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Omushkegowuk Women's Traditional Practices Project



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ISBN 0-919523-20-X

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Acknowledgements

The author would like to thank the following people for their support and effort in making this project a success:

The women elders of the Mushkegowuk First Nations—for their patience and their good words

Diane Riopel—Acting Executive Director and Office Manager—Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre—for her continued support of Native oriented resource projects

Anastasia Weesk—Cree Translator—Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre—for proof reading the Cree portion of this document

Jim Hollander—Curriculum Writer—Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre—for proof reading the English portion of this document

Shayna LaBelle-Beadman—Artist—Labelle-Beadman Consulting—for her illustrations of the elders

Kim Piché—Executive Assistant—Ojibway and Cree Cultural Centre—for her secretarial efforts

Aboriginal Healing Foundation—for their generous financial contribution to this project

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Introduction

The Traditional Women's Practices Project was organized through funds obtained from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation under the program theme Restoring Balance. "This theme looks at ways to heal the community in the present and keep it healthy in the future" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Handbook, 2ND Edition, p. 13). The goals of this project were as follows: (a) to gather information on traditional women's practices from the Omushkegowuk elders, specifically individual, family, community and environmental practices that enabled the Cree people to be strong in the past; (b) to hold a conference on traditional women's practices bringing female elders, frontline workers and interested community members together; and (c) to publish resource materials on traditional women's practices for frontline workers and the public. The information contained in this document is the result of these efforts.

Each of the women elders were interviewed in Cree by the author in their home community. All of these women were asked the same four open-ended questions:

- (1) What practices made you strong in the past?
- (2) What practices made your family life strong?
- (3) What practices made your community strong in the past?
- and (4) What practices were important when you were living off the land?

Responses to these questions were recorded on cassette tape, transcribed into syllabics, and later translated into English. Attempts were made to clarify transcriptions and translations through additional interviews and through the conference proceedings that took place from June 5 to 7, 2000, in Moosonee, Ontario. These attempts are shown by open and closed

brackets ({ }). Further additions to the text were made by the author to improve understanding. These additions are marked by open and closed square brackets ([]).

In keeping with the goals of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I hope that the information presented in the Traditional Women's Practices Project will "encourage and support **Aboriginal people** [frontline workers and the public] in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the **Legacy of Physical and Sexual Abuse in the Residential School System**, including **Intergenerational Impacts**" (Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Handbook, 2ND Edition, p. 4).

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Mary Okimaw

WE USED TO GET UP EARLY IN THE MORNING A long time ago. I remember when I was young, we would get up at two in the morning. We would get up before dawn. It would always be dark when we would get up in the morning before doing any work. We couldn't wait for dawn to come. It was really good when we used to get up early in the morning. It would still be dark when we left camp. Men were more active because they would be walking. They would only use snowshoes when walking in the bush or when they went looking for things. That's why the people were strong because they were walking all the time. They never used the things that are fast [snow machines]. The people used dogs as well. Dogs would take them anywhere. Sometimes people would run with their dogs. When their dogs ran fast people would jump on the sled if they got tired to take a break. That's how people would get their endurance from walking, running or jogging. That was the peoples' way of life, walking around and using dogs to take them places.

These were the things that made them

active. People would use an axe and a buck saw when getting wood if chain saws weren't available. That's how life was long ago and why people were active. People would take a rest when it got dark. It got dark around seven, and at eight people would go to bed. That's how it was, that's the way we saw the ones raised in the bush. It was fun to be active. Life is different now. It seems we are weak. Children can't work when they are raised inside a house.

We were raised inside a *meekwam*. It was fun being raised inside a *meekwam* and waking up early. {A *meekwam* was used in the spring and in the fall. We would put up a *meekwam* when camping overnight. Sometimes a *meekwam* was set up on top of the snow if there was no tent.} A tent was rarely used. A person would wake up in an *askikan*. {An *askikan* was made in the fall and used all winter until the spring. We stayed at Swan River which is about 50 miles away from Attawapiskat.} People would be living in a good place. That's how the peoples' lives were when they lived in the bush, when they moved around and when they didn't live in the community. We would always stay in the bush. We would leave in the fall around September. When we were low on

supplies such as flour, tea, lard, sugar, baking powder and oats, someone would walk back here [to Attawapiskat]. That's the kind of food they used. This food was used for making bannock as well. They didn't bother too much with the things that were inside tin cans. People lived off the meat that they killed in the bush. They killed animals as long as they had rifle bullets. People used snare wire to kill rabbits. They would set nets as well. That's how they caught their food. Canned meat was never used when living in the bush. People got strong when they ate the animals found in the bush. People would get strong when they ate meat like moose, caribou, rabbits and other kinds of meat. They also ate otter. The otter is fast when he runs. Meat makes a person strong the same way it does the animals when they run around and are active. People also ate beaver. That's the kind of food we used when we lived in the bush.

It was good to use things from the bush. The people lived on them. The only things we used from the store, as I had said before when they would come here to pick up supplies, were mainly flour, tea, sugar, lard and baking powder, the things I had mentioned. These were the only things we used from the store. It wasn't

too often that canned food was eaten. It was only sometimes that we would buy the white man's food from the store.

IT IS THE THINGS I HAD MENTIONED EARLIER [that made the family strong in the past]. They would paddle in the summer. That's how life was. There were no outboard motors long ago ... I remember in 1957 we had an outboard motor. Paddles were used long ago when paddling up the river to our traplines. People would push the boats [canoes] just by using their arms. That's where the peoples' strength came from. The people were not fat like the way people look now with their big stomachs. They did not look like that then. That is because when they went out on a boat, they would take their paddles or poles and push the boats along. That's how the people made themselves strong by using their bodies when they wanted to do something for themselves or when they wanted to travel far. That's where exercise came in back then. Now they are using power driven things [outboard motors].

THE THINGS THAT GROW IN THE BUSH, LIKE THE berries they ate [made the people strong in the past]. They did not get berries from the store when they wanted to eat berries. They would get cranberries, moss or

caribou berries, gooseberries, raspberries and strawberries from the bush. That is what they took for themselves. That's what made them strong in their lives. The different kinds of things they used from the bush like the tea they had, the kind they called Labrador tea, and their medicines [made the people strong in the past].

THERE WERE DIFFERENT THINGS DONE IN THE bush [that were important when they were living off the land]. There were many different things done in the bush to survive. The most important of these was trapping. That's where their money came from. The people got money for their furs. They got money from trapping animals like beaver. Beaver pelts were worth lots a long time ago. These pelts were of different sizes. They were called the older [large] beaver, the ones in the middle, and the smaller ones. Prices varied depending on the size of the beaver pelt. When someone would go and sell their pelts at the store, they would get much money for them. There was much to show whenever someone bought something from the store. Things were cheap at the store a long time ago. It is not like the way it is now when you buy something and it is expensive. That didn't

happen then. The people were able to survive from the animals they killed. Trapping was one of the important things for the people when they killed animals. The pelts were also called furs. The animals were worth lots when the people came to sell their furs at the store. That's where they would get their money when they brought their furs here [to the store]. Lots could be seen when they got beaver. That's what the people survived on, from the furs they got while trapping the different kinds of animals like beaver, otter, fox and marten. There were not very many marten then, but there are more now. Other animals like mink, ermine, squirrel and muskrat were also the ones people trapped when they were in the bush. That's what life looked like a long time ago, and that's how the people got their strength.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

There were few families nearby when we were living in the bush, just three families. My grandmother's son looked after my grandmother when her husband passed away. My grandmother's name was Ellen Spence. Her son's name was John Spence. He was the one that looked after her once her husband died. We followed our grandmother's way of living in the bush all

the time. I lived with my father, my mother and my two older brothers in the bush. There were three of us children living there.

We were happy when we were living in the bush as far as I can remember. I started to learn about bush life in 1947. When we were in the bush, we were always busy. When we got up in the morning or when we did something, we always prayed. My father never went out in the morning to go away. He would wake all of us up. My father never waited for dawn. It was dark when we got up. "Get up now, we are going to pray. I'm going to go and check my traps," he would say. We would get up and drink tea and tea broth that my mother made. She put everything out for us. The first thing we did was pray. My father left after that to go out and hunt. He went walking all day in the bush looking for something to survive on. He wanted us to survive.

That is one of the strong things in life when someone goes away. The one who traps doesn't go close by; he would go far

away on a trip. It would be very dark when he got back. My father went and checked his traps for wildlife such as beaver, otter, mink and lynx. He also went to check his lynx snares. Sometimes he came home empty handed when he checked his snares. Often he would only bring home one beaver after one day in the bush. At other times he would bring nothing at all.

Sometimes when they had done this, walking around hard hunting, they would barely find anything. But they were energetic and they never stopped looking for food.

— recorded on March 17, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: July 9, 1940

Place of Birth: Attawapiskat, Ontario

Present Address: Attawapiskat, Ontario

Maiden Name: Spence

Name of Spouse: Xavier Okimaw

Number of Children: 8

Grandchildren: 10

Great-grandchildren: 3

Number of Years Married: 38

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Mary Louise Metatawabin

ONLY MY MOTHER RAISED ME WHEN I WAS A baby. She would feed us fish. She was the only one who was there to kill fish. I was born far away over there [Mississa Lake] and lived at that place until I started to get bigger. When I was a young girl, we always ate fish. We didn't use any other meat. We only used the things from the store once and awhile. The old ladies, usually the single ones, would give me something {food and other important things}. Sometimes they would go away too soon. Fish was the only thing we ate all the time. We learned to fish. The elders fished when they were trying to survive. They let us fish and set nets. The two old ladies would be doing things for themselves when they were trying to survive for their children. That's where I was born, at a place they call big lake ... Mississa Lake. That's where I was born. We would be there all winter until we started getting bigger. It was always fish that we ate and nothing else. We did not even put salt on our food when we ate, nothing. We ate it just like that. It was so pitiful what I saw. That's what I did ...

IT WAS ONLY MEAT THAT WE USED FOR THE family. The children were taught from their parents when they started to get bigger. They were taught what wild meat to use. That is how they were taught. They would kill fish and other animals. We would be moving and staying throughout the bush when we were young.

