tease him by saying, 'Did you know that the myths are lies? They did not actually happen. I do not feel like lying.'"

Anyway, I am very impressed and amazed about your earlier adventures while you were out on the land. How old were you at that time?

AK: Nineteen. As I have said before, we left some of our load for Andrew to bring it all the way to our camp. We waited for Andrew to arrive. I think he came the next day and brought what we had left behind on the trail. Andrew carried most of his supplies on his toboggan but he could not take them all. James went back with his father. Andrew and my father had decided that we would wait for the plane at the designated spot. Andrew said that he would come and move to that area, too. We did not travel there right away. We were to meet each other somewhere to the south. We travelled in the direction where they would come from. We only moved just a little way but they had to travel much farther to arrive at the designated place. It was not a very good place to have a camp where we were. This was on an island. Andrew joined us there. We were not too sure if the plane was going to come for us. We readied ourselves as if it was coming for us anyway though.

While we were waiting around for the plane to come, Andrew killed some more caribou. He killed caribou to the south of us. My father said to us, "Let's go and transport the caribou to our camp." It was beautiful day when we left. I went with my father and the others. It was a warm day and the sun was out. On our way back, it was a slow going. Our loads were heavy because the caribou were very big. I do not remember if we were able to take them all home at the same time. On our way back home, we heard a plane. We even saw it flying by once. We thought it was just flying by to another destination. We were able to tell from that distance that it was a *kautapanaskuuch* [DC-3].

We arrived at our camp in the evening. We saw the tracks of the plane on the ice. It had landed at our camp. When we got to our dwelling, the things meant for the plane were still on the platform. The only people in our camp were my mother, Maria [Andrew's wife] and the small children. We asked them, "What happened? Why did the plane land here?" They said, "We have no idea why it landed here. There was no Iyiyuu on the plane that we could talk to. There was only the pilot and two other *wamistikusiu*."

I guess they could not talk to them at all. None of them spoke English. The plane took off again when the pilot could not understand what they were saying or could have his questions answered. The plane had taken off again. Andrew said, "It most likely was the plane that was coming for us."

We cleaned and fixed the caribou that were killed.

One week later, the plane came back again. It was the one that we were waiting for. Fortunately, we were all at our camp. We stayed ready for the plane. We had packed everything that needed to be packed and put all our outdoor things in one place. But we did not pack the things that we used

inside or our clothes. The plane landed. We carried the things that were ready to the plane on the toboggans. I think it was the same pilot who had taken us inland in the fall. I guess I had spoken to him in English because he recognized me and started talking to me.

As I was coming closer to the plane with my load, he asked me right away, "Where were you the other time we came for you?" I told him that I had gone with my father and the others to take the caribou to our camp. He said, "Oh! So, you were at the other camp." "What other camp?"

"Well, I asked those ladies if there was another camp and they told me there was another camp. They said, yes, there was another camp." They had been confused. "So, we took off again. We tried to find your camp but we could not find it." It must have been it when we saw them flying around on our way home from transporting the caribou.

I said to him, "We came back the same day. We were just out for the day, getting the caribou. It was just a one day trip." He said, "Oh. Now I've got the story straight." I used to laugh at my mother when she would joke about that time. When I returned, I asked her, "What did you do when they started talking to you?" "We could do nothing."

After that day [the first time the plane had come], we had gone to get some water together. We reached the water hole. She looked over to where the plane had come to rest that day it had reached them. As she was looking over there, she said, "This is where we stood around as we were conversing in English!" They were laughing at themselves for not being able to understand what the men were saying to them.

The plane took us to Whapmagoostui. It was April. That was the last time we were at *Ipsikimis*.

YOUNG ADULthood - LIVING AND WORKING IN WHAPMAGOOSTUI

I started working that summer. I worked at the store. It was the first time that I had a full time job. I was nineteen years old.

I do not know why my father decided to stay in town that year. They had told me not to leave my job. I guess he did not want to live alone in town either. He was getting old by then. He could not do most things that he used to. I guess he thought that without me with them, they would have had a harder time.

Anyway, that was my first job. I did not get paid much, though I still thought it was a lot of money at that time. I made about two hundred dollars

in two weeks. I must have made a hundred dollars a week. I thought that was a lot of money because I never had any money.

As far back as I can remember, my father never gave me any money. He did not spoil me in that way! Besides, we hardly needed much money for our use. He only gave my mother enough money for our groceries. He would save the rest of the money. He would do this to save money for the plane and to buy some hunting equipment that we would need for the year in the bush. He would say to me when he was buying for the winter before we would leave town, "What do you want? Do you want a warm coat?" He would buy it then.

He used to tell my mother not to use my family allowance for anything else but to buy clothes and other things for me. At that time, it was not much of an allowance. It was only about eight dollars a month or something like that. The amount of the family allowance was not much for one child. My mother still bought me things with it. It seemed she was able to buy quite a few things for me with that. She was able to charge things against the amount of the allowance for the months that we would not be there before we travelled inland. She bought warm clothes that I would use for the winter.

Whenever we had a lot of food to prepare for storage, [food like] caribou or fish, they would say to me, "Fix and dry as much as you can and packed it away. You can give that food to your friends when you see them."

They knew that whenever we came back to town some of my friends would gave me a few of their clothes and things in exchange for the dried bush foods that I would offer them. I would get a lot of second-hand clothes once we came to town. I soon had a lot of clothes that way.

That is one of the things that my parents taught me. When plenty of ducks or geese were killed, I would be given my own to fix and dry. They did the same thing with fish. I was given this food as my own and did whatever I wanted with it - the food that I fixed, cleaned and dried by myself. My mother would tell me to take great care in drying the fish so that they would come as best as they can be. She would teach me how to dry them so that they would not spoil and how to pack them to avoid spoilage as we travelled to town. She would teach me to take great care in how I went about drying the foods that were meant to be given away to my friends. That is what I traded for used clothes. I was never in need of clothing that way. The girls were also very happy to get the food.

The only things that my mother would buy before we left for the bush were warm clothes for winter - things like socks, underwear and a warm sweater. I

would have enough clothes all year that way.

My mother also taught me how to make warm blankets for myself. I learned at an early age how to make a feather-filled blanket. I used to collect the feathers in the spring time. Even if I could not make myself a feather blanket in the spring, I would keep the feathers till the fall after we had flown inland again. I would make my blanket then. I would make myself a feather-filled blanket [*pichipiuyan*].

EM: Feathers from - - ?

AK: Goose feathers and ducks. These are the feathers I used to collect. Even though I could not buy a warm blanket [it didn't matter since] I was not cold with my home-made blanket during the winter time. We used to use the small caribou skins as mattresses. My mother used to dry the small caribou skins with the fur still on and used these as mattresses. My parents used to use them more than I did. As for myself, I did not always have the caribou skin mattress. I was never cold. I thought it was enough to have a blanket to sleep and then my feather-filled blanket. These are the things that I was taught and what I did for myself.

When I worked full time for the first time, I thought that my pay was a lot. My first thought was to share it with my family. I would give some money to my mother whenever I got paid. But today, I do not do that anymore. Even though I am making more money, I do not share it. I guess it is true that the more money you get, the greedier you seem to get. Also, the more debts you have.

When I first started working, my father used to tell me to try not to charge things. I did what he told me but I only charged things sometimes. He used to tell me not to charge too much because "you are going to make yourself poor if you can not pay your debts. When you get paid, you will spend all your money on debts and you will think you were not paid at all." That is what he used to say to me. I did my best not to charge too much when I would buy things on credit. My father never told me what to do with my money. Even though he never gave me any money to handle before I worked, he still taught me the value of money.

He used to tell me, "When you want to buy something that costs a lot, save some money for it first. When you have saved about half of the cost, then you can buy and put the rest on credit." He used to tell me that all the time. "When you have debts, try your best to pay them off as soon as possible." That is what he used to tell me.

As for him, he hardly ever had any debts even though he was on old-age pension at that time I started working. I think his old-age pension was about two hundred dollars a month. No, I believe it was not even that much at first. I think it was only about one hundred and something. But the amount of the old-age pension gradually increased over the years.

EM: Did your mother receive her old-age pension at the same time?

AK: No, she got hers at a much later date. I do not know how many years later she got hers. Before she got her old-age pension, she was given welfare. Her welfare was only thirty dollars a month. She did not have much money in those days. I suppose when she got her own old-age pension she had more money.

We stayed in town. I do not for how many years. I think we stayed in town for four years. My parents did not go into the bush in those four years. It was the fall the year that Rachel was born that they went into the bush again. It was then that the Income Security [Program] was introduced to the trappers and hunters as a result of the James Bay Agreement [after 1975]. That is how they started to fly inland every year from then on [until his death in 1990]. Their health was still very good for the next ten years. They were in the bush every year. Rachel was thirteen when her grandfather died. My parents were living in the bush all those years. My mother still goes inland every year. They went to the same place every year for those thirteen years - *Wiminipis*.

ADULTHOOD AND BECOMING A PARENT

As for myself, since Rachel was born, I have not been able to be in the bush as much. Rachel used to live with her grandparents when they were in the bush. She must have been about six years old when she first went to the bush with them. She was ten years old when she went with them for the last time. When her brother Paul was born, she did not want to go into the bush again. She wanted to stay with Paul. Paul was the reason why she did not want to go anymore.

There was only one year that I did not work within these years. I was laid off in December. There was no funding for the job I had held. When the funding stopped, I did not work anymore. I went with my parents when they flew back inland in January. We stayed inland until June. That was the last time I stayed in the bush for so long. It was in 1980. I started working as a NAADAP worker in December 1976. I worked for four years. We were laid off in December of 1980. It was in January of 1981 that I went inland again for six months. That was the last time I was in the bush that long since I started to have salaried work. I had planned to go back into the bush again

in the fall if I did not find a job by then. That is what happened. I went back into the bush in the fall and lived with my parents. We got back in December of 1981. I do not know why we came back. I guess we came back for Christmas!

I do not know what happened next...I think I might have gone back into the bush...I think I went back to work for The Bay. I needed the money because I could not apply for Income Security. I started working again. In 1983, I started working on the NAADAP program again. I worked for one year. It was only for one year. Then I worked as a replacement for George [Masty] who went on an educational leave - as a social worker. I cannot go back into the bush [for long periods] again because I have been working for the Social Services ever since then.

AGNES' FATHER

My father used to urge me to keep my jobs. He would say, "That is how you are going to help your children - by working on the jobs you can find. It is better that you stay with them in town because they are too young to fend for themselves in the bush. It is better if you work at your jobs." He especially urged this when Paul was small because he did not want me to take him into the bush while he was still small. It was only when Paul got older than we would go with them in the bush whenever I had the chance.

The last year that my father lived and was in the bush, I was with them that spring. We flew inland in April. We came back in June. Two weeks later, he died. He was sick off and on that spring while we were in the bush. He was not that sick. The main problem was his tooth. He had a tooth abscess. When we got back in town, he got even sicker. He had pneumonia.

I often wondered about how things go when it is the fate of the person to die where the nurses did not seem to take good care of his condition. It was much later that I wondered about the behaviour of the nurses. They know that you can not take chances about old peoples' illnesses, especially if the old person has pneumonia. They have to be hospitalized right away. The nurses knew that he had pneumonia in both lungs and yet they did not send him off to a hospital. They just gave him some medication and said that it would help him in twenty-four hours. He died before the twenty-four hours were up.

EM: How old was he when he died?

AK: He was eighty-seven years old.

I think about the times I had with him. I used to be the one to go with him

whenever he was send somewhere to a hospital. I was always the one to go with him. He was taken to Montreal two times as he got older. The last time he was there was because of his eye.

One evening, while were sitting about in the patients' boarding home, he told me that what is being to done to him, the work that is being done to his eyes will not help him. "It is not going to help me even though all this is being done to me." That is what he said to me. "My sight has already been taken away. That is why all this fuss will not help me get my sight back." That is what he said. "All this has already been laid out to happen in my life." The other thing he told me was this: "In the future, if I am told that I am going to a hospital, I will not agree to go. I do not want to go through all that for something that is inevitable. I have already reached the time where my life has been destined to finish. Besides, I have finished my work." That is what he said to me.

