

Title: 0017-Our Voices-Competition and Pride
Bird Number: 513
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Part 1:

1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10. This is January 3 1992. My name is Louis Bird and I want to do this recording to mention a few things about this New Year. Personally, before the New Year came, I had every intention of staying sober, staying away all the troubles that usually cost by the alcohol and the effect of using it. I had truly wished that there would be no such thing in my home, but unfortunately did not turn out that way. I guess I did not make it strong enough to my family that I mean what I mean. Then it didn't work. And therefore as a result, once again I have spent Christmas with half a mind and half a, unstable mind, due to alcohol, to the drinking. And this is what happened. On New Years day what turns out to be a good hope and good event, turns out to be ugly. Which led us to our house and cost us lot of grief and madness and everything. Which later on bring us to the sad end and sadness and filled with hate and anger. And that's the thing I want to avoid mostly. But it came, unfortunately, it came right back to me, even though I had good wishes. That's personal story. That's the beginning of 1992 and my family.

And now just because I can't speak to anyone else but my recording, I want to state my personal opinions, my feelings, my happy moments, my griefs, my sorrows, my sentimental feelings and mostly my longings. Because of my age, I hate to be this way. My problem didn't start this last week during the Christmas season. It didn't start there. My problem that I carry have been with me a long time, a long time before I ever get married. In fact, my problem is almost with me all the time ever since I remember. Therefore this problem I carry, its not, it's nothing new really, it's tiresome. When I hope each, each time when the problem rises with me, or hits me, I always wish to be the last. I always hope for the best. And always hope for the best doesn't last very long and it doesn't last long enough. I realize it is my making, or some problem comes to me, or something in disguise in good will or in good intention turns out to be the very worse. And usually I get sucked in very easily. I have no resistance to those kinds of things, because I am human, just like the anyone else.

A long time ago I have noticed something which is very ugly which caused me to try to resist of something that caused these kinds of problems. And this was pride. The pride of every individual, or the pride of the family, or the pride of, heritage pride. I can only describe it that way. And these things started long time ago. It didn't start in my lifetime. It started maybe three generations around my family, and it carries on. And that is what I

don't like to see. I don't mind to inherit the good part of our families and our fathers, but I don't like to carry, or to inherit the bad side of our ancestors. And that is with us. But most of the problem we have, in our family or in our community was generated long time ago.

It was with our ancestors on their behavior as a human behavior. And it was this behavior that was modified when the European came in. When they took an opportunity to use this behavior of our ancestors for their benefit. Which I mean to say, because our first nation had pride of the individual, individually, and individual family. And usually had a very strict competition amongst them. Which doesn't mean they hate each other, but they had inherit the competitiveness amongst them. When the European came in they recognized the competitiveness amongst the native, and they turn it again them. And was happened in nineteen, in between 1600 and it carries on to 1950. And during that time, during 275 years, our generation of ancestors carried this competitiveness against each other, just to get the pride and prestige in front of the eyes of the European. And this is where this thing came from. Ever since then, this insurgence, or, making the native take this sort of part they do each other, from the white man inspiration have done a great damage to our family unit, or our community, or even a territorial group of native people in James Bay and Hudson Bay. And this is what I mean. This problem came from far away and not near. And this is what we carry today. That monstrosity which was created by the European, it's carried on today, pride, family pride or individual pride. And now it even comes to the word it's called heroism and heroism which has been adopted by the European by our ancestors. And this is what we have. And that, in the beginning, when European came, as soon as they recognized the nature of our forefathers, they have exploited their habit, to turn this competitiveness which was harmless, turn this into a profit-making opportunity. Which our ancestors were innocence of its cost or of an intent.

During the fur-trading period, this was cost our forefathers to do. To behave to one another, just to please the white man, so the white man can give them the prestige. And this is where this kind of problem came from. To my research and my studies about background. You know, when Christianity was open for the conversion to the natives, and so is the Christian teachers use this kind of weakness of our ancestors to submit to each other. The Christian converters used another trick that is very easily adapted by any nation, by this going through first to the young ladies, women, wives to turn their spiritual beliefs of our ancestors. Which is another trick. That's a white man's trick. They did not give, give a chance to the native people to study the religion, to study the Christian. How it does and how it effect on people, and how, what is benefit in it. No, they just forced our forefathers to convert to Christianity. Again, a white man, a trick, a European trick to dominate people. And this is where these things came from. I am sorry to say that I am speaking against the religion, but this is true. This is the way it has been told by us, by our grandfathers, by grandmothers, and all the people who can remember way back how it was done. And no one ever tell this story in front of other people, it's not written down in books. And no man, none of our ancestors were allowed to speaks this way. But I am speaking. Its not because I want to beat the Christian teacher leaders, it's because I want to make other people understand our people, how they became to be. How they became to have the problems they have. But they don't see those, because

nobody shows them, nobody tells them. So they get this way and we carry these burden. We carry these problems along with us into the forth generation. Up into the seventh generation since its beginning. Approximately, six and a half generations ago the fur-trading impact started. Which I had told about the European take our first nations attitudes and their lifestyle in return for their favour. And so since 1918 another system came in, which was Christianity which also used the same method. That is to compete with Indian people, our forefathers or grandmothers to be the best church-goers, to be the best practitioners and to be praised in the church because they do.

