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Norway House Anthology

Local Stories and Legends

Volume III



by

Byron Apetagon

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Frontier School Division No. 48

Cover Picture: **Bear Tracks in the Snow**
by Byron Apetagon

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Local Stories and Legends

Volume III

The following is the third volume of stories and legends from Norway House, some of them recorded by Byron Apetagon in conversation with the elders, others based on his own memories - what he has read or heard from others. The beautiful illustrations are also his creation. These stories and legends have been collected to help educators and others celebrate and promote the story-telling tradition of the Cree.



by
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This booklet is third and final in a series recording the stories and legends of Norway House. It represents Frontier School Division's continuing commitment to providing children with relevant materials in the context of their culture and community.

Special thanks to teacher Byron Apetagon, not only for collecting the stories and legends from the elders, but also for continuing a local story-telling tradition by adding some of his own. Byron also deserves thanks for the hours he spent in creating the beautiful illustrations found throughout the book.

Thanks to the Norway House School Committee and community leaders for their interest in and support of the project. And to Manitoba Education and Training for generously supplying, through the compensatory grant programme, the funds necessary to bring this booklet to completion.

Thanks are also due Viola Menow, Roxanne Kozak, and Kate Friesen for typing the original texts, to Ken Paupanekis for the Cree syllabics in the title and text, and to Raymond Beaumont for editing, layout, and preparation of the final draft for the printers.

Finally, a big thank-you to the elders who remembered the legends of the Cree, so that younger folk might be connected once more to the stories of the past.

Cam Giavedoni
November, 1994

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CREE PRONUNCIATION GUIDE

a as in maskwa (bear), or ahead

á as in ástam (come), or ask

i as in mistik (tree), or it

í as in nína (me, myself), or machine

o as in mispon (it's snowing), or foot

ó as in kóna (snow), or food

é as in pimohté (walk), or café

c as in mwác (no), (pronounced mwáts;
c similar to ts in English)

hp as in tépak**hp** (seven)

hk as in áhkosiw (he is sick)

ht as in mitáta**ht** (ten)

hc as in ano**hc** (today)

k assumes a hard g sound when
located in the middle of a word
or expression.

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The First People

In the beginning only Kihci Manito and his son Wisakécáhk lived in the universe. Then Kihci Manito created the stars. He created the moons and the planets. He created the earth and living things. When he was finished, he told Wisakécáhk to travel the universe to see that everything was well.

Wisakécáhk travelled for hundreds of years. Sometimes in his travels he became very lonely. There was no one to visit or speak with. Then one day he had an idea. He would ask Kihci Manito to create beings who could talk and think like he could.

Next day he went to see Kihci Manito. After travelling for some time, he reached the great mikiwáhp where Kihci Manito lived.

Kihci Manito was very happy to see Wisakécáhk, but after talking to him for a long time, he could tell something was troubling him.

“What is the matter, my son?” Kihci Manito asked.

Wisakécáhk was surprised, but quickly regained his wits.

“In my travels,” he explained, “I see everything in creation is in order, but sometimes I get very lonely. I have no one to visit or talk with. Would you create beings who can talk and think like I can?”

Kihci Manito was thoughtful for a moment. Then he said, “I approve of your request. But I will leave it to you to create what you want.”

Wisakécáhk was troubled by this reply. As he left the great mikiwáhp, he turned and said, “How can I possibly create companions I can speak with? I don’t know what to do.”

“Don’t worry. You have special powers to create things,” Kihci Manito answered.

Many years passed. Wisakécáhk thought and thought about his task, until one day he came up with a plan. He made a great clay stove and started a

fire. Then he mixed soil, water, and minerals together and formed three figures like himself.

By this time the great oven was very hot. Wisakécáhk placed the first form inside and closed the door. It was shut for a long time. When he took out the dough, he saw that it was very dark. How interesting, he thought, as he put it aside.



Taking the second piece of dough, he placed it in the oven. Only this time he did not cook it as long. When he took it out, he saw it was very light. After inspecting it, he placed it beside the first one.

He now placed the third piece of dough in the oven. He cooked it longer than the second piece of dough, but not as long as the first one. When he pulled it out of the oven, it was not too light, and it was not too dark. Instead, it was a delicate brown.

With the special powers Kihci Manito had given him, he breathed on the three pieces. Then he touched each one on the head. The shapes began to move. He called his creations *ininiwak*.

These were the first people. The dark became the black or Negroid people, the light the white people or Caucasians, and the brown the American Indians.

Wisakécáhk did not stop there. Since he had created the first three people, he knew he could bake more. He found he could make every one a little different from the others. That is why there are so many different people around the world today.

Legend retold by Byron Apetagon

Legend of Wisakécáhk and the Muskrat Woman



Wisakécáhk had walked all over the forests and along the rivers and lakes seeking a wife. In his travels, he had met many creatures who might have been suitable, but he was dissatisfied with them all. Finally one day, while he was walking alone in the forest near his home, deep in thought about finding a companion, he met a beautiful woman known to everyone as Wacaskoskwew or Muskrat Woman.

Wacaskoskwew was as kind as she was beautiful, and she had a lovely young daughter as well. Despite the fact she was getting old, Wisakécáhk wanted to have her for his wife. He told her he would take good care of her and her daughter if she agreed to marry him.

Wisakécáhk and Muskrat Woman married. Wisakécáhk did everything he could for Wacaskoskwew. He soon learned her favourite foods, and every day he brought home these foods for his wife and step-daughter.

Time went by and Wacaskoskwew's daughter grew up to be a beautiful young woman, while Wacaskoskwew began to be old and wrinkled. As for Wisakécáhk, he remained the same physically as he had always been, for he was a supernatural being. He was also a cunning trickster. Seeing his wife was aging and his step-daughter becoming so beautiful, he had a plan.

Pretending he had grown old, Wisakécáhk told Wacaskoskwew and his step-daughter he was going to die soon. He explained to them that a young and handsome man would come to propose to the younger woman. He told Wacaskoskwew to accept the young man as husband to her daughter. Wacaskoskwew became very sad, but agreed to give her daughter away as Wisakécáhk wished. Within a short time, Wisakécáhk aged and died, or so his wife and daughter thought.

A few days later, a young man arrived at Wacaskoskwew's home. Before long, he asked Wacaskoskwew for her daughter. Remembering Wisakécáhk's wishes, she agreed and gave her daughter to be the young man's wife.

The young couple were married. They lived very happily together for a time. But one evening, the young woman looked at her husband as he was sleeping by the doorway. She noticed he had a scar on his head. She remembered Wisakécáhk had an identical scar. Suspicious, she went at once to tell her mother about her discovery.

Hearing all this, Wacaskoskwew became very angry. She now understood what had happened to her husband Wisakécáhk. He had not died. He only pretended, so that he could marry his very beautiful stepdaughter.

As soon as Wacaskoskwew saw the scar on the young man's head, she began to beat him. Wisakécáhk woke up and saw that Wacaskoskwew had found out the truth. He jumped to his feet and ran into the forest, across many rivers and lakes, and over the mountains until he reached an ocean. Seeing Wacaskoskwew still chasing him, he began to swim far out into the water. Wacaskoskwew stopped at the ocean's shore and looked at Wisakécáhk swimming away. She stayed there, waiting for him to return. But Wisakécáhk never came back. Once he got to the other side, he continued to walk all over the world playing tricks on other creatures.

From that time, muskrats have made their homes near the shores of creeks, rivers, and lakes. When we hear them making noises in the water at night, we are reminded that Muskrat Woman still waits for Wisakécáhk to return from across the ocean.

Told by Henry Colon and written by Byron Apetagon.



Teaching in the legend: In this story we learn to be careful whom we trust. There are people who may appear to be very good friends, but who cannot be trusted. It is a good thing to study the way people behave.

Wisakécáhk and the Loon

One day Wisakécáhk was walking along a river. He was hungry and wondered what he could eat for supper. Suddenly he noticed some ducks, geese, and other water fowl swimming on the other side, well out of range of his bow and arrow. So he sat down to think of a way to get them to come closer. All the while, he was thinking of what a good supper a duck or a goose would make.

While he was sitting there he had an idea. He said to himself, "I'll call them over and show them a new dance."

He called the birds saying, "My brothers and sisters, (he called all the birds and animals his brothers and sisters) come over to this side. I want to show you a new dance."



So the ducks and geese and all the other water fowl came over. They didn't come too close because they didn't trust Wisakécáhk at all.

Wisakécáhk said, "Come closer, I won't hurt you. I just want to show you a new dance."

So they waded out of the water, and Wisakécáhk told them how to dance the new dance. "While you dance," he said, "Close your eyes and don't peek."

Then the ducks and geese closed their eyes and started dancing. Before long, the other waterfowl joined in with their eyes closed, too. This was just what Wisakécáhk wanted. While they all danced, he started wringing their necks.

But Loon was suspicious and peeked to see what was happening. "Wisakécáhk is killing us," Loon cried in alarm.

The ducks, the geese, and all the other water fowl opened their eyes and flew away at once. But not Loon. He had trouble getting off the ground, so he started running toward the river. Wisakécáhk ran after him, but could not grab hold of him. Instead he kicked poor Loon in the rear end and dislocated his hips. To this very day loons have a difficult time walking on the ground. That's why they spend most of their time in the water.

Retold by Byron Apetagon





Wisakécáhk Loses His Food

One summer day, Wisakécáhk was walking through the forest. He was very hungry. There were only a few patches of berries scattered here and there, and even the small animals were not making the sounds they had made the summer before. The winter had been very severe. Many of the animals had moved away to warmer regions.

Now and then Wisakécáhk knelt down to pick the few wild berries he found. He ate some and put the rest in his leather pouch to use later if he caught a rabbit. Thinking of that wild food made Wisakécáhk even hungrier.

In another part of the forest, there was a second hunter. His name was Chukapace, and he was looking for food to feed his old grandmother. Chukapace and his grandmother had managed to survive through the winter. They had put by stocks of food in the fall before the cold northern winds struck the country. Now they needed food, but even though he knew every part of the forest, Chukapace was having the same luck as Wisakécáhk. Both hunters were only able to find wild berries.

