Title:	0046-Our Voices-Local History, Sweatlodge, Wiihtiko
Bird Number:	2009
Recorder:	Louis Bird
Date Recorded:	
Transcriber:	Jennifer Orr
Date Transcribed:	February 28, 2003
Language:	English
Culture:	Cree (Omushkego)
Transcript:	Proof

Louis Bird: [Laughing]. O.k.?

George Fulford: No problem.

Louis: Use it for your own studies, for your own wherever you go, whatever you gonna be doing.

George: Would you feel more comfortable, if I ever write this up, if I write it as if it were another community with other people? Just to illustrate the idea behind what happened rather than a specific...

Louis: Yeah, because this community, it's very similar to the others. Similar to the - to the Attawaspikat and Fort Severn. But the only extraordinary about this thing is it to remained very isolated - this is the most isolated for a long time. It remain as an - something like there's one community from Peawanuck and then, what they call that Ekwan. No no no no. Lake River, they call it. Lake River, yeah, that's the little village. Yeah. And then when is - they were the same condition. They were the same. They were the little communities that exist only in summer to two months. Didn't disappear to in the wintertime. So only one person stays there. One or two, family. O.k. let's put that out.

George: O.k., so you start and I'll make notes as you're talking...

Louis: So, this is already on?

George: That's already on, and it's working away.

Louis: O.k. o.k. O.k., this where we started - where we left off yesterday I was talking about...about the things that makes family group, what they are, and...what became the inheritance after that, if you want to call it that. For one thing, it's important - it is important, you know to know, when somebody ask you something today. When somebody ask you today about this family, about this thing, it's not - it's not complete, to

any [region] at all, to answer a quick question, and then just let the guy walk away. You know, he believes that - that is it the answer is there. And you don't actually get anything. So, asking me a question is about such family, I want you, I want you to have a better knowledge of this family, and what caused this changes. And what happened to this family - why is it? So it is much better to tell the truth than to give a quick answer. That was what I was doing about the family of Macks. And what caused the breakage, and what was it?

I pointed out a few things as the camp was there, and the way of life was changing. Because, before the camp get in there nineteen fifty-five, in the spring of nineteen fifty five, that's when the, the first - that's when the first time we know there's going to be a camp, we didn't hear anything! Because there's no radio, no news, or anything. So, that was the first time those people came in. Those people with the equipment and everything, we didn't even know. What it was supposed to be secret. So we carry on our life. People go out into the bush that spring. They stayed out there. And by - by the middle of June they come back to the community, here was full-blast construction was taking place. And that was the end of that serenity, or peaceful union in the spring, that people used to go out hunting loons, and enjoy themself for gathering for two weeks. It didn't happen. They went straight this chaotic of being employed to go across, and work under the yell of the foremans and everything. They were, they were very submissive, they're sort of scared of those people. And I was there too. Was just a young man. And that's what happened very quick change. Easy-going people, just, just relax in the spring, coming down with their furs...Bang! Right away they have this powerful white men giving'em orders every day without stopping, they have to shovel steady and - twelve to sixteen hours during that summer. And you can't even stop to - just to take a cigarette any foreman will yell at you, and you have to jump. And that was a start of the quick...quick change of peaceful tradition that existed ten years before that. Nineteen fifty-five. More than ten years. Because, nineteen fifty-five, you go backwards about, to nineteen –forty. It was - it has people coming in the spring enjoying the gathering and, spreading out again to survive to eat and then come back in the fall to buy the goods and then go into the bush and that was a routine. It was routine with most those people.

And there were not many people, there were only about, maybe...maybe ten major families. But there were a little families in between maybe total of twenty families. That time. And they live like that for fifteen-like fifty-five forty-five fifteen years, you know that tradition remain without much, much change. The only tradition that to change that was new was that people have more store of goods a little bit before fifty-five. They were had a little bit more sugar in the store then that was a luxury. And then the priest was staying in a community, from nineteen thirty-four. They were staying community in there now. Especially of nineteen-thirty-nine and there's, during the war? We got priest. Three priest then. And that was a real tradition then, to have a priest there you know you have plenty of priest! That was during the war. And, about two brothers or three brothers. So, the real society is there when you get there, it's really...something, there's only six people the French-speaking people who are there. And that remain - that runs you know for 'forty, to 'fifty-five, fifteen years.

And then when the lying when, when the construction start, that's the end of that stuff. And nobody went to the bush after that. They just work right through the winter. And I think there's only one or two families who left the community. That was Patrick, Patrick Sutherland, and his wife, and...James Mack and his wife. They were just a couple, they didn't have no kids. So, James work in summertime but he left anyway. And Pat Sutherland work for a little while, you know cutting bush in a - in the airstrip? But he got tired of being ordered and all that stuff so he just walks away. Didn't go back to work. My father also work there eh? He works during the summer but, by fall he just couldn't...he just couldn't face this you know being yell at and everything.

Those elders like my father, who were born nineteen-hundred and after that. These were the - these were the...what do we call that? They were past middle-age group. They were coming towards to be sixty very soon. And there were lots of those. And they're the ones who didn't...be like being yell at or anything. But the new ones you know, the younger ones you know, they work there.

So that's when it changes the life. And from fifty-five on for the next ten years it changes the life everybody. Ten years, at last. The last ten years you can see the difference in people. Because they change their diet, because they're - they work eight hours a day, and they have this you know...They have stress, you know because they have

to get up in the morning, they have to be there at seven. They have to walk across which is about three and a half miles every morning. So all that you know it sort of make them weary every day and they begin to...to change. These people who were healthy and strong. And peaceful in their own mind and everything. Now they are submitting to these people, to construction foremans.