And because of those Christian leaders did not speak well in English, I mean, in Cree, or in the native language, usually make a mistake stressing the wrong point and the native people get led away in the wrong way. They understood that if you do believe in something related to the mitewiwin thing, you are pagan, or a heathen. And this is where the Christian leaders were stressing so wrongfully, which they did not understand the culture of the First Nation. And because they could not speak in Cree or native language, they stress the wrong points because they could only say the words. Those are easy to say and therefore our ancestors understood these, they understood that these priests are stressing the points that they understand, but they never say it to them. Very few, very few of my ancestors ever stand up to the priest to ask question or correct the priest for what he says. It only happen at the beginning, when the first missionaries began to cheat because they wanted to know more about the ancestors too and the priest was able because he's in the back of this faith in Christianity, at the back of its power and it's, it's a strong roots back help him to question anyone which already he established there is no questioning to this church that I have. And very seldom did any ancestor or ours stand up to express what he saw was wrong about the church, or the church leaders, not the church itself, not the faith. Not the Christian, not Christ teaching, but the way the church is teaching, or the leaders will make a mistake, or lack of understand of anything they get into. Just to get the, just because they want to make their mission possible, they didn't care if they did it right amongst our people. And for this reason, their instruction was, if you pray, if you pray wisely, and if you pray in front of people, and you do all these things, God will love you. But he didn't say, they never say that you can pray also without people around you, and still you will be listened to. They didn't say that, those priests, the missionaries didn't say that. But the good Lord has said, "Go inside your home and comb your hair, and speak to God directly, your Father." Not in front of people. Because Jesus saw these things when Pharisee were praising in front of people to be seen. And that's why he said it. So he wanted to tell other people so that he could say that you don't have to be seen to be holy. But you can be holy without being seen, as long as your God understand what you are doing. That's what Jesus said, but that is not how it turns out here.

Here in our northern community, even today, the church has been used to fight each other. To dominate someone, or to deprive someone from something. This is how our people use the church. They use the church now for land to gain prestige or to establish prestige and they fight with one another. They condemn one family to the other in order to get this. And this is what's happening in the communities. Not only this community where I am speaking from, but the communities across northern Ontario, or across

country where there's a very minimum population of native communities. Where the Native people did not have the ultimate chance to learn the white man culture. Where fifty percent of the population is uneducated in the white man's world. And this is where it exist, this kind of problem. And I never speak this way before in my life. And I want to, it's not because I want to defend myself, not because I want to make my mistakes excusable. But I want to see the truth that is there, which has never been spoken to openly. And I want to say now in 1992, at the second, at the third day of the beginning of the year. Because I know, these things will come another 362 days during this year. These things will come here in this community, or in another community. And nobody will ever ask why these things happen. And the children will suffer, and the younger children are suffering now. Now each community, those children who don't understand, they suffer because of this.

Everything that comes from the white man, has been turned against to our Native people, our Native people, our being, because of the white man's lifestyle which has come in rapidly upon each Native community. And this is what I am talking about. The problem that I have to today doesn't come from here only. It came from a long time ago and it just carries on. We, the community members wrongly expressed and with minimal white man education, we cannot see those problems. We cannot see what we do to each other. But we only understand how to exploit the avenues where somebody to have a good name or to have a prestige in the community, especially today, when there is money is involved. And therefore our community members are fighting, pushing and skidding around each other and stabbing around the back. All those bad things which white man carries in their own communities are here to stay with us. And usually when this happens only a few people suffer openly, or even blame for those things when these things happen. And sometimes one family, or one person is punished or made as a scapegoat and this is what is happening here in this community. I want to explain those things because know one ever listen to me, know one ever understand what I am talking about. Nobody tries to understand and nobody wants to understand, not even to hear. But here in this recording, I want to put them all here now before it's too late, before I die. Because that's the only escape people can have here, or have a very low, a very low life in community. Escape is the only way.

And I would tell the story that is one of the example that we have in Peawanuck. There is one family who have not joined the community here and are still outside around the community. A woman who has been left, her husband has left her. And because she has reputation of aggressiveness, or another things, she has been outcast. She has never been with the community long, long enough to, to enjoy the fullness of its benefit, if there is any at all. And she and her family and two other brothers are staying out in the bush, just around the community, as if a dog who is picking up scraps up under the table. That's the way she looks like. She has been kicked out once from the community because of their behavior, because they are blamed and easily punished for anything they do. And now they live out there alone and by themselves, never ever to show their face in the community because they have been condemned. That's one example, extreme example that I'm talking about. And nobody seem to talk about this and nobody cares. Even the leaders at that time were punishing those people. The chief chased those people around

and hit them and nobody says anything about this. And that's one family, for example, that I'm talking about.

And there are other smaller families in Peawanuck who are not punished as much, but totally neglected and pushed aside. And there are those that try to join and stand up. If they don't belong to a class of families, they are pushed down. They are supposed to be pushed down under the feet of those who tried to establish the prestige in the community. And this is problem. This is the problem that I am talking about. And it had been here in Peawanuck, and it had been in other communities that I know of, the native communities along James Bay and Hudson Bay. And this is my story. This is what I have in the beginning of a New Year which I wished that we could have erased these problems, if we could just avoid them, if we could just clean these sins of nature, or sins in spiritual life. If we could avoid them, understand them and explain they are there. But no one wants to listen to these things. It's just like shoving a dirty, dirty things under the rug, or mess things, just to cover them now, just today. And hopefully they don't show. But it doesn't happen that way. It happen each time, each month, each week, each year, these ugly things come out in the open again. Again we shove them under. We never do anything to try to straighten them out together, let alone to try it alone. So this is the problem we carry in the community. We experience these things, off and on.

Sometimes it seems the community is beautiful and nice, but these ugly things are under there and they come out once so often. And when they do come out, who is getting hurt. The young children are hurt and the people who want to live peace are hurt. And the people who want to enjoy their life are hurt. And those who want to gain all the possession and prestige enjoyment. And this is what's happening in Peawanuck, I don't have much impression in this community even those it's beautiful from exterior, but we didn't. I understand its blackness and its dirtiness, and everything. But these are the things that I cannot sweep by myself. I do not wish to see them, I do like to sweep them under the dirty rug, yes. But I cannot get rid of them by myself. It has to be an effort of the family, or community effort, in order to do this. But that's impossible also, because it takes, it has take three hundred years to establish them and hundred and fifty of spiritual part. It is hard to erase something that has been existed there for one hundred and fifty years, spiritual part and the material part which has been practiced for three hundred and ninety years. That is not possible to erase within a limited time. It has to begin with the young children to understand these things. It has to begin with the young people to understand, or maybe, we have to kill all the Elders, so the young start, so the people can start young. So they will forget. That's the only solution, is to get rid of the old people who have practiced and passed these dirty things to their children which in turn they carry them on. But this is not possible. This is supposed to be country, where there's free country, where everyone can live peacefully in this land and enjoy the pleasures in life, supposedly. But due to these three hundred year old exploitation are here with us in this Peawanuck. And their effect is carrying on, on and on and nobody seem to understand that you have to stop those things. And that's why I am speaking to this tape, not to anyone, but to this tape. So my, my vision can be heard. My ideas are here. My understanding are here. I understand the problem, but there is nothing I can do.