As the day went by, Wisakécáhk spied some brown-speckled ptarmigans. Even one, he thought to himself, will satisfy my hunger. He quietly lifted his bow and with careful, steady aim, let the arrow fly. It struck the mark and one of the birds lay still, the arrow piercing its small, feathery body.

Wisakécáhk went over and picked up the bird. Exhausted by all the walking he had done, he sat down beside a fallen log and lay back. He would cook his bird later. As he lay there, Wisakécáhk suddenly remembered there were other hunters in the forest, so he got up and hid his bird under the log. Then he told his Behind to keep watch over the food.

Wisakécáhk fell into a deep sleep, while his Behind kept watch for





thieves and robbers. The problem was that he could only see in one direction. It was impossible to see someone coming from the other side. Now it just so happened that Chukapace was coming from that way. An observant hunter, he saw that Wisakécáhk was face down in a deep sleep and that his Behind was protecting something.

Chukapace and Wisakécáhk were always competing to see who was the wisest, the strongest, and the fastest. Chukapace chuckled to himself as he watched his old friend sleeping with his Behind keeping watch. He decided to investigate.

Crawling around carefully, so that the Behind could not see him, Chukapace caught sight of the bird and pouch of berries under the fallen log. Quietly, he reached over and took the bird.

"Now I have food for my grandmother," Chukapace thought to himself.

As he walked away with the food in his hand, he stepped on a twig. Wisakécáhk heard the noise and opened his eyes. Then he sat up and looked under the fallen log. His food was gone. He became very angry and decided to punish his Behind for not waking him.

Wisakécáhk built a fire. He added sticks to it, until it became bigger and bigger. Then he picked up a large rock and threw it in. When the boulder was red hot, he took a stick and heaved it out onto the ground.

Wisakécáhk was angry with his Behind for not telling him someone had stolen the ptannigan. He was going to teach his Behind who was boss. So he turned away, bent over, and began to walk slowly backwards toward the hot boulder. He could feel the warmth on his Behind as he went closer and

closer. I'll teach him a lesson, he thought to himself. Finally, his Behind landed on the hot boulder, and Wisakécáhk screamed with pain. Every living thing in the forest heard his shouts and cries.

Days later Wisakécáhk was still sorry for burning his Behind. He could not sleep because he was in so much pain. He could not sit because his Behind was covered with sores and scabs.



For a long time all the living things in the forest were afraid of Wisakécáhk because he would chase and accuse them of having stolen his food. Then one day he met Chukapace and chased him, too. Wisakécáhk almost caught up with him, but Chukapace was just too fast to catch. In frustration, Wisakécáhk pulled off his scabs and began throwing them at Chukapace. They missed him and fell on the trees instead.

Today Wisakécáhk's scabs can still be seen on the bark of trees. And as for Wisakécáhk, it is said that for a long time afterwards, he could not forgive himself for what he had done to his Behind. He had taught himself an important lesson. He knew he had to treat every part of his body with care and respect - even his Behind.

Retold by Byron Apetagon.

Chukapace and the Moon



Many years ago somewhere in the forests of Big Island lived an old woman and her grandson Chukapace. The boy's mother and father had died on a canoeing trip when he was very young, and his grandmother had raised him as her own.

The young boy grew up learning the old ways of his grandmother. She taught him the important values of respect, honesty, and obedience. She also showed him how to make a strong bow, and

arrows that were swift and accurate. As he grew older and stronger, he began to take them with him into the forest to get food for his grandmother. He went hunting every day.

When winter came, he used roots to make rabbit snares. One day while he was working on the snares, his grandmother crouched down beside the fire and spoke to him.

"If you see a peculiar trail among the rabbit trails, don't place your snare there," she said.

"Why can't I?" Chukapace asked.

"Sometimes the Moon disappears from the nighttime sky," she replied. "It does that because it makes its rounds to play with all the animals of the night."

Chukapace thought about this for a moment. The Moon gets lonely. It sees all the animals running around at night and comes down to play with them. That is why it makes trails in the forest.

"I must be careful," Chukapace told himself.

Some time later, Chukapace took his snares and went into the forest to set them. He saw many rabbit trails along the way, but then he noticed a trail that was very different from the others. It appeared as if something like a ball had been rolled over the rabbit trails. He remembered what his grandmother had told him, and guessed it was the Moon's trail. This gave him an idea. He would set a big snare to catch the Moon and play with him.

When he returned to his home, Chukapace did not tell his grandmother what he had done. He was afraid to tell her because she would scold him for being disobedient.

That evening Grandmother told him to carry water from the river, but he remembered his rabbit snares and sneaked off into the woods, taking his pail with him.

In the meantime, his grandmother waited for him. Knowing her grandson was full of energy, she did not worry about him. She knew Chukapace would return when he was ready.

Time passed, and Chukapace still had not returned. His grandmother began to worry. She went out to look for him.

As she stood outside her cabin, she happened to look up into the sky. There in the centre of the rising Moon she saw Chukapace waving at her. Grandmother hung her head and wept. She knew she would never be close to Chukapace again.

Ever since that day, Chukapace has been carrying his pail on the surface of the Moon. He had been punished because he had disobeyed his grandmother. This is a lesson for children to remember that obedience is important.

Told by Donald Muswagon Sr.
Written by Byron Apetagon

Chukapace and the Moon (A Second Version)



Long ago there was a little boy named Chukapace who lived with his grandmother. Chukapace was a good boy. He loved his grandmother very much.

Chukapace learned many things from his grandmother. She taught him how to make a strong bow and swift arrows. He used his bow when he went hunting. She also taught him to make snares. Chukapace made many rabbit snares. He set these snares in the woods near his log cabin home.

One winter morning Chukapace went into the forest to check his snares. While walking in the woods, he came upon some strange looking tracks in the deep snow.

Chukapace was frightened. He knew these were not rabbit or moose tracks. The tracks belonged to something huge.

Chukapace ran back to his log cabin home to tell his grandmother. At the cabin, he told her about the strange tracks. With a smile, she replied with a story.

“The tracks you have seen belong to the Moon. You see, the Moon gets very lonely at night. It sees all the night animals running around on the ground and comes down from the sky to play with them. Never try to catch



him or something evil might happen.”

Chukapace sat and thought for a long time. He needed a friend to play with. There weren't any children near his home. The Moon would make a good friend.

Forgetting his grandmother's words, Chukapace went into the woods and set a big snare to catch the Moon. Then he remembered what his grandmother had said. He decided not to tell her what he had done. He knew he would be in trouble if he did.



Later that evening, Chukapace peeked out into the night. The Moon was in the sky. But it was beginning to disappear behind the trees. Chukapace was excited and could not wait for morning to check his rabbit snares.

Grandmother was washing the supper dishes. She had noticed the water pails were almost empty.

“Chukapace, go and get some water from the ice hole. Take the small pail.”

Chukapace dressed, grabbed the water pail, and went down to the river. He was just about to scoop up the water, when he saw a light glowing brightly across on the other side. He looked at the light carefully. It was shining where he had set the big snare.

Forgetting his errand, he ran across the ice with his empty pail to see if he had captured the Moon. When he got to the other side, he saw the Moon in the snare. He ran over and began to untie it. He was excited to show his new friend to his grandmother. The Moon was breathing heavily as Chukapace untied him.

In the meantime, Grandmother began to worry. "Chukapace has been gone too long. He is probably running around on the river," she thought to herself.

As she went out the door to look for him, she was nearly blinded by a strong glare of light. As she ran toward the river, she saw her grandson being carried away by the Moon. Chukapace was screaming and shouting, but she could do nothing but watch.

For a long time, the old woman lived by herself. On clear nights, she looked at the Moon. She could see Chukapace still carrying his water pail. To this very day, if you look closely, you can see him, too.

Retold by Byron Apetagon



Chukapace and his Dipper

One night as Grandmother and young Chukapace sat by the fireplace, she noticed the wood supply was low and would not last all night. She told her grandson to go outside and chop a few more sticks. While he was outside, the boy noticed the Northern Lights dancing to and fro across the dark skies of the universe. Impressed by the beauty of this splendid movement of light, he stood in awe and wonder. After a while, his grandmother came out and stood beside him. She began to speak.



“Those lights you see are special lights. They give extra light to the animals who move around at night. There is one thing you must remember. When you are alone, never whistle while they are moving fast, or they will come down and take you away.”

Chukapace wondered if Grandmother was just teasing, or was she trying to scare him? Sometimes Chukapace thought his grandmother said things she didn't really mean.

A few nights later Chukapace once again had a chance to watch the beautiful display of the Northern Lights. Grandmother had asked him to get water, and he was using his wooden dipper to fill the pails. Made happy by the beauty around him, he forgot his grandmother's warning and began to whistle the tune of one of her favourite lullabies. Suddenly he became aware that the Northern Lights were descending upon him. Startled and frightened, he threw his dipper at them. It hit the lights like metal striking rock.

Chukapace watched as his dipper was lifted into the nighttime sky. As it rose higher and higher, it grew bigger and bigger. Soon it was so huge that a star was born at each angle of the dipper. To this day Chukapace's Dipper can still be seen on a clear night.

Told by Irene and Donald Muswagon
Written by Byron Apetagon



Old Raven and the Little Ravens



One day Old Raven rested on the highest tree near a small lake. As he looked below he noticed his grandchildren, the little ravens, were cooking something.

Old Raven smiled and had an idea about how to get an easy supper. He flew away quietly so the grandchildren could not see him.

The little ravens had made a big fire on the beach. One had run for wood. The others made sure there was enough water, fish, and seaweed for a delicious stew. They had worked hard to prepare their meal.

While everyone was running around, one little raven saw Old Raven come limping along the beach. He called the others, and they ran to help their grandfather.

“What happened, Grandfather Raven?” asked one of the little ravens.

“Well, let me rest and catch my breath,” Old Raven said with a wheeze.