IT WAS ONLY MEAT THAT THEY USED. THE people, who lived long ago, never used the white man's food. Our food was always meat, but mainly fish. The people would say long ago that fish was always the best. The people never got sick too much. It is only now that people go to the hospital. What they use now is doing that to them. It was not like that before.

MY HUSBAND AND I MOVED AROUND ONCE I was on my own. No one helped us while we were living together. We taught ourselves. My husband and I would see one elder in the summer and then we wouldn't see him for a while. We worked by ourselves trying to survive. Sometimes it would be after midnight when my husband got home while trying to find food. He would be walking using snowshoes. Sometimes you could hear him coming well into the night.

He was good when he worked when he was young. I was good too. I never asked anyone to do anything that needed to be done outside. I did the work myself when I handled wood and raised my children. We walked around in the bush when we would be moving. Often we would camp on top of the snow. You see it was cold sometimes. That's my story on this one.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

... I remember the elders I saw who lived in the bush year round. They would come to the community for a short while. They would come to pray and leave soon after. I saw these elders putting things away for later use when they were not searching for food. They only killed for food. People dressed animals in the late spring when they were preparing to go to the community. They would take some of this food with them or store crushed fish for long periods. I saw them do this. My aunt, my father's older sister, was very good at this. She was the one I saw who was good. She had two [fire] pits where she would dress fish. My aunt would hang what she called a roast pan there. She would use a bark container and put the crushed fish in the container she made. She would save the grease from fish. That's what they ate. Sometimes she used different fish grease.

That's what I saw the elders do.

Up the river, there is a lake [Mississa Lake], which I am talking about, that is far away. I saw that lake once when I was walking with my husband. I saw fully grown trees where we used to play when we were young. There was a hill near the lake where berries grew. When I saw it at first, it didn't look the same. That's where my aunt and my father's older sister are lying. Another elder and one child are lying there too. There are at least three graves at that place anyway. There were many graves I saw from the people of long ago who lived at that lake.

Children were good when they listened, when they did something, when their parents raised them. That's what happened to me. Even now I am good. I am still able to dress up things such as caribou. I did many different things and worked on birds as well. I still eat crushed fish that I make for myself. My children eat them also. When I was alone and younger, I did what I saw my mother do. Sometimes people want to eat the food I am making, perhaps they don't know how to do that.

I still make many things that my children

use. I copied what the people did long ago. They brought food to the community and ate it while they were there. There was nothing there at the time, but later there was a store that gave the single elders supplies. That was the assistance they were given. The assistance given to my mother was small as far as I can remember. It was not enough to last one year ... We were happy then. That's because she was alone ... They were good because they could survive without a man. That's how it looked then.

My children are all grown up. They are all getting old, just like the way I am getting old. That's what the people said to me when they made fun of me. You're a young woman and you don't have any white hairs yet they would tell me laughing. "You're just saying that, you're just making fun of me," I told them. When I was a young woman, I did not work inside the house. I was always outside working. I was good when I walked around outside and worked on rabbit snares. I cared for these snares and I reset them. That's how it looked then. Sometimes I snared many rabbits. I could hardly carry them home even after I checked only three [snares]. That's what I did. I did that all of the time when I was a

young woman. My older brother, the one that is alone, did that also. I got wood for two houses. I thought it was nothing when I used to chop wood then. The way I am now, I can't chop or split wood.

The doctor told me my breath is too short, but I am still able to do things. I prepare caribou hide and stretch it too. I sell it after I smoke it, when people want it. Now I don't do that too much since I've been alone. I don't feel like it too much either.

It is hard when something goes wrong in the family that they have been with. That's what happened to me. My grandchild left me last year. I suddenly lost my grandchild. It was hard because I lost my grandchild in one day. It was really hard and I felt it.

This is the way people lived a long time ago. I saw what people did when they came to meet in the community, especially when they came from far away. My parents and the other old lady, the ones that lived long ago, prayed well, not like the way it is now. They prayed twice a day. They did the same thing when they lived in the bush. They prayed. They kept Sunday in a good way. No work was done;

they looked up to the Lord. That's because they knew He was looking after them. They knew the Lord. That's the way I saw those elders. Our parents made us pray the Lord's prayer, the one that's important, before we went to bed. That's the one they used when they prayed. They taught us to pray and they taught us to write. That's where I began to know the Bible, that's where I began to recognize it. They kept the praying to themselves.

The elders I talked about, the ones I will talk about now, the one called Janet Nakogee, her mother and my mother, used one boat [canoe] trying to survive for their children. They came far from the bush a long time ago. They were women too. You must have heard about the Attawapiskat River that goes to a lake far away. That's where they would always go. That's the only place where there were things they could live on when we were small. They walked along the river. There was nothing yet that could be used [like motors]. Only a sail that they carried with them was used on a boat, as far as I can remember when I was young. That's how those elders looked. They used to feed on fish only. Fish was the one food that was important. The Lord made fish for the people to use and live on. That's what I

find the Bible says. We were told by your parents that we will have the hardships they encountered. That's what I went through for my mother.

I was pulling a sled for five years while looking after my children. Five years seems like a long time. It was not really hard for me when I was looking after them and caring for them when we were travelling. There were many children we cared for.

My husband did not think it was hard for me to look after my mother. We looked after her properly until the time she died. It was hardly three years that my mother used her [Old Age] check before she passed away. It was not hard for me when she left. That's because I paid her back for all of the times I gave her a hard time. I did whatever she asked me to do. That's why I was not so sorry when she left me.

A lot of times, I talk to the people who have hardships. I tell them how to use the things the Lord has given them. It was the same with Theresa. I went there when her husband left her. I was right there when he passed away. She was sitting in the resting room. That's what I did when I was looking at him after he left this world. I

was there when I saw him taking his last breath. I was happy the Lord gave me the strength to work on him. I closed his eyes when he appeared to looking. It is not that I am very strong, but that the Lord has given me something that I can do. I deal with many people who have passed away. That's why I am glad the Lord is helping me, because I am not that strong.

They say that it helps someone live when they do something good to another person in this world. That's where one will see how the Lord will reward them. I can go anywhere by myself even when I am alone. I don't think I am alone even when

I am by myself and still live in the family way. Only the Lord asks me to walk with Him. That's all I am going to say.

— recorded on March 18, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: June 3, 1923

Place of Birth: Attawapiskat, Ontario

Present Address: Attawapiskat, Ontario

Maiden Name: Fireman

Name of Spouse: Emileon Metat

Number of Children: 12

Grandchildren: 60

Great-grandchildren: 10

Number of Years Married: 57



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**Mary Theresa
Kataquapit**

THE MOST IMPORTANT THING IN OUR LIVES IS the spiritual life. It is the first thing in our lives. We are all strong once we take that spiritual way of life and all of the things our parents taught when they asked for something to be done — the things their children could use. These are the things we used when our parents raised us. These good things are traditional meats such as moose, caribou, fish, rabbits and partridges. That's how it was for me when I was growing up and when I was living with my parents.

AS FOR THE OTHER QUESTIONS, I WILL PUT them together because they sound pretty much the same. These are all of the things they used food wise. These are the things that were taught, for us anyway, when we were being raised. {They taught us syllabics, praying, cutting wood, setting nets, fishing, snaring rabbits, skinning animals and tanning hides.} These are the things we used. These were the things they respected, the bush things and the beaver, all these things. Otter, mink, muskrat and lynx, these are the things they ate. They must have respected all these things because they lived in the bush. {They showed us to respect things by talking to us and doing what they told us.} These are the things our parents taught. We went through difficult times when we were with our parents when they moved around in the bush. They were looking for something to help us survive. They made some money from trapping, but only when people were able to trap animals.

I didn't really do any trapping myself. I wanted to help my parents by doing things. I would help my mother when she skinned animals. My mother was very happy when I helped her. She was doing

things by herself. Once I was able, I started to help her. These were the teachings — the traditional teachings. She taught me to skin all kinds of animal furs. I would do the things my mother taught me. I tried to do all of the things that my mother taught me. I tried to do all of those things. I prepared moose hide and caribou hide.

I did everything while my mother was away. She went to the hospital. {She was in the old hospital in Attawapiskat. Later, my mother went to the Moose Factory hospital. When she got sick again, she went to the hospital in Toronto.} I did all of the work that my mother had been doing while she was away. I looked after my siblings too. I often think back on all of the things she taught. That's how the younger generation should be like now. They should be using the things that their parents taught them, which were in turn learned from their parents. Children should go ahead and do what they had been taught. I know that life is different for the ones who are growing up now.

If they wanted to do these things, if they really wanted to do them, they should use

the elders' teachings taught to them. Children would benefit from the spiritual life. They should use these things and take them in a good way instead of taking those things in our community that are troublesome. It is sad when the things in our community cause trouble. I am hoping that something different can be done for all of the young people. I hope they try to do things in a good way to better their lives and their children's lives, especially those who are bringing up children now. I hope they think about things to make their children aware of their future lives. {Alcohol and drugs, smoking up and taking pills, are the main problems in our community for the young people.} I am finished with my story, which I agreed to do. But from what I think, we have to try to motivate the younger generation.

THE THINGS IN THE BUSH USED [WERE important when living off the land]. I saw my parents use medicines. I will mention some of them. These are the things I saw my parents use from the bush. Willow bark was put on a wound when someone cut themselves with an axe. This is done so that it wouldn't bleed too much. The

wound was looked after all of the time. The dressing was changed regularly so that the wound would get better faster. These were the things used when staying in the bush. Another medicine was the gum found on trees. It was used when someone had a sore or when something was broken. That was how this gum was used. Wet rabbit skin was also used. This skin was used as a dressing or if someone had puss in a wound. That's the use of rabbit skin. It was very good when rabbit skin was used. It takes the puss out of the wound when someone had that kind of injury. Rabbit skin takes the puss out. The rabbit skin was also changed frequently. The wound gets better faster when rabbit skin was used.