When I hit, when I get to talk about these things this far, usually when there is one audience, or two audience, usually they just walk away with this, because they don't want to hear this. They know its ugly thing. But like I say, it's like just sweeping the dirt under the rug, or ugly thing and cover with the nice thing on top. But that is not a solution. The solution is to dig into the rug and bring out the dirtiness and ugly stuff and try to get rid of it. But it has to take a long time, but it has to begin somewhere, otherwise we will carry it forever. We, the First Nation, will have covered or submit so easily to this ugliness. Should be somebody who is honest enough, some group, or some families, or actually sit down together and see these things and talk these things together. And then try to clean these dirty things away. And then we can start a fresh. We can start a fresh. We cannot turn back. But we will have to at least start with freshness and without any dirt under the rug. That's my hope, if it's possible at all. But this is impossibility. We cannot do this unless we are very honest with each other. We can't do this unless we look back and see every detail where these things came from and why they exist there. It's just like sweeping the house that has many, many, many unfinished businesses. You cannot just throw them away. You cannot just pile them and cover them somewhere. You must make an effort to clean them and then sweep the floor house. That's the only time the freshness can be in the house. So it's the community, so its people's mind and body and spirit. These things all have to be cleaned within and out and then the fresh start can begin. That's my opinion. And now it seems that nobody wants to listen what I say. I say it here. And whoever listen to this recording will have a treasure of knowledge, or at least an example of some community. And I do not dedicate this recording to anyone. I am just recording and that's it. If anybody found these recording, you would know what the Winisk people, Winisk people are and what Peawanuck community is. Winisk is one of the most nice-looking community, and it has everything. It has what any white man likes to have in his community. It has all the supplies, except that there is no oil heating. If that was here then this place would be heaven. But in this heaven, as compared to other places, but within, the people within are not as happy as it is. They are not as good as house look like. The people within it are not as pure as it looks like outside their house, or the community. The wilderness around it is clean, has been clean for many thousands of years. The trees, the nature around even muskeg, it's clean, and it's refreshing. But within the community of Peawanuck, there is a bad and sin and evil in it, what wants to come out once in a while. And it doesn't come out yet and it can't be swept away yet until somebody else understand what I am talking about. And it's very hard for people to understand this. It's hard for somebody to understand when you're alone, when there's no one else that want to understand. And this community is very dirty inside, but it is very nice outside. I cannot yet for the life of God, cannot condemn this community because of the... a patience-ness that exist if there is any God at all, or any person who believe in God. If a human can be strong enough to have patience and still understand these ugly things, God knows how this man or someone can live here. I cannot. I simply cannot live here now. I think at this moment, when I'm speaking. But maybe something else give me a comfort to stay, something maybe. I believe it's not a person who will comfort me, but something will. Probably the wilderness itself will give me a comfort where I could not find it within the community or a people. It's very hard to find comfort from anyone in this community, especially when you are getting old. You can't reach to anyone to give you comfort and you cannot reach comfort from the young people who do

not understand your problem even though they try to do their best. The only comforting that I can have in this community is when I look at the very young children who are so innocent who like to laugh in front of me and like to play out, out around me. These are the most innocent and comforting beings that I can only find. Any others, there's no such thing. And now, that is the part of, that is, that summary of my feeling about the community and about life itself.

As I speaks today, as I speak today in this recording, it is the third day of first, the first week of January, 1992. A very good promise of that. But the promise of happiness this year, looks very bleak to me. Where do I turn? What do I do? I have been advised from my family to stick it out and to wait for the better days, or to forget. I'd been advised also to smash things, but not necessarily advised, but the subject came up. I have thought of it myself. Will the force work? No. The force is not going to work. The force will just distract and multiply. But where is, where is the solution? What effort shall be begin, if any at all? If one person have to want to do this, it's impossible. The only thing that may work is to educate the public, to educate our people to understand, to recognize this. But every time when you each get your person, when you tell something, he takes and turn it around your, your instruction, or your information. I find this out. It has happened to me many times. I have tried to educate my people - the older than I am and the younger than I am. They turn these things for their benefit only. But they put aside. They shove me aside and make me to be ignored and use the things that I have teach them, that I have shown them and they continue to do. They still do today. They don't take things that I tell them, public education, they don't take that as a thanks or some kind of a gratitude. But they would rather condemn the person who gave it to them, and take it for their own. And this is one of the ugly things that we have amongst the people of Peawanuck. Not only in Peawanuck, it came from Winisk long time ago, the old settlement. It came from there three hundred and nine years ago. And spiritually it had started in 1834. It started there, the spiritual value, it started to change.

I am historian. I do my research very well. Through the Elders that I speak, through the people I spoke to themselves, the natives, not the white man. But I also studied the white man history. So the history of the white man gives me the date. But the history of the Native person, it came directly from the mouth of the Elders and the mouth of, my age group who have listened to their mothers and grandmothers, from the stories way back, reaching as far as two hundred and seventy-five years ago, if we count the date. If we can pinpoint the date through the white man's history. And these are the kind of, the history I do, when I say I do research. I do not write those things down as the white man does. I put them in my mind and I keep them there. And when I want to record them, they come easily. I write very little. I don't write as a writer. But I tell stories as it is. And I don't make the stories. And that what I want to say about the fault that we have in Peawanuck. It came from three hundred and ninety years ago, part of it. And then, one hundred and fifty or so years ago in a spiritual part. Which has been, was changed from that time.