After a year, you see the changes, some of them begin to have a...a tire in their stomach, and then they begin to develop white hair. As a noticeable the first two years they just begin to turn white hair! By ten years younger people begin to turn the white hair. Just because a change of diet. And all those other things that actually you are seen it...I have seen it during that ten-year period, I've seen that. Changes. But still the women folks, you know they were not there in the camp, they remain...very slightly touched by that. Because the men were always exposed in there, they eat just like a white man but a woman did not. So they remain, they remain the same for...that - during that ten-year period, the women. They didn't go fatter, they didn't get turn white hair. And they still active, they were still hauling wood for home. Not like today. Women hauled wood all day and everything they, they even set snares and rabbits and shoot ptarmigans. The women were doing - keeping the home. And that was natural. They do it in the village as they do it in bush before. Because they were the one who keep, keep the home warm and supply of the - around-about food. Like ptarmigans outside, and rabbits and put setting the net, they were doing a little bit of that. But they couldn't set a net because it's too...in the windy - in the winter. In the winter they couldn't - no place to put a net. But they did set snares sometimes, they go into inland and everything. During that ten-year period. And they didn't turn the white hair, the ladies, they did not. Because they didn't eat that way.

But they did begin to change. It was only after they begin to change. Remember I told you they use to go into the...to the dump? Because those years you know the...there were so plenty, the food was plenty. The foodstuff used to come in the whole bulk of the animals it look like a big half of bacon. And one quarter of a beef, whatever that is. And sometimes when it goes bad, in summertime especially when it happens to go bad and stale, all these things will be thrown into the dump. Pile after pile if they think it's no good to eat. And that's what the ladies grab. Because we, we can keep the meat for

about a week. Us outside and we just still eat it. And they think this was just a [manna] from heaven. And they went and grab those things when that happens…And many other things but they enjoy eating those things, only once you know, but we eat every day. Us people who work. We eat eggs and bacon and everything. And that's why I said we get fat [laughs]. And then we turn lazy after ten years.

[So many other thing changes along that, like I told you about... a womens were, naturally were curious about strange-skinned men and, they wanted to have experience in sex with them. So the young girls who've...just couldn't hold'em.] They run across the village and have, fun you call it or, maybe the white men had a good time. And then, and after that some of them got babies from it you know, as I told you before they were quite a few had babies from that time. And then the population increases in the mixed [inaudible] blood [laughs]. Then the community begin to....you know the members of - the purity of the des-the culture was now diluted by this thing. Diluted is the word that I want to use, not to say destroyed. Actually, that exactly was happening. Now it was physically destroyed, it has been spiritually destroyed a - the last hundred years. But now it was physically destroyed because the women are not more eager to help as a partners in the bush. The men are lazier. So that's what cause that ten-year period of the, of the camp.

And then after that, it just continued to deteriorate and, people wanted to be more like a white man after that. The new people who grew up in Winisk after nineteen-fifty-six, to nineteen-seventy. Or thereabouts, six - fifty-five to sixty the people who grew up there in that time, they were never saw the hunting and, and trapping, they never saw, those young people. Anyone that born after that, didn't see none of the traditional cultural activities. That I saw. They didn't see. They didn't experience it, they didn't know it. And, they're the ones that are all thirty-five years old. Thirty-five to - they're forty. They are now there. Forty years old maybe like my brother Joe. We manage to teach him a little bit of trapping, you know, after the main activity of the construction of the camp. In nineteen fifty-five and then on, we usually go up to go trapping. And Joe learn a little bit of that. And my younger brother Alec did not. But he did come back once in a while and practice a little bit of hunting moose there.

So, from then on, it is the changes that you see today. That we are now. Now, going back to the old ways, from a - from before that time. This is the way that I usually briefly introduce my history is that, you know before the European, people were...even our elders say that. Our elders David Sutherland says that on a tape, you could hear him, I have a tape somewhere. He says, "Our elders our forefathers before the European they were - they were literally more like animals." That's what he says. Mwechiisapokoyach he says. That's what says he mean it's just like animals. They move, you know one place to the other in seasonal changes. They're follow the fish to meet the fish there the proper time they go up the river to meet the fish who go up there. And also to settle for the winter. And also to find a place where they could find....catch a fish to store, and all that stuff, and that's what he was saying. So that's the thing they did before that.

And, one of the reason they did that before the European is that they didn't have that much clothes. They didn't have much clothes, not like the way we have today. They barely have - cover their body with, with the material they get, like a rabbit-skin coats, which is the best. And some of them have a...moose-hide. And some of them has caribou-hides and those small animal hides. They use it as a - their clothing. So, they didn't have plenty. So they have to more like hibernate more like in the winter. They have to make a...moss house, and then they keep their children there because the children doesn't have dress to go outside. So that's where they keep the children in that moss house all winter, cold winter.

And then they have to - the men only have to go out and hunt, and the women also dress just to go run outside and, maybe do a little fishing or visit, visit the fish-trap if they have one. Or if, to go sit for a few hours, maybe an hour into the open ice, you know ice-hole, to fish. So they just do that, they just take turn, they run into the ice and fish, and if they caught one fish they run back, and the lady go back there again. So that's all day work, sometimes during the winter. And the kid stays inside.

So this is the life before, before the European. And mind you, they didn't have no steel, didn't have no steel axe, didn't have no gun. So the only thing they use to live is that you know, if they can catch the...if they can make, they could create the fish-trap before freeze-up, that they will accumulate some fish. That they could store during the winter. And live close-by there and also, at the lake or the river if they can make a hole,

keep the hole open, to fish. Mind you that, it's not easy job to do when it's freezing. So the hole wants to freeze up to February. So what they do, they say is that they used to put a hot stone in there. Hold it there and bring it and makes it warm water and keeps the....and whenever they leave it they cover it. They cover this thing with, with snow, and then they come back and, the water holds still. So it was hard to do that. Nothing like today when you get an auger you can drill a hole in no time. So they, they have to keep that hole open for fishing. And this is before the European came, that's what I mean. Only during the December, January, February and part of March they stay. One place.