I saw my father do another thing. He used to boil juniper. He would drink the water after he boiled it. That's what I saw my father do when he had a sore stomach. Another medicine comes from a cone that grows on a poplar tree. It was another medicine that was useful when someone had a sore tooth. The cone is put between the teeth when someone had a sore tooth. It was another very useful medicine. That's what I used to do when I had a sore

tooth. These are some things I did in the bush when I was living with my parents. That's about how long I am going to make my story.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

I have never eaten much beaver myself. I never cared much for beaver, especially in the spring when they used to roast it. But, I would eat beaver, rabbits and other animals. I liked eating them. I went to Fort Albany school when I was young. I was there for a while. I was mainly taught the Catechism and the Cree language [syllabics]. My mother taught us the same thing. She would write the sound using charcoal. We were taught a little, so that we would know something at least. Every morning and evening, we would pray when we were living out in the bush. We would pray a little longer on Sundays. That's what I saw when my parents were teaching us.

I USED TO WATCH MY MOTHER DO THINGS. I often wondered when I saw her cooking if I would know once I started cooking when the food would be cooked. Sometimes I would feel tired or find things too hard. Once I had to finish

scraping all of the moose hides because it was starting to get warm. I was alone working on them. My mother was amazed when I finished all of the moose hides before it got warm. Some of my big tasks were plucking geese, when I was the only one there, and making smoked meat. That's what I did when there was nothing in the bush to freeze meat. That's how it was for me when I used to look after my siblings because my mother was sick.

NOW, I'M GOING TO TALK ABOUT MY FAMILY life. I got married in 1962. My husband passed away in 1999. We lived together, but I went away for ten years. I lived in Timmins because my children were going to school and we wanted to help them. I went to stay with them. I went back and forth. We used our own money to pay for their way through high school. I took them back to Attawapiskat in the summer time. When it was time for them to go back to high school, I came out again. When the youngest one finished high school, I went back to Attawapiskat. We wanted to help them and we wanted to find out how many of them would finish school. They all managed to finish and they all have jobs now.

We took our children into the bush in the spring after we got married. We took them when they were small. That's what we did. We stopped doing that when our children started going to school in Attawapiskat around the time the school was built. That's when they started to stay in school. There wasn't any assistance of any kind yet. My husband would go away in the bush to trap for a month. They would use a plane when they went there. He would go there with his brothers when they wanted to make money and get some food from hunting. It was hard when there wasn't really any work then. Trapping was the only way of providing for the family then. That's where people would get money to pay for things such as ski-doo's when they started to have them. Dogs were used before this. These are the teachings, the ones we got from our parents, that we used. These are the ones we followed when we were raising our children.

I have eight sons and my task is still the same as before. I am still rearing them, the ones that are in my house. None of them are married yet, but I still have grandchildren even if they are still single.

They told me not to pressure them into getting married too soon when they started seeing someone. They didn't want me to do that to them. "You know and see some people when they get married too soon they leave each other," they told me. I told them to do the good things that I was told even after I was married. My parents talked to me all the time, even if there was a problem in our family life, they still talked to me. I am glad that I finished my married life, even if I had problems sometimes in my marriage. I am satisfied that I helped my husband. I went to see him when he was very sick. I helped by praying for him.

I still have some of my children at home because there are no houses available. I hope that they can each have a house, but it is hard to get a house for them. It is difficult for the younger generation when there are things here in our community that the young people are into such as smoking up and alcohol. I have a hard time when I see my children into these things. Everyone who has children must be going through the same thing. It is hard for them when their children do that. That's it for this one.

IT WAS A HAPPY TIME WHEN WE CAME BACK TO the community and saw our friends, our girlfriends and our boyfriends. It was fun to be there in the summer. There were games during the day. There were dances and people danced. There was a house that was close to where we were living. My younger sister Annabella and I would run to where they were dancing. We ran inside. We went to the dance. One time at the dance, the door suddenly flew open and our mother came in and told us to come with her. We left the dance. She did this was because it was the law a long time ago. It was said to be a sin going to a dance or being at a dance. It was said to be a sin just being there. That's why my mother was concerned for us. Often I laugh about that when I go to a dance now.

It was fun a long time ago. It is not like now when I am uneasy about things. These things were not here before. It is only now that there are occurrences that cause things to go wrong, it was not like that then. Now children are troublesome. Children who are small are outside. Sometimes I see a small child that has run away from home. Whose child is this I

think when I look at it? I was happy and I tried in a good way to do the things that my parents did while they were raising me. That's what I tried to do with my children while they are small. I did not want them to run far away when they are small. When they came home after school I would tell them to be inside by nine o'clock. Now they are awful when they don't want to listen.

I went with my grandmothers. I did not know my grandfathers. I never saw any of them. My grandmother was called *Cheestanee*. I went with her on the boat in the summer when she set her net. She went with another woman. They were happy when they were doing that. I used to watch what they were doing when they were dressing fish and smoking them. That's what they wanted their grandchildren to do when they were dressing fish in the summer. There wasn't much in the store to buy at this time. It was only bush things that were used all of the time when we were trying to survive. People went on the boat to snare rabbits as well. That's what they did all summer long. I went with those old ladies all the time, my grandmother and my aunt

Margaret's mother. These were the ones who would always go on the boat. I was always frightened when we slept uncovered. We only used a mosquito net when we slept outside.

I was afraid of those whom they called the Ojibways when we heard such things. They called [strange] people Ojibway when they saw them. I used to ask my grandmother not to leave me if she went some place. I would tell her to wake me up. One morning I woke up with the flaps flapping. Where is my grandmother I thought? I became very frightened. I jumped up when I knew that I was alone there. I ran down the bank and they were just getting back from checking their net. I was really frightened. That's what my grandmother did to me, my grandmothers, when I went with them. I always helped them. I washed for them. That's what I did for my grandmother. I did all I could to support her during her life. She told me this when I went to see her at the hospital. "Ah my grandchild, my grandchild is coming to me. This is my grandchild who supported me all the time," is what my grandmother said to me. I was happy when I heard her

thanking me. She passed away shortly after that.

It was said that one of my grandfathers died of starvation. He came here when he was in the bush. He wanted to come here to the community for some food. They had run very short. There was not very much in the bush for them to survive on then, not even fish. He died before reaching the community. That's what was said. That's what happened to him. He wanted to be kind that is why he had left home even though he was very weak. He wanted to show that he was kind. That's how my grandfather was from what I had heard when they were talking about him. That's what I did for my grandmothers, the ones I helped. That's how they were.

That's how the young people were too, the ones that still had grandmothers living. They supported them as best as they could. The elders who are in the hospital look pitiful. Their grandchildren do not appear to pay them any mind. That's what I think of always. I wish that my grandmothers were still alive when I look at the people who still have

grandmothers. That's all I'm going to say answering that question.

THE THINGS THAT MY PARENTS TAUGHT ME [made me strong when living in the bush]. The teachings like when and how to set a net in the bush to kill fish (in the winter and in the summer). These were the things that they taught me. There were many things done when trying to keep fish. Fish were often dressed. Also, crushed fish were made to keep them a long time. Things were dried well because there were no refrigerators. That's what had been done. Meat was dried and smoked to keep it a long time. People also made salted geese and geese stored in lard that was called *seekobaeseekan*. Geese were good when they were boiled and then put in lard. That's what was done when they wanted to store geese for survival. They were dried well so that people could survive on them during the summer.

These were the things they respected — everything that is. The elders taught the spiritual life too. The spiritual life helped them when they asked or requested something, especially when asking help

for someone going through a hard time. The spiritual life helped when asking the Creator for help or for something to be given. It is true what the elders said when hardship comes to them; it is true what they said. I do not know anything myself. I wondered how people were when I saw them going through a hard time, when their husbands and their children left, or their children got older. That's where I wonder about the things I heard them say.

They say that hardship comes to someone when their children get older. They say it's the hardest when that happens. On the other hand when a small child dies, it is known for sure that a child will go to heaven. These were the things the elders taught when I used to listen to them. These are the things that someone can be taught from the elders if they listen to what they have heard the elders say. In turn, these are the things I teach my children when I tell them about these

things. That's what my parents said and what my grandmother said. These are the things I tell them although I know that I really don't know anything myself. That's what I think about myself . . .

I agreed anyway to come here because I was invited to come. I am happy when I see people. That's all I'm going to say when I answer that.

— recorded on March 18, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: March 18, 1935

Place of Birth: Ekwan River, Ontario

Present Address: Attawapiskat, Ontario

Maiden Name: lahtail

Name of Spouse: Gabriel Kataquapit (deceased)

Number of Children: 8

Grandchildren: 6

Great-grandchildren: 0

Number of Years Married: 37


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**Evadney Friday**

FROM WHAT I KNOW, IT WAS THE WILD MEAT that helped us to survive when we were living in the bush. We lived on many different species of animals: Snow goose, Canada goose, ducks, rabbit, partridges, fox, otter, mink and fish. I even ate a small amount of seal when a famine occurred. These were the animals we lived on as far back as I can remember. There was nothing else. It wasn't like that the way it is now. That's the way my life was when I was growing up. We also used flour, tea, oats, lard and sugar. These were the only white peoples' things that were used.

We were given broth to drink when meat was being cooked. We used berries as well. I would gather them in the fall with my mother. That's what we ate during the winter. My mother would cook fish intestines and put berries with them. I also ate small animals like the owls, squirrel and ermine. These were the things we ate that I can recall. I ate mice too, especially the bigger ones. Mice were big a long time ago. There were many mice then and they were clean. It is not like now when you can't eat anything that was provided for your survival. I don't eat all the wild meat I used to eat before. I use some now even though I am no longer in the bush. I still eat wild meat, such as Snow goose, Canada goose, ducks, different kinds of fish, moose, and caribou, when I am given them.

I still eat beaver, but I don't eat otter and loon any more. I ate loon many times. We ate these animals many times. We don't eat these animals too much because we don't live in the bush any more. These things that we lived on made us strong. This is why we say many times that we're sorry we lost our way of life. I heard my husband say many times that his home is

not here. My home is in the bush where I grew up. When you live in the community you seem to get weak, but when you live in the bush, there is much strength there. There was no sickness a long time ago. It was always a healthy life when living out in the bush.