The true Native spiritual value was there, a long time, before white man came. But the spiritual value of our ancestors have, it was individual spiritual value, not the church. Everybody has his own ways of believing spiritual God, whatever they call it. There was

no church. The church means to having one belief by a group of people. That doesn't mean a church with a wooden block or stones piled together. That's not the church. The church is mean, as I was told by the Bishop, is that when people, or a group of people, or a community believe one faith, one god, this is a faith, this is a church. The church is people put together to act as one. To help each other in spiritual, life. And that's the church, to my understanding, to the explanation of the experts and theologians for the Christianity.

But me, I tell you before the Christianity became to exist in this community, or around the Hudson Bay area, there was a spiritual practice and belief that were practiced by our grandfathers or our great-grandfathers and on and on. They have this by individual, by one person, a pain by living in the wilderness not by living in a community. All these spiritual beliefs and value and beliefs and practices by individual came with the life living in the wilderness. And also give them more knowledge and more to live in harmony with nature. And each person has his own belief, definitely. Maybe if you put altogether those people who have a strong religious belief they will be, they may had in if you, one person can look at all of them together, they could be a common way of believing something. Which I believe it is. It's related to material things, like in the wilderness and through God, to the God, or from God through the wilderness and all that. This is way it seems to have worked what our grandfathers have used. And that was destroyed, that was destroyed when the Christianity was preached to them. But for fifty or seventy-five years they held on to it. It was something major what they call, they went underground. They keep believing what they believe. They keep practicing it in the wilderness when they go into the bush. Only when they come to the community do they join the Christianity in the church.

I have seen three old people in my life who believe those things and sometimes even saw them they practice still. But still, they use the Christian prayer books and prayer songs each day, but during the night they practice these, the old practices. So there are some Elders who are living, who believe those things, or have heard it so much when they were young. But nobody is now in the generation is willing to learn or even to wish to learn and none of the Elders are wish to tell their children about these things. To my opinion, it's not even worth to consider, because as we are today we have left that kind of life a long time ago. We have left the ancestor's life and lifestyle and their culture long time ago. At least thirty years ago for the Winisk people and God know how long ago for the rest of Canada. But we left the spiritual individuals, spiritual practices one hundred and fifty years ago by a common numbers of people in the territory. But now there is nothing, but the effect of those changes are with us, the ugliness of those changes is still with us and there is nothing that we can do to erase it, or even to eliminate. And this is a sadist thing and this is what makes community so terrible it, it's explosive tension is there. You can almost see the tension at times. And at times when you want to see people having a social activity, there is always that clenching of teeth, always ready to explode, and that's the problem. How do you bring people together on a spirit without these clenching of teeth? And a fist under, and a knife under, knife somebody's back. That is ugly thing I'm talking about. And these things have to come out and make it bare and open so everybody to see, so we know how to a results with them. How to make amends with

them. How to find solutions for those ugly things. How to explain to children why they are there. So they can understand, so they don't have to carry, so they don't have to pass it on. They don't have to inherit those ugly things, so they can get the fresh start. So the community of theirs can be beautiful within and outside.

These are my hopes and these are my wishes. And these are the only things that held me together, hope like that still hold me together. If I follow these ugliness and dirtiness and whatever, if I followed these I would smash anything. I would set fire in this community; I would kill anything that I can. Would that make any difference? No. I'll still follow and add what is already dirty there. I would add the ugly stuff that is under the rug if I do that. I know that. There got to be some other way to do it. One group or two group make a start to understand this. Maybe the young group. Maybe the very young group can understand better. But the older ones, that will take a long time. Because it takes a long time to change the whole person what he has believed and enjoyed to do. Only the young people can be changed. But if we show these ugliness and ugly things and all the time amongst, in front of them, we will make them as inheritors. And they will carry on this kind of problem that we have, continuously. We will have perpetuate this, this dirty thing in our community if we do that. A bad situation. I don't know what to call it. I said the monster's ugliness. Within, within the individual person, persons in all of us. But no one ever talk about this way, nobody ever say that. Everybody talks about beautiful things on top, on exterior part only. That is, that is very sad message for the New Year, but this is true. This is happening, right here in this Peawanuck. And I don't know how long I can hold on to. Personally, there are many times I think I'm gone to leave this place. I'm going to just walk away from this place, but I can't do that. And what end, should I just die here and watch it and can't do anything at all? That is very sadness. It's very hard for me to wish for a better New Year and prosperous New Year and happy New Year. It's very hard for me to follow that. And as I say that speaking of that very clear minded, speaking the truth that has existed here. But how do you begin to arrange or even to make an attempt to clean the dirtiness and ugliness that we have, the monstrosity that we have. I don't know. I don't know how to start.

I always take pride in telling the native, native stories. I always, I used to take pride in telling our native ancestors activities, because I wanted to promote slowly so our young people can be, can have a respect for being the ancestors of the First Nation in this area. But I have not much luck. I don't have that luck and it doesn't work. Not yet. It has to be another generation probably or never. Somewhere something has to stop and something has start anew. For a time being, this is all I can say for a time. I shall turn this tape around and I will begin again to explain more things. Why am I staying here? Why am I doing here for? I'm trying to bring up bad feeling for the New Year. I want to say it somehow and don't, nobody is there to listen and I can't speak to anyone. Nobody can stay long enough to listen to me when I see things. But I want to say. Every time that I want to do this people start to walk away, and start to laugh, or make fun of me. Or simply don't want to hear these things, but they are there. These things are there. Nobody is going to erase them if we just simply close our eyes or shut our ears out. I repeat, I say the same thing. They are there. For now, I shall turn this tape.

Continued in Part 2... See "PERSONAL COMMENTS" January 3, 2002 (513) Louis Bird.

