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Hello, hello, testing, testing. Am I recording? Testing, testing...

Today is February 13, and it's same topics we shall talk about - the Omushkego people blending with the Europeans and the James Bay lowland. It means how the Europeans got along with each other, with the local people, the Omushkego people. In terms of relationships, intermarriage, things like that. For now, and the other side I have talked about how I have listened to stories about the elders and how I have, sort of, understand what they were talking about and that I wanted to... I wanted to add some thought into it, so they, so that we can understand.

As far as I know, the quick review what I have said is this: I do believe that our ancestors got along fine with the Europeans who came and landed in the inside of the Hudson Bay and the James Bay, especially on the southwest coast of Hudson Bay, from the York Factory of Manitoba, right down to the tip of James Bay, perhaps even to the east coast of James Bay and east coast of Hudson Bay. Let us remind us first, the east coast of James Bay is partially Cree-speaking people. The Cree speakers of Québec have a different dialect, not exactly as a west coast of James Bay. The same language, but a different dialect, and the east coast of Hudson Bay, beginning from Great Whale River. And right up to the Fort Hayes and whatever, are occupied by the Inuit people, and Belcher Islands, they occupied by Inuit people, and inside the James Bay, apparently long time ago, they had also used the small islands, perhaps even have used east coast of James Bay, perhaps occupy the land, and blend with the local... the Cree people. This is evidence today, you could see the trace of mixture of people, even before the European came. Once the European arrived in the James Bay and the Hudson Bay, they too, began to blend, with the east coast of James Bay. There's much more evidence about this. Let me explain, why I'm, why I have been told this story.

The east coast Cree-speaking people, from the Great Whale down to the East Main, have physical evidence of being intermarriages between Inuit and the Cree people, and besides that, after the European arrive, they also have mixed well with the Europeans. For this evidence it shows the fair skin of those First Nation, and also they... the, the eyes, many of them have blue eyes, even some of them have a very light brown hair, and the skin with freckled face. You do not see many First Nation people with the freckled face, or freckled skin, whatever. So, this is the evidence of the mixing with the European at the very early contact. Since the Hudson Bay has been visited by the European, by the Europe, early 1500, as we know it, in our history, Christopher Columbus landed in Caribbean, I mean West Indies somewhere around in Islands, in 1492. 1492, it's only eight years before 1500 came to be. Eight years time, there were many other arrivals between that time, so by 1510, we could say very easily there were many other visitors.

As recorded in a European history, by 1600 the Europeans have already set sail in around Hudson Bay and James Bay, and it was a time that I mentioned people used to have a, a strange objects going out there on the bay, and the noises they hear, and other things. Sometimes, a humans walk around, around the shore, and they have some kind of a fire sticks which they seem, perhaps, may have hunting, which they're fight the local people, and hide away from them. We, our Omushkego elders, have carried the his... our stories orally, it has been said the local people were sometimes terrified by the humans who walk around on the shore, seems to have a fire stick, that spewed the big smoke, and that was a vision for them at the beginning. But later on, trying to contact these people. So we, we, we had, the elders have said they must have been hunting - these people with the guns - for the reason that Native people are so afraid of. So they did not express themselves with each other. For that reason, they were vis... they were visitors long time before the Omushkegos ever contacted them openly.

And then, to jump back into the, into the 16th century, beginning of 1682, was already, nearly hundred years that European been in North America, that when the Hudson Bay Company formed, and it was from 1682, no, 1682 according to history that the Hudson Bay Company form, as a fur trading company. But they were, there were trades before that, early as 1600, even before, amongst the First Nation and the European.

And there were contacts, and it was in that period, we believe, also this, the, the sexual relationship may have occur, because it happens, because people live very sparsely along the Hudson Bay coast and James Bay. They could have been visited by these people, and God knows what happened. And so we have the very early mixture of relationship, a blood relationship existed then, nearly five-hundred years ago. We shall see if we say from 1610 at the most, and then they dumped this number from the year 2003, we will have very close to five-hundred.

Anyway, if it was me, it doesn't count, it's the stories that I hear that I am more concerned. And they form, are saying this, amongst the First Nations, they had been visited by many tribes within the land, from the interior of the country. They have blend well for any kind of tribes, the Ojibwas, or any, you name it, they were able to blend well. And so, it is, enjoys, with the European who came, there was that curiosity that I mentioned about the human beings, especially amongst the opposite sex. The vision sometimes very strong, and then your body decides even stronger. So these things are naturally come about, that is the only reason the population exist because of these, and there's no... there is no, nothing evil about it to my opinion. Except to the point of view of religious people, and religions, and the well-established religions that have come to point out, you know, the sinfulness of having a relationship in such a way.

Amongst the animals, we know that they did, don't establish the church but they were created to act the same way, as I said before. So that kind of stuff to First Nations was not much, it was not considered a sin as such in a view, as a view of the Christianity. But it was considered disrespect for the women to deny her husband and go after the other man, that was sin all right. But the, but the women who were single, to have a relationship to no matter what tribe, and what – a European is just another tribe, just like any other Mohawk or any other who come around and have, take the women to be his wife. That was considered that's fine, as long as the women is willing, and that was acceptable, so it happens the same with the European who came. In fact, according to my grandmother's story, they were much more desirable or agreeable by the, by the local women.

And therefore, for that reason, the mixture of blood relations established long time ago. For this I want to say, today, if we were to be able to trace the, the relationship, or

the mixed marriages, we would have to go way back then, 400 years ago. And many of those present, many of the population of the present day - you can easily trace those things.

I want to give an example of this. I may think that I am pure Omushkego, I am Omushkego, but I may consider myself, I am, I am pure First Nation. That is totally wrong. I would be a liar if I said that. For this reason, I will just begin with my grandmother.