“I was hunting on the other side of the lake,” he said, painfully. “I saw a big fish near the shore. I flew down. Then I fought and killed it. It gave me a good fight and almost broke my wing. My leg, too. Now I won’t be able to fly for a few days.”

Sitting himself near the fire, Old Raven slyly glanced over to check the stew. It was almost done.

“Aha, what’s that nice smell?” he asked, sniffing the air.

"That's seaweed and fish stew," replied the little ravens.

"My, it smells good, but it would be even better if I had brought that large fish I killed. It's a pity I have this injured wing, or I would go and get it," Old Raven added significantly.

The little ravens were suspicious. They knew Old Raven was a sneaky old character. But in the end they decided it was a good idea to add Old Raven's fish to theirs, and off they went to get it.

Old Raven watched his grandchildren as they flew off. As soon as they had disappeared across the lake, Old Raven feasted on the fish and seaweed stew.

Not long after, the little ravens flew back and found their supper gone.

They were very angry. They had trusted Old Raven and been tricked by him.

Old Raven paid no attention. He sat and watched from the highest tree, thinking about where he would get his meal tomorrow.

Retold by Byron Apetagon

Porcupine and Beaver



Porcupine and Beaver were best friends. One day Porcupine asked Beaver if he could come and visit him at his lodge. Beaver was not exactly keen on the idea because Porcupine always left quills all over the place. However, he did not want to hurt Porcupine's feelings, so he agreed to have him come by.

Beaver went to pick Porcupine up. He climbed on Beaver's back and began to swim across the lake to his lodge. Before long, he began to get

tired as Porcupine was a bit heavy to carry. In the middle of the lake, a large stump had become lodged on a shallow reef. Beaver saw the stump and decided to play a trick on Porcupine.

When they reached the stump, Beaver told Porcupine to get off as they had arrived at his lodge. Porcupine quickly jumped off Beaver's back. While Porcupine was safely securing himself on the stump, Beaver swam away laughing at his friend. Poor old Porcupine stood on his hind legs and watched as his friend slapped his tail, then dove and disappeared.



Days and nights went by. The cold northern winds began to blow. One morning there was not a sound of a ripple or the splashing of a wave. Porcupine sat up, happy to see that the lake had frozen over. He hurried across the ice as fast as his legs could carry him, thinking only of the delicious fresh bark from the trees in the woods near his home.

Later Porcupine was happy to see Beaver again. The two played together as if nothing had ever happened, but in the back of Porcupine's mind was a plan for revenge.

One day in early spring, Porcupine asked Beaver to visit his home in the woods. Beaver agreed to go because he had never been to Porcupine's home. He had forgotten the dirty trick he had played on his old friend.

As Porcupine led him through the woods, Beaver was astonished by the natural beauty surrounding him. Soon they reached Porcupine's home among the tall trees. Beaver wanted to see Porcupine's home, but he was not a tree climber. His old friend offered to carry him up. The climb was not easy for Porcupine. Although he was strong, he moved slowly and carefully, until they reached the very top of the tallest tree in the woods.

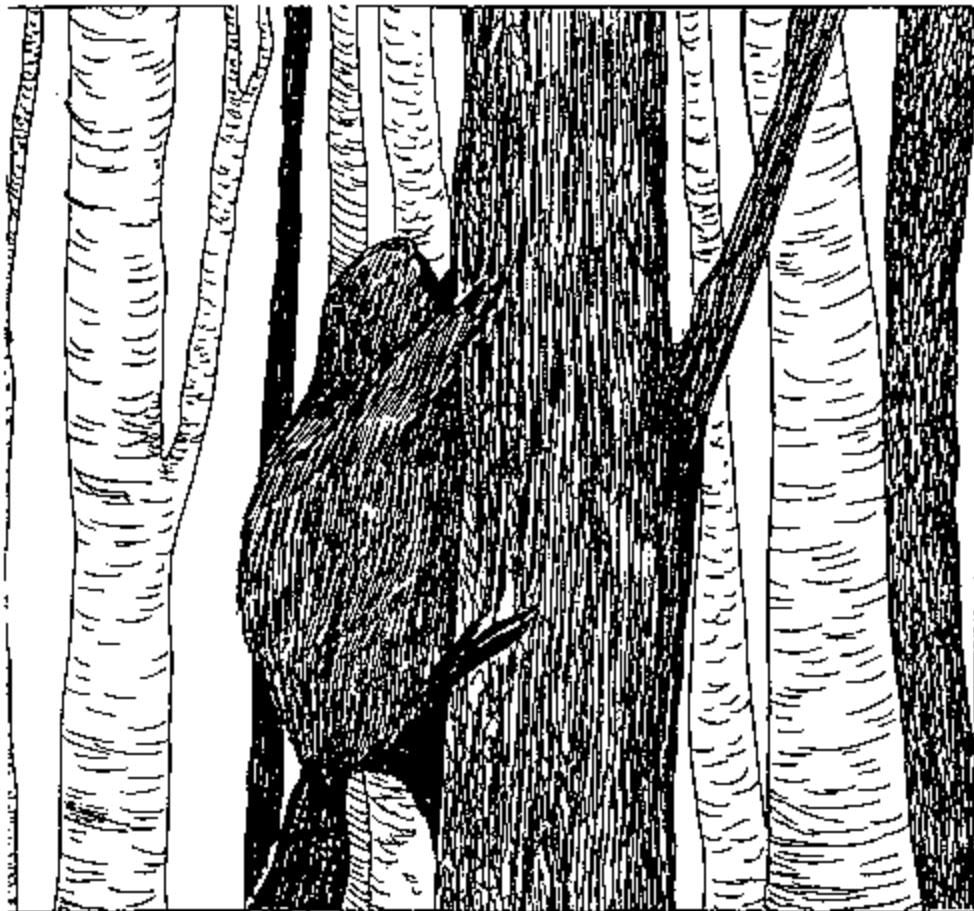
Beaver looked at the beautiful country all round, amazed at what he saw. While he admired the scenery, Porcupine scurried down the tree and disappeared into the woods.

Beaver called for his friend. There was no answer. Not too far away, Porcupine was chuckling with great satisfaction.

Days went by and the nights were cold. Beaver became sad and lonely. He was not a good tree climber but after a long time, he made his way down and went to look for Porcupine.

It is said that the lines and cracks we see today on tree bark are the claw marks left behind by Beaver as he slipped and slid down the tall tree many years ago.

Retold by Byron Apetagon



How the Whiskeyjack Saved the Starving People



Long ago in the far north, the weather was very cold. The winds blew day after day without ceasing. All living things suffered, and many animals disappeared. Some, like the caribou, wolf, and rabbit, retreated to the south where it was much warmer. Others were not so lucky. They

simply died during the cold, bitter nights.

People became extremely worried. Day after day, the men tried to find food for their families, but the snow was deep and the winds kept blowing from the north. It made hunting more and more difficult. Now and then, they would stop to rest and warm themselves by the campfires, while whiskeyjacks flew by looking for scraps of leftover food. People never thought of eating the whiskeyjack. It was left alone, unnoticed, just another bird that could not be eaten.

When hunting proved unsuccessful, the people of one village decided to move south in the hope of finding food. Preparations were made and soon they set off on their march. The snow was deep and the winds strong, as they pulled their loads along. Hands and feet froze in the bitter cold, and children cried with hunger. What little food remained was shared, the older people saving only tiny morsels for themselves. Soon the supply was all used up. The men hunted in desperation, but to no avail. Daily they became weaker.

One afternoon while the people were resting, three whiskeyjacks flew over and landed nearby. No one, except for a lone hunter, paid any attention. As he watched them, he had an idea. Since there wasn't any food for the children, maybe the whiskeyjacks could be used to feed them.

Using his sling, he killed all three birds and plucked their feathers. When he finished, he saw how small they looked. He wondered how he could make a meal big enough to feed everyone. Then he realized he could make soup from the liver, blood, and intestines. So he mixed the ingredients together with water and placed them in a pot over the fire. Everyone watched - all looking very hungry. The man knew the soup would give everyone strength to keep on walking.

The whiskeyjack stew came to a boil over the campfire. The sweet smell made everyone come alive. The children began to move around the pot. Each one took a spoonful, when the man served the soup. To his amazement, it was enough to revive everyone's strength, so that they were able to complete the last length of the trip.

For a few days, the men hunted whiskeyjacks, and the people ate whiskeyjack soup. As the sun began to shine longer each day, the weather became warmer, and the winds died down. Once again, animals which had disappeared left signs in the snow covered ground. The people were very thankful for the whiskey jack because it had helped them survive. Ever since then, people have remembered this incident.

The story teaches people to respect all things in the world. It shows that everything has a purpose, and it is up to man to find it. The whiskeyjack revealed his purpose to a group of starving people. Today, he can be found at any campfire, a reminder for people to respect all things and use them wisely.



Told by Irene Muswagon
and written by Byron
Apetagon



The Girl who Disappeared from her Home

When I was still young, I used to listen to the stories told by the old people. There is one which has always stood out clearly in my memory. It is a story which deals with the beliefs of our ancestors. It shows their respect for the animals. Tell it to the children to see how they will react to it. Henry Colon.

Long ago in the lands around Oxford House, a family of three left their summer camp to go to their winter home. The family consisted of a father, a mother, and a young daughter who was about seven or eight years old. Their winter camp was a distance of two to three days paddling up river.

When the family arrived at their destination, the grass had withered and the leaves blanketed the forest grounds with autumn colours. The winds were colder as the days turned shorter. Soon the first heavy snowfall would be falling.

The man and his wife rebuilt their wigwam and caulked the logs with moss. They prepared wood and food for the winter's supply. After all this had been done, the man repaired his traps for the winter.

One morning the family woke up to see that the ice had formed along the edge of the river. The man told his wife he would be going up river for the whole day to set beaver traps.

The woman stayed with her daughter in the wigwam. She kept busy mending old winter clothes and cooking supper. While she was working away, her daughter slipped outside the door. The woman glanced at her as she walked out, but paid no further attention for a while. Then she noticed her daughter was rather quiet and decided to call her to come in. There was no answer. She called again. There was still no answer.