While he was telling me all this, I did not feel sad. I was very happy that he chose to tell me all this. I felt that he was preparing me for his death. I took this as his telling me that he knew he was not going to be around much longer. There was something between us, an understanding of some kind, that helped me not to feel too sad about this. I understood that I had to accept it. "That is the reality and I have to accept it," I thought. He chose me to tell all this to. I do not know if he told any of my siblings the same thing. But then I was always around him. I was the one who was always helping them. I presume that was the reason why he chose to tell me instead of the others what was going to happen to him.

When he died, I remembered the things he would say to us from time to time. One of the things he said was, "There are a lot of things that distract you from your path. A lot of things in your lives have made you lost. Do your best to hold on to your Iyiyuu way of thing and the Iyiyuu way of life. Do all you can to hold on to them."

The other thing he would say to me whenever he heard me talking to my children in English, "Do not talk to them in English. Talk to them in Cree. If they loose their language, they will also loose their Iyiyuu way of life." That is what he used to say to me. "It is not right that they should loose their Iyiyuu way of life."

He would also say to me, "Even if you do not teach them English yourself, when they go to school, they will be taught the English language. They will learn it, anyway. That is why I do not want you to teach them the English language. Use the language that you were born with. It was given to you to use. Do all you can to teach them the Iyiyuu language."

After his death I often thought about all the things he used to say to me. It was only after he died that I seemed to be able to reflect on what he used to tell me. It was only then that I understood what he had been telling me. What he used to say did not mean much to me while I still saw him in life. After his death, all that he used to say to me meant so much. When I think about it and if I understand what he said to me, it really taught me a lot things - that is what I have learned since his death.

Two months after his death, something happened to me. I really wanted to tell someone about all the things he used to tell us. I wrote down all that the things he used to tell us and I also wrote down all the things that I saw him do. I realized that he had taught us a lot of things even though he did not use words but just by letting us watch what he was doing. For example, whenever we were in the bush, he used to tell us how we should look after all the animals that we caught to eat. He even told us to take care of the weasel and squirrel. These two small animals are still taken for their fur but he told us to burn their carcasses because we did not eat them, especially the weasel's meat which can not be eaten at all. "Burn the meat and the bones if you have to but do not let them be seen unattended for long." Whenever he saw these two animals killed and just thrown out, he would take them and put them in our garbage pile. Before we moved or left any campsite, he would burn all our garbage and anything that would not be used again. When he knew that we would be moving soon, two days before the move he would put everything outside away. He would take all the poles and sticks we had been using and place them in one spot against a tree. He used to be the last one to leave the camp whenever we travelled in the winter. He did this so that he would put the unused firewood in one place. Sometimes, he would make a fire inside our old campsite and burn all the boughs we had last used on the floor of our dwelling. Naturally, he would burn everything that was laying about inside our dwelling like pieces of things we had used there. Even though he did not have much time to do this, when we returned to the same spot, we saw that he had taken the time to clean and tidy up our campsite. He never missed doing this. Before we would leave, he would tell us to put the poles lying about all in one spot.

I used to hear him say to his grandchildren, "Do not chop trees that you do not want to use. The only time you should chop a tree down is because you have some use for it." He would say that to his older grandchildren. As for the young ones who did not understand yet and were imitating the adults, they would still chop some young trees down. Whenever he would see such a tree chopped down, he would pick it up right away and used the boughs inside our dwelling and the wood for firewood. He did not want the small trees chopped down by his grandchildren to be laying about. These are the things I saw him doing.

Naturally, he made sure that his grandchildren's first [animal] kills were treated and handled with the utmost care. He was given the first ptarmigan that each of his grandchildren killed. After it was cooked, he would give a piece to each one of us. He made sure that everyone partook of his grandchildren's first kill. He asked for all the small birds killed by his grandchildren. He would say to us, "Do not throw the small birds away or lose them. Gave them to me and I will eat them."

I remembered his teachings - his action and actions and his words. He showed us and told us how we should respect everything. He may not have taken a lot of time to tell us these things with words but he told us by his actions. We saw what he wanted us to know and [through this he taught us to] understand the way he respected the land and everything on it.

The other thing he used to do was to tell us about his day after he came home from his outing out on the land. Sometimes, he would say, "I went to visit him/her² today." He knew of the grave sites of our ancestors and relatives. He marked the area where the grave sites were by taking off some of the bark off a tree near the burial site. He marked the area where the burial site was. He would say, "I placed some boughs on his grave. I talked to him/her for a while." Everything was so natural to him. He had no bad thoughts or superstitions about the dead and where they were buried.

One time, he said to us, "I went to see my younger cousin *Atwaanis*, today. After I had stripped some bark off the tree near him, I placed some boughs on his grave. I sat there for awhile and told him some news [*katipaachimustuukw*]. I told him, "Things are not the same as they were for us while you were alive. We are not as poor as we used to be, especially how we used to lack tea to drink for long periods of time. We have tea all the time. We always have bannock, too." My mother remarked, "He was truly telling him some news."³

Now I know that he was showing us how the Iyiyuu of the past viewed things and that they still communicated with their ancestors even after they departed from this world and long gone. He believed that if you asked them for help, they would help you. He said, "I asked him to send food my way [*pachi pipawaah*]." The Iyiyuu of the past would ask their departed relatives to help them find food or kill some food or ask them for their blessing. They would especially ask this of the old people that had passed beyond. He was very much aware where the old people had been buried when they had passed

²This is an example of the use of the Cree gender-neutral pronoun. The way it has been used does not explain specifically if the person discussed was male or female.

³Trans. note: Agnes laughs after saying this.

on. There were other things he shared with me. I do not know if he shared the same things with my brothers.

One time, he told me that he felt that the one we call *mitukwaau* [female-water-spirit/translated sometimes as "mermaid"] was following him. He also thought that he would see it if he wanted to but he did not want to see that spirit. He told me that to ward off this spirit he wore one of my mother's things, like her sweater or her scarf. He always wore one of her things and that was his protection from that spirit. I used to talk to him a lot whenever I was with him on his outings on the land. The time he told me about this was when we were getting some things from our cache. We had to spend one night out on this trip and he was telling me this before we went to bed as a bedtime story. I asked him, "What would happen to you if you saw the *mitukwaau*?"

"I do not know. All I know is that I fear something from the water. If I was to see it, maybe I would die." He feared that he would probably drown or die because of the water. But he did not want that to happen. I guess he thought that if he was to see the spirit, something would happen to him - that maybe he would drown or have an accident that involved water.

He told me that when my brothers James and Andrew get older, "I will not feel this way anymore but I know one to them will have this same experience." Sure enough, it was Andrew who went through that.

EM: What happened to him?

AK: My father said that he probably felt that something was going to happen to him because he was too young to understand what was really happening. As he got older, he realized that nothing would happen to him even if he saw the spirit. "I probably felt the spirit of the water because I was good at hunting animals that lived in the water." The spirit of the water probably wanted to communicate with him. But he did not really get into detail about this but he still felt those things [to be true]. But the religion is what stopped him from getting to know any more because the [Anglican] religion told him that it was not right to get involved in those things. That is what stopped him. He would probably have known if he tried to understand why this was happening to him. But there was a fear of these experiences and he did not overcome that.

The only thing he said he did was he offered some tobacco whenever he killed a bear. If he did not burn tobacco, he would just light up his pipe and blew the smoke in honour of the bear, for the spirit of the bear. He offered some tobacco to the spirit of the bear in this way. "That is what I used to do," he said.

There were other things that were powerful that I knew he knew but he did not practice these things. But I guess he knew that I was not ready for those things either. Today, I feel that he left something for me. It is the way I think and feel. I feel that my father is still alive when I think of him. In my mind, he is still alive. Maybe I think that because he has left something for me from him.

I was very amazed about something that happened after he died. I do not know if I was the only one who was not given a choice to take something that my father had owned. I knew that my brothers were asked if they wanted to take something that belonged to my father. I don't know if my sisters were asked the same thing but I was not asked. No one ever said anything to me, if I wanted something from my father. I did not ask for anything, either.

When we moved to this [new] house after his death⁴, I unpacked my things that had been packed for the move [other people had packed up the house]. I unpacked my clothes. When I unpacked one of my box of clothes, I recognized a bundle which was wrapped in a scarf that my father used to tie his head with. Wrapped in this scarf were two pipes. My father had two pipes. There was also a pocket knife which my father had for a long time. There were also some strings in there. He used to put some strings in his pockets and there was a pencil. These were the things in the scarf. There were four items in there. Right away, I thought, "I will keep this for Paul when he grows up and one of the pipes I will keep for myself." I gave the other pipe to Rachel. We had enough items for the three of us to keep in memory of my father. I have kept those things bundled up in the same scarf. I have put some medicines and tobacco in with these bundles. Wherever I go, when I travel, I take them with me. I wrapped the pipe that I gave to Rachel in a cloth with some tobacco. I told her to take it with her wherever she goes whenever she travels.

The first time she took the pipe with her on a trip out of town, she told me of her experience. She told me that she felt happy. "When I would be alone in the room, I felt that my grandfather was with me. It was like as he was there with me. I felt so safe." That is what she said.

I told someone else about what I had found. He/she told me, "The things you found with your belongings must have been the things he left for you. They mean something for him to have left them with you." He/she urged that we always keep those things with us. "Wherever you go, take them with you and do not leave them behind."

⁴Moving out of the home (or altering the dwelling in some way) after the death of a family member was, and still remains, standard practice in Whapmagoostui.

ADULTHOOD - HEALING

I had a lot of problems when I was young. I went through a lot. There were some painful experiences that I went through. I thought about these painful experiences that I could never tell anyone about. Right after my father died, I suddenly realized that I needed help but not because I was grieving. It was for another reason but I did not know at first what it was. Shortly after that I went to a conference. That was in 1991. It was one year after my father's death. I went to one of the workshops. The conference was in Montreal. The woman who was conducting the workshop was talking about a healing circle that she wanted to do for the Iyiyuu women in Montreal. She talked about the reasons why she wanted to talk about conducting a healing circle for the women. She talked about herself and the things that happened to her when she was young. She had been sexually abused. While she was talking about herself, it was like she was talking about me. Everything that had happened to her had happened to me and the thoughts she had were the same as my own. She had the same thoughts about it. What had been done to her was so painful that she had blocked it and had pushed so deep down that she could not remember it - so that she never had to talk about it to anybody. That is exactly what I had thought.

She went on saying, "That is not the way to look at it. You have to bring out the pain that you have carried with you for a long time. You have to start to heal otherwise this thing you carry around will stop you from succeeding in life. It is going to block you all the time. Since I started the healing, that is what I have found out. I started healing six years ago but I still can not do some of the things I want to. It takes a long time to heal for someone with this kind of painful experience."

It was a beginning for me. From that time on, I was very anxious to find somebody to help me. I was at the conference for only a short period of time and I could not really go around to look for someone to help me there. But I knew that I had to find somebody to help. I could not think of anyone in Great Whale who could help me. I thought that I was the only one here who went through this experience. That is what I had always thought. Before that Martha [Mackenzie-Mamianskum] told me about this woman who did healing circles. She never really explained what a healing circle was. She told me about the woman who did healing circles. She suggested that we send for her. I agreed. But we never got around to it then.

Later, I searched for and found her. I called Sudbury. I asked where she was. I was told where I could reach her and I called her. That was the first time I talked to Eliza Mozer. Right away, I had a feeling that she would be able to help. I invited her to come to the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Awareness Week. She said she would be able to come. I knew that she could help me but I did

not know how she was going to go about it. So, she was the one who showed me how to help myself. That is how my healing started.

Sometimes, when I get anxious about things that I think about, I usually think, "I wish my father were here. He would be able to tell me what to do." Whenever I think this way, soon after, I seem to think of a way to handle whatever was worrying me. It was like he was still there, telling me what to do about my worries.

Since I started the healing, the woman told me that this kind of healing is slow but she encouraged me to go on. "You will get there," she would say to me. "Just be patient with yourself. Do not expect to know everything all at once and so soon. It is going to take time to understand everything. It might take you four years to really understand how to help yourself. It takes about four years for someone to heal from that kind of experience in their youth."