After the March begin to get start warm and, there is enough clothes for the kids to move, then they move. They change the place, to look for a place because by this time they exhausted their fish. Now they have to seek other stuff that may come, in the changed season. And then the geese will come and that'll gives them an opportunity to change their diet and, other birds that comes along. And, some of the places where they can catch a fish. They're go find another places where they can catch a fish. In a different way. By this time, you know March or April, the - some outlet that begin to expand and that's where they usually go. So they move. In the springtime when the thaw is coming, when the slush is coming and when it's hard to travel, so they go find places where there is a dry land, you know, a land where, where they could walk without having to swim across. So they move there, they stay temporary again there by eating just what, what's offered there, maybe the geese? Canada geese. Mostly what they eat. And, this is before the gun, so they have to use bow and arrows to hunt. What they do then, you know they make a goose line, and they have bow and arrows. And then shoot arrow with - they shoot with the arrow, to kill a geese. So it's temporary they o.k. for that with the supply of food. Until the waters begin to run. And then they have their canoe with them then, they move again. As the canoe is - as the waters open. And before the European, when they were not hunting for the, for the Hudson Bay company, they were hunting for their own benefit. They were hunting beavers to change the diet. They were hunting for beaver also for its clothes. For its material to use as a moccasins. And also for the fur. And also they were trapping the otters, using the own, their own

invention of traps, like the dead falls. So they also catch the black bear in the deadfalls, so they have this different diet also, fish are plentiful again.

So this is the year activity what they do a long time ago. So they move. During the winter, they stay. And in the spring - towards the spring they move in the new location. During the thaw and break-up they move to the next location, as soon as the ice is clear to the river next, then they drift down anywhere they want to go. They can go down the river, to meet other friends into the, the outlet - the estuary whatever you call it over there in the Bay. These local people. Or some of them they will go to the other side of James Bay to meet other families there. So it is in June the month of June the middle of June or thereabout that they usually do this. They go down the rivers and right up to the - to the mouth of the rivers and they meet their friends there. They meet together. The most famous place that they used to do was in Ekwan River. The mouth of Ekwan river in James Bay. Some of the people from Winisk used to go down there, to meet their friends. And gather together. And then that's when they have celebration. That's when they have a dances and all competitions and everything. This was before the European. That's when they used to exercise all those competition also the Mitewiwin. You know, to show who's best. But they were not competing to kill. They were competing how much they can do things. It's all celebration.

And that's where they have the marriage arrangements, and marriages take place. The young people and also, the partners who wants to - who wants to join together to, you know, the widows and things like that. And also it was a time where the big families can plan there for their sons and daughters you know, whether they should get married in the fall. This was the time when they planned the thing.

And it also in the fall, it was this summer that they used to plan with each other, whether they gonna go back the same place where they were last year or they gonna change to the other place for a next winter. That's where they plan to do that. So each knows then, when they can - where they can figure where their friends will be by this winter. Because they already have planned there. Usually they don't change that. And, then during that summer when they after they meet, before the European came, then their go spread out again. In winter, to try to survive. They spread out all over the place, wherever there's a place they can find, for their survival. Then they promise to meet

again in the fall here. Those who have meet the same place. They promise to meet here before, before it freezes up. Before it start to [unclear]. Somewhere around September they're use to - they used to plan to meet again. Not only in Ekwan at the mouth of the river they do in Attawapiskat at the river, they do it in Winisk river, they do it in Fort Severn river, all over the place. They have those place where they meet. And Winisk is one of those places too. But there was no village there. So they meet again in the fall, this time they actually in detail, they explain that where they gonna go. Which, which this area they gonna spend the winter. If it's two families or five families they gonna...And this what gives them, not too many people to go into that area, so they won't eat up the supplies anything. So they spread out again. They arrange this, [unclear] arrangement.

So that has been going on for ages before the European came. Mind you, they were not trapping for the Hudson Bay Company. They were not killing animals to - you know for somebody, they were killing animals for their own use. And that's when their laws and regulations applied then. They have those conservation laws. Not laws, they're rules. They are taught as a you young, you know those things, you don't have to be written down. So they just know it, they know that you don't have to kill all the caribous that you see, you don't have to kill all the beavers that you see, take one out of each house. But if you're hungry, well, you take another extra one. And the fish, what they fish like, like fish traps? They have rules for them too. They say catch as many fish as you think you may be able to use and, open your fish trap, let the fish go. Just put it aside. They're many things. So many things that they had. It was these...even, those are the times when before the European were there. And they have the rules, they have their own custom. And they were migrating, that's the key factor. They never...they know that! I ask, I ask the elders about today: "Why didn't they ever settle somewhere?" They said, "Are you crazy?" they said, "If they settle somewhere they will just eat the area off. It would never re-reblend - restored itself." They said, "They have to move with the season." So the season nurses where they have destroyed during that three months. Where they have, you know, [unclear]. You know, deteriorate something, whatever. It, by the time they come back following year it's already healed, it's clean again. The nature has cleaned it. By the weather. She says, "All they do when they

move like this, you know, it was the best, the best harmonization with the world with this Creator," they say.