The mother became alarmed, and went out to look for her daughter. She ran to the edge of the river to see if she had walked onto the ice. She ran into the forest to look there. There was no sign of her daughter anywhere. The woman searched all afternoon and late into the evening. Tired, she returned to the wigwam to wait for her husband.

Soon her husband came home, and she told him what had happened. He went into the forest immediately to look for his daughter, but after searching for several hours, he gave up looking for the night. The search continued for several days. There was no one living in the vicinity to help them, and to make things worse, the nights turned cold and windy. The snow fell for many days until the whole world around them was covered with a deep whiteness. The lakes and river were frozen over, too. Eventually, the parents lost hope of ever finding their child alive. Days, weeks, and months passed. The parents were very sad and lonely for their daughter.

One morning, the first signs of spring became evident. The cold winds died down. The ice on the rivers and lakes began to melt. Soon the birds would be arriving from the south. The man and his wife sat near the fireplace inside their wigwam. He told her he was going to go set muskrat traps up river. He asked her to come, but she refused. She still missed the only child they had.

The man tried to console her, but he still had to leave to set traps. Alone in the shelter, the woman looked at her daughter's clothing once in a while and remembered her laughter and the happy times they used to have together.

Suddenly the door opened. The mother looked up and to her astonishment saw her daughter standing there. She could not believe her eyes. She thought her imagination was playing games with her. She rose to her feet and walked toward her daughter. She touched her hair and face. She was real! In tears, she threw herself upon her child. The girl held her mother tightly and told her not to cry.

The mother asked her daughter where she had been. "I went to visit my grandfather," she replied. "I went to live with him! I slept at his home all winter."

The mother was puzzled. She knew all her daughter's grandparents had died years ago, but she said nothing. Shortly after, the father returned home. He was very excited to see his daughter sitting beside her mother. He asked her where she had been.

"I went to visit my grandfather. I went to live with him. I slept at his home all winter. My grandfather woke up just once to turn over. I woke up twice, and each time I went back to sleep. When we woke up, we ate some food. Then my grandfather brought me home. Now I'm here," she explained to her parents.

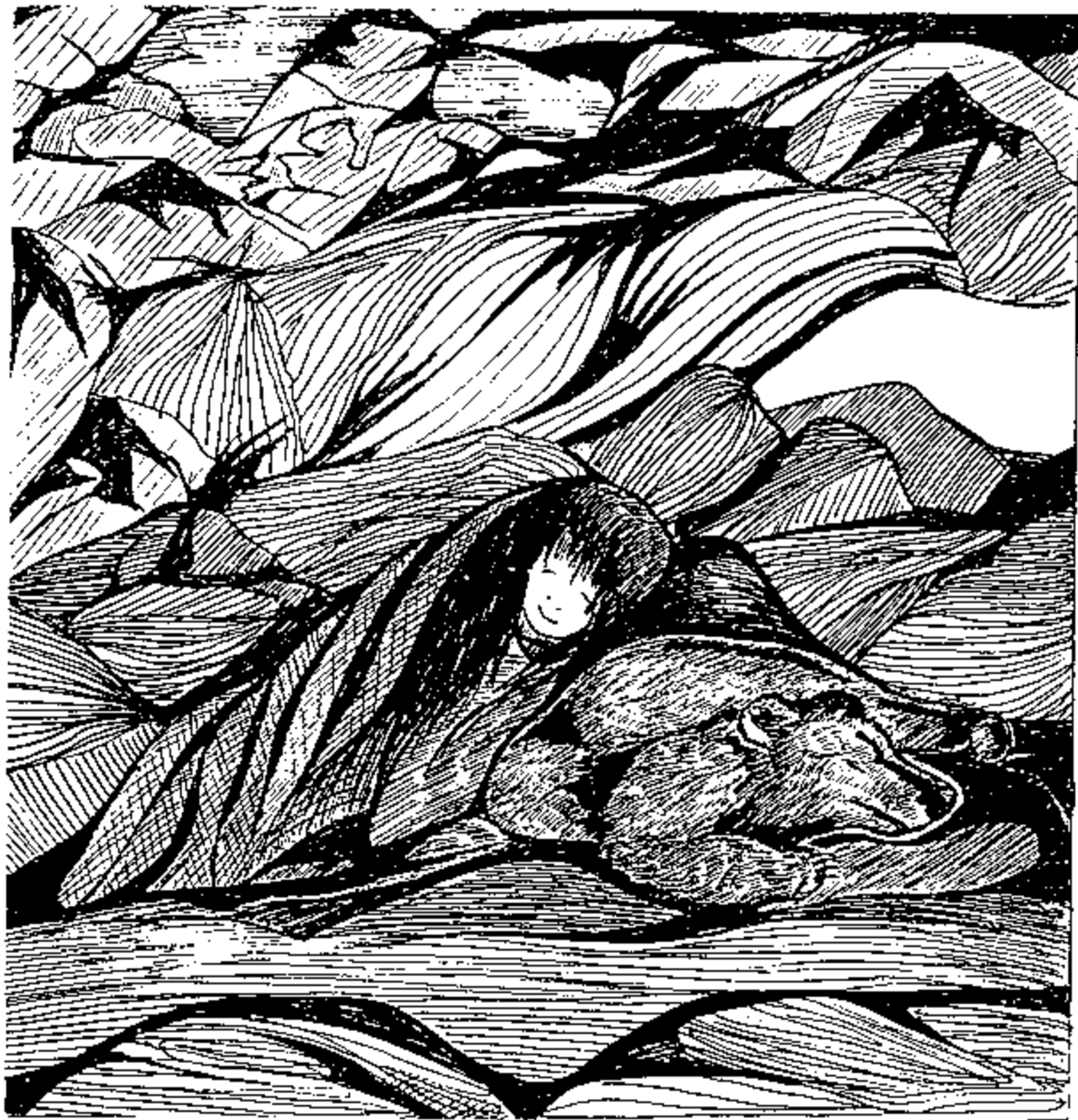
Her father tried to tell her that all her grandparents had died years ago. She had no grandparents.

The girl looked at him and said, "I have a grandfather. I have been with him all winter. He brought me home. I love my grandfather."

The father asked his daughter to show them where her grandfather had left her. She explained that he had brought her many miles and left her behind the bushes near the wigwam. The parents followed closely as she took them to the nearby cluster of willows. Although most of the snow had melted, there were still some patches of snow on the ground.

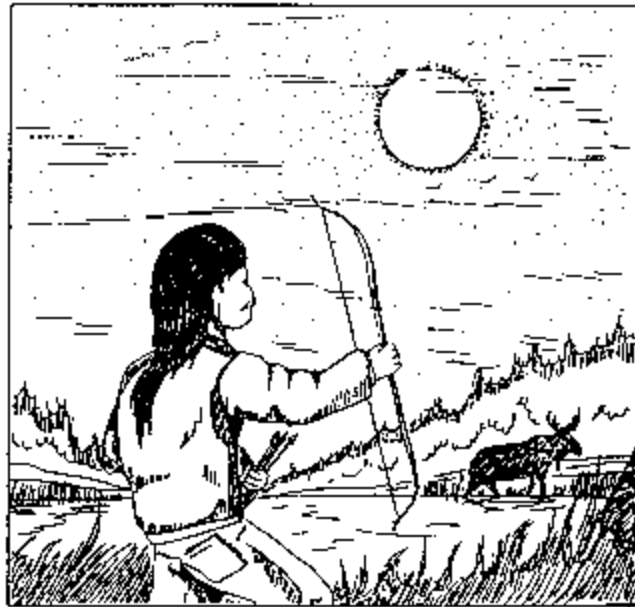
All at once, the girl stopped and pointed to two sets of footprints. When the parents looked, they were filled with awe and wonder. They could see their daughters footprints and the footprints of a big bear.

Told by Henry Colon and written by Bryon Apetagon.



Bakahk

Many years ago, a young man left his family to go hunting. He was a very good hunter, one of the best in the village. Everyone admired and respected him. The young man always hunted alone. It was his way of having peace with the land. Many times his friends had warned that he should not go out by himself. They cared for him. There were many dangers on the land.



Ignoring the warnings, the young man continued to hunt alone, and one day he did not return home when he said he would be back. For several days his family were worried. He had always come home before. Friends went to look for him. They travelled all over the country for many days and nights. They could not find a single trace of him anywhere and lost hope of ever finding him again. The men returned to the village to tell the news of their failure. The people were sad and grieved. Days passed. Weeks passed. And months passed on. The year went by and soon everyone forgot about the missing man.

Years after, people began to tell what had happened. The young man had lost his sense of direction and died of panic and hunger. His spirit could not rest because he had not listened to the kind words of his friends. He came to them in dreams and told them of his fate. He had not listened. His spirit was never to rest.

When the winds blow hard, and the nights are cloudy and dark, something happens to the young man's skeleton. As the winds become fierce, the skeleton goes flying into the air. The spirit screams and cries as it tosses and turns in the midst of the strong gusting winds.

When the wind settles down, the young man's skeleton also slows down. Its cries and shouts fade away, until nothing is heard. The skeleton falls down to the earth and lies there till the next storm. This is Bakalik, the young man.

When the winds blow again, Bakahk comes alive. He can be heard screaming and crying. For those who think they have heard someone laughing during a storm, listen again. For those who think they have seen someone in the skies, look again. For those who have felt the presence of someone or something nearby, it may be Bakahk, the young man who disappeared many years ago.

Shared by Irene Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon

Legend of Thunderbirds

Long ago, the Cree people believed the lightning and thundering sounds during the rainy season were caused by the great thunderbirds.

The young thunderbirds are born in the early spring, usually on top of tall mountains or on isolated rocky shelves where no humans have ever been. It is believed they are like beautiful eagles. Once they are old enough to leave their nesting places, they travel around the world playing. Sometimes their play can be destructive.



When a storm is about to begin, big dark gray clouds appear. These signs let the Cree know the destructive young thunderbirds are going to thunder and strike. They can tell them apart from the old thunderbirds. When lightning zigzags toward objects on the ground, it is the young ones contesting. Their sounds are loud, abrupt, and crackly. These first sounds of thunder are the loudest and most powerful.