My grandmother, which I have listened to many times, when I was young, have always talked about and brag about, and so excited about and so fascinated about, and so romanticize about her wish that she could have married a white man. She even resented her husband at time in the open, by saying, "I could have married the white man, and I've been forced to marry this old man." [laugh] Very disrespect. So you can see what I am talking about and my grandmother was born 1884, and there she went quite a ways back, and then there were others who were like that. If she can speak like that, so were other women must have been the same. So that willing is there, the willing to mix it was there in my grandmother's side. And so it was said, there were families that were mixed, mixed marriage already, from a way back, from 1700, contacting the European who landed in York Factory, and down in James Bay.

We know that York Factory is the earliest settlement of the European, and then the others follows a few years later, like Fort Severn, and Moose Factory, and, and East Main, and that east coast of James Bay, and all those places. They were all occupied and established as a European or Company settlements. And later years, the other ministers came in, I mean, the missionaries. It was later years. But during that time, that's when the, that's when the blending took place very easily. Because there was no restrictions, there was no religion yet, I mean, Christianity was not that powerful yet. And that is why I say my grandmother talked about a time, yet there was no, there were no Catholic missionaries so much at that time, very few. The, the English people who came in to do the fur trading, they didn't bring their ministers with them, that much, to convert people, no. The English people brought their ministers, yes, for their, for themselves. But they live alone, they let people alone, to what they find. They didn't bother them, they did not

convert them to their, to their Christianity. Except they were just trade with them, with the, as they established themselves as the fur traders.

And there was no restriction there, for the First Nation women to, to marry the white man, or even to have common-law wife, maybe as you may call it, and it was acceptable, and for that reason, the mixed marriage existed a long time ago. And there was no, no big deal, I mean, there was no big issue, the people, the white man who wants to join the band and he was welcome, began one, blended well, and learnt how to survive and live with the First Nations in the country. As I understand, the fur trading company felt very restrictive policies that they didn't want their men, staff, to mingle with the First Nation women otherwise if they do, they will be rejected and discarded from the job, regardless they want to go home or not. That happens, it did happen recently, it happens in, in somewhere around 1845, for example.

For example, my grand, my grandmother's father was the half-breed. The mother was a local girl, woman, and the father was either Scotsman or whatever, but his name was Sutherland. And this happened in within the James Bay. There was no, there was no Hudson Bay store, or settlement in the river of Attawapiskat, and this is where that person, Sutherland, settled himself there, somewhere around 1880, maybe sooner. When he was discharged from the company, he didn't go away, so he just stayed there, made himself a home, right at the, mouth of the river, and established himself, well, to survive.

He hunted seal, and he hunted, he fished and goose, three of these basic animals, local food products he, got it, and stored it, and began to trade with those items with the local people. Those who leave in the fall they go away and all winter they come to trade in the spring or middle of the winter when there was a, when there is what they call outpost operation took place. He met the people and provided them with the fish and provided them with the seal, seal fat for their dogs, and also provided them, other things that he had prepared in exchange for food, the meat and other kinds of food.

So he was more like a, a pirate, an entrepreneur, you may call him. But nobody recognized that, but he respected and he had, he had begun to have five children, I believe there were five. One, one boy, to be sure, and his son was called John, John and he carried his name, John Sutherland. And this John Sutherland is where my grandmother came from. And for that reason, John Sutherland had David Sutherland and Jamie

Sutherland, and Peter Sutherland, and William Sutherland and Joseph Sutherland, and all these five boys, they all have the fair skin. They all have the very white skin, and their children became to be, some of them, begin to be like that, and they blend well with the, the Omushkego people. They didn't, Mr. Sutherland who have lived there in Attawapiskat, didn't take his family with him, he just left his wife and his children, with his wife. Then he went back somewhere, whichever way he came from. I don't know where he went.

So that's just, 1800. The Hudson Bay Company have fur-traded at least two hundred years, by that time, and to think of it, there were many others, that were, that were mixed blood at that time. And, and this is what I am talking about, continuously, from the early fur trade, this has begun, up to the 1800s, 1832 at least, thereabout. It was easily happening, because there is no restriction.

And finally, the missionaries arrive in the area, and they brought the religion, they brought the Christianity, they brought the Ten Commandment. And when two of those Ten Commandments says, "You shall, thou shall not steal the women, or you shall not commit adultery. And you shall not even," the Ninth Commandment says, "You shall not even think of those kind of things." Let alone do it.

And amongst the First Nation, they had this custom that a young woman, the custom, I mean, it's more like a law that belongs to the tribe. It was stated that no, no young woman should have a child before she's married. That was strict, very stricted, restricted. Any young lady before she became adult, at that time for women, they were supposed to go at eighteen thereabout. They called them adult as soon as she knows how to do all kinds of work the women can do, it was only be called adult to the women. Before that, they were still under the care for their parents, they were allowed to be free to choose what they wanna do in regards with, to men. They were well guarded. But if the girl is to have a, is to be pregnant and have a child without the father, without married, it was really looked down, but never really throw away. They don't throw away any young person who had a child, they just take it, but it was that, a downgrading of person. It's sort of looked down on that kind of a, kind of thing. That is why, it was, it was...it was the custom.

But when the Christianity came, it even get strong, even get worst [laugh] I mean it's even restricted very powerfully. And it's sort of, stop this the easily blending stuff with the European because of that Christianity, Christian church, Christian church and its laws. And it begin to be harder to do that, but it didn't stop, it went on just the same. And since that time, it went on a bit slower, not as openly as possible as it was, but it continues on, it didn't stop. People still have intermarriages and not necessary marriage, more like a common-law, they live together, and they didn't get married because the men who came in here sometimes have a wife and they're back home, so they cannot get married. So they just stay with the women, and they have child and the white man obviously who is a leader in the settlement could be the manager you call him today, or could be a chief factor in those days, and they have their, they have their women, and so is the staff, they were able to have their women, as long as they don't bother the Company, they have, their activities is away from the Company property.