That was before the European. And it was only after European came to, to, to insist that a Native people to harvest the furs, you know for their own benefit that these rules were disrupted. The old traditional stuff were disrupted. The value of the old stuff begin to decay. Or, deteriorate. That's the word I use polluted [laughs]. Or, things like that. But anyway, there was...before the European, that is the time when we talk about. Many elders say that. Many elders today they say: "Before the European whatever the arrangement our forefathers has, that was a self-government." He says, "nothing else." If you say self-government, I want to run my own - I want to be a self-govern, the elders say you're wrong, you're not. When you use taxpayer's money you not, they said. If you want to be self-governed, go back to the land and live the way your grandfathers are. You will be self-governed that way. You will supply yourself, you have your knowledge and rules and everything. So, the elder people then that's their argument....that's their - I mean that's their statement. That is fact statement. They believe. That's the only time the native people have the self-governing system is when they were there before the European. The way where it was there. And for that reason, they even say that the way it was, you did not destroy anything. They said, "We were more like a custodian to the land, we take care of it." They call themself that, nineteen-eighty they begin to call themself custodian of the land. You hear them? They did that. Right across Canada, especially in the west, they said, "We are the custodian of the land." So he says, "We don't own the land but it's - we have been using it for thousands of years." So, they, they didn't like the idea of, measuring this land in square measures by man and to call it, and to put the law into it. And they say, "Well, that's not our nature. Our nature is to use the land, as it is and, wisely and, never to possess it or never to claim it. As a personal possession." Says, "You could possess it use it, when you need it at the time, and then after you have lived through it then just release it back to the nature. Move to the other place." That was their own, their own philosophy. That was their land use system.

So when the European came, because they're different, because they're more advance in living together, their rules were different. They come with the square measures. They come with the institutions that has been established for the last three,

four-thousand years. When they came here. So that's what clashes there, that's what give way to the old culture that was there. It just like, you know, for example the...what do they call those? The land, the land movement, you know, the one that goes under and get the one comes on top. So ours went under, that's it, it's not gonna come again. So it is now...it is actually false, for the native people to say, we want the self-government. No, it is not right. All the elders know that. They say, "That's not self-governing." Maybe perhaps self-determination.

So that's the way it was before, and it slowly changes. Slowly, the fur trade is the first...first force of the change, to cause native people to harvest the animals much more than they used to. That's caused the changes. And that runs for the time in this area anyway and, and the Bay area that's what happen. And, the Hudson Bay Company, Hudson Bay Company or, the European fur harvesters in the Bay, at least, they did not change the people, forcefully, the way they live. They just utilize that - what they were good at. Just ask them to increase the harvesting of animals. Without really thinking you know, what damage will it do? So the native people because of this curiosity, human curiosity, they agreed to this, to this new idea, and then, because they exchange. Because the curiosity is there, they want to have what the whiteman have. So the really that was short, they can get more, three beavers for this item. So they went on. Without, also Indian people, without actually asking themself, what will happen then? They know they, they killing more people. I mean, animal. And that was started in sixteen-hundred there abouts, and right through the eighteen-hundred.

And then another, another force came, and that was the Christianity. The Christianity came over to them. This time is to leave their spiritual connection to the earth. And that's another, another force that comes to them, now they have to release that go and let it go. And which is now more than fifty percent...disable them more what they call that, detach of their truly culture. Detach them from the land, the value is detached. Spiritual connection is detached from them. Now, they don't belong to anything by, by that reason. Now they have to rely on those people who brought who brought the rules to them, and it existed for about a hundred and fifty years in that nature. Just barely doing something what the Hudson Bay want the furs. And then not using their own spiritual connection anymore. Now they were asked to come to the community to practice

Christianity, regardless how far distance they have to travel. You see the church people didn't, didn't concern about the native, the native families welfare. They ask them come to the church you know if you can. But they forget. These people are in the moss house you know because they don't have enough clothes. What they do is they ask them to travel in between just to say a prayer in one night. And these kids, they were traveling in there and...in this fifty below cold weather to go and do that. That's how submissive they were. That's why sometimes I think these people are, all of them are saint according to this thing! [laughs]. Anyway, they submit to a very heartedly - a whole-heartedly. They are very nice people. If there is any holiness I think they are them. But they never complain. They lost their, their identity almost, totally then. They still submit. And, that's the history that's, that's what we've been talking about, the little bit of what asking why is this families like this, and why did those people begin to be this way?

So going back you see what caused. Now that was only in nineteen - eighteen-hundred to nineteen-hundred. And then, and then in nineteen-hundred thereabouts or eighteen....eighteen-eighty-five I think, the first idea came in about, about the treaties and then it comes about, residential schools. That's the third one. The third one is the residential school system. That's is exactly what pulls the children from their families. Put'em into the school system and, into the buildings where they can stay for, during nine months of the year. And that's what detached them totally from understanding experiencing the bush life, those youngsters. And that was my - the age of my father, and my mother. Nineteen-hundred. And then a few years later in nineteen-forty - forty, that's when I was in residential school. I only experienced the bush life maybe the first six years of my life and I enjoyed it very much. I enjoyed the seeing parents, and staying in the bush and I was...was really enjoying that. And I was sent to the residential school. Three years. After three years I forgot how it was in the bush, sometimes it hits me in spring, when I was there. Wishing I could at my mother with this robin singing outside of our home. And our teepee. All those little things really makes you homesick, and all of us were like that...children. My age. So we longed to be home. But we cannot. After three years we come back, we lost some of that, some of that, that attachment to the land, you know the bush life and all that. We lost it and we begin to look down our parents, they were not really care about anything. They were too submissive to everything. Then,

there will still have their own skills. They still have they own cultural skills. They still practice it. But we were not cooperative because we've been destroyed in...in a residential school. And it took years before I begin to regain what I've lost myself, during that time. To begin to understand again what nature is. And, and most of us in my age, they have the same feeling. Some of them they say, well, it's a good cause, you know...Some women they say it was a good cause that they have went to school and all that. And they praise in the holy Catholic Church for that. But some of us who think about something else...I guess, those of us who have too much pride. We think it was very unfortunate for us to be detached from the things that belongs to us.