Even though it was really painful the first time I talked, the more I talk about it the less it hurt. I am beginning to see that I can overcome it but I can never forget it. I know I have to accept that I can never forget what happened to me but I know I can overcome the feeling, the bitterness and the guilt. I know I can overcome that. I will gradually grow stronger. I know that I will gradually understand how to help people who had the same experience as I had. Right now I am at the healing stage. I am trying to understand myself, love myself and accept myself, who I am. I have to learn to show love to others, too. I am beginning to understand how I looked at myself before the healing. I was always putting myself down. I always resented what had happened to me and I always blamed myself.

I really resented my mother, too, because I thought she did not want to help me. She did not want to understand what I was going through even though I tried to tell her at times. I had to learn to accept her. I really resented it when I think about it but I understand now that she is only human, too. She had no knowledge of how to go about helping me. The only way she knew how to deal with it was to avoid it. It was not really her fault even though it really hurt me when she did not believe me when I told her. Maybe she did believe me but she did not want to admit it. When I think about it, it must have been very painful for her, too. Maybe she thought that if we did not talk about it, it will not be real. I have not been able to bring it up with her. Up to this day, I have not talked about it to her. Right now, I am trying very hard to forgive her and not hold it against her. I have decided not to confront her with it because she is very old now. But I wish that she would know and understand. But I don't know how....

RETURN TO THE LAND - PRESENT AND FUTURE

AK: The last time I was out on the land was last fall. I had gone with my mother once before that time when she went inland after my father died. I had gone with her inland the fall that my father passed away. I was there for one week. It was a beautiful place where we stayed. Rachel was not with us when we went inland by plane. She stayed in town. Last fall my mother wanted to go inland again and we took Rachel with us that time. We went inland in October and came back in December. We were only there for two months. Rachel really wanted to come with us. She really wanted us to go into the bush. I asked for time off from my job in order to do this. I asked for two months off. That is how we got to go and stay there.

When we were there, it was somehow different than all the other times I had been in the bush. I felt more peaceful and I did not seem to worry about anything. I was not anxious to come back to the village. Even though it was always raining and snowing, it did not affect my mood. I was very happy the entire time we were there. We were always busy. It really helped me to be keeping busy.

[My son] Paul was happy there, too. After he got sick, I took him to a traditional healer. She told me that Paul was sick because he has a power to help others [when he gets older]. He has been given a special gift. He is sick now because he is paying for that gift right now in his life. She also told me to watch how he does when we are out on the land. Paul is always having strange dreams. That is what happened when we were in the bush. He was always having strange dreams. He was trying to do everything that he saw being done. He was always hunting birds near our camp, especially the *wiskichans* [Canada Jay]. When the fall birds were gone, he went after the *wiskichans*. He killed quite a few of them. We always cleaned the *wiskichans* he killed. My mother told me to take care with the *wiskichans* that he killed.

One night, he said to me, "Mother, I will not kill the *wiskichans* anymore." He would no longer kill any *wiskichans* that came near our camp. Before this the *wiskichans* would fly away as soon as they arrived at our camp because Paul would try to kill them [to practice his hunting skills]. "I will no longer kill the *wiskichans*." "Why do you say that?" I asked.

"I had a dream last night. I dreamt that I saw two *wiskichans* sitting on a branch of a tree. They talked to me. They just talked to me. One of them turned into an Iyiyuu [human being], turned into a woman. The one spoke to me and turned into an Iyiyuu. It turned into a human. I do not want to kill the *wiskichans* anymore." After he had spoke to me about it, he said, "They are spirits."

He also told me of another dream of a woman that came out of the water. The woman was much bigger than an ordinary human woman. He was afraid of this dream. I asked him, "What did the woman do?" "She was hugging our dwelling. That is what I dreamt." I did not think about it then, about these things but I should have asked him to offer some tobacco. I should have told him to offer some tobacco for dreams like that. I did not think to teach him to do that yet.

He was always saying that he dreamt of an old man. He was always dreaming while we were in the bush. Since we have returned to town he has stopped dreaming. There are too many things distracting him.

The woman told me to start teaching Paul things like ceremonies. He will need to know these things. I teach him all that I know.

The old woman said the same thing about Rachel. Rachel also is dreaming. When she talks about her dreams, many times she wants to know the meaning. She really wants to know. I know that her dream means something but she has to know herself what it means. She will know some day. I told some of Rachel's dreams to the old woman. While she was listening to some of Rachel's dreams, she said that Rachel was receiving messages. She will start to get ready to prepare for her life work. She is getting these messages to start her preparations for her adult work. The old woman told me what to say to Rachel when we do ceremonies. "Rachel has to offer tobacco into the water." That is what she told me. She has to do it in her own time.

I am starting to learn all these things. I understand a little of the teachings that the Iyiyuu taught. We were told not to think or practice these things in the past. It is still very strong, though. My mother's generation was convinced that they should abandon their Iyiyuu teachings and knowledge. Even us - our parents taught us what they were taught [about abandoning those practices].

EM: That is true. We have many guilt feelings for living. We are guilty for living! That is how I see it.

AK: I used to wonder...I do remember the times I was out on the land as I was growing up. I used to have so many questions. I never asked my father the questions I had. I regret that now. He would have told me if I had asked him the questions I had about things. I never asked him. I am very sorry about it now.

I do not know why but I can not ask my mother these things. I guess one of the reasons why I am like this is because I know her faith in this [Anglican]

religion is very strong. Her faith in it is very strong. She was not thinking about the traditional ways in her life even though she lived the traditional way. But this religion is very strong in her life.

EM: I tried to get her to talk about these things. She would tell me little bit. She would tell me the Iyiyuu way of life and then turn to talking about religion. She would talk about a Creator. She would replace it with God, which I think is right, too, you know. You know what I mean? Yeah, which is right. It was the same connection. I would tell her it was the same connection even before religion.

AK: When I think about it, I am anxious for my children to know about the traditional way of living. I remember the way we lived when my father raised us out on the land. There were no distractions...no tv, no radio, nothing. Whenever we went inside for the night, after our work outside, we had little time to play. When I was young, I had little time to play because I was always working. When I went inside, my father would tell stories if he was up to it. He would tell us legends, too, when he was not too busy or if there were no problems. I know the way the Iyiyuu used to live because I experienced it and I was taught first hand. I tried to learn everything - like trapping and hunting. I tried to do everything that I was capable of doing.

My children do not live in the bush. They only go out on the land occasionally. I know that they will not know everything that I was taught as a child living out on the land. They rarely hear the stories and legends that I heard as a child. I am hoping that if I keep talking about it, eventually, they will try to find out for themselves later on when they are adults. I hope that they will try to learn the survival skills of the land. There is so much to learn in order to survive out on the land. All the teachings are natural and they are not hard to understand if the learner listens intently. But if someone does not listen, they can not understand. It is the same way as one does in the classroom. If you do not listen, you can not understand what is being taught. That is how it is in the bush. Someone will have a hard time if they do not listen. Everything that my parents taught us, the way my parents put it when they taught us something was so logical. They would tell us why we have to do something a certain way. "This is why you have to do this. If you do it this way, you can achieve this. If you do not it this way, you will not achieve it."

When I was young, I used to be told to go and check the nets. Sometimes, I did not feel like doing it because it was too cold. I would ask, "What would happen to me if I do not go out and check the nets?" I would be told, "You will not eat then. You will have nothing to eat." That is the way they put their teachings. In this way, we would understand why it was necessary to do

this or that.

At first, I it was hard to understand why certain things were done the way they did them, for example, when erecting a dwelling. I used to wonder, "I wonder why this is done this way?" My mother - parents - would explain to me why it was done.

When caribou were killed, the poles of the dwelling were made bigger than ordinary ones. They would use big poles. I asked my mother, "Why are you making our dwelling more secure than other times?"

"There will be other poles that will go horizontally across the fireplace and tied to these poles. The frozen meat will be thawed on top of these poles. When the meat is heavy, the poles will bend and our dwelling will cave in. This will happen if the poles are too weak."

I learned so much. I did not understand right away but some of the poles in a tipi has to be bigger than the others. Eventually I learned where the bigger poles went and where the smaller ones went and why. My mother told me, "If all the poles are big, the tipi will collapse onto itself at the top. The smoke hole would close in. That is why some poles have to be smaller and others bigger."

The bigger poles had to be strategically placed because the horizontal poles over the fire place were to be attached to them. The poles at the entrance way have to be big, too, because there is a lot of activity there. The poles at the entrance are often held onto and moved with all the people going in and out. In this way, it does not move out of place. If it is a small place, it would move out of place and the entrance way would get bigger and bigger. Little things like that are very useful to know. They are very important to know.

My father used to make the fire place in the middle of our tipi. There is a certain way to place the stones around the fire place. If they are placed in another way, the tipi will be smoky. There is a certain way to place the stones so that the fire will not be smoky. These are some of the things I remember I was taught which had been taught to my parents. My mother used to teach these things.

In the summer time, there is no log that is placed over the entrance way. But in the fall, when stoves are used, then a log is placed over the entrance way. The reason for this is because you need air to come in through the entrance way to push the smoke up the smoke hole in the tipi. These are the things I learnt. The entrance way should not be too sheltered so that air can come in so that the smoke can go up. When a stove is used, then the entrance way is

secured because we do not have to worry about smoke.

When the *wiskichanchiwaap* was made, my father used to say, "If the top is low, then it will warm up faster. If it is too high, it will not warm up fast."

He used to make our *wiskichanchiwaap* low. It would heat up fast. He used to pack snow all around the dwelling from the outside. Then he would pack the snow down with this feet, not with his snowshoes. He would put more snow all around our dwelling.

He would say, "There is certain kind of snow that is not warm. It is the snow that is loose, sort of powdery that is not warm. It does not insulate enough to use for this purpose. The snow that is on top that can be packed down is what is good for insulation. It will keep the dwelling warm. It is soft but it is warm." It is the snow we call *ushaashuwii* that is good to put around the dwelling. It keeps the dwelling warm.

EM: I didn't know that. The other thing is that your parents must have taught you each place where you went and did not cover had a name already before you were there yourself. It is vast territory where you and your parents were and yet they had names for all the places you passed.

AK: That is right. They had names for all the places we went to. They would name the areas and knew it by name and would tell us where we would go by name. For example, there are so many names for a lake. One lake can be described in many ways, has many parts to it. There is the *astitakam* [where the sun shines on it] of the lake, *aukikam* [shady side in relation to the sun], *kipituunch* and the *anayach* [point], *aminawaatimuuch* [peninsula]. Around the bend of the point or peninsula is the area we call *wasaaau*.

EM: -- the names given to a lake because of the four directions and the way it is situated to the sun and the winds.

AK: We can say, *wapinutach a waakwaakimaach* [northern end of a lake], or *achistu a waakwaakimaach*. There is another *tipinukamikunch* [sheltered side] and the other one is *kipituunch* [east end of the lake]. This refers to the wind directions. For example, the east wind is one of the main direction. The wind will come from the east.

There are two names given to an island. One of them is *ministuk*. These are big islands. Rock islands are called *minisaakw* which are usually smaller. Sometimes, the *minisaakw* will be submerged.

There are ways to describe on which part of the island is being talked about.

For example, if someone asked you to get something from an island, they would say, something like, "It is situated on the *astitaau* side of the lake." This describes the part that faces the sun. The opposite side of this is called, *auchaau*. The other ways to describe it is to say *achistu a uniskwaaauwaayaach* [west end of the lake] or *waapinutaach a uniskwaaauwaayaach* [east end of the lake]. All islands are facing the east [*waapinutaach*]. That is how they are described. They never say, south end of the lake, only, *astitaau* and never north end of the island.

The descriptions of a mountain is also described as such, *astitayaauch* [side facing the sun] and the north side is called, *aukitinaach*. *Achistu a iskwaayaaukaach* [west side] and the east side is referred to as *waapinutaach a naaukaach* because I do not know if you ever noticed that...If you look at the mountains from the north side or the south side, the mountains are sloping up to the east side. It seems that they are all facing that way, to the east. *waapinutaach* is east. Usually, the mountains are higher on the east. It is very rarely that the mountain will be sloping up to the west side. It goes up higher to the east side. The higher part is called *anaaukach* [jutting part of the mountain]. It seems that all mountains face the *waapinutaach*.