That's what I remember about living in the bush when we used to live there. We only stayed in town for a while. At the beginning of September we would go back to the Lawashi River to spend our time before freeze-up. We never visited the community all winter even at that distance. It was only during Christmas that my father and older brothers would go to town for a while. Not everybody went though. The rest of us would remain there. That's all I can recall.

I don't remember seeing my father staying at home. I always saw my father going outside early in the morning in the winter looking for something. Sometimes he would not come home when the sun went down. I saw him do that many times. I saw him tired many times when he was trying to support us. I remember many times when he went to Akimiski [Island]

because there were foxes and wolves there. He went out many times trapping for foxes at Akimiski. That's what I remember about the way it was during my life.

We were strong. We lived a good life. It was not like the way it is now when we get sick with illnesses that come to us. That's because everything was clean and the meat that we used every day was good. The different meat that we ate made us strong. We grew up well and we had a good life. Everything made us strong. We drank tea made with the tea leaves that grew in the bush. I drank Labrador tea. I remember drinking Labrador tea when we used to make tea in the bush. That's what I remember. I don't know about the other ones, the ones that are older than me. They wouldn't have had those other kinds of things such as flour, tea, sugar and lard. I heard when this was talked about. I don't think people had those things before. {There was nothing in the bush to use as sugar then.}

People used anything were they able to eat. People starved a long time ago when they could not catch anything to eat.

That's how it must have been in the past. I heard bits and pieces when my father talked about how hard it was for them trying to survive. Things used to survive were very sparse in the bush. Something must have been found eventually in the bush that helped people survive. It must have been good for the people to survive when it came from the bush. Later, they left the bush to stay in the community. I think that's why the bush looks like that because of what was done. Things in the bush will start to disappear when they are not being used. They will start to go away and the earth will seem empty when the things used for survival start to go away. That's what I think about when I hear people talking. I feel pity when I hear they want to go back, when they try to teach the young people of the land what the bush was like. That's one of the things I pity. Many things could be taught to the young people in the bush, but I think it is too late. I see it happening now.

Some children were taken into the bush a month ago to be taught what traditional life was like. No one is going into the bush to do these things. If children want to go into the bush, they shouldn't be stopped

from going. They should go if they like staying in the bush. These children did not grow up in the bush as we did. They grew up in the community. They were born in the hospital, but we were born and raised in the bush. I was not born in the hospital ... These children don't know what it's like living in the bush, not one bit. {Whoever teaches the younger generation should have experience living in the bush and walking the traditional way of life. They should be old enough to teach (at least sixty years old) and if younger they should have lived the traditional life in the bush.}

When they are told [about life in the bush], they don't believe it because they have not seen it. The ones that grew up in the bush that know what it's like. They are the ones that fought these things when they were trying to survive. There is much weakness in the community. The different kinds of sickness will never stop coming here. Meat from the bush will help us against these things. That's what the people survived on when they were living in the bush. That's what I know about the things I'm talking about. That is all I will say about the bush.

IT'S PROBABLY THE SAME THINGS I MENTIONED earlier. I'll say that I did not see medicine in the bush. I only saw a little bit when it was used. The people that lived in the bush never got sick. It was their strength and probably their hard work.

The things they did like trapping, snaring and setting nets was where their strength came from. They never stopped working. It is not like now when nobody does anything. When they were born, and when they grew up they didn't do anything, and it is like that during their life today. The people didn't stop doing things long ago. Their children carried on by learning from what they saw. They had strength by not stopping and by trying to do what they saw their parents do. That's what I know. I think that's where their strength came from. No one stopped doing what they needed to do to survive.

No one ever stayed put doing nothing. They never stopped. That's what they looked like. I had said before that I had never seen sickness when I grew up in the bush. That's where the strength came from when the people were living in the bush and how they lived. It is not like now

when sickness comes here from far away. It was not like that before. No one got sick. They had a good life. People were strong when they lived in the bush. These are the things that the people are going away from. They are getting weak when they live in the community. I know what I am talking about.

I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ELSE. IT MUST HAVE been what I had said about the different kinds of things they did and the animals they ate. That's what I know. I don't know anything else that I can say about the things that made the people strong. They got their strength from what they had eaten.

Look at me. If I don't eat any wild meat for one day, I don't feel well. I don't have any need for the food I buy from the store. My body feels as if I am not eating. If I eat the wild meat once a day, I feel strong. That's how I feel. I feel hungry if I eat store bought things. These things don't help me at all. I have a need for meat from the bush when I eat it. That's the strength that wants to be known. How can someone talk about that? That's how my husband and I are. If I drink tea, the

milk doesn't do anything for me. I don't drink milk the way I did a long time ago. I make tea broth using flour. That's what we used when we drank tea in the morning. I added tea broth with my breakfast. That's what we did sometimes. We drank that in the evening as well. No one gets hungry when they drink tea with flour in it. You can use oats too. That's what we did when we drank. We let the milk go long ago. We didn't use milk when we drank.

We drink plain tea also. That is what we do. Depending on how we feel we eat other food. We drink tea broth if I am boiling meat, wild meat. We use oatmeal for breakfast in the morning. Sometimes I make bread called bannock too. The best lard is Snow goose grease or Canada goose grease from animals that are fatty. We used goose grease when we made bannock and when we ate meat. The lard used today for eating is different. That's how I know what I am talking about.

I FIND EVERYTHING IS IMPORTANT. I WILL TELL you exactly what I saw. I said we lived off wild meat. I talked about what we lived in, tipis and shacks from wood. We also

stayed in an *askikan*. That's what I remember the most — staying in an *askikan*. It was warm in there. We didn't make a fire during the night. We only made a fire in the morning. No one ever got up during the night to make fire in the winter. It was warm enough like that. {They used plastic [tarp], dry grass and mud to make an *askikan*. Before plastic, people used flour bags as a window on top. In the summer, a tent or *meekwam* was used.}

Everyone's dwellings were different during the winter. Some people had tents. Everyone was different. No one stayed in the same place. They lived moving around in the bush. They lived wherever they needed to survive. People didn't stay in one place. We stayed in the same place. That's how it was for us when we lived in the bush. We used the things that were in the bush.

I remember many times I would be very cold when I went with my mother to check her net in the winter. That's where I found out how cold it would get. Many times I would help pull the nets when checking them. That is what it looked like.

Now I don't think I find myself too cold. I don't even wear any mitts when I go outside. I still do one thing here in the community. I am still able to make a moose hide and straighten it out, but my husband appears to be sick. He never stopped doing things until we stayed in the community. He would be doing something all day in the bush. He appears to be sick now for a long time. It must have been nine years since he started getting sick.

Both of us were young and we did things on our own to survive. No one taught us anything. We watched what was being done. It was good when we did that. We did what we saw being done. No one had said do that or this is what you should do. We just did what we had saw our parents do.

It bothers me many times in the spring or in the fall that we can't do these things any more. If my husband was in good health we would still do these things. He is still able to do some things outside whenever he wants exercise. Sometimes he can't do anything at all. That's my story. I am hoping my story will do some good.

— recorded on March 15, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: November 1, 1928
Place of Birth: Lawashi River, Ontario
Present Address: Kashechewan, Ontario
Maiden Name: Wesley
Name of Spouse: Simon Friday
Number of Children: 5
Grandchildren: 14
Great-grandchildren: 6
Number of Years Married: 56



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Mary Solomon

MEAT, WILD MEAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT thing the people used long ago. That was the only thing that made me strong when I was moving around. I still use these things. I think about that when I eat wild meat. These things are good that were being used. Flour was used when meat was not as common. Flour tea was made. This tea was called tea broth. That was the thing that people lived by. My grandfather walked around all day. When he didn't have anything to eat, he drank tea broth. This tea broth was important when there wasn't too much meat a long time ago. Tea broth was what they lived on all day. I was part of that too. I didn't have anything. Flour was put into the tea and the broth provided food.

People would feel strong even if they not eat any other food. They walked around using only this. People would only carry a little bread. They would be gone all day. They would only use this tea broth.

I still use tea broth. Every morning when I get up I make it to drink. I give this to my grandchildren to drink as well. When I still am able to make it for them, they drink it. I tell them why this is important when it was used long ago. It is one of the things that was important. Flour was important when put into tea. That's how it was used. No one got hungry when walking around all day looking for food. That was all they used long ago. That's how long I will make this one.

THERE WERE MANY THINGS THAT MADE THEM strong. I saw my grandparents moving around. I saw how they respected the animals that they used. They used them sparingly. They didn't leave animals lying around. That's because they respected them. They respected the things they used. I saw part of it. I went hungry as well, when there was no meat. It wasn't too long ago that there wasn't much meat. There wasn't very much moose and beaver then, and there

weren't many rabbits. There were some rabbits here and there though. The skunk was very useful and it was eaten as well. The fat, the skunk's fat, was made to be pleasant, and we ate that too.

The elders respected everything a long time ago. They were very strong when they walked around. That's because they used things that were satisfying. The Lord made them for us so that we could live on this earth. Nothing else was used. That's when we would leave with fifty pounds of flour, fifty pounds of sugar, tea and lard. That's all we would carry when we left. We would be gone for one year. We would get back in June. That was the food used in the bush. No meat was ever bought back then.

No one got sick before, as it is now. Many people get sick these days. That did not happen to them long ago. I did not see any of that happen when we stayed in the bush. No one ever got sick or had sickness come to them. That's what I saw. That's because the meat in the bush was good. It made people strong. That's why they had strength. These things helped them. There was no sickness in the bush where they were living. There was no sickness there that I saw, when I was living with my grandparents in the bush. That's how long this one is.

THERE WAS STRENGTH WHEN THE ELDERS lived long ago. They never had anything. They had enough of the animals they used from the bush. They respected the things they used. People that were in the bush would sometimes run short of supplies. They would get other supplies from plants. I'm talking about tea. They made tea when we didn't have any from the store. I saw my grandfather use one of these plants. He used a big willow and it would turn to tea when he boiled its bark. They also used Labrador tea.