So those people used to have a little, what do you call, shack up with women? So they have children and everything. But according to the First Nation, they were married, there was nothing about that. As long as they don't starve, as long as they don't bother anyone, then they were okay. So that is existed in those days, and it was acceptable amongst the First Nations. Somehow, for that reason, many of our families in the Hudson Bay and James Bay are mixed blood. I want to tell you especially in Moose Factory. If one visit the Moose Factory and Moosenee today, you will find many names that are carried from the European names. Wesleys, Louttit, MacDonald, and...Hunters, Hunters are the English name, and then there also MacPhersons, MacPhees. And many other like blend with the French last name, like Goulet, and all this. MacDonalds is very famous name, and the Wesleys, there lots of Wesleys, Louttits And you name it.

The European names they're all carrying that name, and they are, these are the half-breed people. But they, they blend, they just don't divide themselves. There have never been, and they very little division there of, regarding to the, regarding to this mixed marriage stuff. And those people who came from the east coast, they came to settle in Moose Factory, they are the same, they are much more like a white man than Indian. But they live, they hunt like an Indian, but they look like a white man.

But there is nothing in, nothing there, you don't care about what person look like he just blend well, and the actual European, like the European who work in Moosenee, they have good relationship with the people, local people. They treat them exactly like the rest, especially now, but at that time past, they trying to separate themself.

So this kind of activity carries on in Moose Factory and Moosenee much longer than York Factory in Manitoba, the first depot or the first unloading place for the cargo, from goods from the Europe. That is exactly the same kind of a situation in the early 16, 17, 1800... Until the Hudson Bay Company decide to leave the area. And that was in...that was in 1957. So we can see how...how far back we can go about this situation about inter or mixed marriages or inter, interrelationship between the Europeans and the local people. That, that is in the James Bay lowland, or Hudson Bay/James Bay lowland.

As we know it, in the history, in our, today's understanding, we know that...the Company when it's form, was given by the King. We're told to get all the fur bearing animals from every major rivers, or any rivers that emptied into the Hudson Bay or James Bay. Well, for that reason, it's as if, it's as if you had been give right to do anything in those areas. So Hudson Bay Company had this, I don't know how you call it in English, a power to do things what they want from their government. And the First Nation is a government itself, it's a Nation itself.

And the, the Company that form and the, the authorities from there recognized these things, and they have set policies, that the staff, or the workers with the Company were to respect these things. But they were not recognized by the First Nations, they didn't know that. Before the, before the missionaries came, they really didn't know how to take about those companies, the company-men, they just know that all the white men are like this, where they come from. They think they were much higher and they got power and everything, which is wrong, it wasn't.

These were the special men, they work for the Company, and they were under the authority and they were able to do things together, which is why they have a wooden ship that is larger than canoe, and it have three, two mast, and big, and live in it. So this something that is not possible among the First Nation, it is one of the things that impresses them so bad, so powerfully – to be able to see well-functioning people working together in the small quarters of a boat, and sometimes even winterize in it.

But they also find out their weaknesses. Whenever they take one, one white man out of the group, they find him totally helpless, just like a baby. So they had to take care of this guy, if he, he live with them. So, so it seems that the Omushkego people, the James Bay lowland people, sort of pity on those lonely white men who are more, branch off from the main body of the groups of the European ventures. And when they're together, yes, they can accomplish some deed that the First Nation cannot so by themselves, even because they never work together. Their lifestyle is so different they are individually family people and they don't work together. So for that reason the European contact was totally strange to them.

That blending with them, [laughs] intermarriage? No problem! It seems that there was a curiosity that was so strong that they can overcome that fear easily, especially the stories that I hear from the women. My grandmother sort of, and the others. They simply drift into the fantasy world, and they talk about these things and they even do that recently in my home ground where, in my hometown, village where we never saw the white man more than two at one time when I was young.

We only saw the priest and we only saw the Hudson Bay manager who was there when I was young. And just recently they have begin to do that, in Winisk area, because the Winisk was the most inaccessible to reach because it's dry river. The river bed is drying up the mouth of the river and you cannot bring any, any barge or boat, goods into the river, and it denies the European to fur trade because they cannot establish themselves there, for that reason. So the Winisk River was totally isolated, and there was no community. It was a place for the Omushkegos to enjoy, all for themselves. And I was born in that area.

And it only, it only takes, it took about, somewhere around 1920, for the Hudson Bay to finally, erect their structure to call it, the Hudson Bay Company residence, and also the store. Maybe the store was partially as a, as a warehouse too, and sometimes it was partially the residence at the back of the store, of the store, at the beginning. And the...the missionaries arrived somewhere around 1880, and they increase very rapidly, and then they settled in the Winisk River. The first church they built was 1900. There's a small church, but a living space at the back, and that was the first one. And, the missionary people did not come there, they didn't stay there, they just built a church, and

come early in the spring to preach for them to, to have a place. In the wintertime, they were gone, and only in the spring they arrive and they occupy their structure. But in the, during the winter, only the First Nation appointed person who will open the church and let people in for the prayers. So, that is in Winisk. And so the Hudson Bay Company did not stay in Winisk that long. So this blending and intermarriage thing didn't happen in Winisk at that time, because we only saw the Hudson Bay manager and, and the priest continuously from 1934, they say. And, from 1930 to 1955, we never see more than one white man, but we hear lots about them.