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Transcriber:

“PERSONAL COMMENTS”

Now let me say it again, that the other, “A” side of this tape I have finished saying, explaining the things that I feel so sad about and the things that I see are bad and which I cannot do nothing about. And now I want to say a few things that made me, few things that makes me or gives me a consolation. I can ignore the bad things in Peawanuck when I go out into the bush. When I go out down the river, or up the river. When I go follow the old trails of our ancestors, yes there I can find consolation. I even have sentimentally tears in my eyes when I do this. But sentimental tears are not ugly things. They are a human nature. Every human who has a good functioning mind and body has a sentimental values. And every person, no matter how strong and powerful can cry for a sentimental value, or to remember the past which were gone bad or they were happy moment. They still bring the tears when someone has a good sentimental value. I have those, sentimental value. I have walked in the old, old trails of the ancestors, with wet tears in my eyes in sentimental feeling and in happiness and consolation. These are the only things that hold me in this part of the land. The land is the part that I always come back to, but not the community Winisk, not the community Peawanuck. Even more so Peawanuck, it’s not the reason I’m staying here. I just hope there was, there was something like that that could be so happy to come to Peawanuck. No, there’s none, there’s none. Except because my children are here and my grandkids enjoying this community and that only brings the consolation. But any other thing, there is nothing else. When I look at those, the monstrous bad things that I wrecked that I know.

So that’s the only things that hold me, my dear life in this part of the country is the country itself; the land where I raised, where I grow up in. Because I was not raised in the community, I was raised around the community, around the land, and even as far as Moosonee, as a young kid. Just walking, playing along and carried along and cry along the way as a young. And all across this land is my land and that’s the only thing that hold me here. Not Peawanuck itself. Not the success of the people, or guard themselves, prestige around their feet because of their tricks. Not those things. These aren’t the things that makes me happy here. But the things in the memory that I have in my good old days when I was young, when I was taken care of by the two lovely parents who devotedly were Christians, or used to devotedly practice their religion which they have adapted and loved. Every morning of, before dawn they used to pray. They used to pray to their heart

out and then in the lunchtime they pray again when they only tea broths. Tea broths is a simple meal. They still thank God for that. And then in the evening after sunset again they will curl us in their lap and make us comfortable and they pray again. And then just before they fall asleep again they would say a few words, good words before they lay down. These are the parents I remember in this land, not in Winisk community, but in the around the rest of Winisk River. Along the rivers of Sisismattawa when they [unclear] go to Albany. I remember those things. These are the good memories I am talking about. Not the memories that come after that, but the memories now once and a while that I experience with my own life, with my own family, my children, my grandchildren. These are the things that hold me here. Other things that are ugly, I don't like them. I don't want to see them. I even don't want to stay here. As I say that before. But I say these things once and for all. I will never say them again. I don't know what I'm going to be. I don't know I can cleanse my teeth all the time or pounded my fist into the snow to try to forget these things that I saw. Or to go and scream in the bush. How many time do I have to go scream in the bush to try to forget them. How many times did the trees bend down to comfort me? The little bird to come and fly in my feet, tell me that there is nothing wrong. These are the comfort that I find around me, around the community. To see the rabbit sitting there and eating while I'm pounding my mind and he says, "there's nothing wrong with this world, Louis." He still eats, but he has no fingers like me and he has no clothing, but his rabbit fur and he still hop away as if there's nothing happen. These are the things that give me comfort, just to hang on here. But the things that happen here around here with me, the bad things, spiritual value things, and the material things especially, that pull us worst down even. And there is nothing I can do to stop it. But I am forced to stay here, by my family, by my loved ones. Will I have the strength to leave? Will I have [unclear] to leave just to be by myself. They are the questions I have to fight within.

I don't know. There is not much happiness in this 1992. Some people may have a hope and happiness in 1992, but for me, it's very grim. Could I face another, face another three and fifty-two, sixty-two days with this kind of feeling. I hope not. I hope I will find some day to be comfortable and to wish to live on. I speak to this tape, not to speak to one person, but to speak and somebody will have this recording to know what things going, the things that go around in my mind in my feelings. Those people who don't know me at all. People who don't want to hear my voice, they don't have to have this tape. But if the person that wants to know what's wrong with me, they can listen to it. I am not a holy man. I say that before. I am not a holy man in a spiritual point of view. I am just a man who simply hang on and have continuous hope that there is life after death. That surely there is God, and surely that the Christianity that has been brought to us, that I can use that to comfort myself, to forgive, to forget and to try at least.

These are the only tools that I have. Any other, I don't trust any other thing. I cannot find any consolation in any other. Give me a million dollars. If I had these feelings, I don't these things will erase that feeling. But give me one hope, a sign that someday these things will someday be erased and will be forgotten, I will die with a smile on my face. But I don't see that today. But I'm still hoping. I hope that something, something will happen to erase these things that I see that are so bad, that are so bad, that keep threatening my hope for happiness and peace. That's personally. But not only for me do I

think that. I think for my children, mostly in my grandchildren, will they carry these ugly burdens with them when I die? Is it my business doing that? It may not be. But to concern, anyone that is concerned for his loved ones wants to leave their children and grandchildren in a state of good hope, in a state of hope for the last thing, comfort for their life. When an old man, when a person who has been living at least fifty years begin to understand these things. And wants to leave something behind. At least comforting words, at least hope, at least something that will carry them through. I try to do that. But those things, at least in this time, they don't seem to help. And now I still have that question will I have enough guts to hang on. Will I have enough mental stability to be able to live here, or do I just get to go crazy? Or should I stop my mind to see things? Should I stop myself knowing things? These are the things that are hidden.