There were many things in the past that helped people and they were strong. They didn't have anything to make them weak when they were moving around. They had their own things to make them strong. The Lord made it like this. Many people starved when they were looking for something to survive on. There was someone there to help them. That's why our grandparents were like that. Yes, there is a lot strength in the bush. That's all [on this one].

RABBITS WERE THE MOST IMPORTANT animals. There were many uses for rabbits. Rabbits provided warmth through coats, hats, mitts and socks. Rabbits were used in many ways when

people were cold. That's how rabbits were used.

Now I will talk about the skunk. The skunk was also important. The smell is nothing. I didn't hate skunks because I ate them. When we were in the bush one time, a child got sick. We got distressed in the bush when the child could not breathe. My grandmother remembered she had hung a gland, a skunk gland, outside. She went outside to get it. My grandmother squeezed a bit of it onto a cloth and she rubbed it all over the child's body. The child began to get better. That's how the skunk is important. You can't hate skunks even when someone thinks they don't smell pleasant. That skunk is a medicine. It's a very good medicine.

Other medicines were made from cedar {a green branch that was boiled} and {spruce} cones. They were used whenever someone wasn't feeling well. I didn't have a husband and children yet when we used cedar medicine. I saw my grandmother making this medicine. She boiled spruce cones or cedar. My grandmother would give us that liquid to drink. She would also give us cedar water. My grandmother would give us that to drink when we were not feeling well or if we had a cold. When someone was sick in the chest, she would place cedar on

their chest while it was warm and rub them. People would be in good health again when those things from the bush were used.

Many medicines that our grandfathers used, when they were around, were effective. They did not forget these things. That's why the people were strong when they used these things, before there ever were any medicines. It is just recently that these other medicines were here, and it is just recently that the doctors came. People always helped themselves when they made medicines from the bush. That's all, that's how long this is. That's it.

— recorded on March 15, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: January 16, 1928
Place of Birth: Pagashi River, Ontario
Present Address: Kashechewan, Ontario
Maiden Name: Lazarus
Name of Spouse: James Solomon
(deceased)
Number of Children: 4
Grandchildren: 14
Great-grandchildren: 1
Number of Years Married: 51



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Nancy Wheesk

MEAT FROM THE BUSH MADE ME STRONG, MEAT from big and small animals, and beaver as well. These animals made us strong when we used their meat, especially caribou. That is what we ate mostly. My children ate these things too.

... I GAVE BIRTH TO MY OWN CHILDREN. MY children ate meat. One of the children I had he always lived on meat. My first husband's child is the only one of my children still living. I had three children from my first husband. It's my son who ate anything, the one that is still living. I have only one son left from my first

husband. That's how he was like. I was the only one who raised him after his father passed away. He was two years old when his father died.

I had nothing to help me. It was hard for me to raise my son by myself. When they ignored me, they ignored my child as well. I would take my son with me when I was trapping and setting snares. I would do that in the winter when I was trying to feed my son. That's how it was then. I lived only on meat, fish and rabbits. That is how it was for him too. We ate the fish and rabbits I killed. I killed rabbits in the winter and fish in the summer. I was not given any help. I worked sometimes when he was able to walk. My son was two years old when his father passed away. There were only two [of three] of my children still alive then. One of them was very small when his father passed away. I carried him on my back when I was trapping muskrat. I was carrying one and I was by myself when I did that.

I was not hesitant to go on living. I asked the Lord to help me. It was like that when my children looked pitiful and I was walking around with them. I went through

that when I was trying to save them. My son lived anywhere. The other one passed away, he didn't even have his birthday yet when he passed away, the youngest one. That's how it was with my son. He lived anywhere when he was small. I gave him fish water to drink. I gave him broth to drink when I didn't have anyone to help me. There was nobody around to help me.

IT WAS SAME WAY FOR THE PEOPLE IN THE PAST as far as I can remember. The elders and my parents who lived then ate anything. My parents hunted looking for things to live on. They never lived in town. They always lived in the bush. That is where they lived and that's where the people looked for what they could live on. The elders didn't have any help that I can remember. I saw those elders, that's why I am saying I know these things. I was like that too while my parents were keeping me. They taught me to survive on my own and to stay where I could survive. I would come to learn about these things too. That's how my parents taught me.

I saw my grandfather, my father's father, and I saw his mother. I saw my mother's

mother too. These elders taught me how to kill things to live on. I did not stay in the community, and I didn't go to school there either. I grew up in the bush. I always looked for something to live on while my parents raised me. While my parents looked after me, I was never inside. I would always go outside at daybreak. When I went to look for something, I went with my father. That's how it was when I was walking around. I went with my father when he was hunting. When he went out, he was trapping and looking for caribou. There was no canvas when we slept in the bush. My father just made a hole in the snow by scooping it out. Then he made a fire where we would sleep because it was so cold. I never thought I would freeze when I was sleeping in that hole at night. That's how it was long ago.

My parents didn't let me stay in school. They needed me. I wanted to help my father when he was walking around hunting. I didn't stay inside and sit there. This is what I'm thinking about when I am inside today. I think about what I did outside. I never had any happiness. I was unhappy while I was growing up in the

bush. I never saw the community. I never stayed in the community. We only stayed for a while when we went there. When there was a church service we went to pray. We would go back on the boat [canoe] when we went to stay in the bush. That's how it was when my parents were looking after me.

It was my father who taught me how to make things. I made a toboggan using tamarack trees. My father would teach me what to do when making snowshoes, and I was able to do it. I did what a man does. I wasn't inside doing what a woman does. My father taught me what to do to survive. That's why I always went with my father when he was trapping animals. I killed everything that was trapped for. He didn't let me trap beaver, otter and fox. It was only small animals I killed like marten, mink, ermine, squirrel and muskrat. These were the only ones I was allowed to trap. I was good at killing these animals. I was much better than my father. My father would laugh when his traps were not touched. My traps caught animals. He would laugh at me. I did not really set up traps right. I did it haphazardly. He would laugh at that. I still

killed the animals in the traps even though I had put them there haphazardly. That is why my father would laugh at me. I thought about what I did. I did it to trap animals.

I also set snares in the winter. I survived on rabbits while my father was looking after me. I went with my father when he was trapping, when he was doing everything. He would kill caribou too. I always went with my father, that's how it was for me. Sometimes I did not feel happy living then. We would not eat for three days. Sometimes when there was no food to eat, we just used the things that were in the bush. When I don't eat for one day, I feel hungry. If I don't eat for two days I feel no hunger. If I don't eat for three days I really start to feel hungry all over. I feel very hungry. I remember my siblings many times, when there were thirteen of us. My younger brother, the one they call Raphael, and I are the only ones left. There are only two of us left.

I thank the Creator many times for giving me life. I did not do anything to my parents. I never hit my father or mother. I always listened to my parents when they

spoke to me. I never thought my parents were going to stop looking after me. I always thought I was going to stay with them until they passed away, but that never happened. My father told me I was going to live separately. He said when someone lives with their parents, they eventually leave them. He told me that they look for someone to look after them and that is what's going to happen to me too. I was very sad when my father told me that. My mother told me that I would leave my parents and look for ways to survive as well. So, I did what my mother and father told me to do. I never refused anything they told me.

Then I got married to my first husband, but I wasn't with him too long. I had three children with him. One is still alive and the other two have gone already. They didn't live too long. The girl only lived for three months and the boy didn't live long enough to have his first birthday. One is still alive. That's how it was with my husband. I never thought to live with anyone again even though I had a hard time trying to look after my children by myself.

It was the Bishop that did it. He told me to

get married and look after another man's children [Emile's]. A nun was looking after this man's children. The Bishop said get married and look after him and his children. These children would not be able to stay there all the time because a nun was looking after them. I never really thought about that. The Bishop asked me many times to marry this man. Eventually, I thought that I should do it. That's why I got married again to look after his children. I raised these children. One of the small boys I raised always thought that I was his mother. He called me Mama all the time.

That man cared for me good. I never did anything bad to the men that I lived with. I am satisfied with what I did. I find it hard that my children are gone and that my husband passed away. This is exactly where he was sitting where I am sitting now, when he got sick before he went into the hospital. I listened to the one I was living with, I didn't do anything bad to him and he never said or did anything bad to me. I am satisfied that I did right, when he looked after me good and that I listened to him all the time. I did as much as I could for him while he was sick. He was in

the hospital for two years before he passed away. I went over there to Moose Factory where he passed away. I saw him when he passed away. He talked to me there. I didn't know he was almost ready to pass away. I thought he was just sleeping. "Do you want to sleep?" I asked him, and he said, "Yes." His eyes started to close and his mouth started to close as well. I spoke to him saying, "I will go for a while, you sleep, and I will go and eat. I will come back again," I told him. He said, "Okay." I took the holy water and sprayed it on him before I left. Let him sleep I thought. He placed both his hands on his chest and I thought he was sleeping. His head was sweating when I touched him. He lifted one of his hands and he looked as if he wanted to make the sign of the cross. I'm going now I told him. "Okay," he said. "Can you hear me?" I asked him. He said, "Yes." That was the last time he spoke. When I got up, I began to spray him with the holy water. It was then that he was started to go away when I left. When I came back, he was gone. I was with my son. He came and got me. They want you to come he told me. I knew that he had passed away when I went there. I had thought he was sleeping. I was

content that I saw him when he passed away and that is what satisfies me.

It doesn't seem as if he passed away a long time ago. I think it seems like today. I never forgot that and I still find it hard. It's my prayers that help me. I get up during the night to pray. I didn't sleep too much after he passed away. I couldn't think otherwise. I couldn't forget and it helps me when I pray. That's how it was for me.

I stay here at my house. I always do something inside the house. I didn't want to go when they wanted to put me in the senior citizens home. I didn't want to go there. The elders sleep all the time there. I don't sleep too much. That's why I don't want to go there. I tell them that I'll come there when I can't do anything for myself. They ask me too much when I tell them that. I'm still able to do things inside, but I can't walk around outside. I walk around inside the house. I do everything. I cook and I keep the house clean. That's what I do. Thank you for coming here to speak to me.

IT WAS IMPORTANT WHEN YOU PRAYED [LIVING in the bush]. It helps when you pray.