Then finally, when the radar station opened, radar base was constructed not far from our community, and then we saw... a whole bunch of white people. This was during construction. Perhaps a thousand during the summer, thousand working men. And that is first time we saw the European...in so many and what they did was so fascinating and powerful effect on us, and then I saw myself, the results in, amongst the women. Our young women then, they're just went crazy, because there's so many men to be have, but unfortunately, they didn't know that these people were married, and they have families and their sweethearts and everything. And so, the thing, what my grandmother have talked about when I was just a little boy, I begin to see, I begin to understand the effect of this kind of stuff. I saw my own cousins, and my own aunt that were same age almost as me, they were simply, they would do anything to go and see them, the white men, just because they so handsome for them, and so extraordinary attractive. We, the First Nation young boys were just swept aside, and we lost all our friends, our girlfriends and whatever it is. Course, I didn't have much of a girlfriend at that time, because we all related. And so, they find something so plentiful, they have the headache and also they got themself into trouble.

Nothing could stop them, they could swim across the river, because the radar station was located across the river, 5 miles away. And when the parents didn't want to, their restriction which they applied to them, it overcome. The girls just simply cannot be hold, and when they cannot get across, they jump across on somebody who's going across the river. In the morning, when the men go to work, you know, some girl would just jump in and get off there somewhere and they can live there, they can survive by themself. They can hunt, they can fish and also many other stuff, many other ways. And

sometimes, you will, we would lose the girl, maybe for a day or two and sometimes you begin to worry, where is she? But some person will see it, and she's okay. For her point, she was having a, what do they call it, whale of good time [laugh] she was having a good time, she was having freedom, and by herself with the parents were, were worried sick.

But that's the effect of this, the curiosity that I talked about between opposite sex. What would have happened if it was only women who came in to work, and established the opposite there? Ever if the radar base was hired all women, what would the men do? It would have been terrible thing. It would have been a problem for sure. But of course, the women would not go after the men, but the men may go after the women, or both. They might be just as curious as our women did. So anyway, this is the thing that I am talking about. When it come to sexual desires and needs, there is no colour [laughs] simply there is no separation, there is no, there is no stereotyping. It just begin, the desire, need, is so powerful it's overcome everything.

So I see that happen myself, I've seen it. And I see the effect after that. It really changes our culture that time. Totally within ten years, we have a different vision, different, different way of thinking. Our parents would have embraced the Christianity, and lived by Ten Commandments, and pray three, two times a day; by the time 1965 was over, when the, when the base was closed, we were totally different people. We have abandoned our hunting with family unit because of that. And many of us who go trappers left, they look for a job. It totally changes the, our culture, and it ended our, our ancestor activities, it ended all the skills that we used to know, it ended the value what we believe, it was ours in time before that.

It even worst, makes it worst than it did with the... with the, with the residential school. The residential school was a, was a very bad thing, I mean it's good thing for the missionaries, yes, a great accomplishment for them. But, but our parents who were sent to the residential school, they managed to come back and they reclaim their love into the wilderness and everything. And then us, when I begin to be a teenager and then I was shipped out into the residential school, and the residential school destroyed my love of land, destroyed my happiness in the, in the wilderness. My happiness to be with my family, and my friends, to enjoy hunting and to satisfy the little things that we have. After that, it took a long time before to get back to that kind of way of thinking.

And then when this radar base came in 1955, it totally wipe out all the old ancient, old traditional practice, and didn't, and enjoyment of the wilderness – it was gone. It never, we never had it back again. And because of this situation about, our young women having the curiosity, satisfaction and desire, fulfillment of the sexual needs, it also destroyed and further blend other, blend mean, mixed relationship, mix. Mixed blood, they were many more. The illegitimate children running around after ten years. And now we have those as an adult, now they're grown up, that's thirty-five years ago. They have forty years or thirty-five years old half-breeds, but they don't even know they're half-breeds, they just think they just there. They don't even know what the, what the Native mean, almost, they just people, they just Winisk people.

And all along James Bay it's like that, all the towns that you see in James Bay, they are like that. There is no, there is no separate feeling about being half-breed, and then they blend very well. There are very few families that are still intact as a First Nation, a blood, a pure blood, it's not there, actually, but a few think they are. And that's the thing that I was gonna, that I want to talk about, this mixed marriage and mixed, interrelationship, and what happened in that area. I know this, because I travel a lot, I travel across Canada, and I see those things, and I can feel them, and I can witness it.

And I see other parts to the opposite way, and I wanted to mention about my story that, that the James Bay lowland in where they called the Omushkegos, they are the most easily blending to any situation to my understanding, and they're very innocent really, they don't know what, they don't seem to understand that, you know, blending is somehow losing your own culture, and losing your identity.

But it's coming now, it's really coming, it's begin now to talk about organizing the Métis, you know, the half-breeds. They trying to, trying to establish themself in such a way, because it seems that they can get more easily access to the benefit of the, of the European style. Those who are half-breed, in that part of country, they did this, any other place. And they're treated respectfully, I would say. And, the one that considered themself a Native, First Nation have a treaty, they have a rights, different rights. And it was the religion that makes it, makes it do that. The religious point of view created this separateness, and also the...the coming of modernization in that area. After 1955, and 65, it began to have more...European regulation come along in that area, and more services

were offered to the people, and then more, the federal government and provincial government begin to provide services, because they're the ones who force people to move in, into the community. And those who are blend with the white peoples...mixed marriage, easily settled into communities.

And the First Nations that used to be in the bush, they were pulled into the community by force of these many things. The residential school started that, and then finally when the public schools were established or community schools, that's what hold people in community. And that was exactly the purpose, what the federal government was trying to do. That was its job. To de-Indianize the people, by any means, even to blend them with the rest of the Europeans. By any means, I mean, that was one part of the things that was said, was to be a use. Okay, I am now have to stop this.