EM: Did you ever notice or were told in which direction should the entrance way of a dwelling should face?

AK: We were always told to face the dwellings to the *waapinutaach* [east]. If we can not for some reason, then we were to face the dwellings to the south.

EM: Was there a reason?

AK: I don't know! There must have been a reason. My father said that the light comes from the east [*waapinutaach*]. The sun comes from the east. We face the sun when we wake up. As they go out the entrance way, they face the sun. The day comes from or starts in the east. That is the reason why the entrance way of the dwelling should face the east at all possible times.

Death goes that way [west]. That is why it is not wise to have the entrance way facing it. "It is like inviting death if you face your dwelling that way. That is what was said," my father told me.

The trees...My father said that it was said that even the trees face the east. The trees' front faces the east.

Achistu is west. I used get confused about these direction in the Cree language. *Waapinutaach* sounds like it should be the west but that is east,

waapinutaach.⁴ *Achistu* is west.

EM: I must have had it all wrong in some of my translations about these two directions. Therefore, *wapinutawiiyyuuch* [Other Iiyuu groups from the east] came from the east and not the west!

AK: Seven Islands...around there. Montagnais.

EM: Your mother told me that they used to meet three groups of other Iiyuu out on the land in her youth. One of the groups were the *Ausawaawiiyyuuch* [Naskapi], *Wapinutawiiyyuuch* [Iiyuu from the east] and *Waasawiiyyuuch* [Iiyuu from the [big] cove]. Who were the *Waasawiiyyuu*? Iiyuu from Labrador?

AK: Iiyuu from Labrador... Montagnais... Innu?

EM: Yeah, probably. I got mixed up with these two groups.

AK: It is very important for a person to understand the [Cree] language of the land when they stay there for any length of time. Suppose you are asked to go somewhere, just by someone directing you where to go. You have to understand and know all land forms [and their relation to the four main directions]. Sometimes, they might say, "*anta astitakam pach ut takakapuuch mistikuch*?" What do you think this would look?

EM: I don't know...How would I know?!

AK: You would look for a grove of trees, a line of trees coming down coming down to the shore of a lake on the north side of a mountain/hill.

Then my father might say, "*uta itacha astitayatukw*" or "*achistu iytachatukw akuta itacha cha a ti pimutayiin*." Then he would say, "*nat tikhuch akuth a tikhuch mischaakw* [or] *mischaakush*." It could be a small one or a large swamp, *mischaakw*. "*Nata iytischakaau*." Then he would describe it where or where it was leading to. Or he would say, "*ki upitiwaasiwaa naat iysinakun*." Meaning, there would be point of trees from both sides. That is what he means. It means that, where the bog/marsh, there would be grove of trees on both sides of a pass/tunnel of clearing. "That is where you will walk along the clearing" or something like that. Or "*anta pisimwaatach*" or "*itimaapishum iytischakaau*" or "*achistu itacha itischakaau*" or "*waapinutaach itischakaau*. *Akuta cha iytutaiin*." You follow these [four] directions. I never wrote down these instructions or

⁴The confusion here stems from the literal meaning of the word for "east", which is "to the back of west".

the descriptions of the land where I should go for something. I used to find it, anyway. I would still remember what he used to say to me. Sometimes, he would say, "*usayakunikashu ut.*" Then I would be confused, thinking, 'is it a small one or large one?' "*Usayakunikaau aukun cha at pistayakunikaham. Iyt sachukuhumina cha waapitimin an...*" Then he would describe the land further away. "You will see the layout of the land. *Akut ant cha pimiskumikaach an saakiikin. Mitaskuina...*" He would tell me then which way to go once I got to the shore of the lake. "Then you will go towards a point on the shoreline or *pachi mitapayakunikaau*, that is where you will walk up from." Those things you have to understand.

EM: *Pachi mitayapayakunikaau*. What is that?

AK: It means there is a clearing leading from the slope of a mountain/hill to the shore of the lake. There would be trees all around but there would be a clearing all the way up to the mountain/hill to the shore of the lake. It is the same way as the trees that come all the way from the slope of the hill/mountain to the shore of the lake. This time, there are no trees but only snow on the clearing.

EM: Is that all you wanted to say about those things. I know there is much more, like, to do with the rivers, course of the rivers. For example, for a long time I did not know what was meant by *anatwaayaach*. I used to imagine something breaking in half. I wondered what this landform looked like.

AK: For me, I did not understand for a long time the difference between *mamiich* [down-river] and *ntimiich* [upriver].

EM: What about before the falls? What is it called?

AK: *Iykutwaastinu*. At the end of the falls is, *twaakuchiunch*.

When the strong current is going for a long time and there is a little spot on the river where the water is calm and where the strong current stop. This part may look like a little river lake and it is called, *anatwaapaschiushich* and *anatwaayaach* is a big river lake. There are no strong current in the *anatwaayaach*. It is just like a lake. The strong current start again or there are rapids where the water starts again as a river which is called *akupitich*. The source of the river is called, *asaachiuch*.

EM: Yeah, someone told me that the source of the river is called, *asaachiuch*. The outlet of the river lake is called *akupitich*.

AK: There is something else I remember. When a small strip of land separates

two lakes but are very close, this piece of land is called, *atiwaayaashu*. The portage is very short on this kind of land formation.

I thought of something...You know these land forms that we called *anayaapiskaach* [rock point] and *anayaakuuch* [sand point]. You must know is meant by *kipttakin* and all that. And...What did my father used to say? When the Iyiyuu were travelling in the winter time with their loaded toboggans, sometimes, in a conversation about the travel, one might say, "*anita nichikischawaapichinan*." This means that it is a winter portage between two bodies of water.

EM: So, *akischawaapichinanuch* means going over a piece of land that separates two lakes or from lake to a river or river to river.

AK: Yes.

EM: In the summer, the phrase is *akipitanuch*?

AK: Yes. *akipitanuch*.

EM: Someone would say, "*atikischawaayan*".

AK: It means, the person was just walking without carrying anything overland to another body of water. The same phrase is used in the winter time when someone walks overland to another frozen body of water, *atikischawaayan*.

When walking overland to another frozen body of water with a loaded toboggan, the phrase, *akischawaapichinanuch*, is used to describe the nature of the actions in relation to the time of the year.

When someone is carrying a canoe over a portage, he will say, "*akut ka kischawaasitayach ntutinan*" [That is where we portaged our canoe].

EM: The term, *apimisitat utiyu*, just means that someone is carrying a canoe on their shoulders to a destination.

AK: Yes.

EM: All these phrase or terminologies, or describing actions, most children do not know them nowadays. They are just phrases but it says so much about their actions and what they were doing.

CHAPTER FIVE
LIFE HISTORY: RACHEL KAWAPIT

REMEMBERING LIFE ON THE LAND

EM: You may speak in Cree or English to express yourself with this interview. Your mother and grandmother told me that you were raised in the bush. First thing I would like to say is to tell me about your first memory about the bush or you can tell me about your first memory living here, whichever you want.

RK: I do not remember many things.

EM: Sometimes, your memories may seem like dreams. Anyway, you can start anywhere you want but try to tell me about what age you were when this event took place. Tell me anything you remember before you went to school.

RK: I do remember that we were in the bush. I remember one time...I think my mother and I were out getting firewood. We saw a frog. That is one time I remember that my mother and I did together.

EM: Were you afraid of the frog?

RK: No.

EM: Was this memory before you went to school?

RK: Yes. What else do I remember? I do not remember much.

EM: You can go back and forth as you remember, as we go on. Once you start talking, you might remember other times when you were younger so do not be afraid to go back and tell about that time.

RK: Is it what we did that you want to know?

EM: Yes, things you did or things that you were taught while you were in the bush. You can tell me about your feelings about events, if you thought some things were hard to do and things that made you happy.

RK: When we were in the bush, there used to be only four of us and that was me, Isaac [Kawapit], my grandfather and my grandmother. I used to be very happy whenever we would take trips away from our camp. We would stay out all day. We would go somewhere else from our camp. We would make a fire and we would go home only in the evenings. That was when we were in the bush.

EM: Do you remember the place where you were?

RK: We were at *Wiminipis*.

EM: Were you ever at *Ipsikimis* where our grandmother was raised?

RK: When I first used to go with my grandparents in the bush, we would be at *Ipsikimis* at first but later as I got older, we only stay at *Wiminipis* where we usually are these days. We stay at the same place these days.

EM: How many years did you stay in the bush with only the four of you?

RK: I do not remember. Sometimes, Peter used to come and live with us. When I was nine years, that was the last time I lived with them when they went into the bush. I do not remember why I did not want to live with them anymore. I lived with my mother from then on. I only went back into the bush with them whenever my mother went, too.

EM: Was it because of school or you just did not want to live with them anymore? Did it just happen?

RK: I just did not feel I wanted to be there anymore. I was happy when I lived with my grandparents but I was not happy to live with my mother. I do not know why I changed all of a sudden.

EM: So, when you were nine years old, you changed?

RK: Yes.

EM: You wanted to live with your mother then?

RK: Yes.

EM: Did you like going to school at that time?

RK: No, I never liked going to school.

EM: Why not?

RK: I do not know why. I just don't like going to school. I just feel that I prefer living on the land. I like it better there but I also know that I have to finish high school and want to finish high school.

EM: So, you are torn.

RK: Yes.

EM: What did your grandmother used to teach you when you were in the bush?

RK: She used to teach me about cleaning animals and how to fix the animals for eating. She also taught me what needs to be done to prepare the dwelling when people live out on the land. She taught me what to do and to bring these things to the dwelling. That is what she taught me. She taught various things about living on the land and what to do.

EM: Give me an example what you can do. I am certain that you know how to clean a fish. Do you know how to smoke fish?

RK: Yes.

EM: It is things like that you have to tell me about. I know that is it hard when you talk to a Cree person about these things because I know what you mean but you have to be more specific for the general audience like the white people. You have to tell me these things in detail. I know what kind of work is involved in the bush but they do not.

What is the first thing you learned on the land?

RK: The first thing I was taught to help bring in the firewood. I would be bring the small pieces of firewood. I would also get the water. I was also taught to pluck ducks. I was not strong enough to pluck geese at first. I would pluck the ducks and ptarmigan and grouse. These are the things I would do first. I was also taught how to gut the ducks and the ptarmigan. I was not very good at working with the knife, I couldn't cut them the right way. I would only gut them and burn the fine feathers off of their bodies. That is what I learned at first. When I got a little older, I was taught how to cut the geese and ducks.

EM: Were you taught how to hunt?

RK: Isaac tried to teach me about shooting a gun but I never did because I was too afraid of it. My grandmother taught me how to set traps. We used to set traps for muskrats. My grandparents taught me how to set a net in the summer and the winter.

EM: Did they teach you how to set fish lines? Did you ever set your fish hooks?

RK: Yes. My grandmother taught me how to set fish lines. We used to set fish lines together.

EM: Did you ever set the fish lines all by yourself?

RK: No, I never did.

EM: This was before you were nine years old?

RK: Yes.

EM: But did you ever check on the fish lines by yourself?

RK: Yes, I used to check on the fish lines, only when the fish lines were near our dwelling.

EM: What did you used to do for play?

RK: We used to go sliding. We also used to make tunnels in the snow where there is a lot of snow near the shore line. We used to make holes in the snow and crawl into it. That is what we used to do.

EM: Did your grandparents tell you stories?

RK: Yes. My grandfather used to tell us stories after we were all turned in for the night.

EM: You must have not understood some of the phrases or words they used when telling you the stories.

RK: That is true. I would ask them what this meant or that.

EM: Of all the stories and legends they told you, what was your favourite legend?

RK: I used to like the legends which were handed down to them, the legends where the animals talked like people. I liked to hear these kinds of legends.

EM: So, you lived with your mother since you were nine years old. Since then, how many times were you in the bush with your mother?

RK: I think we were in the bush at least four or three times since then.

EM: I know that you were in the bush with your mother and grandmother during the fall during the last two or three years. Aren't you in the bush every year?

RK: My mother only goes whenever it is possible for her but not every year. It is only when she can get some time off from her job that we go into the bush.