That's what my parents taught me to do. They taught me to pray when I got up, to pray when I went to bed, and to pray during the day when I am not working. They taught me to pray and to read books. That is what I did. My parents taught me to survive. I read all the books when I didn't go out. I read all the books my father and my mother taught me. Praying is one of the important things. That's one of the things that is helpful when living. My parents prayed all the time; they prayed in a good way all the time. They prayed in the morning and before they went to bed. Praying is one of

the important things. Nothing else is important. That's all I'm going to say ...

— recorded on March 14, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: August 1, 1913

Place of Birth: Winisk, Ontario

Present Address: Fort Albany, Ontario

Maiden Name: Sutherland

Name of Spouse: Emile Wheesk

Number of Children: 6

Grandchildren: 3

Great-grandchildren: 1

Number of Years Married: 46

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Theresa Metat

I WAS ALWAYS IN THE BUSH AND GREW UP THERE when I was young ... My parents lived in the bush. That's what I mean when I said we lived in the bush. We lived along the Albany River at a place called Kashechewan (Old Post) and at Kapiskau further north near Attawapiskat. We lived in the bush all the time. We didn't use any of the things I see now. It was always sugar, lard, tea and oats. That's all we used when we were living in the bush.

We used different kinds of bush meat. We used different kinds of animals such as moose, caribou, rabbits and partridges. When my parents set nets, we used all kinds of fish.

We never stayed in the community [Old Post] too much. It was only when we got bigger that we stayed there. My father put me in school when I was six years old. My younger sibling came with me. Her name was Emelda. She was five years old and we stayed at school there for three years. We never went to school again after that. We learned how to write syllabics and read the bible in school.

That's how we lived all the time. We lived in the bush all the time that our parents looked after us. Everything went well while we lived in the bush. We travelled back here in the month of June and stayed for two months. We would go back on the boat in September and live in the bush again. We would be there all winter until we got back here in June.

We would work in the summer. My father would always work in the summer on the boat, the one that used to go around the bay. I don't think you saw that boat. The boat was used to transport children to school. There were many that were looked after there. The boat belonged to an Oblate brother in Fort Albany. It was called *Boshemae's* boat and was about 30 feet long.

The people would shoot their firearms when the bishop came or left. That's what the people would do when an important person came here. That's what the people would do when they respected a person's departure or arrival.

WHEN THEY WORKED, AT THE THINGS THAT ARE done every day from what I know, they got up early in the morning. That is what was done. People would pray in the morning when they got up. They would never lie down just to lie around. The people always moved around. We lived in what they called a *meeteekwam*. In the spring, I think it was around March, we would go into the bush and watch for [Canada] geese, the ones that come here and stay during the summer. We would stay in the swamp. That's another way we would change our lifestyle when spring came.

That's how my parents lived. They prayed in the morning and in the evening as well. The only things we used were bush meat. My father would always hunt, but he was never in very good health. He was sick. My father could hardly move when he cared for us. We always stayed in the bush. It was only in the summer that we came to stay in the community.

I had mentioned before that my father would work in the summer, when they wanted to use him. They used to bring people here. They would go around in a boat to Moosonee and Fort George. The boat went all over, even to Winisk. They used that boat to take children to school. There were many children who came to school here a long time ago when I was going to school. There were about a hundred girls and a hundred boys at the school. That's how many children were looked after a long time ago. The building where I used to go to school burnt down. It was just recently this new building was made. This is where my children went to school.

That's what the elders did, the elders that lived in the bush. They used anything, flour, tea, sugar, oats and lard, that's what they used. They didn't use any of the things we see in the store. Those things were never there. There wasn't any pop, but I remember Jell-O though. I also saw big raisins and other things such as dried apples that they called ears. There were no other sweet things, just those things they called ears. That's what these sweet things looked like. There was not a variety of sweet things then. I think it was in 1965 when they started to have many different things in the store. That's when the people

started to live here, but I don't know what happened a long time ago.

My mother was sick with sugar diabetes. I don't know how she got that when we were always living in the bush. I don't know where it came from, but my mother had diabetes anyway. Her name was Charlotte Koostachin before she got married. It was diabetes that was destroying her. She was in the hospital for seven years and she couldn't see. That's where she passed away. She was brought here after being taken to different places. There were thirteen of us together, seven men and six women.

IT MUST HAVE BEEN THE WILD THINGS USED that made them strong. That's what must have made them strong, when they moved their bodies a lot when they were in the bush. They never stayed in one place like the way it is now here in the community, staying in one place. They always lived in the bush, always, always. It was only when something happened that they would not be in the bush. They never asked for anything like the way life is now.

They wanted to look after themselves when they were in the bush. My grandfather was able to do that, the one in the picture over there. His name was

Xavier Koostachin. He lost one leg and still lived in the bush. It was the same with my grandmother. They lived in the bush all the time. Even when they were old, they still lived there. That's where my grandfather passed away. My grandmother passed away at Moose Factory. Her name was Mary Koostachin. That's how I remember it. I don't really remember everything. That's all I remember when we lived in the bush. They would always, always, put me in school. The elders would always go on the boat after putting their children in school. That is what I remembered.

IT WAS NOT LIKE THAT THE WAY IT IS NOW when someone raises their children. The elders nursed their children a long time ago. The broth they gave their children to drink was the food they would pass around. There was nothing like the milk being used now. I used to see it [condensed milk], but I don't see it now. The milk they used was thick. It was sweet, a lot thicker than the milk used now.

It's the same with what they called dry milk. That milk was really good. It used to be sold in a big tin container. The manager would scoop it up when he had it. That's what I remember when the milk

was used that way. They would nurse their children the way I had seen them when I was young. That's what I did too. I nursed some of my children when they were small. It is just recently that bottles came. I never saw bottles a long time ago. It is just recently that people started using bottles to feed their children. That's all I remember.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

I was in school when I was six, seven, and eight years old. I was not put in school again after that. I was always in the bush where I helped my mother look after my siblings. I was the one that looked after my siblings. I stayed with my grandfather whose name was Xavier Koostachin. He only had one leg. Xavier used a stick when he walked. He was very good and he survived by himself. It was he who taught us.

When I was young, I started to live in the community. My parents looked after me well. We never ran around like the children today. Now they want to run their own lives. We were not like that. Parents were very strict long ago. It was the same for our grandmothers and grandfathers. I have no control over my grandson now. When he is gone for a long time, I can't go and look for him because I

can't walk. I have to use the police to look for him. Children are bad now. In the past when a child was born out of wedlock, the priest tried to find out who the father was or tried to find out the last name. Now they don't do anything when a child is born to a single parent. Women didn't have control over who they would marry. The elders would call someone to come and see if they wanted to marry a woman. That's what happened with my husband back then. He came to see my parents and asked for my hand in marriage. I almost did not want to do it. My parents talked to me and told me that's how life was. I cried then. It was about a week later that we got married. Back then there were no wedding announcements.

— recorded on March 14, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: February 25, 1928
Place of Birth: Kashechewan (Old Post), Ontario
Present Address: Fort Albany, Ontario
Maiden Name: Sutherland
Name of Spouse: Abraham Metat
Number of Children: 11
Grandchildren: 28
Great-grandchildren: 17
Number of Years Married: 53



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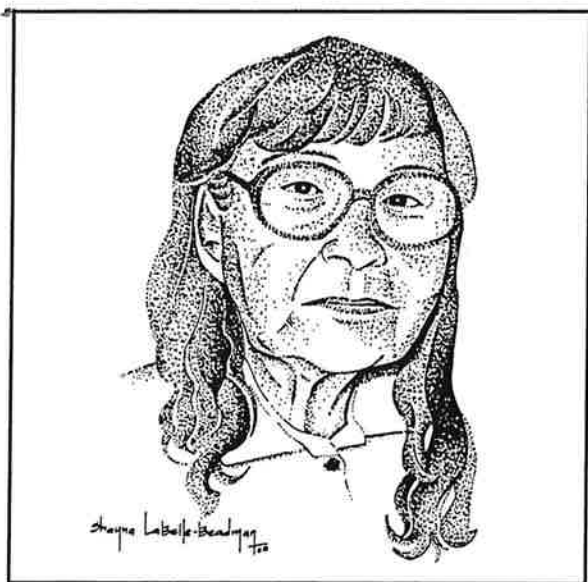
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**Beatrice Faries**

WHAT MADE ME STRONG IS THAT THERE WAS hardly anything going on for Native women. So, when this lady came and set up a homemaker's club, many women here joined. There were many things we did together. Everybody respected each other and they were happy together. That made me happy too.

MY HUSBAND AND I GOT ALONG VERY WELL AND when we started having kids we both took care of them. We tried to teach them everything that we could, especially when they first started school. I always had to be with them. I had to talk to them when they went out of town to go to school. I

would phone them and encourage them to keep going so that someday they would come back and help their people.

My husband did the same thing. One reason we could help them along at school was that he had a good job. We both did the same thing with our children. Everything went fine and they were happy. It was hard for them when they left for school. It was hard for us too because they were so young. We always told them to go to school, so they could help their own people when they came back. I see that happening now and I'm very pleased with it.

I think when you're a mother you have to try to do the best for your children. I never swore at my children and I did everything that I could to teach them. All the young women learned things like house work, cooking and plucking geese. We tried geese we would get from the bay. My husband would take the lead because he worked for the government. He was operating the power plant and he would always go to work. We were never short of anything because I could sew and make things too. It made me stronger when I knew that. I'm gifted at making things, and even today many people ask me to

make things. It makes me feel strong that I can do that [for them].

Many of them have respect, sometimes coming in here and asking how to cut this out or something. It makes me feel good when they know I can help them. When my kids were small we took them to church, Sunday school and everything. I think that's why they're together. You know they're happy together. We never let them argue in the house. They listened, but it's hard to do things like that. It's good when they follow our rules.

PEOPLE HERE [IN THE COMMUNITY] HAVE always been friendly like a big family. There was hardly anyone saying bad things or anything, and it made us strong when we went to the cities. When we had the club, we would get a grant from the government. This grant helped us take women out to the cities and see how it was out there.