No, I cannot stop those things. I tried to erase them off my mind. I tried to take a simply things to do. No, they don't help. They give me a bit of free air when I do enjoy a few things in nature. As I said when I go on the river and when I walk on the old trails. I make believe that these things are not there. I make believe that I am walking with the Elders that I know in their, the old trail. When I go down the river in the summer, when I travel there, I make believe I saw those people in front or me or the back of me, which gives me a great pleasure to travel. Especially when I am alone in the, major rivers where our ancestors have traveled. It gives me a comfort to picture them mentally that they are there with me, even though I am alone. These are the things, the only thing that make me comfort to live in this part of the country. And to think Peawanuck is highest place and the nicest place to live in should make me happy and to have possession and everything. No, that does not help me. Maybe because I'm getting old. I feel old. I even feel older than I am. And that is how bad it is somebody to have an understanding and knowledge to be aware of things that are most people not aware, or ignore. Simply are lucky people, who can ignore the things that are bad. But the person who always confronted these things in his mind because he happened to understand and see them. It's a torture. It's just like continuously stabbing somebody, or a thorn in your side, or a finger, or a blister in arm, in your hands. These the same effect has these things somebody, if he has to. I guess I have made a mistake. I must of made a mistake when I prayed to God one time to give me the wisdom to understand life. I truly asked the wisdom to understand life. Sometimes I made a mistake. I think I made a mistake by asking such thing. If I didn't understand those things, my life could be more simpler. At least I would have pretended it's simple. And knowing the things that I asked to understand has brought me many, many worries, many griefs and many hopes and false hopes.

Now, I am tired of those. I am getting old and I'm tired of those things. And there is nothing I can do to avoid them, or even to evade the thought of those things, or the question, or even to make an effort to try and do anything. That's how get, that's how old I get now. I feel like I have lived three hundred years because of those things that I understand. But today I saw some Elders that are sixty-five, or eighty-five, or seem to have a very serene living. Like next door neighbor, one time we used to condemned as a sinful person, lives here with smile on his face. How does it happen? And I'm only fifty-five. I feel like ninety-five, a hundred and fifty. And I carry those things very heavily. How, that is how wrong it is to ask somebody things that you are not supposed to have.

Sometimes you ask the wrong question to the Great Spirit. And when he gives you, you suffer.

So it's easy for a person to have a simple mind, a simple understanding, or a simple life. And it's easier for somebody for his body also. People who have a simple life do not carry the burden of knowing things, but they can dance, they can jump and skip and they can enjoy the small things, even if they are not that valuable enough to enjoy. But for the people who understand things, or do understand a few things more so than the next person, he carries or she carries much more a burden. And that I understand now. And these are the things that I have in mind and this New Year, this coming New Year. I have to face those things squarely in the eye, or they will have to stare at me squarely in my neck or in front of me. So does one live through that? How do they avoid those things? How do you confront them? What help do you need? And what strength do you need? And what patience do you need? And what endurance do you need to have to understand those things, let alone trying to straighten them? At the moment I don't think there is any worth at all to have to straighten anything as it is. The only hope that can be done for the moment is let it go as it is for a time. Let another generation straighten it out. That probably so for me. But I would be leaving some garbage behind if I think that. When I have a chance to straighten some things out in my life, so that my children will live, at least, with a good intention there, with my good intention. As for my New Year and I have to face those things. And these are the things that I want to tell, before I live again, if I have any chance at all to live through it.

The problem I hear in this community are very heavy on me, because it seems to, I seems to have a knack of being blamed, or throw at things that somebody can point the finger my way when something goes wrong. It has been done, ever since I got here. It's been four years now, and it hasn't stopped. And it started in old Winisk in 1972. It started that long ago. Seventy-two, eighty-two, that's twenty years ago. And it started that long, that far and it has been carried. It has carried itself, the ugly thing I'm talking about. And it seems that I was the one who carried it, or who started it. Because I stirred the shit that was there. The fakeness that was there I exposed it and break it and this is what comes as a retaliation and it hasn't stopped. It carries on to the next generation. Where will it stop? How can it be stopped, or anyone can stop it? That's my question. How can you stop something that you cannot feel, that you cannot see, that cannot hang on to? No, you cannot, because it is within. It is in the mind of the, and it's there and it's very strong. And those who know it, I am not the only one who knows these things. Those Elders who know it, they just simply shut their mouths and pretend that there is no such thing there. Because of their name, because of their family's sake. They know it's there, but I think that they simply shut, clench their teeth, that's what I mean clenching teeth, trying to hide it. Trying not to tell. Get somebody else to blame for what is happen. And I got that blame. And that's why I say stay out of the way. Maybe I should not be showing here. Maybe this clenching will stop. Maybe this point, a finger point that I cannot stop in my direction if I'm not here. Or maybe I should expose myself right openly. Maybe the thing will come out and the young people will see for sure. So that is just two choices that might bring out this ugliness. One, fire against fire. Fight fire with fire is a term they use. Fight is something I want to avoid. Reasoning is what I want to use. But you don't reason

with anyone who has simply shut themselves out for the truth and reason. You can't do that. And it's right here in this community. You cannot penetrate that tumor that is there, because it's a family unit, because it's a whole family unit. Almost half of the community is like that. And that's what, and that's where the evil lies. And anyone that does disturb that evil monster, it slashes it tails sometimes, where ever the wind is touching that repels it, and I am usually that wind and the wind is my voice and that's what cause it.

Should the wind be stopped to go in that direction? The only way it can be stopped is *me* – not to live. Not to breath, not to speak. But the monster is not to be gone, it's going to be there forever. Someday, years to come, it will come out. Someday, the next generation also, they will see this monster, they will see how bad it is. A long gone then, or days will be gone. Us that we sit now speak. Will be six feet underground somewhere. We will be all rotten. But the monster is going to be there yet. And that's what makes me so much concerned, that's why I'm so concerned - my grandchildren will be amongst those who will be, hit with the slashing of the tail of this monster I am talking about. They will be knocked down because they are there. They will carry my wind and they will be hit. And I am that wind, and the wind is a voice which is sometimes hurt that monster that is there. And this monster will be inhabited amongst those who carry it. It will be well hidden. And that is almost impossible to expose, because it has protection. It has a white man's protection, it has church protection, this monstrosity I am talking about. And Native person is a person who that threaten this, Indian culture and Native culture is what threatened with this monster. And Native culture is at stake. And that's why it's so, it's so bad to have it there, because today, in these days, and these years we hear so much about Indian culture to be regained, to be re-respected. The Minister, the Prime Minister mentioned giving the Native people their respect and their culture. The Pope has said forgive those who have done wrong to you, using your ancestor's wisdom. If we don't understand what those people are saying, if they really mean what they say, it has to begin here.