EM: Were you in the bush last year?

RK: Yes, we were in the bush during the fall and this year, too. We were in the bush every fall for the last two years.

EM: How old are you now?

RK: Sixteen.

EM: You have been in the bush the during the fall of the last two years. You are older now and will remember more things now. What new things did you learn?

SK: I learned the same things and was taught more of the same but I was also taught how to do them better and not to do a sloppy job.

EM: Before you were nine years old, you told me of the things that you were taught. This time, what new things did you learn? What other animals did you learn to clean?

RK: I was taught how to butcher a caribou and how to cut up a beaver. What else? I also learned how to put up a tipi and a winter dwelling we call *wiskichanchiwaap*.

When we had an organized school trip, we were taught how to enlarge an already made dwelling [*a nuschinchanuch*]. We also were taught other things. We were also taught how to load up our toboggans and not to make too heavy a load.

EM: I do not know if you were taught how to skin an animal before you were nine years when you were in the bush but were you taught how to skin any animals since then - like the last two years you were in the bush?

RK: The first time I learned how to skin a marten was when we were in the bush this year. My grandmother taught me how to do it. It was the first time I learned how to skin a marten but before that when I was younger, I was taught how to skin a beaver and a muskrat. I also helped to skin a bear when I was younger. Peter or Isaac killed the bear. He shot the bear while he was out hunting.

EM: What about tanning a caribou skin, were you taught that?

RK: Yes, my mother taught me how to tan a caribou skin. My grandmother also taught me that.

EM: Do you think you could tan a caribou skin all by yourself if you really had to?

RK: Yes, I think I could.

EM: Can you tell me about an event that happened when you were in the bush. You started to tell me about what you used to do when you were in the bush when you would go off to cut some wood. You can pick any day to tell me about, something significant that happened or any ordinary day. You can tell me about any event you like.

RK: When we were in the bush - when I was younger, we used to check our muskrat traps every two days. We would paddle over to our traps. We used to get up very early to do this and paddle to our muskrat traps. There would only be the three of us, my grandparents and me. We used to take a lot of food because we would stay out all day long. We would check on our traps and the nets. We would also check on the fishing lines. My grandfather also had some otter traps. We would check these, too. At the end of the day, we would chop some wood for our tipi. We would take these home with us in the canoe. That is what we used to do in one day.

EM: What did you used to do in the winter time?

RK: Naturally, we could not paddle anymore. We used to paddle along this small stream where the traps were situated. In the winter, we would set our muskrat traps in a large lake, along the shore line. Sometimes, my grandfather and Isaac would set their beaver traps when they found beaver lodges. My grandmother and I would go with them sometimes.

EM: Did you ever go ice fishing?

RK: No, I do not remember doing any ice fishing.

EM: I am always asking you for details but you, as a youth, do not go into detail about events like our grandmother does. For example, I do not expect you to remember about how many muskrat skins you got in one winter but the elders would know that and it was not your job to do so. I am sure it was not that important to you to count how many skins you got in one winter.

RK: All I remember is that we did have a lot of beaver skins and muskrat skins but I never counted them. Sometimes, I would have my own muskrat skins but just a few, for example, ten muskrat skins. I would get the muskrat because I had my own muskrat trap. My grandparents would designate which trap was mine and set that trap for me.

EM: Were you nine years old the last time you spent a full year in the bush with your grandparents?

RK: Yes.

EM: Since then, you have been in the bush only few months at a time. You told me about the time you dreamt about someone talking to you about your grandfather. You can talk about that or you can tell me other things that your grandfather taught when you were in the bush or life in general that you remember well.

RK: Things that he taught me?

EM: Or anything that you were taught when you were in the bush.

RK: I do not know what to say. I do not seem to know what to say. I have a headache. I was taught many things.

EM: Were you taught how to set a fish line?

RK: Was I taught how? No. I learned by watching. That is how I learned to set a fishing line. I learned by going along when someone set a fishing line and I learned that way. I also learned to work with a winter net that way, by watching how it is done. That is how I learned to fish. Sometimes, Isaac and I would go with our grandmother or grandfather to check on the fishing lines and nets far from our camp. We would use a ski-doo to do this, sometimes.

EM: How old were you when you were in the bush the last time with your grandparents?

RK: Living with them by myself, before Paul was there, was the last time I was with them. The fall before the summer my grandfather died was the last time that my mother and I lived with them.

EM: Can you talk about that time? Was it here that you had the dream about your grandfather? Tell me about that fall. How old did you say you were? Thirteen?

RK: Yes, I was thirteen. That fall when we were in the bush, thinking back, it seemed that things did not go very well for us. I believe now that we were being readied for my grandfather's death. I do not know what to say. Things were happening to us when we were there. Something happened to Isaac two times while we were there. He had an accident with a gun once and once with a fishing hook. Paul also was cut with an axe by the one of the children

who was living there with us. That is how things were not going well with us that time. That was the first time that things like that happened to us for all the times we were in the bush.

EM: What happened to Isaac with his gun?

RK: It happened while he was ptarmigan hunting. I do not know if he was walking or using a ski-doo. Anyway, after he shot some ptarmigan, he placed his gun down to pick up the ptarmigan. His gun when off accidentally. He had held the gun by the nozzle and the bullet went through his hand. We saw him walking home. He was bloody. There was blood along the trail.

EM: What happened with the hook?

RK: We had moved to another kind of dwelling. We have a permanent wooden frame dwelling there. We moved to another kind of dwelling when the snow started to melt. He used to go to our old campsite. They used to tinker with the ski-does there at that wooden frame dwelling. They also used to go there just to hang out and be alone when they wanted to. One time, he was tinkering with the ski-doo there alone. I do not know how he came to use the hook for this purpose but when he got up to leave, the hook caught on him and bore into his skin on his hand. He could not take it out. He had to be flown back to Whapmagoostui to get it taken out.

EM: Was it in the fall when you were in the bush that time?

RK: Yes.

MY GRANDFATHER'S DEATH

EM: Was it here where you had a dream about your grandfather? You once mentioned that from this dream you had an inkling that it was trying to tell you of your grandfather's passing away. Did you know this from your dream?

RK: At first, when I heard the old man talking to me in my dream, I figured it was going to be him who was going to die. I was not certain it was going to be my grandfather who was going to die. But I was very afraid when I awoke from this dream. I checked to see if my grandfather was alright. I did not think it was going to be him who was going to die. I thought that the old man I heard in my dream was going to be the one who was going to pass away because he was very sick at that time.

EM: Which old man was it?

RK: Joseph Sheshamush.

EM: Was he the one you dreamt about?

RK: I was thinking that it was Joseph who was in my dream and other times, I felt it was my grandfather. It was Joseph's voice that I heard by the way he spoke. I was certain that it was Joseph's voice that I heard in my dream.

EM: What did he say to you?

RK: I dreamt that he was saying that he was leaving now because he was sad and sad to see my grandmother so sad. He was saying, "I am going now because your grandmother is not happy that I am here." I thought he was saying that in my dream.

EM: When did you know that it was your grandfather who was going to be leaving you? You also mentioned that your cousin Peter got mad at you for not letting them know what you knew - -

RK: Yes, he is the one. He was drunk when he said to me, "Why did you not tell us so that we could be ready for it, too?" He said something like that to me. I was sorry that I had not told anyone. I blamed myself for the shock they had when my grandfather died.

When my grandfather died, Peter was still sleeping and Isaac was not at our house at that time. When my grandfather was being taken out [to the clinic], I was awake when they passed my room. I heard him saying that he could not walk on his own and that he needed to be helped to walk. That was the last thing I heard him saying. That was the last time I heard him speak.

I got up and went to see my grandmother. She was sitting there. I felt very sorry for her. I could not stay with her for too long. It was too sad to see her this way. I just waited for my mother to come home from the clinic with my grandfather. When I went to see my grandmother, I was certain that my grandfather was going to die.

EM: Did you go to the bush this past fall?

RK: This fall? No.

EM: After your grandfather's death when you were thirteen years old, have you gone to the bush since then?

LIFE IN THE BUSH

RK: Yes, we were in the bush last fall. I was very happy there. Sometimes, I did not like it because one of the people we lived with was always mad at my

grandmother. She seemed to be angry at my grandmother. You know how it is sometimes, that an old person seems to have some ills and is not very happy at times. I guess this person thought that my grandmother was angry at them. I guess that is why they were like that.

EM: Have you noticed whether your Cree vocabulary increases when you are in the bush, have you learned new vocabulary as a result of being in the bush?

RK: Yes, I have. Out there, I heard the others using words and phrases that I have never heard before. I notice these phrases and words because they sound strange to me and I ask what they mean.

EM: You have been brought up in the bush, can you tell some things that you have learned there that can not be learned when a child stays in town all their lives? What kind of work were you taught? For example, can you skin some animals? Those types of things...what kinds of work can you do?

RK: One of the things I learned was to skin animals. I know how a net is set in the winter time. I really loved to watch my grandmother as she worked the nets. I liked to do all kinds of fishing. I liked to watch her as she did her fishing. I know how to build a dwelling all from the bush. I know what is needed and have helped in erecting all kinds of bush dwellings like pitching a tent or making a *wiskichaanchiwaap* [Cree winter dwelling].

When I went on the bush trip with the students this winter, I learned how to make a dwelling bigger to accomodate unexpected visitors [*a nuschinchaa-nuuch*]. I really liked doing that. It was tiring because I had not done that kind of work before.

With my grandparents I learned how to clean and fix all kinds of fowl and learned how to skin most animals. I learned how to skin muskrat, beaver, mink and marten. I have not skinned an otter yet.

I like it when I would go and get some firewood with my mother. My mother has also taught me all kinds of work and what to do in the bush.

My grandmother taught me how to make a fish net. But today, I have other things that keep me from being with her that much so I do not know if I still know how to make a fish net.

EM: What about when you were growing up, do you remember when your grandfather or grandmother used to tell you stories and legends? Can you tell me some of the legends that you especially liked to hear? Which ones were your

favourites? Did you ask them when you did not understand a word or a phrase what it meant?

RK: No, I did not ask them. The stories or legends used to be told to us after we were in bed.

EM: So, you could not ask your grandparents questions about the meanings of words from the legends because you were sleepy during the time they told these stories.

RK: Yes, that is true. I could not ask questions because I was sleepy or I did not want to interrupt the flow of the story.

I remember the stories told to me by my grandmother when I slept with her. As for my grandfather, I do not remember much of the stories he told about himself and what he did as he was growing up. He would tell us stories about these times and the times they had been travelling from place to place. Sometimes, he would tell stories about the times they felt the presence of *pwaat*. He would tell us stories like that.

I used to sleep with my grandmother whenever we were in the bush. She used to tell me legends. She used to tell me the legend called *ichanaapush* and *chichiuchaans*. I really loved these two legends.

EM: What is this legend about?

RK: It is a legend about a monstrous rabbit who usually killed the baby animals for his meals.

In turn, whenever I slept with Paul [young brother], I used to tell this legend to him, *ichanaapush*. These are the only two legends that I feel I know by heart. I may have forgotten some parts but I tell it how I know it.

EM: What are some of the things about their lives that your grandparents told you about that has remained with you?

RK: My grandmother told me of the times when she first got married to my grandfather. She told of their problems and what they did together with their family. She told me about my grandfather how his mother died when he was young and of his stepmother. I do not know exactly how it went but it was like they were having problems with one of the family members after they got married, a member from his father's side. Some people did not like each other in the family that she had inherited through her marriage to my grandfather. They always seemed to have problems like that. Anyway, I liked the

stories that she told me about the times she delivered babies and what she had to do.

I did not see a baby being born myself. Anyway, she told me how she would give heat treatments to the woman by using hot stones and wet moss. The midwives would feel about the woman's abdomen to see where the baby's head was. There were times when they had to right the baby so she/he would be born head first. She also told of the times she helped woman who were having difficult births. Sometimes, I used to wonder if she and the other midwives got scared doing this kind of work. There were stories like when the baby would get stuck and they had to help it out. Sometimes, the mother or the baby would die in some situations like that. They would be able to help the baby out of the mother in those times.

EM: As you were growing up, did your grandfather usually kill caribou?