Once the young thunderbirds have passed through, the older thunderbirds make their appearance. The Cree say they are scolding and chasing the younger thunderbirds so they will not cause destruction on the ground. The

old thunderbirds can be recognized by their sounds. They have longer and softer tones than the younger thunderbirds. Their thunder is almost continuous. Their lightning seldom strikes the ground, but makes a bright display throughout the sky. At nights it is an aurora of beauty, daylight in a darkened world.

On stormy nights and days, the young thunderbirds compete with each other to see who can make the loudest thunder and whose lighting can strike the most destructive blow on the ground below. Whenever there is a forest fire in isolated areas, a young thunderbird may have started it. Sometimes trees, rocks, and living things are hit by lightning. It is usually the doings of young thunderbirds playing and contesting amongst themselves.

Told by Donald Muswagon



Why the Muskrat has a Crooked and Narrow Tail

Wisakécáhk was making pemmican one summer day. He mixed it all up and put it in a rawhide pouch. He waited for it to harden, but the day was too hot. Wisakécáhk did not know what to do. Then he had an idea.

He said to himself, "I'll ask my brother, Muskrat, to take the pemmican out into the cool stream and swim around with it until it hardens."

Muskrat agreed to help. He took the pouch in his mouth and started swimming around. After some time, the pemmican started leaking out where he held the pouch with his sharp teeth. Muskrat started eating it a little bit at a time.

Wisakécáhk asked Muskrat if the pemmican was hard yet.

Muskrat said, "No, it's still not hard enough."

Muskrat kept on eating. Finally Wisakécáhk realized what was happening. The pouch was getting smaller.

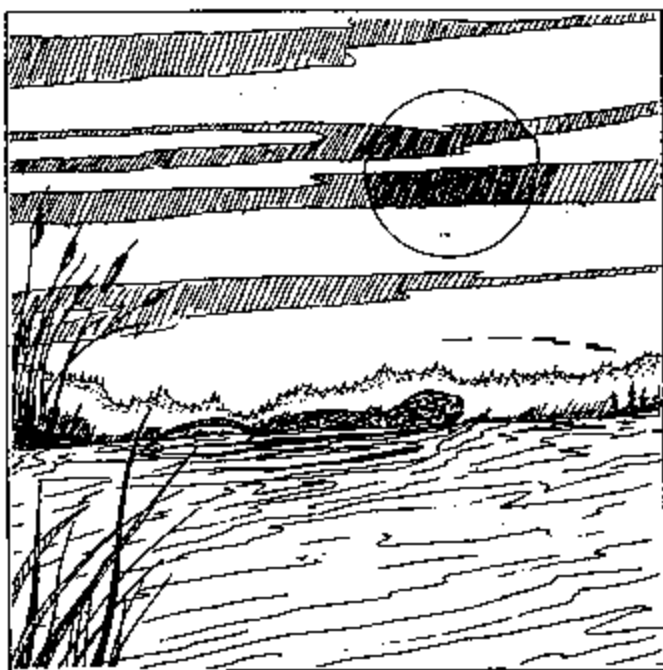
Wisakécáhk got angry and went after the muskrat.

He said, "If I can't eat my pemmican for supper, then I'm going to eat you!"

He grabbed Muskrat by his tail, which was big and flat like Beaver's. Wisakécáhk pulled. Muskrat pulled, too. Finally, Wisakécáhk pulled so hard he stretched and broke Muskrat's tail.

That's how Muskrat got the tail he has today.

Retold by Byron Apetagon



Grandfather Spirit

Long ago, a man was walking across the lake called Ininowi Sakahikan. He noticed smoke rising from one of the islands and decided to go and see who was camping there.

There were no people around the lake. Maybe it was just someone passing through. As he came near the island, he saw an old man having tea beside a campfire. He decided to go over and visit with him for a while.



The old man told him he came from the east. He was on his way to visit someone he had not seen for a long time. He had stopped on the island to have lunch.

The man sat with the old man for a while, then he decided to keep going. Just as he was leaving, the old man asked him to have some tobacco with him before he left. The man agreed. As they sat together smoking their pipes, he began to feel strange being with the old man. He quietly glanced over at him. He noticed the old man's pipe was translucent. He could see the tobacco inside the pipe.

The man then knew this was no ordinary event. He wanted to leave, but the old man told him to stay for a while more. He had something to show him. He took out a beautiful gun and told the younger man he could have it if he wanted. The man refused.

The old man pointed the gun into the sky, and it became translucent against the sun. By now the man was very uneasy. He told the old man he had to be on his way home.

As the man was putting on his snowshoes, the old man told him he would walk with him part of the way. While they walked, the old man told him if he had taken the gift, he would never have been short of anything. Still, because the man had been with him, the old man said he would kill a moose within two days time. The man did not believe it, but two days later while crossing a creek, he killed a moose exactly where the old man said he would. Nearby, he saw some rock paintings, and understood whom he had been with.

Told by Henry Colon Sr. and written by Byron Apetagon



As a young man growing up in Norway House, Donald Muswagon remembers many experiences he had with the older men. He went with them on long canoe trips, sometimes as far as Island Lake, Manitoba. He came to know many places in the country and their Cree names. Donald recalls the evenings when the men rested and told stories to each other. Usually the stories were about people of the past, good and bad events, dreams, and myths and legends of the Mémékwésiwak, or the Rock People. The following

are some of the myths Donald heard the old people mentioning in their stories and conversations.

The Mémékwésiwak or Rock People

The Mémékwésiwak, or Rock People in English, once lived around rocky cliffs near the many rivers, lakes, and creeks of the north. Donald remembers being told that people occasionally met them, but only a few individuals had ever spoken or visited with them.

It was always believed the Rock People were short in height and had strange facial features. They spoke the language of the tribe which inhabited the area. The old people believed the Rock people drew paintings on rock walls. These are usually seen just above water level. Sometimes the paintings are also found near waterfalls and rapids.

The paintings are reddish in colour. It is believed the paint used was red ochre which does not erase or evaporate. Donald remembers people used to say it was made from a red soil known as *wanaman* mixed with fish and animal oils. The soil can only be found in certain places. Donald was told there was some at a place called Wapisi Lake. Apparently some people discovered it while they were lighting a fire to have lunch.

The paintings seem to become clearer during the spring season. It was then that the Rock People came out to do their painting.

The paintings usually depict something important, like messages and prophecies for people of future generations. They explain how things will be changing, especially things which will affect the Indian way of life. Sometime they contain prophecies pertaining to the next four years or the next four generations.

If one sees four strokes or four short lines, that is a prophecy of how much the climate will change in the next four generations. Donald recalls that four generations ago the winters were cold, and there was plenty of snow. Today we have little snow and warmer weather. There has been a drastic climatic change.

Some places Donald recalls seeing rock paintings are at Painusk Creek, Pakitawákanihk at the east end of Molson Lake, York River, up along the Hayes and Gunosao Rivers, and at Fairy Lake.

Donald explains he cannot interpret the meaning of the paintings. Only a few people have that gift. One such man was Charlie Saunders, who trapped near the rock paintings around Molson Lake. Richard Saunders, Charlie's son, told Donald many years ago that his father read the rock paintings. From them he knew what the weather and trapping would be like in the next few years.

One time old Charles Saunders went to see the rock paintings. He had some doubts about the existence of the Rock People. To see if there were Rock People, he offered them some tobacco and food which he placed on the rock shelves. Charlie also drew illustrations of an axe, a boat, and a spear (askimákan) and placed it near the offerings. Once he was finished, he went back to his cabin. When he returned, he couldn't find the tobacco and the food. The drawings were gone also. Somewhat mystified, he looked up and spotted the three illustrations painted on the rock walls. Now Charlie was more persuaded there were Rock People nearby.

Offerings

Donald considers offerings of food, medicine, and tobacco as a way to show respect and thankfulness for everything that is produced from Mother Earth.

When tobacco is placed near rock paintings, it is like sharing a meal with the family. He remembers people made offerings to the Rock People, so that they could receive information on what was to happen in the next few years.

Later, they returned to the cliffs to find out if their requests had been answered through rock paintings. Only certain individuals could interpret. Sometimes they received prophecies about weather and changes in lifestyles.



Rock People - Kinoséwi Sípíhk

His grandfather, James Muswagon, told Donald that his ancestors used to see the Rock People right close by Norway House long ago. They were seen in places along the Nelson River as well as Jack River (Kinoséwi Sípíhk) where there was much high rock. But as the community grew, the Rock People began to disappear. They only lived in places where there were few people. Finally they completely vanished around Norway House, but were occasionally seen above and below Sea Falls, High Rock Rapids, or Místahi Pi Miskáwinihk in Cree. They were also seen along the Big Nelson and the small river tributaries around the Molson Lake area.

Donald remembers clearly two stories which were told by his grandfather James Muswagon.

A Man Sees Rock People

Long ago, a man was fishing north along the small Nelson River near Norway House. While paddling along one day, he noticed a peculiar vessel which was shaped somewhat like a canoe. In it were two men dressed in sealskin clothing. When the two men saw him coming, one of them slouched down and hid his face. The other sat up and looked the other way, not facing the intruder. As the man approached, he asked them where they came from. The one, who sat up and looked the other way, told him they had come from nearby, not too far from where the man was fishing.

The man did not spend too much time talking to them and went on his way. Later the same day when he was returning home, he looked around for the two men in the strange looking canoe. He also looked for their net. He could not see any sign of them.

Sometime afterwards the man learned there were Rock People living on the high rocks where he had seen the two strangers.

The following story was told to Donald by his grandfather James Muswagon, who in turn, was told by his grandfather. Donald does not remember his name. In those days people still had Cree names.

A Visit with the Rock People

Long ago a man and his son went trapping at a nearby lake. While they were there, the man and his son went to a certain place where there were high rocks.

Just as they were approaching the rocks, the man told his son not to be afraid of what they were going to do, but to be brave. He also told him not to think of anything foolish.