Each community to understand what it means. And the monster that has been created by the Christianity and by the fur trading, by the European, aristocracy foolishness, or fakeness, that is where the monster came not I'm talking about. And that has to be cut off. The only knife that can be used for that is to use the white man education to educate our people, and to educate our people to be respectful that they are Native people. Not because they use, they have adapted this foolishness the white man aristocratic nature which is at least six hundred years old. And this is what we have to understand. If we do not understand this before that the monster that has been created that type of monster where people will live. It will live on. And those that live on the side will be hurt again and again. I would have passed away, I would have died, trying to find this monster and could not kill it and could not erase it. Who is going to try to do it? How? And the monster that I am talking about is every community of northern Ontario, even the small communities that is within that. Wherever the fur trade has established. Wherever the Christianity has been brought into these Native communities, it is there, all of it. I see it. Wherever I visit the Native communities this size, or even larger one, it is there. It's a white-man-created monster amongst the native people and it stays there. And the white man cannot do anything with it. They just add it with a bit more ugliness with a different

thing. And we the native community must understand that, before we can, before we can erase, before we can take that monstrosity away and learn to live without it. But there is no honesty in that. It's all deceiving actions that have created it. Deceiving, trickery and everything which bring this white man to this land. And that came from Europe. And we have inhabited it. We have nourished it. We have multiplied it in these communities and we still do. But who is going to try to erase, take it apart limb by limb until it's gone. No. That is too much of an effort, too much of a project to do or even an event which will take a long time to accomplish. If any at all remaining years to live. And this is what I am talking about. This is what I'm saying, it's impossible for somebody who recognize these thing to say, "be happy." It's impossible. And you cannot line your self with it. It's there. Anybody that wants to see it, it's there. I just don't want to tell anyone it's there, but it's there. And its power control us, its power, its wickedness, is forcing us and make us hate each other and anything. And it happens in every community, every community along the James Bay and also within that. The Ojibwe community that's small as us, it's there.

But how do we change that? How do a person, or person or group of people, how do they change that? And it's almost impossible. It would be impossible to try to erase the thing now within a few years, it's impossible. It has to be done in duration about fifty years. By the time fifty years has arrived the other monstrosity will have grown within us, which will make it impossible for ever to leave it, or even to erase, or to put it aside. We are now at least seventy-five percent erased as the original First Nation culture. At least seventy-five percent has gone now. Twenty-five percent that's remaining, it's only the language. Only the native language has held on for the time being. The reason why we still hold on to the Native culture is we still have the Elders who practice the physical activities we they enjoy. Like hunting and trapping for hobby. They use it for only hobby for now, not to live. That's twenty-five percent that still exist. In the other part, there is nothing. The true native culture is gone. And within it, it start, I talking about the ugly monster, it's there. And we have to get rid of that if we have to understand what we are. And we have to look back at the old people who are still living to give us that help. We have to get down on our own [unclear] self to ask the Elders to give us the support and to guide us, to get rid of this thing. But to accept the life and culture that is coming upon us, instead of using it to fight each other, to condemn each other, to strike each other, to hate each other. Because of that, because of this monstrosity we have to understand it is a monster, not a good thing to have. But we cannot stop the white man's progression, we cannot the white man's culture upon us. We have already welcomed it a long time ago. Three-hundred years ago in the fur trade, one hundred and fifty years ago in Christianity. We have praised that, but within it came the monster. And the mind distorting monster is what we have in most of the communities is alcohol. And that's what keeps us in within without ever getting out from that monster as a holder. If I sound as if I hate total white man and if I sound as if I rejected the Christianity it is because I want to show the perfectly clear what I am talking about. Even if I am a Christian, I am a Christian, and I have one of the oldest Christian, Christian church which was established by European, or by the first civilized people, which is a Jewish people. I have accepted because I didn't understand, I was young when I was given to Christianity. As I grew up to be young, I was totally, totally given instruction which I cannot reject, even if I try. For one thing I cannot kill a person because it has said, "do not kill." I cannot do thing that says is wrong

in the Church. That's how powerful that Christianity is. The only the thing is that it brings with it also the wrong thing with it, which the ministries have used. The first kind of missionaries, they had misused that power. And that's what still, that's another part that we have to recognize all of us in this community. To see what's wrong with these, the way they do it, the missionaries who brought the Christian church in this area. They make us fight. They divided us. We still fight each other because we are using the Christian church to condemn each other. And that's part of the monstrosity that the European church brought in. It divided us. It denies us our ancestor's spirituality.

Today, now they recognize it was wrong. Now they start to invite the ancestor's practices which has already gone, it's not there anymore. The only thing that we have there is the imitation of drumming, imitation of singing, but none of those young people who sing and dance truly understand what is true Indian and First Nation spiritual value system is, because they didn't live in it. They didn't born in it. In order to have a true Native spirit practice and belief you must be born within the land, within the wilderness in order to have it. But these young people today that we saw drumming and singing, that's just imitation. They don't know anything about the spiritual system long time ago. But the church invite that, they know it's already destroyed. That's why they allow it to go into the church. They know these young people not truly understand what that is. And I know it to. But it's soured it. The old thing has already been damaged and distorted and even eliminated. Now it's just a practice. And anyone who wants to be truly a spiritual practitioner in, in native culture, the First Nation culture must experience it, not just hear it. Grow with it and love it and live by it. That's the only way and that's what our ancestors did one hundred and fifty years ago. But that does not mean they were perfect being. They were not perfect. They were almost as bad as they is today, amongst them. Not all of them. We hear the stories of those who did bad things only, but we never hear those who have done a good life and live a good life, because they use their spiritual value system. As it is today, we don't hear the nice people, we never hear the story of the holy people, very few, very few, like Mother Teresa, is the only person that we hear. She actually show the world that she does she does extraordinary make an effort to show she mean business. And she get recognition the world over. And then time passed, before the Christianity came in. Our forefathers has a true and kindness with them who had truly practiced their spiritual practice. They were the ones that were the most unnoticeable and they were the most who were kind. And they were the most that we have never heard of. But we heard the ugly stories about long time ago about those who misused their spiritual value and power. That's where the religion, that's where the legend, Indian legend came from. Only them that contained that. But it's only to teach. That's why they used it. To teach how bad it is for somebody when he is misusing it power and it's spiritual given life. And that's conclude almost.