RK: Yes, he killed some caribou. I used to like whenever he killed some caribou when we were in the bush. Sometimes, there would be four or five of us living out on the land. My grandfather and Isaac used to go out caribou hunting. Peter would go with them if he was with us that year. My grandmother and I would stay at camp. Sometimes, they would be gone for two or three nights at a time. When they killed some caribou, I was happiest when we were having our first meal of caribou.

EM: Did your grandfather ever sing or chant?

RK: Yes, he did.

EM: Did he ever tell you what is songs/chants said?

RK: No. He would only tell us who he was singing/chanting about.

EM: Do you know if your grandmother ever sang?

RK: She would only sing when she told legends and if there was a song in the legend or song in the story she was telling. These were the songs/chants she would sing.

EM: So, it was the legend of *chichiuchaans* that you liked to hear told to you.

RK: Yes. There is another one but I do not remember what it is called...I know the legend is called *sikwiis*. I also liked the legend about the two men who would leave their kills where they liked if they did not like the taste of it. I

do not know what it is called. Anyway, there came a time when they were very hungry. I liked to hear this legend, too.

EM: What kind of games did you used to play when you were in the bush?

RK: We used to play Cree baseball.¹ One of us would be alone and there would be two of us in another team. We would also play hockey. Whenever we were in the bush, I only had boys to play with. I played like a boy or tried to act like a boy, doing what they did. My grandfather used to make me my own bow sling and bow and arrows to play with like the boys. My grandfather would carve caribou figurines for us to shoot at with our bows and arrows and bow slings [*tsipaskunikin*]. I used to play hockey with them. We used to get reprimands because we would cut the foam mattresses to make goalies pads for ourselves. We would make the pads for ourselves [during the hockey season].

EM: You were also telling me that your grandfather made some snowshoes for you.

RK: He made snowshoes for me. The last pair of snowshoes he made for me, I did not have a chance to use them. We still have them and are keeping them. I gave my snowshoes to my brother Paul, both pairs. He made two pairs of snowshoes in my life. The first pair was the round ones.

When I was in the bush, about eight then, I always wanted to do whatever the boys [Isaac and Peter] were doing. I did not really enjoy playing with dolls even though I was given the dolls to play with. I wanted to do whatever they were doing. Sometimes, when I wanted to go with them at play, they would say, "This game is only for boys." I really insisted that I go with them and do whatever they were doing. Sometimes, I would go with them when they were hunting with their ski-doo's. It was only sometimes that I would go with them. They would let me shoot [with a gun] at ptarmigan, too.

EM: How much older are they than you?

RK: I think Peter is about twenty-five now and Isaac is around twenty-eight or twenty-nine.

EM: And your are seventeen?

RK: Yes.

¹"Cree baseball" resembles something in between baseball and cricket. It is a ball game played with two bases and an outfield.

EM: So, they were teenagers when you were eight years old.

RK: Yes.

EM: And you were always trying to tag along with them?

RK: Yes. I can say that they were my teachers, too. They taught me many things. I used to watch them as they worked on their ski-doo's and other mechanical things.

EM: Did they make you cry sometimes?

RK: They used to make me cry sometimes when I would not leave them alone or when I teased them.

EM: Did you learn to lace up snowshoes?

RK: I was still very young when my grandmother showed me how. My grandfather taught me, too. I did not do it very well when I tried to. I was making the wrong paths in the lacings.

TEEN YEARS IN WHAPMAGOOSTUI

EM: What was the difference between here and in the bush? I know that it is peaceful out there but when you get here, what do you think?

RK: When we have been in the bush for a long time, when we get back here, I feel very alone because I have my own room. But when we were in the bush, I always saw my family members and they were very close to me when we slept. They were never out of sight. When we get here, I feel lonesome because I do not see them where they are in their rooms. Sometimes, when I am here, I feel very bored especially if there is no school. It seems I am just hanging around and I feel very bored. But when I am in the bush, there is always something to do and I am never bored. It is well known that when people are in the bush, people hardly ever just stay around doing nothing.

EM: You have told me a very significant thing. You feel more lonely here where there are a lot of people, in one way.

RK: The other thing is, in the bush, the only thing you hear is the wind during the night. But here, there is always noise all night long. We youths make noise during the night. There is always the sound of a ski-doo or four-wheeler most of the night. There is always a sound out there in the night when we are in town.

EM: What about your sleeping habits when you are here and in the bush?

RK: When we are in the bush, there is always one person who wakes up very early in the morning. The early person makes the fire. Others then wake up but the ones who want to sleep have to get up eventually because they are kept awake by the others who are already up. They also have to get up because they are already thinking about the things they have to do that day.

My grandmother and grandfather told me that they could never sleep in like we the youth of today do. We - the youth of today - like to sleep in. They said that they could not sleep in because they were anxious to get going with the work they had to do that day. They also could not sleep too long just thinking about the work that was set out for them to do the next day. They were anxious to start working early in the mornings. When we are here, my mother and grandmother wake up early but not me. I do not wake up early if there is no school because I stay out late. Sometimes, I wake up only at noon and I sleep in the whole morning. I miss the whole morning.

EM: When you were in the bush, what was the average hour you used to wake up?

RK: I would wake up about 8 or 9 o'clock in the morning.

EM: What about grandmother, what time does she get up?

RK: Since she is old these days, she does not sleep well in the night or that is is sick and can not sleep well, she does not wake up as early as she used to. She usually gets up around the time I do, 8 or 9 o'clock.

She used to wake up very early when I was with them before I was nine years old. We would get up before the sun was up especially if we had to make the trip to our traps or get some wood from some distance from our main camp. My grandparents would get up before sun-up when Isaac had to make a trip to the post. They would wake up with him and help him on his way.

EM: Do your mother and grandmother still teach you about Cree culture while you are living in town?

RK: They can not really teach me everything when we live here. I seem not to really take care about that when we are here because I have many distractions in town. I play a lot of sports and other things. I can not learn as much here as I do in the bush. I also go to school and that keeps me busy and delays the Cree cultural knowledge I should be getting. I can not really learn much about Cree culture when I am in school although we have Cree Culture as a

subject in school but it is not enough. I feel that they can not really teach me much about Cree Culture in school.

EM: What about the Cree Language? You are the one who can really tell me this. You have been in the bush for three to four months for the last two years and you also have been going to school here all year. Comparing these two settings, where do you learn the language more, in school or the bush?

RK: I learn more when I am in the bush. I feel that we are not learning much in school about the Cree Language or the Cree Culture. When we girls are in the Cree Culture classes, all we do is sew and cook. We only learn easy words in Cree language classes.²

EM: I am asking you this because I know that you do some traditional dancing. When did you start to learn about traditional dancing?

RK: I learned how to do some traditional dancing last summer [1992] when the young people were taught how to dance in the traditional style. I learned it when the others learned how to dance.

EM: Who made your traditional dress?

RK: My mother made it.

EM: Do you like to dance this way?

RK: I started out as a Fancy Shawl dancer but I did not really like it. I do not really seem to like it but I found that it was fun. I was not really happy the way I danced it. Later on, I learned to be a Jingle Dress dancer and I really liked this style of dancing. I was not shy when I danced the Jingle Dress dance like I did with the Fancy Shawl dance. That is what I do now. I am a Jingle Dress Dancer.

EM: What about sewing? What kinds of things can you make?

RK: I love to sew and make things. I see my mother sewing and making things all the time. Right now, I am making my traditional dancer's dress. I want to make it all by myself. It is quite hard for me to do but I am keeping at it. This is the first time I am doing it by myself.

²Trans. note: Rachel may feel this way because her Cree Language learning has advanced far beyond what she could learn in school, mostly because she was brought up on the land and continues to go out on a regular basis.

The other thing that I can do by myself now is make mitts and moccasins. I really love to work on any kind of traditional clothing. When I am not going to school, I do some sewing. I really like doing that. I like to try to make anything that I have not tried before. I try to make new things that I have not learned yet how to do. Sometimes, I try to create my own things or clothing.

EM: What kind of dress are you making now?

RK: The dress is made out of cloth with a lot of ribbons. The ribbons cost me a lot but I still need more than that. The dress is called a Fancy Shawl Dancer dress.

EM: I am asking you this next question because Ruby [Dick] told me that you and she are going to Australia or is it New Zealand?

RK: Australia.

EM: Are you going to take your Jingle Dresses with you?

RK: Yes.

EM: What is the name of the conference you are going to?

RK: Second Indigenous Youth World Conference.

EM: Who are you representing?

RK: I am representing the Youth Council from here and Ruby is representing the Cree School Board.

EM: What do you think? Are you afraid?

RK: I am afraid because I do not know what is going to happen and the place is so far away from here. At the same time, I am very excited about it and I am very anxious to go.

EM: I remember a story your mother told me about you in connection with something she was telling me. I think you might have been 5 or 6 years old. I do not know if you will remember this story. You were in the bush and you were afraid of a crow. She told me that you were afraid of the crow because of a movie you had seen. If you had not seen the movie, you would not have been afraid of the crow. She was trying to tell me that as a native child, you

would not have been afraid of the crow if you had not seen the movie. Can you tell me about that time? How old were you about?

RK: I do not remember how old I was. I must have been 4 or 5 years old. I was very afraid of crows after seeing this movie. I do not know where I saw the movie, here or when we were in the south. In the movie, a crow was killing people. When we were in the bush, I saw a crow fly by. I was very afraid that it might try to kill me, too.

EM: Your mother told me that she heard you screaming while you were playing on the ice. She said you really scared her when she heard you screaming like that.

RK: I was very afraid of crows for a long time. Whenever I saw one while I was outside, I ran inside our dwelling. I was very afraid of the crows.

EM: But other animals - you are not afraid of them?

RK: No, I am not afraid of them. The only other animal I am afraid of is a mouse. I do not know why I am afraid of mice. I was not afraid of them when I was younger but since I have grown older, I am very afraid of mice.

I remember once my grandfather telling me about some animals that are dangerous. I have never seen these animals myself. One of the animals he told me about was an animal that is rarely seen which we call *pakuuchiskw*. He said that this animal was dangerous and can kill someone if it was hungry. The other animal was...What was the name other of the animal? He told me that animal had a sharp beak. It was a bird. He told me that the bird has a sharp beak. He said that this bird once flew towards some Inuit while they were traveling. The bird punctured a hole in the Inuk's sealskin coat even though the sealskin is a tough hide. That is how bad this bird is when it is hungry. I do not remember the name of the bird. I do not remember what he called it.

EM: Is it a bird that is common or is only seen sometimes?

RK: It can be seen from time to time. I heard one time about one that was killed. Someone in another camp killed it while we were in the bush this fall. I do not know what it is called.

EM: You can tell me later on when you remember it. Was it a bird with claws like a falcon?

RK: No. I do not remember him saying it was a bird with claws. All I remember him saying about the bird was that it had a very long and sharp beak.

EM: You can tell about anything you want now. You can tell me about anything that they taught you.

RK: As I have told you before, my grandfather told us that we were to share anything that we bring into the house, especially food. We are not supposed to keep anything just for ourselves. We are not to be miserly. We are to share food with others in the house. We are to respect each other and show respect to each other. I do not know what else to say.

EM: Can you talk about the trip you took this summer. What did you learn and what did you see? Talk about, generally, the whole trip.

RK: Australia? We first went to Montreal. I was not there when everyone met there. I was not there when the others were briefed about the trip. We had a few problems. Our visas were not ready. I do not know what happened. During the night of the morning that we were supposed to leave Montreal, some people drove to Ottawa to get our visas. Our visas were processed again. They left late at night. We were on a tight schedule. When we left, finally, I was afraid that we might get stuck somewhere. I was afraid that we might get lost and I would lose my fellow travellers. We landed near New York but it was not in New York. That is where we first landed. Half of the my fellow travellers took a plane to San Francisco and the others went to Los Angeles. I went with the group that went to Los Angeles and Ruby went with the group that went to San Francisco. That is where they went. We finally joined up in Honolulu. We flew for a long time to get there, across the ocean. We waited for them in Honolulu. We all finally got together. We took a plane together to Sidney, Australia. We stayed there for a while and then we flew to Darwin [Australia]. That is where we stayed. When we got off the plane, it was very hot. When we got in the bus that came to get us, it was like going inside a stove. It was awfully hot.