Now, in the next, in the next things that comes after residential school, is when the - during after the war. After the war then comes the Minister of Natural Resources coming, to set rules upon the land. To establish individual trap-lines. That's also divided the people who used to use the land, harmoniously. Now, they break that too. That is really damaging to the culture at that time. Nobody knows it. But it causes everybody to fight each other for the square measure of land. And then comes the welfare. That's in the next item that comes, the welfare system came in in nineteen forty-seven. The child welfare came, which I didn't have. You know, like a - like a family allowance. I didn't have that. And then old age pension came also at the same time almost, a little bit. And...that was nineteen forty-seven. For the next five years, we were o.k. with that thing you know, for little while, we didn't have it all. We didn't have all the cheques like today, there was oh, [wee] cheques once in a while this guy get it in for six months. And, nobody really care about this: what the hell's come from anyway? You know they, never had anything like that.

And then, after that in nineteen-fifty-five, from there on you have - you hear the construction at the radar station in Winisk. After five years from 'forty-seven. Right? Oh no, six years. Six…'forty-seven, to 'fifty-five...oh, that was eight years, eight-year period. So from 'fifty-five, and then the last...the last of the back bones of old culture I think it was totally crushed. In our community. And we were the most isolated people. We were the most untouched - Winisk, and the Ekwan - Lake River people. Attawapiskat people were spared by this experience. Kashechewan people were spared by this experience. Fort Severn people were spared by this camp, by this radar base. At

Fort Albany, they were, because they live right next to it. And they have the same effect as we have.

So that was the end that, our cultural stuff. And, this is the final [laughs]. I told you that. This is the final move. This is a desperate move. We lose anything. The youngsters that you see today that are forty years old, they were just a babies in nineteen-thirty-five, I mean, nineteen-fifty-five to sixty-five they were just a small kids, they were small babies, they were born that time. They never saw what I'm talking about, they never felt it. They don't know what it means to, to be attached to the land. You don't have to have your trap line to enjoy; your land is a whole landscape as you see you could enjoy it as your home. I feel that. Because we traveled between here to Moosanee. Twice. With my parents. And I never felt lost, and I was just home with my parents. No matter where we are. But today, you don't have that. You take the youngster from this community into about five miles away they say, "Take me home!" They don't want to go more than five miles. They cannot stay into the bush more than three days, the youngsters, they want to come back. And that's why I said this is, this is the last, the final. To, to leave, the old culture that we are talking about. So if that is satisfactory of what you ask? O.k. I have [unclear]

George: Now it works

Louis: Now we have to do it again.

George: Yeah.

Louis: O.k. The subject lead us from a sweatlodge. Some try to use a sweatlodge as a, as a medicine or as a spiritual connection, right?

George: Yes.

Louis: So anyway, in our, our tribes in the Cree country, like James Bay and Hudson Bay, they have a similar type of thing. But, to my understanding they didn't use it...they didn't connect it as a spiritual thing. They use it purely for medical purposes. So they use it – sweatlodge - they use it for somebody who is been exposed to the extreme cold, and, who is going to have some sort of a seizure, or fits, because of over-exposure of cold. So when they have a person in that state, that's when they create this - a little sweatlodge - sort of thing and make the guy get to be heated and so sweat, and so long until he stop, you know, quivering, whatever it is eh? Until his muscles relax because

when somebody get that way, they just...they just twitch into ball of muscle, when they get that way over cold exposure. So, they could die from there. They could die - they could either develop what maybe, it could be the stroke or it could - could be related to those things but, the [symbolic] thing is where they just twitch, in fits like you know, like epilepsy. Ohchiptogon is the name. Ohchiptogon. It's epileptic sort of seizure. So when the person start to get that way like this he knows it too. So he has to be quickly put into a heat. And this heat has to be applied to him until his muscles or tendons relaxes, until its relaxes. Only then they stop the heat. And then they slowly bring him back to the normal temperature. Slowly, not right away. Until he actually relaxes and, and a person who have this -- go through this experience it's very bad. They usually get totally exhausted. But they survive. At least they prevent them from having, having created epileptic seizures, from there on because people that's what they used to get. If somebody's not treated, they just repeatedly have epilepsy, or sometimes, some of this stuff. So this is why the people use this extreme heat, sort-of sweatlodge procedure.

But they use stones if there's available, sand....they have to get a sand, and if not, they have to use something else, sometimes hot water. Put it in the skin, skin bag, and put this beside somebody's body, to get him to have a heat. Anything that will hold a heat. And they put it inside - beside his body. 'Till he gets wet again and all that stuff. But I think they gave him a drink also, I think they gave him a bit of liquid to drink. So that's the...that is for the healing.