The young man saw the rocks ahead of them, but did not notice anything peculiar. All he could see were cracks and crevices. As the two came up along side the high rocks, a rumble was heard. One of the crevices in the rock face began to move apart. The water poured into the opening and took their boat along with it.

Inside the young man saw a dock and a small narrow trail leading away. His father sat in the canoe and smoked his pipe very quietly, not saying a word. When he had finished, they got out and walked along the trail. The trail led them into a room where several old men sat around in a circle smoking a pipe.

The man sat down with them and smoked the pipe which an old man offered him. The young man sat behind his father next to two of the old men.

The young man gazed around the room. It fascinated him. On one side he saw a stone table with a trout's head lying on a stone plate. He wondered where the head came from and what it was doing there. Suddenly, one of the old men turned and told him that they got it across the lake and were going to eat it for supper. Surprised, he realized why his father had told him not to think of anything foolish. All the time his eyes had explored the strange room, the old man had known what he was thinking.

Later the young man was told these old people with white beards were the Rock People or the Mémékwésiwak.



The Lake With Three Protruding Rocks

When I was still quite young, I had an opportunity to travel with a group of men to Island Lake. They were canoe freighters travelling up the Gunosao River. Along the way, I remember a certain small lake which had three tall rocks protruding from near the middle of it.

The men stopped and docked alongside the tall rocks. They were quite high. I remember two men from the group climbing the tallest rock. Their names were Thompson Dixon and David Menow. These men were canoe freighters who were strong and daring. When they reached the top, I remember seeing them bending down to look at something. I also remember one man, old Norman McLeod, telling them not to touch anything up there. He also told them to get down.

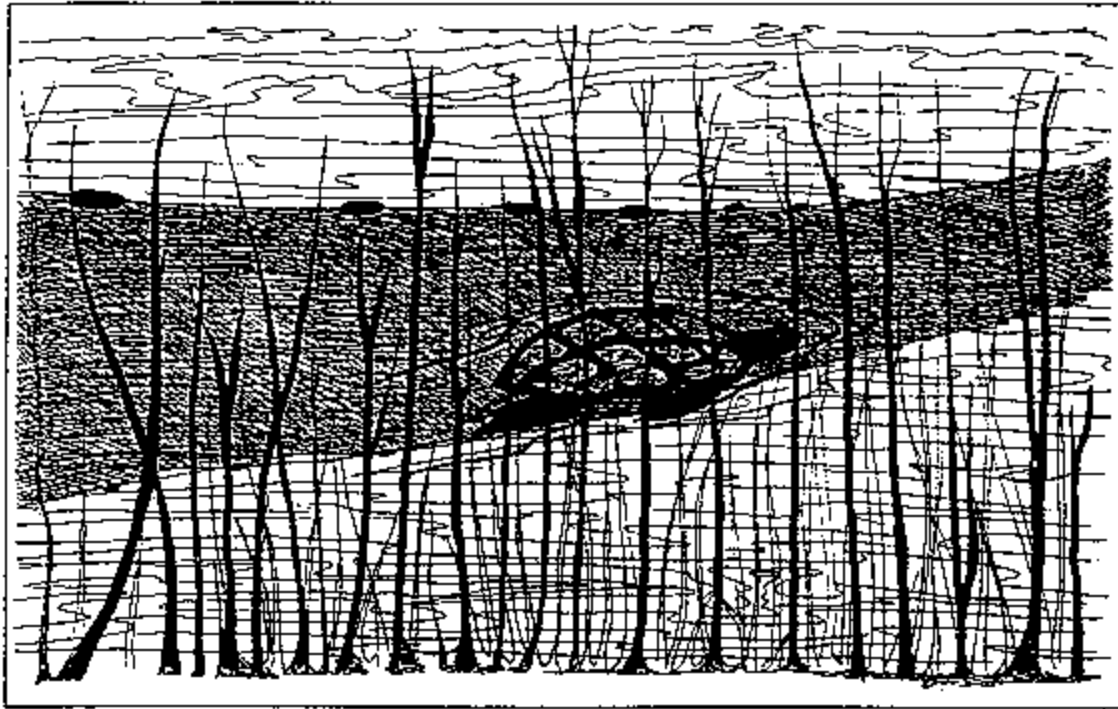
When the two men climbed down, they told everyone they had seen strange writing. These were rock paintings they had seen. They also told everyone they could see several lakes around the area from the tallest rock.

Story told by Donald Muswagon.

Turtle Spirit: A Special Dream

Many years ago, I had a special dream. I dreamed I was standing underwater near where I had set a fish net. As I stood there, I noticed a turtle swimming nearby. I grabbed onto its shell. It carried me along in the direction where I had my net. It swam along side the net, which I could see very clearly. It was a short dream and I didn't think too much of it. I did not share it with anyone for some time.

As I continued to fish for my needs, I noticed my nets were always filled with plenty of fish. It happened whenever I remembered my turtle dream. There were times I caught very few fish, and realized I had forgotten that special dream I had on one special night. Since then I have always respected the turtle because it helped me feed my family, friends, and relatives.



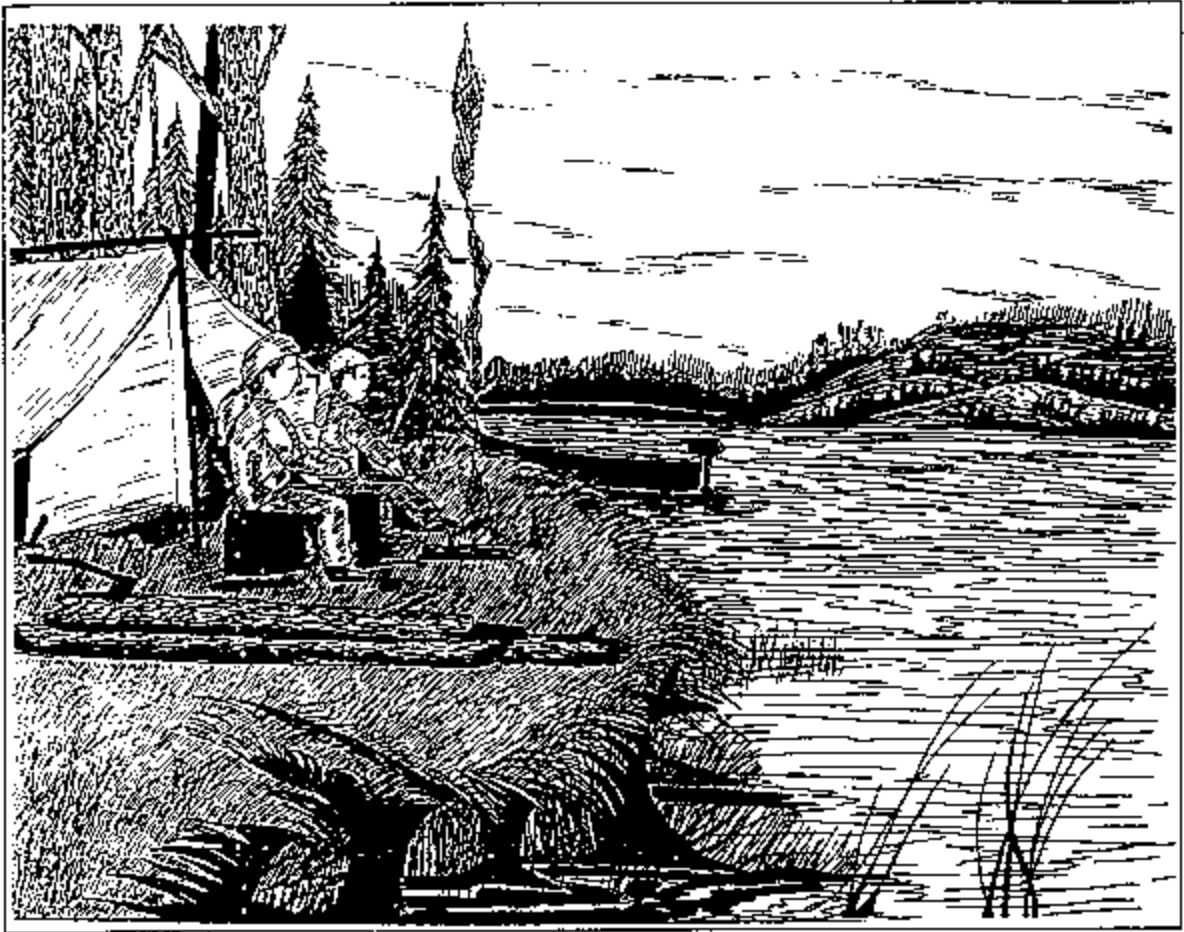
Turtles and Rock Paintings

In the old days, I remember there used to be some turtles around Norway House. Today there aren't any. I don't know what became of them. Maybe they disappeared because of the climatic changes that have taken place in the last hundred years.

It is very much like the mystical Rock People. When changes were quickly advancing, they too disappeared.

I wish to see the rock paintings left alone because they hold much of our Indian history, our prophecies, and beliefs. I know the white men are curious to know more about the rock paintings. They have their ways to prove things, but we Indian People have our spiritual ways to explain things. There are many hidden values of life in the paintings, which need to be interpreted for our children of the future.

Shared by Donald Muswagon Sr. and written by Byron Apetagon



A Peculiar Experience on the Gunosao

Late one summer, Frederick Apetagon and Edward Albert started up the Gunosao River to trap at Little Jack Lake. The terrain along the river was overgrown with muskeg, trees, and marshland. Further up, the land rose higher with rock formations.

Frederick and Edward travelled for two days on the river. On the third night, they made camp at a place called *Kakinowaskak*. It means where the river makes a long curve. Large rock shelves were visible across the river from where they had their campfire.

The two pitched their tent and ate a light supper. About eight o'clock in the evening, after they had laid out their bedrolls, they heard a humming sound coming from the rock shelves across the river. Thinking it was only some

animal making noises, they listened to figure out which one had made them. They listened curiously. The sounds were not of any animal or bird they knew. They could not recognize what they were.