EM: How many of you there altogether?

RK: I do not know. There were many of us. There were youth delegates from the nine Cree communities. Some communities sent two or three delegates. There were two of us from here and some were alone.

EM: What was the name of the meeting you attended?

RK: Second World Indigenous Youth Conference.

We were taken to the hotel. We were very well taken care of. They brought us towels and juice when we got there. We were taken to the place we would sleep. Everything was strange to us. Everything was very different and new to us. When we were there, they told us that it was their winter over there but we were very hot.

I was very happy once I got there. I was happy to see how other people lived and their ways. I was amazed at everything. It was exciting to be there and learn new things. During the conference, other youth from different countries spoke about how things were going for them in their countries. I was very amazed at their stories.

EM: What were some of the things they were talking about? Give me some examples. What things did you not know before that they talked about?

RK: I did not know that the white people were very disrespectful to them, too. The white people in their countries held them in disgust and were very mean to them. They also have problems with alcohol - like how it affects us.

EM: How many days were you there?

RK: I do not know. I think it was ten days or nine days.

EM: What did you do during the day? What kinds of things were you shown?

RK: The conference was being conducted during the day. In the evenings, different events were going on. Some of the events were talent shows. We were asked to dance, too. I was very excited. The people liked our dancing, the native youths from Canada. I have never been photographed that much in all my life.

EM: Did you take your Jingle dress with you?

RK: Yes. We all had Jingle Dresses.

EM: You danced in these dresses?

RK: Yes. Other youths had their hide clothing on.

EM: Did you dance the Jingle Dress Dances?

RK: The others danced, too. One of the guys who danced was Glen Cooper. He used to lead the dances when we danced. We were only supposed to dance only once but they kept asking us to dance again and again during the

evenings. We were part of the entertainment. The people there and the delegates liked our dancing and wanted to learn to dance like us. We taught them as much as we could.

EM: What did you think of the Aboriginal people from there?

RK: I liked them. I really liked it there because everyone was very nice and kind to us. No one showed any disrespect to anyone. Most people just came up to us and spoke to us. We did the same in return.

EM: Did you find the people different?

RK: I did not feel they were different from us. We could relate to them even though they lived differently from us [due to environment].

EM: What did you eat over there that seemed strange to you?

RK: I could hardly eat over there. Everything tasted different. Whenever we ate meat, we could not eat much because we were thinking that maybe we are eating kangaroo meat. We could not eat the meat.

EM: But did you eat any kangaroo meat?

RK: I do not really know. One time the boys told us that we were eating kangaroo meat. I think they were just teasing us but we felt queasy after that.

One day, we were driven to a river where there were crocodiles. Some people were sitting inside the boat where there were windows and others on top of the boat. We all watched the crocodiles from these places. We were very scared. When the operators held some meat on a stick over the river, the crocodiles jumped for the meat. They startled us.

We were also driven to where there were high mountains. It was very beautiful. We were shown where the ancestors of the Aboriginal Australians lived. There was a place where there were rock paintings. They also had placed flat rocks like tables. That is what we were shown, where the people lived long time ago. It was beautiful. There were huge rocks where they had lived.

EM: Were they caves?

RK: Yes. The places were like caves.

EM: Were you taken to Ayers Rock?

RK: I do not know. We were also shown where the movie "Crocodile Dundee" was made. We were shown where it was shot. During that trip we were told that there were bats at night where we were. We travelled in a big bus. When stopped, there was a bat splattered on the front of the bus. It must have flown right into the bus window.

I liked it there and at the same time, I was anxious to be on familiar ground. Everything was new to me there.

EM: Do you have any contact with anyone that you met there?

RK: We met a boy there. We [Ruby and Rachel] call him sometimes. It is hard for us to call because we do not really know what time it is over there when we have time to call him. He lives in Australia.

EM: Where were the other youths from?

RK: They were from different places - all over the place. There were Inuit youth from all over and some native youth from South America.

The Elder from Chisasibi who came with us, Robbie Matthew, predicted that the Fourth Youth Indigenous Conference will have great results. A lot will come of it and people will really help each other by attending it. That is what he said.

EM: When will the next meeting be?

RK: A decision was made on the last day of the meeting when the next meeting will be and how often they should be. Some of the people suggested that these World Youth meetings be held every two years. But James Shecapio and Glen Cooper were the ones who were talking most of the time from our [Cree] group and did not agree with that. There were many people who wanted the meetings to take place every two years. Glen and James were not for that. The others argued for the meetings to be held every two years and they won. In the end, the decision was that these meetings will be held every two years.

EM: What were their reasons for asking that the meetings be held every year instead of every two years?

RK: Their main reason was to keep the dialogue open and flowing and to maintain each other's assistance on a year to year basis. Next year, the meeting will be where it is very hot, South America. I think the name of the country is Ecuador.

EM: Then you came back to Canada?

RK: Yes. I dreaded the journey home because it is a long journey by air and yet, I was anxious to come home again. I felt better when we reached the United States. We all felt we were already home [home continent].

EM: Where did you land?

RK: On the way back, we did not travel back together after landing in Hawaii. My group landed in San Francisco. I do not know how many hours we were in San Francisco. After that, we landed near New York City. Then we flew to Montreal. It was morning. Some people went home from there. Ruby and I, the elders, and the youth from Wemindji and from Chisasibi had to spend the night in Montreal before we all came home.

EM: How did you feel when you landed in Whapmagoostui?

RK: I was very happy! I was very tired. The day we came home, there was a wedding and we were both bridesmaids. It must have been twelve o'clock when when we came back. I did not have time to freshen up when they came to get me, saying, "your fellow bridesmaids are dressing now." I was very tired but I went anyway. The wedding was at two o'clock that day.

It really hit me when the dance started - I was almost falling asleep then. It must have been two o'clock am when I went home to sleep. I did not awaken from my sleep the whole time I was asleep. I woke up and got up at six o'clock in the evening. It was in July when all this took place.

RK: I do not know if I have it recorded but you told me that when our grandfather was sick while you were in the bush, you had the idea to be a medic who flies helicopters and to help people in need who are in the bush?

RK: I still think that is what I want to do. I want to fly a helicopter and learn about medicine. When the people are in the bush, they are sick but sometimes they can not be helped because there are no planes to get to them or that any help going to them is not easily accessible. The idea came to me when my grandfather was still alive when he would get sick as he grew older while living in the bush. My grandmother is the same way now. She seems to get sick often as she grows older while she is living in the bush. That is how I got the idea to try for it. When my grandparents got sick, I used to wish that something like that was available here in Whapmagoostui. I also wished that I could learn to do both things for the Iyiyuu of Whapmagoostui. I always hear that when the people in the bush are sick, there is not much anyone can do. Sometimes, I know that some people are angry at the nurses

for not doing much to help them or at least ease their worries. The nurses do not help much by telling people what to do through the radio. It is only when it is an emergency that they move to do something. I do not know why I like to fly planes. Maybe because my mother had told me that my father was learning to be a pilot when they met but did not stay together. I do not know if he is a pilot now or what.

EM: If you compare yourself to the girls your age who have been in town, do you notice that you know more things than them since you have learned both ways of learning, the cultural [traditional] and the formal way?

RK: I find that some of the girls who have not learned both ways tend to be kind of lazy. I feel that they seem to be lazy by the way they do things.

As for my formal education, I feel that I am getting weaker in it. I do not do as well as I should. I am not very interested in it. It bores me.

EM: What do you think is the problem?

RK: I don't know. I guess I am not very interested in it. It doesn't really interest me much. I am really anxious to finish high school. But it seems that my grades are going down. Last year, I did not pay much attention to my schooling. I was busy at other things. I do not know how I am this year. This year, I feel it is interesting. It interests me more. My classmates of last year are not the same as they were last year. They were talking mostly and some did not seem to like each other. This year, it is not the same. There are few of us in the class. The boys and the girls treat each other equally this year. The boys talk to us like friends and they are not shy with us. They talk to us and are not shy with us. We help each other more this year at things. I like my classmates this year. There is humour. The boys are always trying to make us laugh in a good way. Sometimes, when I am at school, I do not like it when something else worries me or that I am thinking about something else other than school. I feel happier when we are all there in our class. It feels different when they are not there. They make us laugh when they are there, the boys.

EM: Are you still working at the Northern Store?

RK: Yes.

EM: How old were you when started working there after school and on weekends?

RK: I was fifteen. I work different hours. I start work at nine o'clock on Saturdays.

EM: What kind of sports do you play?

RK: Basketball. So, I am quite busy outside of school, too.

EM: What are your plans after you finish high school?

RK: I would like to go inland for a while, be out on the land after I have completed my secondary V [last year of high school] this year. I will see what happens. I was thinking I should go to CEGEP right away after secondary five. Ruby asked me to wait for her. We would have an apartment together doing our collegial studies.

EM: So, are you still thinking about being an helicopter pilot?

RK: Yes.

EM: Is there something you would like to talk about?

RK: No.

EM: The last thing I would like to ask you is this...I feel that you are torn between...No, you are not. Is it that you would like to spend some time out on the land before you go off to pursue your career, your schooling, continue on?

RK: Yes. I would like to be out on the land.

EM: Okay, you want to be out on the land for a while and then you will to college.

I have the impression that you are always busy doing things because you were brought up on the land. Were you taught not to be idle as you were growing up?

RK: Yes. We were not allowed just to hang around or sit around. We used to be told, "do not just sit around, there is so much work to be done" or "do not just lay around." We would also be woken up early in the morning.

EM: Were you told why you had to do this?

RK: We were told that we were supposed to go to bed when the sun goes down and get up as the sun was coming up. You should not be laying down for long after the sun has come up. That is what we were told.

EM: Were you told why this was?

RK: We were told that the day was the right time to do work and the night was the time to rest from the work. That is what we were told.

EM: Do you think that if you were not brought up in the bush, you might not have these values and be sort of lazy like some of your friends?

RK: Yes. When we were taking a school trip out on the land this year, some of the students did not really want to do much of anything. I was guilty of that, too, at times, because I was tired. But some worked really hard and others almost could not be budged to do much. When we were making the dwelling bigger, some of the girls just stayed there inside the dwelling while we made it bigger [by widening the poles out and adding new ones and spreading the floor out further all around and putting new boughs on it]. They were just lying around. When I saw them doing that, I did not feel interested in doing all the work. I also thought that they would make fun of me if I worked hard. Some of them were always criticizing us and others. I did not like it when they did that.

EM: You can say that you had a good upbringing out on the land from the time you were a year old to about nine years old.

RK: Yes.

EM: When you have your own children, would like for them to have the same experience as you did when living out on the land?

RK: Yes. At that time, when I was growing up, I was not anxious to get back into town. But now that I am getting older, when I am out on the land, there are times that I am anxious to get back to town. I guess it is because I am spending most of my time here now and that I like to have fun with my friends and the town life at my age. I guess that is one reason. I was not like that when I was young. I only missed my mother sometimes when she was not with us when I lived with my grandparents out on the land. I was anxious to see my mother but other than that I was not anxious to get back here. The other thing I was not anxious to get here was because some of the kids made fun of me and teased me. I did not really liked being here.

EM: Why were they like that to you?

RK: I do not know?

THE FUTURE

EM: Do you think that your own children would be able to learn the things you learned out on the land?

RK: Yes. I would like them to know what I know and have the happiness I had when I was out on the land. It was a happy experience for me. It is very pure out there. There is no noise after you go to bed, only the sounds of nature. Here, the telephone can wake you from your sleep. I want them to be healthy and learn to survive off the land. I do not really know how to say it but I want to live off of nature, something like that.

EM: You want this for your unborn children but at the same time do you think it is in jeopardy because of the hydro-electric project? What do you think about that?

RK: Sometimes, I wonder about it. I wonder what will happen to us and our future children if this hydro-electric project goes ahead. The land out there is very beautiful. What will happen to the animals? Are they all going to drown and die because they are losing their homes? When most of the animals has been destroyed, our children will not have enough land to learn from and learn about the animals. Our future childrens' education out on the land will have been destroyed.

EM: What is your stand with this project?