And, another emergency stuff is what happens to a lady, when the lady also, being exposed to the extreme cold weather in the wintertime or in summertime - whatever it is. If she has a menstrual period and then, the flow stop, because of that. That's what they used to believe. So in order to stop - in order to catch it before it actually stop, that's when they establish again this little sweatlodge sort-of. And then they put her in there. In order to get heat. Extreme heat in her body and everything. And then the flow starts again. And...this is why they use this heat. This sort-of sweatlodge medicine-thing. But I have, I have never heard it in our in our tribes, to be used as a sweatlodge we see today, some of those tribes. Some of those tribes may have different ways. But our Omuskego they didn't have this. They may have, have it long time ago.... So, to repeat a little bit more about how dangerous it is a women, not having a menstrual period from extreme

cold condition. She would not have the, the menstrual flow again. It will just develop every month. And will just accumulate inside the womb. Begin to the hardened substance inside, and cause her to be sick. And, when it's get so big enough, they can have this menstrual material that has been solidified. Nine months. Then, it has to come out. And that's when people have to really try to do something. So the medicine man or a lady, she would know that there's no baby in there but you know this is what happen. So they sort of to liquidate this stuff somehow. By using water. Inserting the warm water inside with the...the – douche, you call this stuff. You know, the home-made douche. So they try to liquify it by also pressing hard on top of the, the bottom of somebody's stomach or lady's stomach. So the flow can come out, you know that liquid stuff. I mean, the blood that has been clot can come out. So the - so to save the life of person. Instead of, people die from - the woman die from it if you don't treat it. The once they are - once they been cleaned or partially clean at least they live, but the thing is, they could never have baby. Because it destroy the, the womb, I guess. So that's why this people use this sort of, sweatlodge stuff. O.k.? That's in our Omuskego tribes.

Now, to carry on this...this idea of a cold and sweat and....and we come to the point of asking question saying, why the story about the Wiihtiko having an ice heart? [laughs]. I don't know, I...I personally, it's hard to believe. Is it possible for the human body to form the ice in the heart? Could be just a symbolic thing. Symbolic...language. But they say that. What has been said in the many stories that I have heard is that, when a person - there's three ways that you could have a Wiihtiko. One, is through starvation. When there's a, when there's a poor years in the country, mostly many, many natives will experience starvation, and then in order to survive sometimes one family someplace will have a weakness for something. They would begin to go crazy. Crazy for the - for food. And they begin to eat human flesh. They know it's wrong to do it, but they do it anyway. And when they do this it - its alienate them of the, of the natural human mind. And because of this, they know they hate what they're doing, their conscious is aware of this. Against the rule of life. And soon they pass that caring. And then after that, they just don't care. They just simply have to have human flesh. And only the human flesh, then, can satisfy their appetite for eating. So they don't care who they kill, they have to kill a human no matter what it is. And they eat it. And those who have been so damaged by

the brain, they just simply kill human as...as we kill the animal to eat. They just simply kill a person and just raw, eat it raw. Very bad. Very dirty. And, these are the people that are considered the real Wiihtiko, real Wiihtiko. They are the ones who are considered to have ice heart.

And there's a lot of story about that, there's not much we can do about it, but there's a second way is....the second way is someone to became Wiihtiko is by being mistreated. Over-mistreated the person. You mistreat a adult, or young person, or even the young - the very young child. Sometimes they were families who mistreated one of their members or one of their relatives or one of their strange amongst them, they mistreated one person. For some reason they pick on this person they drive him crazy. And this man being repeatedly mistreated in front of everybody and he has no place to turn. Turn himself - he turn finally into a Wiihtiko. He is also the one that became so hatred. And he doesn't have no feeling and he could kill, and also eat at the same time. Because he doesn't need any more food as an ordinary man. That's a second way of having...to put those Wiihtiko, who has so - who could be called with the ice heart. And, one of the minor things that I hear about this. So there is a rule. There is a rule in the old culture a long time ago. Which has stated that you know, in the fall, just the first time, the first fall of snow that stays on the ground and start to freeze the water, people were instructed, the young people were instructed never to eat snow. Never to eat ice that is freshly frozen. Because if you do that, you will create yourself an ice heart, and then you became a Wiihtiko. This was just the fantasy, I think.

But the, the real third part of being - become Wiihtiko is again, the extreme mistreatment of a youngster, especially. A youngster, orphan, that is kept in one family and neglected, and not receive any love from the human feeling, he or she develop this, gradually, gradually as it grows up. Sometimes when it became a teenager age in that teenage age, they cannot tolerate any more of this, mis-use and abuse in the most human creatures. They became alienate so much, they actually develop to be the most powerful shaman. And they became Wiihtiko. They also begin to be ice heart. Because of the mistreatment. So I think that is the explanation of the word saying, a Wiihtiko having an ice heart. It's a symbolic meaning.

But they are stories, they are stories that has been told, by many people. It happen here in this where we are sitting not far from me maybe fifty miles east - south from here. A place, a lake called Washekami. Not far from there maybe to west. There was a man by the name of George Wabano. George I think or no. David Wabano. David Wabano is the person who had the shamanistic power. So one day he was living there in that area. He was trapping there. And he notice that in the fall something was bothering them. Someone. Some mitewiwin was bothering them. And it was aimed at him. And people begin to notice this unusual thing. Experience are in the camp. But they didn't know what it was, but they know there is something around them which is evil. So they want to find out. So they told...David didn't even think about. David, I think is his name. I'm just giving the name David for now. So anyway, so...they told him. He ignored of us and ignored the word first and finally he says yes, yes there is. There is. There is Wiihtiko. Actually, there's a Wiihtiko here. Sent by someone. You know, to bother me, to bother us. So the people in the, in the family says well, get rid of it if you can, because we don't want nothing to do with this, not - don't want to be bothered by this person. By this thing. So he says, O.k., whenever I can. So he was a mitew, you know, this Wabano. And one day he was walking away from the main camp he can feel that the thing was following him. He knows that. So he lead it away from the camp and away to...to go and get, to go trapping. And it was in this particular muskeg area there was tundra, tundra area, where there's a white - where there's ground rough like this, you know, and there's a white moss stick out, black moss. And that's where he was walking through that - this person actually was coming behind him. The person that he know, without looking. So when he look, this, this Wiihtiko was ready to grab him. So he turn around and just wrestle with the guy and, by the power of this mitewiwin managed to trip his leg and, smash him against the ice. Ground. And as sort of stun him. And this Wiihtiko just lay there as if, not moving. But what this Wabano was doing, he's purposely hit him, make him to hit the ground so hard. Hoping that the ice in its heart would crack. [laughs]. And that's exactly what happen. That's why the Wiihtigo couldn't move. It's, its heart has been cracked. Because of ice. And then, then Mr. Wabano just let him lay there and walk away and went to his trapping. And then does his little thing there trap and he comes back to check this person to see if it's still there. So he came back and he saw that