A little bit more additional information. I was just thinking as I begin to stop that...I don't know whether if, if I should say this. I know, I know myself as I watch my people in my, my relatives and everything, in that Hudson Bay and James Bay lowland, there is an expression that is always been used amongst people. For example, when a man thinks he's great, he is accomplish something satisfaction to his, his pride is very, his ego is been energized, what shall I say? If he has accomplish something which more than he expected so he call himself esiya ochipwemistikoshiiw That's the expression he use, he says, esiya- means, it's an expression that says "Oh wow!"

Now, the expression, they say, wachitapwewemistikoshiiw it is, "That's exactly the white man." This is the expression they use when they proud of themself, when they think they have accomplished something, maybe even better than next guy. So this is that, idea is there, that they want to be more than what they are, they want to be like other people and they have a very strong impression what the...what the wemistikoshiiw can do.

So that's the thing that is very, very noticeable in each, community. It's this...we, or I don't know how to say it, they, we seems to be very proud of ourself when we accomplish something, and compare yourself to the, to the European, and that has been the thing from since the beginning of the contract, contact I mean. And it still exist today. In, in the real meaning of this is that our First Nation are willing to adapt. They are even eager to be like the rest of the European, but they don't really think "I am

separate, I am different, and than anyone, and I want to keep separate.” No. It doesn’t work that way in Hudson Bay, and James Bay. They actually want to blend and be, be exact the same as, as the rest of the Canadians which we call the European majority. So that’s the final thing that I wanted to say. There are many other things I could have say about this, but for the time being, this may bring today’s outlook of the First Nation in James Bay lowland. Thank you.

Our people who lived, were known as Omushkego, because the land is described by this word meaning the flat and muskeg land. Not necessary to say it’s flat, but it is bog-like condition in many places. And so people who live there have been known to be called Omushkegouk, people who live in Omushkeg, muskeg area.

Before the European alive, arrive, our people in that area knew how to live on the land, they knew and understand the land in which they live. They know how to live, how to survive and they know how to blend with the land, or in the environment. It may be, it may be hard for the outsiders when they come. But those people who live there knew how to live, and understand very well, dangers and... some not so dangerous spirit in life.

Seasons that can bring very hard on human life, for example during the winter. The winter stays to that area from October to the end of May. That’s ten months of the year, and the summer only is there, mostly July and August. By the middle of September and then the weather changes again to cold. And these are the seasons that control the life of these people long time ago, and they knew how to live – they follow the seasons, they migrate with the animals and birds they use as their food, and then they, also knowing where the fish will be in all seasons.

They have four seasons, a major one, but two overlapping seasons in that area. And each of those overlapping season takes place in the month of...September and to November, the middle of the November and the middle of September. Sometimes they...extend it or last very, very, very close to the end of November, and that’s a long summer. They call it extended fall season.

Sometimes, in the other way around, in, in springtime, the springtime for those people started in May, and the summer begin in the middle of June. So between the month of May, and June, and April 15, that is what we call a spring season. Somewhere around 15th of June, the latest, there is an ice break, ice clear off the ice, and drift down to

the bay. After the ice is melted down and there's no more to be seen on the riverbank, this is what, this is the season we begin to call summer, early summer. Just when the leaves begin to show on the tress or on the grass. And then the middle of June is beginning of the summer, and the summer last July, August.

By the end of August, now the summer begin to end...and the early beginning of fall. And then the winter sets in at the end of November. Cold weather come in during the month of December. And the coldest of the month is December, not the coldest but cold. And January, February – these are the two months, that are very cold days during these sixty days. And there is two days of thaw, thawing, sometimes even raining in February 20th. So they call that the middle of the winter. And then it turns cold again for the next two months, March, April, and part of May.

And that's the seasons. And all these seasons, different animals move around, and the migrating birds come early May, and they stay in the area during the summer some go far up north and then in September they return and they stay awhile and they go back, go south again. The fish move the same way, the fish, they do migrate too. And all these are used for food, for our people. And these were the action that was taken. this is the...the migrating move that our Omushkego people, Omushkego people exercise. That's their routine, that's culture, that's their migrating movement to the bay, into the land, back into the bay and into the land every winter.

And some, some lived along the coast. Those who have accustomed for surviving on the bay area, they know how to live. And they know the area very well, all of its seasons, and summer to fall, the winter, even the middle of the coldest winter, they know. They know the land, they know the shores of the bays, they know everything, they know the moving of the ice, they can hear it, they can feel it. And these kind of people that understand the bay and those who live in the wilder...in the up the river area during the winter, they do not understand the bay as much as those who live on it.

And therefore, there was a division sort of, different skill. Those who live on the coastal region, they understand everything, every movement, every condition, every animal that is there, every object that is ever existing, or human or...non-human or even any other strange objects. And for that reason, they know ice, ice move in the winter, and ice move freely in the, in the summertime.

And the ice stays on the bay right up to the month of August. By August, some, some large snow, ice will drift freely into the bay. Water will be open quite well, and it is seldom that ice will actually appear on the, on the deep water of the Bay, of James Bay or Hudson Bay. Only when there is a very strong wind from the north, brings the ice into this shore, and drift alongside. And every iceberg, always move to the east, southeast, and then to the south in James Bay and goes to the tip down to the James Bay, and then go back up north again. And goes around on the, more like a clockwise if you were to look at the map. And the water moves like that, the water moves around west coast of Hudson Bay shores and then goes to the east and then to the south and back up north again. And the water move like that, the body of water moves like that, and all the ice follows, drifted like that.