I could go on and on explain about these things. But the thing is does anyone has time to listen? No. This life of ours, just rushing forever and never catch up with it. We don't have to listen. No one has time to listen to those things and therefore it's left out. I know this. Some day maybe a hundred years if the world that exist, maybe someday we will go back and remember those things. And they would say why did we left it behind? It happen now... it happen now in southern Ontario and the United State. The native people

are sorry they had left their First Nation ancestry and their culture. Some people may have managed to regain it, because they have money. But those who do not have any money who beg for money, they are totally lost. We are that people. We are. We, the coastal area and within. We are those people and we have lost. We don't have any money for us to speak, to act as our own. We have been bought by the White Man's tax payer's money. That's my famous word. We totally have been lost. We don't have anything at all that belongs to the First Nation. And getting back to the monster that I'm talking about, that's part of it. I don't know how to describe the monster I'm talking about, but it's a very ugly thing, to my opinion.

But there are people down south who are crying for it. We have seen it two years ago in Oka crisis. When the native people are half-breeds only. They don't have one-fourth of a blood in them. One-fourth of Indian blood in them now, but they know the history about their people. They know how great they were when they were by themselves. That's what they tried to regain last two years ago when they had this Oka standoff. But these young people didn't have that experience in life. All they know is the White Man's life who is surrounded it which they can't even move around. They pick up a gun to be heard, to try to stop the golf course to be built in their home. They have all the opportunity today that they had three hundred years ago, but they're just like us. They will come to White Man's culture. They even praise the White Man culture. They even fought wars for the White Man and after all those years, three hundred years, five hundred years later they find themselves they have waste it all. They find themselves they have been just pawns. They find themselves they have lost their value tradition or value system, which were one time make them strong. And this is what's happen here, in James Bay and Hudson Bay. We are like them, which happened to them one hundred and fifty years ago, it happen to us now and we don't recognize it. And that's what create that monster we have in the community, it's that transition period which that monster is created at that moment. Which gives us drift apart, hate each other and fight each other. That's what happen to those people a long time ago. They finally woke up, because many of them cannot even remember their language. They find that out: they have lost all of it. Now they want to stand up together and fight the white man for the last piece of thing that belong to them. That was the last piece of ground. The culture is gone, but the last piece of valuable ground that was used, that their grandfather used to stand there on their feet is what they fought for, to retain it. See how far is, they have lost. But they had a choice three hundred years ago, but they didn't. We have that chance to fight it. We have all of us in communities. Each community, we have that chance to fight it. But do we understand it? Do we see it? No. We don't see it. We are so busy. We are so blinded by its exterior beauty and exterior, activity which we cannot resist. It has been, it has been situated and create in such a way that we would want to grab it. We would fight each other to grab it. And that's the monstrosity I'm talking about. And it's there. Each community fighting for its own bits and piece of this - a bit of a false glory, a bit of thought of temporary money or gain. But we forgot ourselves. We forgot that we are destroying ourselves. And that is the same monstrosity that existed in a time of fur trade. That's when our grandmothers also participated and changed the life of our history. It is happening now. It's happened now today. If only one person can see it, or two. If one person who see can be heard and

listen to and try to understand what he's talking about, or are these person talking about. No. We don't even have time to listen.

The leaders today, the Native leaders today across that have been well educated by the white man's education will have accomplished their education will have understand what I'm talking about. Like this First Nation chief. He understand all this I'm talking about. But we has the, he's powerless to change it because the rest of us do not understand. George Erasmus who was been a chief for some time. I happened to talk to him once. And I asked him if there is such hope for that, and he says, "not likely." So I said, "why?" He says, "because we, all of us have to understand first and then we can succeed to retain our culture and respect of it." But the respect of the culture is what we throw away very, very willingly, because of the few dollars to have and a few glories though it came. That's about all the price there is. And we sacrificed our culture whether it was not as good as a white man, at least the independent, independent state or self-sufficiency or ancestors which they live by is gone. And we fight each of even to leave it behind.

Here in Peawanuck is a good example where all that is taking place at this moment. As where we create that even, even, even ugly monster here. Monster I'm talking about is what bad effect this, of this, culture exchange, and a culture impact. And a culture impact is, negative impact is what I say is a, monster. It's a monstrous thing. It's a bad thing for Native People. It's a bad thing for us, it's a bad thing for our children to pass it on. And that is what I'm talking about, a monstrosity. But we, do we see it, or do we just hide it? No. I think sometimes we don't even see. Some of us don't even see. We are too busy. We are too busy trying to catch up with the white man's material world. We even forgot that Christianity is there with them. It's a Christian, it's Christian, it's a white man Christianity. We forgot that is also made to come with it. But we don't understand enough either. But the white man's material world is here, it's gaining and fast and approaching and it's going to bury our Indian culture very soon. Someday we are going to wake up and say, "what was I? Was I an Indian? Was I a First Nation person?" Then we can say, "well, I don't see it anymore. What was it?" That when we are going to find our children do. Our grandchildren will find that. Our great grandchildren, yet to be born will see that and then they will ask questions, "how come our ancestors were beaten, how come they were eliminated?" If they can recognize at all. So this is what I'm talking about.

And the New Year that we have today, we have three hundred and sixty-two days to live. How many of us will look at the life this way? How many of us will hide this thing that we have? How many of us will try to give, avoid this monstrous change over that we have? The culture change over that we go so fast and claim the, and claim the.

(TAPE CUT OFF – SEE ORIGINAL FOR LAST FEW WORDS)