RK: I am very anxious and unhappy about it. That is where we used to stay when I was young. That is where our ancestors used to live. When we were out on the land, my grandparents showed me where they used to live and where their parents used to live. They showed me the travel routes of our ancestors and where they are buried out on the land. When I see these places when we are out on the land, I remember these things that I have been taught. I am afraid when I think about the flooding of the land that I will have nothing to remember our ancestors by and things that I was taught by. I will have nothing visible to help me remember what I have been taught. I will have nothing to see to remind of the things I was taught and where our ancestors are. There are many places out there [in the region of the proposed flooding of the land] that my grandmother showed me and told me about events that took place there when they were there before I came along. Each time I see these places that she showed me around and in IPISIKIMIS [Lake Bienville], I remember the things she told me about. She would tell me what they did when they were there at time over the years. When I see the places again, I remember what she told me and I can imagine them being there and doing these things. Sometimes, I wish that I had been there with them. I wanted to see them doing these things. I am really going to be unhappy when I can

no longer gaze upon these places and remember them and our ancestors. I think of the time when my grandmother will no longer be with me and how much greater my loss will be if the places where I had seen her are no longer visible because these areas will be under water. My memory of her will not be clear if I can not see these areas and places where we were together to remind of our time together there. Much more than this, I won't be able to show my children these places and pass on the memory and teachings of my grandmother.

EM: I would like to thank you very much.

RK: You're welcome.

CHAPTER SIX CONCLUDING REMARKS

I feel both pride and apprehension when I think about how much these three women shared with me and, through this document, with generations to come. Why apprehension? Because all of this is threatened unless we, the Iyiyuu of Whapmagoostui, do something to retain our way of life. I believe that we can do this even as our world and daily lives change around us. At the same time, I feel pride because I am a descendent of the people who live on the land and I, with my knowledge, language and skills, am a testimony to their success.

I know that Suzanne Kawapit lived a life that can no longer be duplicated. She was born and raised and lived most of her adult life during a time when the Iyiyuuch had to rely on their own power and skills to ensure their survival. It is all the more fortunate that she has shared her life story with us since there remains the threat of erasing her - and my - ancestral home.

Suzanne Kawapit is truly the last of her kind and a spokesperson for an entire generation. She is a woman who worked extremely hard to raise her family. Her story, told so matter of factly, is the story of strength and perseverance. It is not just the story of a woman who lived on the land, but of life on the land - with all of its difficulties and all of its joys.

Agnes Kawapit's life story symbolizes the transition process. Her stories reveal the changing life circumstances of those women who are now in their thirties and forties. Agnes experienced hospitalization, residential school, an absence of more than three years from her parents and then a sudden return to her family and to life on the land - all before she was nine years of age. Agnes Kawapit has learned

to successfully balance a multifaceted and at times discordant life, in part, because of her upbringing on the land during many of her formative years.

Through the interviews with Rachel Kawapit, we see that she has the qualities of a youth who has been brought up with some of the most fundamental Iyiyuu teachings, passed along to her by her mother and grandmother. I believe that Rachel will pass these qualities - many of which were conveyed to her while living on the land - to the next generation. She will grow up facing many challenges but with the legacy of her past.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE *ROYAL COMMISSION ON ABORIGINAL PEOPLES*

The recommendations that I offer to the RCAP stem both from my long term involvement in the recording of peoples' life histories and stories as well as from my concerns as an educator and now principal (since 1993) of the Badabin Eeyou School in Whapmagoostui.

The Cree School Board has begun to institute a programme of Cree language education in our communities' schools. In Whapmagoostui, for example, we now have Cree as the second language of instruction in the pre-k, kindergarden, and grades one to three levels. All of the (Cree) teachers and trainees are currently upgrading their oral and written skills in order to enhance this programme. Given that I am one of their instructors, I am keenly aware of the lack of oral and written materials available to these teachers looking for ways to expand their language base and writing proficiency. Collections of stories and legends are extremely useful not

just for their content but for the language. The oral to written Cree transcription process however is onerous and devastatingly slow given that there are so few of us adept at shifting from the oral to the syllabic form of the language. Part of the problem is that we have virtually no Cree language texts. These life histories, however, in either their original taped version or written in English, provide us with a basis from which we can eventually develop a small Cree library of local history and language. I know that one of the best places to keep the language alive - aside from the home and the bush - is in the schools. It is in the language as well as the stories such as those found in this document that one finds a pathway to our value system, spiritual beliefs and philosophy. It is for that reason that I feel that it is so important to retain the language of these histories and stories in the original Cree both in the oral as well as in the written, syllabic form.¹

Finally, I would like once again to thank everyone who made this life histories project possible and especially the Kawapit women for so candidly sharing their life experiences.

¹There is no question that this document should have been produced in both Cree syllabics as well as English. Proficiency in written Cree is growing and will only grow further once there are more stories available to read. However, the time and financial constraints of producing such a document were prohibitive for this project.

GLOSSARY

Achikunipiy Seal Lakes

Achistu west

Achistu a iskwaayaaukaach western face of the mountain

Achistu a uniskwaauwaayaach west end of the lake

Aischikw name given to a type of heavy stone (pipe) pot

Akipitanuch summer portage

Akischawaapichinanuch winter walk over land with toboggan

Akuh cha kichaskuuman "I will sing a dancing song"

Akut cha tikwaakipiikw "we will wait the freeze-up right here"

Akupitich mouth of the river

Aminawaatimuuch peninsula

Anaaukach highest, jugged part of mountain

Anatwaapaschiushich calm spot on the water near a current

Anatwaayaach large calm region of water near current

Anaukitaukasiich highest point of a hill

Anayach point (geog.)

Anta astitakam pach ut takakapuuch mistikuch "at the place near the shore of a lake there is a grove of short trees"

Aputaanh special, selected parts of the caribou that are always brought back with the hunter after a kill

Asaachiuch source of the river

Asachiiuch source of a lake

Asiipawaayaich straight

Astitaau side that faces the sun

Astitakam place name (lit. "where the sun shines on the lake")

Astitayaauuch mountain side facing the sun (south side)

Atikischawaayan person portaging in the summer

Atikwaatiwaapiich one river joins another

Atiwaachiun cove

Auchaau shaded side (away from the sun)

Aukikam place name (lit. "shady side of the lake")

Aukitinaach north face of the mountain

Ausawaauwiiyiyuu (*Ausawaauwiyiyuuch*, pl.) Montagnais/Naskapi Cree; Innu

Awaasapus feast held at the birth of a child

Cha chi pipaumiichimat "contact animal spirit to give some food to us"

Chichiwatin wind direction; (wind from the north lake)

Chiichiiuchans legend/myth

Chi kusapitan he conducted a shaking tent ceremony

Chinusaau pike

Chinusasiukipitakin place name; portage location

Chisasibiwiyyuu Chisasibi Cree

Chisasipistuk Chisasibi water way

Ikwaawaanipishuih pole laid horizontally over fire for smoking/drying meat

Ipisatikus young caribou, approx. one year old

Ipisikimis Lac Bienville

Ipwaanaskuh cooking stick; stick used to cook meat either over or beside fire

Isini-Amisinuut(h) place name, portage

Isiniuspwaakin stone pipe

Itikus caribou younger than one year

Itus a feared (mythical) being that is believed to eat human flesh

Iyyuu (*Iyyuuch*, pl) Cree person, person, living person

Iyyuumiichim Cree/bush/traditional food

Iykwatwaastinu water before a set of waterfalls

Kakuh porcupine

Kapimiiwich matches with oil

Ka usikut injured something in one's body

Ka utitauniyoch "that was our homeland/territory"

Kawaakuwiiyu place name

Kichaskuum increase the tempo and intensity of drumming

Kipitakin portage

Kipituunch east end of the lake (wind directions)

KiskischatukW dried wood that crumbles to powder if broken up

Kukimaau large lake trout

Kusapichikin shaking tent

Maach-kipita(a)kin place name; portage location

Maasimakus Pischistwaakinch place name (lit. "good place for net fishing")

Mamiich down river

Masimakusich Atach place name

Matawaausipis place name, stream

Matis flint

Minawaan place name

Minawaanis place name

Minisaakw small rock islands

Ministuk large rock islands

Mischaakw swamp (*mischaakush*, small swamp or bog)

Mistaapau spirit being/intermediary communicated with in "shaking tent"

Mistiwaatin Mr. Walton; Anglican missionary who had a profound effect on the Cree of this region.

Mituchisan sweat lodge (can be of different sizes)

Mitukwaau female water spirit
Musuunch Moosonee/Moose Factory, Ontario

Naanasiusakiikin place name; lake (lit. "where Naanas was buried")
Naasch a chi miywaawaapiich "a drumbeat that sounds good enough to dance to"
Nichikuniwiiyiyuu Cree from an inland post (Nichikun) that was located between Chisasibi and Mistissini (s. of Whapmagoostui)
Nisikus cross-aunt
Nistuuchiun place name (lit. "where the rivers meet")
Ntimiich up river
Ntukin spear stick/harpoon
Nuchimiyuwaskaikin Fort McKenzie
Nusatikuuch female caribou
Nusims grandchild
Nuhtaasin near starvation, cannot function and will die if not helped
Nuwitapiin "I am on fire"

Ochimau boss; trading post manager

Paputatin high falls name
Paputatiniukipitankin portage site to cross the *paputatin* (falls)
Pichipiuyan feather filled blanket/duvet
piichipikwaan gunpowder container
Piitah "bring in the chopped wood"
Pikwaapachinikinatuk stick attached to cord used as marker (in harpooning)
Pinuu a type of male caribou
Pimitaskustakin the stick that goes across the tent flap
Pitapimakus one or two year old whales
Puschinaau tree marker on a lake or river
Pwaat (*Pwaatich*, pl.) any unknown human presence, treated with caution

Saputiwaan large Cree dwelling with entrances at either end
Sasapimakwaan *anistukW* stream located on the south side of the mouth of Great Whale River
Sikumin fish mixed with berries
Sikutaau bakeapple berries
Siputanh "close the entrance flap of the tent/tipi"
Susaskuun "I see a patch on the lake"

Tipinukamikunch sheltered side of the lake
Twaakuchiunch water just below the falls

Uchakitiku constellation, possibly the big dipper

- Ushaashuwii* dense snow
Uspwaakinsini stone with which to make pipe bowl
Uspwaakinsiniuschiikw aastach place name (lit. "place (island) where the type of stone to make stone pipes is found")
Utitikumaau trail made by many caribou
- Waapinutaach a naaukaach* east face of the mountain
Waapinutaach a uniskwaaawaayaach east end of the lake
Waapinutaskwaa East coast/Montagnais woman
Waapinutawiiyiyuu Montagnais
Waapistan marten
Waapmakustus Little Whale River
Waapush rabbit
Waasau Labrador coast; point or peninsula
Waasawiiyiyuu Innu
Waaspisuyan Cree style infant bunting bag
Wamistikusiskwaa non-Cree ("white") woman
Wamistikusu Refers to non-Cree, non-Native, "white man" (English speaking person)
Wamistikusiumiichim "whiteman's" food
Wapinutach east (to the back of the west; where the sun rises)
Wapinutach a Waakwaakimaach northern end of the lake
Wapinutawiiyiyuuch Cree from the east; Labrador; Innu
Waskaikanisiiwiiyiyuu Washkaganish Cree
Waskaikin any constructed dwelling; can refer to e.g. trading post or house.
Whapmagoostu Great Whale
Whapmagoostusibi Great Whale River
Whapmagoostuwiiyiyuu Great Whale Cree
Wiiaskuuch male caribou during mating season
Wiich dwelling
Wiimin red ochre
Wiiywaapiskuchiy Quartz Mountain
Wiiywaapiskw White and red quartz
Wiiyaskimiy Clearwater Lake
Wiminipis place name; lake
Wiminipisiukipitankin place to portage after travelling on Wiminipis
Wisakupisium caribou mating month/October
Wischisk low lying trees
Wisiichipikwh Labrador tea
Wiskichanchiwaap flat top winter bush dwelling
Wiskichans Canada jay
Wiskuuch when the caribou loses its velvety antler covering
- Yaachisaakw a Sachiuch* the source of the lake named *Yaachisaakw*