It was in those days that our ancestors, four-hundred-ninety years ago, somewhere around there, if I may say. It's less than five-hundred years ago, that first our people, Omushkego people noticed strange object and that was the ice –that usually move up, down, down east on the southwest coast of Hudson Bay – seems to move opposite direction, and it goes to the northwest. So they begin to wonder, and they say “how come the ice move that way.” So that's a first, that's a first sign of something amongst the some people who live in the coast.

And then they finally find out it was the sailing ship that appears only at the horizon. And then they begin to say “well, that's strange object really.” And it was years later, maybe, a few years later that they begin to understand these were the sailing ship, that the European have come in and sail around the bay. It was later only that they begin to study the matter and begin to watch for the following summers and tried to find out what that is. And the men usually the ones who saw it. And they begin to see it closer and they know it is man, or human made, cre... construction. They know it's a boat, it's a big boat, and it's the sails that they saw as iceberg. So now, there is a mystery, but who are these human beings?

So, some years existed without ever appearing to those people, or the people that sailed to actually come ashore and show themselves. It was later in the year that the story said eventually, that they found those ship or this boat stuck in the shore, and able to

contact those people and help...help them people to bring their boat into the deep waters again, so they can set sail.

That was the first contact. No communication much, but a little exchange. A few objects were made exchange between the two groups. There was a friendliness, there was no hostility, according to the story. I guess both parties were odd to each other, what they, as they examine each other how they look like. And the First Nation is so fascinated by these peoples' clothing, the tools, the boat, the sail, and also the skin, the language and everything. So, they're fascinated by them, and they in turn, the other people was also and the European were also...fascinated by the local people – the way they dress, and they way they are and the way they speak, the way they behave. So, they both study each other and sort of guardfully examined each other and then managed to be friends, without sudden movement to kill each other. So that was the beginning of the story about the first contact, actual first physical and vision contact.

But they said, a year, few years before that, the first Omuskego people who, who saw the human beings in the boat, they thought these were the strange people, something not human, but a bit higher, a mystical people, maybe even witnessing a myth, or something fantasy materialize in front of them. So it was exciting for those people who first who saw the European. Once they find that out, once they, they meet and together, and that was the beginning of the acquaintance between the Europeans who set sail into the, into the bay area. So, at least, they did not, there is no story that says they have killed each other.

They may be, there may have been. According to the stories that I hear, it was not so. As I listen to the other elders who speak about the past, they seem to speak to the white man, about the white man, so fantastically, they were simply...awed about those people. Awesome stories, awesome descriptions, and mystical more like. And, the story tells you how they respect those people, our, our ancestors, but not necessary feared them.

They begin to understand as years acquaintance with them, they begin to understand how helpless they could be when they are just one person. They know that, they are just simply not fit to live in this part of land. But in the, in the boat, as a unit, as a group, then can perform what one man cannot do, and the courage they have to sail into

the open water, is what mystified our forefathers so much. They found them, in their own words to describe kihchi mitewak that means the “powerful spirit people” like Mitew, like a shaman, they’re sort of, take them in like that. And that’s a great respect of a human to, to say that...for someone to say he is a kihchi mitew or to say tapwemamaskachtokosiiw. Mamaskatch is the, in the mystical vision or...a terminology that is used when you are mystified and awed and fascinated and feared even blending, and that’s what maskatentahowin.

So this is how they talk about the, our ancestors talk about the first white men. And there are many things they do not understand. They don’t understand how did they get to be this way, and they also wondered about them being just men, and women, and there was a big question there, they must be some kind of a Gods, don’t even need women out here. And they, they really didn’t understand how did they do it, because the, our First nations, they are not, they are not complete if they don’t have their women around with them. They need women to help them, to work for them and to look after them as they look after their women. So, all this, to see a bunch of men by themselves in such a far distance in where do they come from? How do they manage? And this is something that mystifies our forefathers.

As the, as the white men begin to, more acquainted closer with the Omushkegouk, when they begin to trade. And with the little objects first, and both were apparently, were, were willing to trade the small items. And as I understand my fore, my grandfathers, they say when they saw the white men with guns, that’s also really terrifying for the moment anyway, which they call a ‘thunder stick.’ That’s a gun, they called it first ‘thunder stick,’ and then they called it ‘fire stick’ after it. So they, that was the name for the gun, and they see how powerful it is, and how...how hunting, it be so useful, be, be so easy if they had such weapon.

And, and in the war, if they were not, they don’t, they really, they were not the warlike people, they Omushkegos, no. They would not organize the war party and travel the distance to go try to conquer people out there. No, they didn’t have that kind. But they sure would fight if somebody come and bite, bothered them. And there were many such stories about that. And this is what they thought: if there was a danger about the war, these fire sticks would come very handy, that’s what they thought. The men, at

least, that's what fascinate them. And then the next thing that's, next thing to the gun, I think the most important was the steel axe, how durable it is, how sharp it is, and not like stone axe, or bone axe, or anything like that. A knife, a steel knife, such thing was highly honoured by our First Nation.

And they, the European recognized that, they recognized how the First Nation totally fascinated by these, these weapons and equipment. And they also in turn the European, the white man, they were also fascinated by those people, and a few other things, and formed the idea of trade the goods with them, and show something at home, what they find. That's what the European history explain how it is. But ours, it's not like that, our ancestors didn't, talk about the trade as a key thing there is, but they experience it. They were very interested in getting their equipment of the war with the European, and they do anything to, to please them, and to make an exchange. And that was the beginning, the beginning of the relationship to the, of the two nations.