Before I was married, I lived out there. I couldn't go out in the bush with my dad because our mother was sick in the hospital. He couldn't take care of my younger sister and me. My other sisters Emma and Ethel stayed around here [Moose Factory]. The youngest one and I

had to go to North Bay to work for people there. Later, they found a place for my other sister [Emma] in Timmins so she stayed there. {My father took my brother Eddy with him in the bush while my mother was at the hospital in Cochrane.} We would come back for holidays in the summer time. In North Bay, I learned how white people lived. The lady I lived with taught me how to sew with a sewing machine, how to use patterns and all that.

So, I hold sewing courses sometimes when we get a grant or a training program from the government. I taught many people here. Even now the younger ones ask when am I going to teach sewing again. It's hard to get grants now or programs going.

THERE WERE MANY THINGS THAT WERE important when we were living off the land. Our parents taught us to respect the land and they taught us how to do everything. When we were around fourteen years old and if my dad should kill a moose, he would send us to go and skin it. At first, he came with us and after that we knew what to do with it. We would skin the moose and cut it up. It was heavy to move the moose around, but we had dog teams and would take some meat

back. We also lived with other families. There were never any arguments. Everybody was happy in the bush and anybody hardly ever got sick. We always had food to eat.

Our parents showed us how to work. They showed us how to cut branches for the *meekwam* or tent. They showed us how to make fire, and even how to make snowshoes and moccasins. I think everybody respected each other, that's why there was never an argument in the camp. Even kids didn't tease. I don't remember kids teasing us because everybody had control of their children. Parents were always there with them.

I miss the bush. I wish I could go back again someday. The only time we saw the town was in summer. Sometimes we would go out to La Sarre, Quebec. We would go up the Harricana River that flows into Hannah Bay. It goes all the way to Amos, Quebec. That's where we would go in the summer. Sometimes we would come to stay here [Moose Factory] in the summer as well.

We were also told to never let the head of any animal or goose lay around because that's the most important part of a person or an animal. We always put it away or buried it somewhere. We did not leave the head lying around. It was the same with water. We were always told to never throw burnt wood in the creeks because it's going to go down the river smoking and the animals will run away from the smell of fire. There were many things that we were taught. We were taught to help each other, to help other mothers watch their kids, and to sit with the kids while the mothers went and cut wood or whatever they had to do outside. That's about it.

— recorded on February 1, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: July 8, 1927

Place of Birth: Lasarre, Quebec

Present Address: Moose Factory, Ontario

Maiden Name: Trapper

Name of Spouse: Eddie Faries Sr.

Number of Children: 10

Grandchildren: 30

Great-grandchildren: 5

Number of Years Married: 45



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**Charlotte Koosees**

THE THINGS WE DID IN THE PAST [MADE US strong]. We worked. We worked well all the time. When it started getting towards morning, we would go out and get wood. After we got wood, we went and looked at our snares. When we didn't look at our snares, I would go to where people fished. We would begin to fish and look at our nets so that we could eat fish.

There was nothing long ago like the things we see now at the store. People would go outside early in the morning. The men would go out and leave around six o'clock in the morning. Sometimes they would

come back at six o'clock in the evening. The men go all day looking for things to survive.

It would happen often that men would bring nothing home. Sometimes they would bring only one mink or one otter. That's what they would use to help their children pay for things bought at the store. Flour, lard, tea, sugar and oats were the only things that were there long ago. Nothing was plentiful. Nothing else was ever bought. Even candies were not around back then. People would get things they needed to feed their families by going to the store.

It was hard for someone when they were far away from the community. Sometimes people would be with two dogs when getting things like flour, tea and lard. It was not easy for anyone who lived back then. It was very hard for a person who had lived back then, but no one thought, it was hard for them. No one thought that. They had to fight the fatigue they felt while providing for their family in the wilderness. Even when we got married, it was hard. We foraged around for food before we got married. People would be gone all day checking their traps.

They used their furs to buy things from the store.

People would sometimes kill a moose when they were walking around. Other times they would see where moose were staying. Men would go to where they had tracked a moose, when there was a wind or a snowstorm blowing hard. That's what happened long ago when they tried to kill a moose. When it was calm, moose were not killed as much long ago. That's the only thing that was brought home sometimes. Moose were tracked to where they lived. When that happened, they would kill a moose. It was not like the way it is now when the young people want to have an easy time killing a moose. That did not happen long ago. There were not very many moose long ago, but now a person in the bush is killing five or six a year.

People moved from one camping area to another until they reached the place where they would spend the winter. They would stay there until the spring — around the beginning of March. Then they would move to an area [of high ground] to spend the spring thaw. Sometimes they would walk for three weeks, when they

were moving. People would also take a boat [a canoe on a sled] with them from the place where they had spent the winter. They would make camp four times before getting to their [spring camp] destination.

When people were moving, they would use two sleds, one for the woman and one for the man. They would have enough sleds to take everything in one move. A tent, stove, sleeping gear and children would be put on the sled. It was the same for the woman. It was easy for her. She would pull the plates and children if they had any children. That's how it was for the people who lived then.

No one ever thought that it was too hard or too tiring. Even now some people are still strong from what they had been doing. The ones who lived then. The ones who pulled sleds without any dogs, when there had been nothing to help them. That's the way life was. It was hard. Now children have it easy. They just go out and take off wherever they want on their machines. It was a hard working life for the people who lived before. It was not an easy life for these people. I didn't find it hard. I helped to survive. Some people had six or seven children. Sometimes we

would pull two or three children. Some of them would walk when they moved camp. When children were old enough to walk, they would walk with their parents from camp to camp. That's how my life and other things were.

After moving, they would set up a tent. Then they would make a fire after setting up the stove. Later they would bring in the child and unwrap him or her. The man would go out after setting up a tent. That's when he would go look for something to eat for his family. He carried nothing for himself to eat, only his stirring spoon, his tea and his lard. That's how it was for him. Flour was not usually taken because it was too heavy when everything was transported. That's what the people did when living then.

The woman would do many things after the man set up the tent and left. She would get wood, melt snow for water and fill one pail with water. The woman would get snow after doing the wood. These were the things we did outside. We would dry things such as moccasins, mittens, rabbit coats and rabbit hats. That's what was used. Not the things that are being used now. It was not like that long ago.

Rabbit fur was used to give warmth to the children. They were wrapped in it when being pulled on the sled. It was the same for the *tikinagan*. Rabbit fur was used inside the cloth. That's how it looked then. It was not easy making these things. It was the woman who made everything, including moccasins for snowshoes and mittens. That's how it was for her. She would help make snowshoes. The woman would put the twine on them. The man would make snowshoes, but the woman would put the twine on them. When the snow started to melt, snowshoes were brought in to dry. That is what was done when people were moving. That's my story on this one.

I'M GOING TO TELL HOW IT WAS FOR MYSELF. First, I will say that I was an orphan. I didn't have a father and I didn't have a mother. There were fifteen of us. When I was seven years old in 1929, we lost our mother. In 1932, we lost our father. My uncle started to look after me when I was nine years old. My siblings were sent to school. One of my siblings was looked after in Calstock. After we lost our father we got separated. We stayed with whoever would look after us. It was hard for me being looked after like that.

I worked hard all the time when I was fourteen years old. I would get wood, collect snow, check my snares and keep the place clean where I was staying. We would put boughs on the floor every four days. It was the same in the summer, but we would use grass on the floor.

I never saw my siblings while I was growing up. It must have been around forty years that I didn't see them. Of the fifteen of us, I am the only one who is still alive. That's what happened to me. I never found any love while I was growing up. How can there be anybody to love me when everyone is gone who would have loved me?

I was twenty years old when I got married. I never got married too early because I was not allowed to. My aunt and uncle wanted me to work for them. I got married eventually, and I did it on my own. The ones that raised me and looked after me didn't come to the church. They left that evening on the boat, on my wedding day.

I knew what love was when I got married. I knew how it was for someone to be loved. I thought about it many times. I

had one child and I found what love was again. That's when I knew what it felt like to be loved after having a child. This is what love feels like. I thought about it when I was being raised, but it wasn't until I got married that I found love. I never thought to do anything to my husband, or to say anything needlessly to him, or to swear at him like some people do to their husbands when they talk to them. I was never like that. I thought about looking after him, and I thought about watching over him. That's what I thought about many times when I was raising my children.

We looked after ourselves and we never did anything unnecessary to ourselves. I never thought to touch alcohol. I thought it was more important to look after my children well. Even though I saw alcohol, I never thought to touch it even though it was around. I tried hard to raise my children right. When I was an orphan, I thought I was not looked after properly, and that's where I came to look after my children correctly. That's what I thought many times. It is not good for a child to see anger within a household. It hurts a child when he sees anger there. It affects a child when he gets bigger. The child feels

left out when raised by their parents this way. That's what happens. It affects a child when he hears his father or mother saying something because of anger. There is something that comes from this anger that makes a child feel bad inside. That's what happened there.

Prayers were always used a long time ago. No one ever went outside without saying prayers even if someone got up at six o'clock in the morning. It is the same thing when preparing to go to bed at night. Someone always prays. Prayers were never done haphazardly, when someone was rearing children a long time ago. They would pray while checking their traps and always pray every Sunday. People would stay home on Sundays. They would pray in the morning and at night. That's what I heard the elders say. It is only when we ask the Lord for something that He will give us something to help our children. That's what I heard the elders say when they would speak to teenagers. It is the same for our children that are getting older. They should pray at least once a day. You should not forget your religion. That is when your spiritual life and your normal life will be okay. If you don't pray, what will you be like if you

do not ask the Lord for anything? That is what I heard elders say to teenagers when they were growing up and started having children of their own. The Lord gave us these children to own. {That's what the Bible says, the Lord takes people back when someone dies. People raise children, and when they die the Lord takes them back.} The Lord gave us these children to bring up. That's what I would hear teenagers being told before I was married. He will hear you when you pray. That's why the Lord gave us these things, so that we could walk in the right way and not to say or do bad things to each other or to our wives or husbands. It brings trouble to people and to the children who want to do something bad to their family. That's what I heard when the elders would speak to the young people when they wanted to split up. I was not spoken to like that. It was for the children that this was done when they wanted to split up.