Edward suggested they go across and have a closer look. Frederick agreed reluctantly. As they drifted slowly to the rock shelves across the river, the noises grew louder and clearer. The two men listened. It sounded like drums beating in rhythm. They could hear people chanting as if they were singing a song. Fred and Edward continued to listen for some time from their canoe. The sounds did indeed come from the rock shelves.

The two anchored nearby. They climbed the rock shelf where they thought they might see who was making the sounds. They stood there, but could not see anyone. The drumming and the chanting seemed to come from below the rock where they stood. Once they realized this, they walked away quickly. They knew it was extraordinary for people to hear such strange noises. Hurriedly, they left in their canoe and paddled back to their campsite. Night fell upon the land. They did not build a campfire.

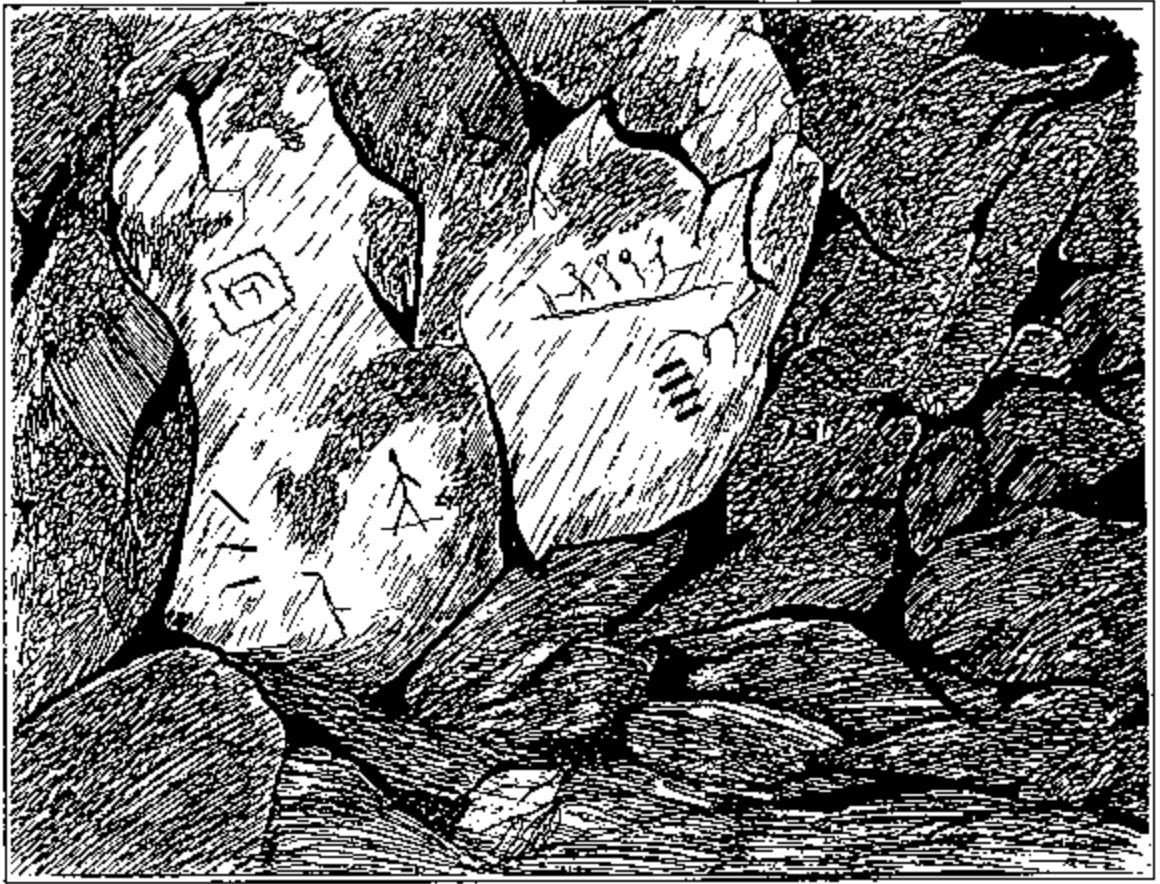
The sounds continued to hum late into the night. The two men could not sleep. Their minds drifted back to their families. They thought maybe it was a sign of something bad. At midnight the drumming and chanting grew louder for a few moments. Then it ended abruptly.

Frederick and Edward slept very little for the rest of the night. Next morning, they continued on their journey to Little Jack Lake. Neither of the men would forget the incident for the rest of their lives.

The following spring, they returned home and told their story to several people. It was explained to them that those sounds were made by the Mémékwésiwak, or little people who lived in the rocks. They were also told that these little people were sometimes called rock people. They were the ones who drew paintings on the rock walls just above the waters of the rivers and lakes.

Shared by Donald Muswagon and Norman Apetagon and written by Byron Apetagon

Prophecy in a Rock Painting



When I was a young man, I lived with an old man named Hekitan, who loved to hunt and trap. He was also a fisherman, and I learned many skills from him. I loved being around him because he knew so much about the land and survival.

Once we were paddling on a creek not far from Norway House. We came upon a rock shelf. I noticed there were several rock paintings on it. Hekitan placed some tobacco in his pipe, lit it, and smoked. I did not say anything, but watched him sitting there as if he was in a daze.

I looked at the rock painting and noticed one painting in particular, which had a deer-like animal enclosed within a fence. I wondered why. It did not make any sense to me. As I was going to speak, I was silenced by the wave of his hand. I kept quiet and stayed still.

We sat for some time in the canoe; then the old man turned around to speak.

“You just about interrupted my meditation with the rock people. I have been with them.”

It was then he explained that whenever one passes by such paintings, an offering of tobacco is made to the rock people. It shows we respect them.

Just as we were about to paddle away, I curiously asked him why the animal was enclosed inside the fence in the painting. He explained.

“There is a message in that painting. Long ago, some people had a gift to be able to give messages to the children of future generations. I will not see the fulfillment of the message because I am getting very old. However, maybe when you are older, once you witness the message, you’ll understand.

“The animal in the painting is a member of the deer family. At this time we can hunt the moose in all seasons. However, later on, people hunting the moose will be given restrictions. I cannot tell you what they will be. The fence is some kind of restriction set by the government. There is a small opening which appears to be a door. Perhaps your grandchildren will see it. Even Indian people will not be allowed to hunt at all seasons.”

Now when I remember the words of Hekitan, I understand. Today Indians and other people are not allowed to hunt any time, except for the annual hunting season every fall. That fence which encloses the moose represents a hunting permit and license. The moose inside the fence represents game animals and water fowl. Today those things we need cannot be taken any time. There are rules and regulations which enforce the new laws.

People from long ago could foresee these things, and because they could not read or write, they used rock paintings for later generations to read and understand.

Told by Charles Queskekapow and written by Byron Apetagon

The Haunted Island on Molson Lake

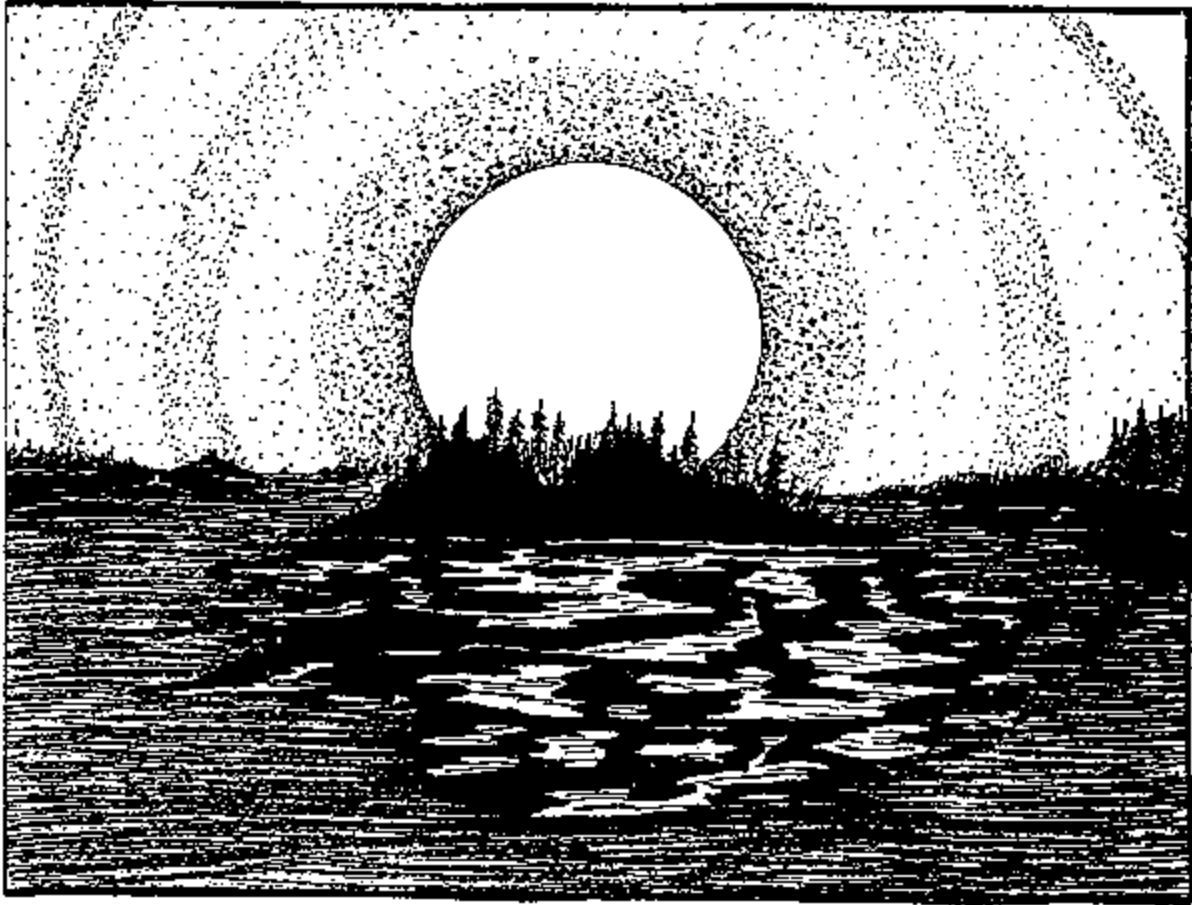
In the winter of 1918 and 1919, the flu epidemic hung over the homes of Norway House and in the regions around the community. In those days, there were people living all over the hinterland. It is said there were people living around Molson Lake and along the rivers and creeks that flowed into it. People even lived around the backwoods lakes. At that time, most people met their needs by hunting, fishing, and trapping. Some were also canoe freighters, dog team mushers, and York boat trippers.