And then later on, as they came, and then established, the European began to establish itself on the Hudson Bay and James Bay area. And they begin to set up their stores for trading goods, and then they settled and had their, and their, when they're in closer home in a different manner as native person. And this continuously brought in a mystery to these, our ancestors who lived very simply, who only have the mobile home, or just temporary home, in each season wherever they go. So, they see the European settle into one place, it was something odd, that's something that they don't think it's right to be done, because their knowledge of the land, it's...it's not right to stay in one place.

So they have their own, they have their own reasoning why, why those people never actually established any community, or even to build a house like what the white man does when they arrive. The forts, yeah, actually, that's what actually mystified them, you know, why they had to make a fence around you. So that's just the habit of the white man, the fort's to protect themselves. And so it was.

And then finally, to come to the, about other relationship and the curiosity that exist amongst them, is the man who came, didn't have no wives, didn't have no females, so they didn't have any, any family with them. So when they came, they seem to be, one side of thing, it's not complete when there's no women. So the First Nation thought, they

say: “where are their wives? What do they do? How far are they?” So they never saw a white women, in Hudson Bay for long time. And at the, at the same time, the European men who are here, as, as any healthy man would be, always have the desire for having a woman, and thinking about their own wives that they left so far distance across the sea. The poor guys must have starving for love, a woman touch, a woman voice, a woman behavior, they must have really suffering. So anything that looks like how you, female, would have attracted them, because they would be starving for women companion and a desire for the woman body and sex.

This is the truth. And that’s what caused the relationship to begin much more intimately – according to the stories that I have heard from my, my ancestors, listening to my own grandmother tell the story how, how she was so fascinated by the man who has a red hair, and a blue eyes or green eyes, and, and freckled skin, and the red face, and pale white legs and body. These was totally, strongly overwhelmed for her curiosity to have a man by, by that kind.

So there was a little bit of a... Adam and Eve situation where Eve, according to the European story, was lured to the apple, and told she can have it even though the Great Spirit said, “No, you shall not eat.” So, this woman who pick up the apple and give it to her husband. ’Cause in that situation was, repeated according to our stories. Mostly it was the women who go, and get, and be, be free, be, be have a relationship with the white man. And most of the time, the results will be that you would have a baby, and there is a first half-white person, half-breed.

And according to my grandmother, of course, she thought it’s the greatest achievement to have someone half, [laughs] a baby with half-white and half-red [laughs] not red, I don’t mean that, what I mean to say is a half-breed. Okay, and it was a great achievement for them, and they really thought it was a great thing to do. And, and for our ancestors, the men, they of course, they feel like betrayed and if they get into this. They did not kill the wife, they just simply, they take care of them, and the, the young women who happened to have a child from the white man, the mother just fascinated and enjoyed very much, and the father of course, what could he do, if his daughter have a child from other person, rather than Indian person, there was much he can do but to accept the fact. Because the First Nation our ancestors, our Omushkego people, are made

the same way as any other human. They experience love and understanding, and also submit to something that he cannot change, something that happens.

So therefore, for that reason, there was not much of a fuss amongst the Omushekgo people that I know of. They simply blend well with the European in that, in that area. Not once have I ever heard that, that the Omushkego people form an army or anything like that to fight the white man, or even to make an effort to throw them out from there. And so is whenever the, the other European institution came later as a Christianity, no they did not. Some did yes, some part they really didn't like the missionaries come around, because it's sort of distorted the men, sort of, it sort of denied them to practice their own, and the Christianity is something that really totally changed their life.

The first impact was the fur trade and the Hudson Bay Company and its staff also the, you know, there is that big thing about interrelationships, sexual inter-relationship that happen at the same time, even though it was, it was forbidden by the white man side, and also the, the First Nation side. I don't think the First Nations, or Omushkego, if you want to call them, I don't think they were so severe as a, as a white man. They didn't have no law, no policy to say a native man, a native woman shouldn't touch the white man, no there was no, no custom, I would not say law, but the custom was not there. It never developed. So they just simply...open for whatever happened. They accept everything. So the intermarriage and interrelationship and interbreeding took place four-hundred-ninety years ago.

And as a result today, it is the only place in Canada that I see myself and that I have heard there is no discrimination, there is no difference. If you are a half-breed, you can blend well with the First Nation, or Indian, or Omushkego, you can go if you can learn how to survive you're just as good as next guy. And it's the same thing with the...with the, with other things, like as the some, you know, white men begin to marry the First Nation women, the Omushkego women.

They were sometimes, the Company, sort of shunned them, or ostracized, they call that, it's a simply give away, they said, you don't work, go out there and you're, it's your fault. And the men sometimes better off than having there [laugh] so they just blend well with the Omushkego people and make living and many of those have existed in the

James Bay and Hudson Bay area. There were many half-breeds, there are many white men who married, or, or the Native women, and blend well with the Native people and became just like one of them. And there's even today, there is hardly any, any resentment or any...a separate kind of feeling because one person is a white man or anything.

Until later the European themselves came in, have their roles, and statute, whatever you want to call it, the way you, looked at, and they're the ones who make rules. The Native people didn't make them, they just simply live with them. And that is what still going on in our James Bay and Hudson lowland. Almost any women can have... half-breed [laugh] you know, half-white and half-child that is...a mixed breed, and there is no great big deal about it. They just simply adapted to the family and raise it as one of our children and even the girl if it's a, it just blend well. And there's no, there is no treatment, there is no mistreatment to those people, to those half-breeds. And it is only in James Bay and Hudson Bay that you do not see much, of stress or make some fuss out of being a half-breed. In a way, it shows that there is no, there is no discrimination for that. There is no, there's no separation from the Omushkego point of view. They just simply blend well, and for the time, at the time, for in the past.