A woman was not allowed to get married before she could do things. She had to do things such as making strips from hide for snowshoes, putting rawhide on snowshoes and making moccasins. {In the winter, moccasins were made of moose hide with a cloth top which was

wrapped around the leg. If there was no moose hide they would use a canvas type of cloth for the foot. In the summer, they would use seal skin.} That's what was taught by the older people in their upbringing. It is only when you are able to make something can you get married. You can't always ask someone to do something for you they would say to the men as well.

You could get married if you could get cedar to make an axe handle or make a sled. If you were able to make a living for yourself as you see us do, then you could get married. We would trap, check snares or set nets during the winter. Setting a net in the winter was done differently. You have to make holes in the ice. Then you have to use a pole to put a net through the ice. You tie a net to a pole on one side and pull it through to the other hole. Then you tie a net to another pole. That's what the young people were taught. Women helped when those things were done. I also chiselled out holes. That's what was done then.

THEY JUST USED THEIR BODIES TO MOVE THINGS and their fingers to make things because there was nothing like machines used long

ago. A man would take his axe and get wood when he wanted to make a sled. He would look for wood to make snowshoes and axe handles. Men made all of those things. Women would make hide, cut strips from hide, and put twine on snowshoes. It was hard when making moose hide, especially taking off all the hair. Sometimes a man would take the hair off the hide. He would take the hair off when he wanted to make a moose hide. That's why the men were strong. They used their bodies to pull sleds when moving. Sometimes they wouldn't have any dogs to help with the pulling.

That's why the men were so strong. Men would walk most of the time. They were not even tired when they were gone all day walking around. Often they would go out again in the morning. Sometimes if they fell down from exhaustion they would not get back in time. They would only carry their pail for tea, flour, and sometimes bread. That's all they would have all day. That is why men were strong because they didn't use many of the white man's things.

Sometimes they would put a little bread with their pail. They would have only

enough to make one fire's worth, even if they were gone all day. That's how life was and sometimes it happened that the woman would be gone all day checking her snares as well. They would go far to where their snares were. Sometimes they would take things for making tea when they were gone all day. She would make tea broth in her pail from tea and flour, but no sugar. That's all she had.

We take these things to the school when we want to teach the children there. When we want to teach them, they should have an elder, but only if the elders are seventy or eighty years old, not those who are forty or fifty years old. The ones who are forty or fifty years old don't have much to tell because they didn't see what happened. It is only the ones who saw these things that were alive during those times.

They would make a *meeteekwam* when it got cold. They would wrap moss around it and mix some mud in a tub. I would smear this mud into the cracks of the *meeteekwam*. Then we put some more mud on top. It looked like a beaver house when it gets covered with snow. It's very warm in there. People lived in this

dwelling all winter long. People lived in a *meeteekwam* from November to March. When it gets warm in March, the people went to a different place to spend spring thaw. It was not cold inside this dwelling. It was warm when someone wanted to make a warm place for their children during the winter. That's what they lived in during the winter. People lived in a *meekwam* in the summer. {A *meeteekwam* is different from an *askikan* or *meekwam*. About sixty logs were used to make one *meeteekwam*. These logs were cut in half like slabs. Then these slabs were made smooth and mud was put in the cracks and on the top. A *meeteekwam* was shaped like a *meekwam*.}

No one moved around too much during the winter. Sometimes the men would be gone for one month when they went on their trapping grounds. Sometimes they would bring something when they came back. After they came back, the ones who were gone for three months would leave again and go to town for supplies such as flour, tea, sugar and lard.

The people would sell their pelts for supplies because there wasn't any money

then. People would buy supplies for the value of their furs. They would buy flour, tea, lard and sugar, but no milk. Milk was not used then as far back as I can remember. It was only used when children were being nursed from the woman's breast. That was the way they provided for their children. When children were two years old, the parents would give them tea. They would whiten the tea by making tea broth. Broth was given to children for drinking. That's what was done when the children were two years old. They would also put oats in the broth and sometimes flour. That's what was done long ago.

THINGS LIKE SNOWSHOES AND SLEDS WERE important [when living off the land]. These were the things that were very useful to the people. No one can do anything in the winter without snowshoes. Snowshoes, sleds and wooden ladles would be made when it started to snow. These were the things people made for hunting, for getting wood or whatever they wanted to use them for.

These were the most important things used: snowshoes, sleds, an axe, and a chisel. They were not bought from the

store. The people made these things themselves as long as they had nails, especially long nails. A chisel was one thing I saw being made most often. It was used for getting beaver, for setting a net, and for ice fishing. That's what those things were used for. These were the most important things used outside.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

My uncle's name was David Wynne. He was the one that raised me. I was not content although my uncle looked after me. When someone cut a cord of wood they would make \$2.50. An 8 foot cord of wood would cost \$4.00. To buy provisions such as wash and face soap, we would get money from our furs. Things were cheap back then: 24 pounds of flour was not even \$2.00, lard was \$0.40 and sugar was \$0.40 for 4 pounds as well.

There was no meat in cans like there is now. There was salt pork, but it was in a barrel when it was brought here by boat. When dumplings were made, salt pork was boiled with it. Salt pork and bannock was also made. That's how the old life was then.

The people took their furs to the store. We always went to the community once a month. Sometimes they killed two or three moose a year. That's where they would get much of their meat when that happened. It was not like the way it is now when moose are abundant. It was the same for the geese, there were few then. The only ones I recall that were abundant were Canada geese. They would store these geese by salting them. The wings, heads and feet were cut off, boiled and the gravy was mixed with oats. Nothing was ever thrown away. Everything would be used. If there was much meat, or if someone had lots of geese, they put food away as it got colder. In the summer, food was eaten right away because of the warm weather.

Fish could be kept for a while if they were dried. The older ladies crushed this dried fish into a powder. They did the same with fish intestines. I saw the elders do that in the fall when they set their nets. They put oats in gravy water made from fish intestines as well.

— recorded on February 1, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: March 2, 1922

Place of Birth: Kashechewan (Old Post), Ontario

Present Address: Moose Factory, Ontario

Maiden Name: Wynne

Name of Spouse: Robbie Koosees

Number of Children: 9

Grandchildren: 18

Great-grandchildren: 11

Number of Years Married: 53



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[illegible]



Mary Lazarus

IT WAS WHEN WE ATE WILD MEAT LIKE RABBITS, partridges, fish, Canada goose and Snow goose, that made us strong a long time ago. These were the kinds of meat we had while staying out in the bush.

IT'S THE SAME THING I MENTIONED EARLIER, wild meat that was killed when staying out in the bush [made my family strong in the past]. Everything that was taken from the bush made people strong when they ate it. The different kinds of berries saved for the winter, like cranberries and gooseberries, made people strong too. Gravy, mixed with water, oats and fish, filled us up as well. We never used milk

when we stayed in the bush. I don't remember using milk. We always drank what they called tea broth. It was just like the soup we eat here in town; tea broth was just like that. That's what made my family strong, my parents and my siblings as well. Meat made us strong. My family never used anything from the store. We always used wild meat from the bush.

EVERYONE WHO LIVED IN THE BUSH USED MEAT and oats as well. These are the things we took with us when we went to the bush. Oats are the things we used with the meat in the bush, with the food from the wildlife. Gravy water was a vital thing for drinking. Drinking oat gravy water was an important thing. It was an important thing when someone was hungry. That is what someone would make when they got hungry suddenly. That's what my mother would do. She would put oats in the water, and she would make bannock also.

Everyone who was in the bush was like that. No one ever took any meat from the store whenever they went to the bush. It was only the things I mentioned earlier, sugar, tea, lard, flour and oats.

EVERYTHING USED IN THE BUSH WAS important, everything. I remember when I

was young a long time ago that we didn't have any blankets. My father killed many rabbits. He would make a rabbit blanket from them. It was a warm blanket. He would make a rabbit blanket when it started to get cold in the fall. My mother would do something else. She would use long grass, about three feet high. One of my younger sisters, my older sister, and me pulled them out and saved this grass in the fall. When my mother tied them together they would get smaller, but she would add more grass until the bundle got bigger. Cloth, used to make petticoats, was laid as a sheet, then grass in a long bundle was placed on top. That's what we used to sleep on when it got cold and started to freeze, before there were any rabbit tracks and rabbits that turned white. We would be very warm then.

We were given these long coats that the priests wore. They called them army coats. The priests would give us these when we would leave on the boat. My mother would make the coats longer by adding something to them. We would lie down in a row and be covered up together. She used a blanket that she had made from the coat. Then she would put grass on next and later put canvas on top. We would be very warm. These things

were important. Everything that came from the bush was important. See how important the grass is? That's what was used when we made a blanket.

My father used wood for making spoons. That's what he would do. He made big spoons. That is all we had for spoons. We never got any spoons from the store. We would only use spoons made from wood when living in the bush. It was the same for the gum found on trees. Tree gum would be used to repair boats. My father would melt this gum when he patched his boat. See how important gum is used for patching? But that was not the only thing the gum was used for, it was also used to glue things together.

CONFERENCE ADDITIONS

... I also mention these things to my children who are getting older. I don't cut the grass at my house when it gets longer, or when I want them to get longer. When my children ask why I don't cut the grass and why I leave it like that, I tell them that I remember when we were poor. That grass was used for our blankets and our mattresses. That's what I told them. These are the things we survived on when we were living in the bush. Everything was there [in the bush]. I don't remember

thinking that things could be bought at the store for use. That's all for now, for now anyway. I will mention things again when the time comes to add some more. There is still much that I could talk about what I can remember of long ago. That's all, thank you.

— recorded on February 16, 2000

Biographical Information

Date of Birth: March 18, 1938

Place of Birth: Fort Albany, Ontario

Present Address: Moosonee, Ontario

Maiden Name: Nakogee

Name of Spouse: Willie Lazarus

Number of Children: 11

Grandchildren: 39

Great-grandchildren: 0

Number of Years Married: 45