he have crawl away. Crawl to the other place and try to dig into the ground to bury itself. And it was just sitting, laying on its stomach on its body into the moss. Being wounded like that. So he follow it home - he follow he walk up he says, "Now you see. You see what happen. If you bug me anymore, if you bug the family like you do, I'm not gonna bother you, you die here." He showed him and he says, "If you promise me if you don't bother again, I will let you be fixed up." So the Wiihtiko says, "Yes, please. I want to be healed." So Mr. Wabano just call in his helpers, whatever that is and, heal him. Put the ice back into form. And the Wiihtiko got up and walk away. That's the story [laughs]. So, ice heart. His heart cracked it says.

That's a story about ice, a Wiihtiko with ice heart. Whatever that is, but it's a mystical language. You don't know this thing when you're ordinary person. But when you are a shaman like Mr. Wabano he knows what he's talking about. That's all mental. It's all in the mind of this guy. You cannot understand it when you're not, when you're not a mitew. My question is, but who sent the Wiihtiko to them? Who was this guy? You know, that's my question. So where does Wiihtiko begin, how did he begin to be Wiihtiko? So supposedly some, some men, some shamans, they have a control over Wiihtiko. And they use the Wiihtikos and that's to bother other people. And that's what Wabano is encountering. So this Wabano he's related to these Wabano. I think his name is David, or John, one of those. David or John.

George: The head of the family, would have the - would have more power, I guess, than a young person. To deal with situations like this.

Louis: Sometimes yes. Usually that's a general - that is the general situation. But there are times even the head of the family doesn't have enough power. And sometimes it's unexpectedly one of the members of the family, will have gifted, to overcome such things. It happens. Many times, in these stories. They are many of these stories, they are Wiihtiko stories, there's so many! But they don't belong to the legend. They belong to this mystical stories. There're lots of them, lots. There are many of those things that are very fascinating stories. And it happen just, not long ago.

George: So then the power of the head of the family Cree?

Louis: Not necessarily. Not necessarily. Not necessary to Cree. I think the most usual word they use was mitew. [inaudible]. Not Kichi-mitew.

George: yeah

Louis: Kitchi-mitew. If he has that power, that's what they call those - the family. He's the head of... And then the next one, they change that into Okimaaw. Okimaaw of the family. Okimaaw. Okanikanasiiw, or those things. Usually he has a name. Individual name. Which describe him what he's... Like there's a story, and it's same type of story I will tell you. You know, in these clanships sometimes there are three families and there's an old person. An old person usually have most powers. He usually possesses powers to protect the family. And it was this time one time, there was a person in such family they've got three house. And this guy's name was Ketasochiniwak. Ketasochinihan it means, person with the gun. Anyway, so that's his name. And he was expert of killing the Wiihtikos. So it so happen even though how powerful he is, the another Wiihtiko came into the group, to kill them. So what he did was, he just has to find out who is killing Wiihtiko. So in order to do that, he catch up with the two girl - two young people in this family and ask them, what's the name of the person who kill Wiihtiko? So they's Oh, Ketasochinihan. So then that's that, he just make them forget he saw them. And he went in between two camps...A tipi here and a tipi here, and Ketasochinihan was here. So he went in between here, and he calls, "Hey Getsochinihan, you're invited." This Wiihtiko. So Ketasochinihan went across and he got grabbed by this Wiihtiko. Taken out into the bush. So that's Wiihtiko overpowered the Wiihtiko-killer. Yes, that. So these are stories that are very, very interesting. So that was the leader for this family. But his wife took offence, his wife. I mean Ketasochinihan's wife. Because they - she know, this guy will come and kill us all. So what she did, she give her life, her life and she followed the Wiihtiko into the - into his camp, take his knife and slash him. That Wiihtiko. They were saved. Family were saved then, even though - even though the Getsochinihano died.

So these are the stories that goes into these kind of things. Because we ask this question about Wiihtiko having a ice heart. It's not always said. Not all Wiihtikos supposed to have a ice heart in stories. It's not really. It used to be this. You see, I think one of the reason they say that is because, most of the time when the - when the Wiihtikos develop is when they're poor years, and its also in a very cold weather, people starve and freeze to death. And those who survive, they survive cold, cold climate and

also the starvation. And usually they said they survive because they were naturally became Wiihtiko and their heart freezes. That's the idea of connection with the ice heart. In my opinion. I think that's what the old man was saying one time. I was asking him the same question, I says: "What did the Wiihtiko had a ice heart?" - "Well, most of the Wiihtiko develop by the extreme cold weather and they survive." And one of the reason they, they tried to prove this by saying, if you kill Wiihtiko you're not supposed to just lay it, lay it there in one body in the, in the attach, I mean, the whole everything attached to his body. When you kill a Wiihtiko sometimes it comes to chill a cold wind. If you kill it and then its remain cold. So what you do is you cut it in piece. In pieces and bits part and everything and burn it. The only way to make sure it doesn't get up. It's no use putting it underground, it's no use putting it on the ice because its pack itself again. But burning it with heat, will actually get rid of it. Strange eh? Just like a horror movie. Shall we?

George: Yes, one comment about what you said...I find it fascinating that that Wiihtiko-killer's name was Ketasochinihan.

Louis: [laughs] Ketasochinihan, yeah.