But today there is beginning to come out slowly. It is a bit of it coming out because, not because of the, the Omushkego begin to think, to think that way. No it's because the rules, the European regulations, the rules and polices and laws now. These are the ones that come into force and sort of bring this separateness and separation of, well-blending before. And it's still today, there's no well organized half-breed organization in the James Bay and Hudson Bay. Very little existed in time, and even today very less that is concern, considered anything important today.

In fact, what we find out ourselves is that, we seem to, to even welcome the European stock in our marriage, for some reason. I could explain the reason: because it brings, it, it prevented what they call interbreeding...disease. There is, it has been experienced by our ancestors that if their families and relatives intermarried too closely, they find out they begin to have a disease, sickness. They find their life begin to be susceptible to disease, easy to get sick, and easily get infected by anything, and they find that the system in their body become weak...and sometimes the children become a

sickness called rash in the skin and places, whatever that was. So they find out this is happen, and sometimes mental retardednesses emerge if this is happening. And, or some kind of other diseases, that was not experienced when there was a well-blending was practiced a long time ago.

And therefore, that is one of the reasons our ancestors long time ago, always move, always change places in a few years. As a family begin to have a children that are in marriage age, they usually take them out into a distant places, where there is no close relationship, and then arrange the marriage that way, to prevent this interrelationships, or blood relationship to blend too closely, to prevent the disease that they know came from that. So this is, was the wisdom of the elders who have taught their descendants to try to avoid. And for that reason, any, any stranger or anyone as long as he's well-liked or she, is welcome into the family. And so is the white man who came around in the area, and if he comes amongst the family groups that are closer relation, he's welcome to have a woman, and then mix the blood a little bit, and there was no hard feeling.

That was before the Christianity came in, but the Christianity came in when the conversion took place and that was a bit of a different story, and many other thing that come to happen recently. For a time being then, it was not, it wasn't too much of a consideration amongst the First Nation, Omushkego that is. And, as the other impact arises – the first impact is the fur trade and also the arrival of the white man, the very first impact is the simply of emergence of the white man amongst the Native, and other things that he brought and the things, the tools and everything.

And the fur trade begin and that's the first impact, of the, of the two people meeting, exchange, exchange item, friendship and all that. And then it expanded, I guess the European much more, more...more, more trade ideas and they done it in their life, and their ancestors and where they come from, so they just establish this, this...activity as a fur trade. And the fur trade really is a first impact on the First Nations in the James Bay lowland. I want to talk about what was the first negative impact. The intermarriage, no, no it was not a very bad negative, [laughs] it was not the negative sort of thing.

And then the negative things which was very, not actually understood or very easily recognized was when the Hudson Bay or fur trading companies begin to demand more fur, and that's when the First Nation begin to stop practicing their conservation

practice where, where they used to say... “take what you want and use it all.” That sort of policy.

Well, it begin to diminish because the way people are forced to kill more animals like beavers and otters and those kind of things. So they overkill, and I don't know for sure if it was at least twice or three times during the last five-hundred years almost, four-hundred-ninety years, have dep-,. depleted some animals almost to extinction in that area. At least twice for the beavers, fr the otters, and minks and martens, all these, and the foxes also. These were almost totally wiped out and times and begin to go again and come back. And just like any other animals that begin to...overpopulate sometimes they die, but it's the same thing happened during the fur trade. The fur trade intensifies that kind of stuff, but not because overpopulation but over-killing. And then destroys the First Nation conservation practice and the respect for the animal begin to diminish as it was. And that is the most powerful impact that is there that people notice but never really have a chance to put a brakes on it or to stop.

The intermarriage stuff it's not, was not the...it is anyway, in the long run, it is the one that truly is, diluted the purity of the First Nation. Whether if it's a bad reason or if it a good reason that is not my, that is not my concern, that is not my, my job, my, my only purpose is to tell the story – how I heard and how did they tell me the story, my ancestors, and what happened. And these are the things that I know, and I see them during my lifetime also, and it's a same thing, it happens the same. And as I listen to my elders and telling the stories about their life, the next powerful impact that comes to our ancestors were the Christianity.

When the conversion took place in that area, even if they were only one, one or two denominations of Christianities, it's really...a same, the same thing happened – our ancestors simply embrace, they simply embrace the religion. And for many reasons, it was again, it is the women who accepted the Christianity much readily than the man.

I... there were some, our, our grandmothers tell us that, you know, they found the life long time ago, when, were harsher, were much harder to live with because they were, women were expected to function just like as a man, and they're expected to work as a man and they're expected to make a home, a home for a man and children, and also to be a huntress at the same time, to feed the children everyday from hunting close by in the

house, the home. And to look after the house, look after the children and to look after the man also and provide all the clothing and sew it and clean it and... The women exactly was overworked more like a slave, according to the modern day or any other...civilized men or, or, or the nation, the European usually treated their women much with respect, and they treated them by helping them deny them to do heavy work, and that should be done only by man.

But then, our First Nation, our Omushkego people, they think that it's not right. They think a woman is only a good woman when she is a equal with man, work as equally hard as man, and that's what makes the women much valuable partner. But the poor, poor woman has to suffer a lot, and they did suffer, yes. But, they have the willpower to survive, and that's what makes them very powerful people. And they can endure a lot of suffering, they could withstand many hardships. Sometimes even much than a man, because they can produce the children, they can bring the kids, children to the world, by their own sometimes. They can even hunt for them, they can dress them, and clean them, nurse them when they're sick, even their husbands. And all this was taking place and that's what makes a women so important and that is why it was important to train the women to be as great as she is, just like a man.

The only thing that a woman denied to do was to hunt a large game animal. I don't think there was any, a definite restriction why not, I think there was just... I shall begin. [end of tape]