George: Fascinating, for at least two reasons. One, I see pictures drawn or carved on rock, in the Ojibwe country of shaman wearing hats. And they're long, pointed hats. So that's a very interesting name. But the other thing that's very interesting, is the symbolic connection in language, between the person who makes the sweatlodge and the person who makes the hats. Because Kematotisiwin and Ketasochinihan are very close in terms of the way those words sound. It's – and you say them fast enough, and you elide them a bit, those words are very, very close. So there may be a symbolic connection. With the hat and the sweatlodge. In the symbolic language used by mitew.

Louis: That could be, yeah. I never really get down to that part. If we were to talk to some of the people, some of the elders who, who doesn't mind talking about this thing, you might - we might have come up some thing that is actually, make sense, actually.

George: Because I noticed in Ojibwe, pictures used by shamans for their mitew chants, a hundred years ago, and those pictures have been published in books. You often see that with certain things which are very sacred, you'll show a picture of something which has a name which is very close to the name. So for instance, instead of niigik, you'll see ninik.

You'll see a picture of an otter. And that will represent the otter because you're not supposed to utter his name. But you know what they're talking about because you see. It's very close. So I'm wondering if this guy with the hat, is somehow connected with the - with this Wiihtiko-killer – with heat.

Louis: It could be, eh?

George: It's a very interesting connection there. That story is full of very interesting things.

Louis: You see if you have an elder's, much older person than my - than me and is willing to explain these things. One such person was David Sutherland. My God how that guy could describe something. He would have, be able to show you or tell you these things if you were to speak - if you were to speak his language. He's the only old person that I...who actually turn him - turns very serious when he talks about it. He's very serious. And if you listen to him and if you sort of giggle when he would stop because you are insulting, or disrespect to his stories. And I used to listen to him when I was a boy. Just a little wee four or five-year old. Because we understand the language when we are two years old. When we are two years old we understand the language, but we don't [inaudible] don't speak as good as the elders. But we understand by two years old, we can say many words. Even one year-old baby can speak a words. You know, in the Indian language. If you don't hear the English. So by two years old you hear those people. You hear them, you hear the elders talking. Although you don't stop to listen, but you still hear. And that's why this old man when I was four years old, he was talking. Not talking to us. Talking, he knows we are listening. But if we make a slight noise in it, not actually paying attention, we can play, but the thing is don't make no noise. But if you make too much noise when he's speaking he will stop. He's not gonna tell you any more, he's not going to say any more stories. You will distract him. You show no respect to his stories. And that was David Sutherland. So we have to beg him again: "Go on, then what happen?" He says, "You don't listen anyway." So we beg and beg and sometimes he will get on again. Unless we promise him that we make no noise.

He had a sons, he had Xavier sometime and he had Joseph Sutherland, and then there was - there were two girls he had in there and there were five of us sitting listen to him. But it was Xavier who didn't listen he used to make fun, eh? Joseph was very,

very...he's the same age as I am, Joseph. And Xavier's older. Then there's Lucy and then there's Theresa. The four or five of us sitting there listening to him.

That's what he was trying to do - trying to teach us something that Native people know....but we were too - you know - sometimes we want to play, then we sort of, put things around and then he, he doesn't look at us. Just lays on his back with his pipe and look at this. You know the top of the miigwam. But he knows we are there, he knows what we are doing. You know? He was teaching us. So that's the man who was to explain things. We didn't have to ask him, he knows what we gonna ask. He just come into it and we - "Just have to wait for him!" Even if we don't understand we don't say anything. Even if we don't - if we don't understand what he means explaining it that time, we not supposed to interrupt. Just have to let it go. When he finish and then he finish talking that's it! So he walk away. And next time if we have some question or ahead then he say when we talk to each other: "Did you understand about that thing? "What was this thing he was talking about?" Then - "No, we didn't understand. We'll ask him some of the time." So, next day. Maybe next or two days or whenever it happens, if we find him in mood. Then we'll go up, and show that we are respect, sit down beside him, and then they say: "Tell us about this guy." [laughs] – "If you show you're interested." You know, I guess it must have been funny, us the little boys to come and sit around, eh? [laughs]. And yet he just couldn't say no. So he begin. Begin to explain. Doesn't even have to look at us, he just smoke... It was interesting. And that's why I remember those thing, I remember very very clear. I wish he was living. So we could have visit him.

George: In a way, he is, because he told you certain things.

Louis: Oh, yeah...

George: You have a brain, which not only has the memories, but can make sense of some of them when you sit and you think. Oh, he's still around.

Louis: Yeah, he's still around, right.

George: He's still around [laughs].

Louis: But unfortunately when they were recorded him, he was recorded by the French-speaking priest, and he speak to them as babies. He spoke to them very very gently and very...what do they call that? A limited language. A limited way of speaking. For them

to understand that's the way he was speaking. But when we listen to him as young kid, you know he did not. He teach us the language. He speaks the cultural language. You know? He uses the word that'll fit in there, and it's you know. Yesterday, at lunch time I hear his son, the youngest son, his name is Emile Sutherland, he lives in - faraway. He was speaking, yesterday at lunchtime and he was ask, "Could you tell us how the old culture used to teach the children?" He almost like his father [laughs]. "He have listened to him?" He says, "Many times." But unfortunately, the man who works in the radio station keep interrupting him. He wanted specific things, to say. He wants to control him. But Emile didn't like that. He say: "Are you gonna listen to my story or you just gonna keep asking a question?" He says. [laughs]. He was annoyed by him. What, are you going to go for lunch or -

George: Heather better make something over there, I guess. If I sat with you, I'd never eat! [laughs] I'd just listen...

Louis: I didn't eat this morning. I only had Cree.

George: Well, your wife's gonna be here in an hour or two, so get...