The flu epidemic struck many western and northern Indian villages, camps, and traplines. The people of Norway House and Molson Lake died in great numbers because of the disease. One story is occasionally told in Norway House. It is about a man who could not dig graves fast enough to keep up with the dying, so he carried the dead bodies away from the homes and stored them in an abandoned house. It is said the house was filled right to the doorway by the time the epidemic had come to an end. The dead were buried properly in the early part of the spring season.

There is another story told occasionally about those who died from the flu at Molson Lake. It is said several families were completely wiped out. Several died all together. Sometimes those who were not infected by the flu could not bury the dead immediately. Cautious not to get the disease, they sometimes left homes untouched. However, when the disease came to an end, the dead were carried from their homes out to one of the islands on Molson Lake for burial. The grave was one large hole, an open pit. There the bodies were all piled on top of each other. Later all were buried in this fashion.

In later years, it was said the island was haunted. Several people who camped on the island claimed they had heard and seen strange things. Most times, they could not relax, and they had to leave to camp elsewhere. They were chased away by the ghosts and spirits of the dead.

Not very long ago, another story was told about a man who dared to camp on the island. People told him it was not a good thing to do, but he did not believe any of the stories. The man was a university professor who came to Molson Lake to do some sport fishing as a northern adventure. Unfortunately, his northern adventure turned into a horrifying experience.



The professor made camp on one side of the island. During the evening, he noticed nothing peculiar, but feeling restless, he stayed alert for much of the night. Shortly after midnight, he was startled by queer noises and saw human figures lingering near his temporary shelter. Because of this terrifying experience, he apparently jumped into his boat and went to another site where other campers were staying. Later the professor was heard saying the island was indeed haunted, although he never told anyone what he actually saw or heard.

Told by Donald and Irene Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon

The Waving Hand



Many years ago, two young people married and began a happy life together. Both had spent their childhood days with parents who had given them love, guidance, and discipline. They learned to live by these teachings.

Not long after they married, a beautiful daughter was born to them. These new parents were very proud of their child. They gave her love, care, and comfort.

The girl grew up strong and healthy. She was always happy and loved her parents very much. One day, however, her character began to change. She became more demanding for things she did not really need. She cried when her parents refused to give her things she wanted. Even worse, she became very disobedient and did not want to help around at home.

The parents became very sad and worried. They had given her everything she wanted to have. They loved their child and not once had they punished her since she was born.

One day, the daughter became very sick. Many people came and tried to help, but it was no use. A few days later the girl died. Friends and relatives came over to grieve with the family.

On the day the girl was buried in the nearby woods, a strange thing happened. After the men had buried the girl's body in the ground, one of her hands came up and protruded from the grave. The hand waved back and forth, and the crying voice of the girl could be heard from below.

The young parents were terrified. Some of the people who had attended the burial went away hurriedly. Nearby, an old woman watched the commotion. She understood why it was happening. She made her way towards the young parents, stopped near them, and held their hands.

"You have loved, cared, and given comfort to your child. Not once did you punish her for the things she did wrong while she was with you. Now her spirit is uneasy and will not rest. Therefore, both of you must find a willow and punish the hand till it goes away. The crying will also stop," explained the old woman gently.

The heartbroken couple were more frightened. Obediently the father found a willow and began to beat the waving hand. The hand began to move faster and the crying became louder. Soon he tired. The young mother took the willow and punished the hand. While she was beating the hand, it disappeared into the grave and the crying stopped.

The old woman held the young couple close together and told them not to cry. She did not need to say any more, because the young parents now understood.

Shared by Irene Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon

The Fiddler's Dream

Long ago, somewhere in Northern Canada, a boy lived in a small village. He enjoyed many things, but he especially loved to watch the people dance to the fiddling music. The dances were held nearly every evening, except when someone died. Then the people shared the loss with the grieving family.

The dances were always exciting. Everyone was happy. Night after night, the little boy seated himself beside the fiddlers. He watched them close their eyes and play their fiddles.

"Someday," the boy thought, "I will play the fiddle just like them."

Years went by, and the boy grew up with a strong love for music. He attended the dances and kept on listening. One night after a dance, the young man had a special dream. In it, he saw people all beautifully dressed. They were going to a dance to hear a stranger who could play better than anyone else. In the dream, the young boy went to the dance with the crowd.

An old man was the new fiddler. He sat at the centre of the dance floor and began to play. He played a beautiful tune, and the people danced gracefully to his music. He played all night, never stopping until the early morning hours. When he stopped, everyone except the young man left for home.

The old man beckoned him to come forward. He smiled as he handed the fiddle to the young man, then commanded him to play. The young man closed his eyes and began. To his surprise, he could play. How, he did not understand. After a while, he opened his eyes again, gave the fiddle back to the old man, and went home.

Next morning, the young man awoke, disappointed. It was all a dream. Throughout the day he remembered it, and wished more than ever that he could play the fiddle for the villagers. He liked to see the people happy.

Later that night, the young man made a special visit to a favourite fiddler he knew well. He asked the man if he could teach him to play. The fiddler said to him, "You have watched the fiddlers for many years now. You should have little difficulty learning how to play the fiddling music." Then, he

showed the young man the proper movement of the bow and told him to take the fiddle home and practice.

As he walked home, the young man watched the setting sun reflecting its crimson stains and hazy colours on the lake. It looked like a good place to play the fiddle. Sitting down on the rocks, he closed his eyes, just like he had seen fiddlers do at the dances, and began to play. As he closed his eyes, for a moment he saw again the old man he had seen in his dream.

Wondering who was playing the beautiful music, the people began to walk to the point to see. When the young man opened his eyes, he saw a crowd gathered around him. He felt embarrassed, but the people chanted for more.

He closed his eyes and again he briefly saw the old man. Then he began to play. The people danced and danced to his beautiful music. The young man did not open his eyes to see how excited and happy they were. Across the lake, the birds danced and sang along with his music, too. For many years afterwards, the young man played the fiddle for the people of his village.

Written by Byron Apetagon



The Hunter

One day, a man told his family he was going hunting and would be gone for a few days. After making his preparations, he said good-bye to them and started off on his journey.

The hunter moved slowly through the thick willows and the open stretches of barren muskeg. There was deep snow along the trail and cold northern winds. In the first day of travel, he searched for signs of animals but without any luck. That night he constructed a nest-like shelter to keep the cold winds out. In the middle of the shelter he made a big fire. To one side he placed spruce boughs and grass, then lay down on them to rest. The wind seemed to die away as he went to sleep. Every so often, he woke up to make sure his fire was still burning.

Next morning the hunter set off quickly. The day was clear, but still cold. He had not gone far when he came across some moose tracks. They were quite recent - maybe last night. Noting where the tracks led, he checked the wind direction. He knew he had to follow downwind. This he had learned from other hunting trips when he had gone with skilled hunters. For several hours, he did not see any signs of the moose. There were three of them, and they were close because the tracks were getting softer.

The hunter stayed downwind. He had to move quickly through the thick willows where the moose had walked just moments before. By evening, he spotted the three of them across an open field of muskeg. The hunter did not want to shoot. If he missed, the hunting trip will be unsuccessful. He would have to return without any food for his family.

Across the muskeg, the moose had stopped to rest for the evening. They had lain down on the deep snow amongst some thick willows. The hunter saw his chance; he would move in for the kill. At least one, he thought. The meat would last a long time.

Moving about in a big circle, the hunter walked where there was less brush. One loud snap or crack of a broken twig could ruin the hunt. He was very careful. As he got closer, he was confident he would hit one of them.

With careful aim, he fired. The moose jumped up. He fired two more times. He shot one of them, killing it almost instantly. The other two escaped. The hunter was satisfied with his kill. He butchered the moose and was careful not to throw anything away. He knew he could not take all of the meat, but enough at least for his family. He would return with other men to retrieve the rest later.

It was late afternoon, and the sun would soon set. The man decided to make camp for one more night. He built his shelter and gathered wood. Then he cooked some meat over the fire. He melted snow in a small can which he used as a pot to make tea.

Night fell quickly. The stars twinkled in the darkened sky. Every once in a while he fell asleep. Every time he awoke he made fire and walked around to keep warm. The night was getting colder. The hunter shivered as he wrapped himself with the hide of the moose he had just killed. A few hours earlier he had been hot and sweaty. Now he was very cold. The moose hide gave him warmth, and soon he fell asleep.



When the man woke the next morning, the fire had burned down. He wanted to get up and put some wood on it, but he could hardly move. The hide had frozen solid around him.

The hunter panicked for a moment, then gained control of himself. The thought of his family kept coming back to him. The thought of hungry wolves made him feel uneasy. The hunter closed his eyes and prayed.

Luckily, the day grew warmer by noon. Between the sun's heat and his own struggles, the man freed himself from the frozen hide. When he arrived home he explained the ordeal to his family.

To this day, the story is told by the elders. It is a lesson for young and old alike. Always be careful and alert in similar situations. Avoid fear and panic. It is a reminder to hunters to be careful when they go out hunting.

Told by Irene Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon

Humour

Men who have trapped for many years have many stories to tell. These have been passed on orally to other people. Some have been told so many times, they have perhaps become exaggerated.

Scaring the Moose

The experienced trappers knew how to travel in snowstorms. Sometimes they cut short spruce trees, anywhere from one metre to three metres high. Then they placed them every thirty to one hundred metres apart, depending on the size of the lake and the availability of trees. During storms, the spruce trees worked effectively. Without them, a person could get lost easily in a thick blizzard. That is why one trapper placed them across a large lake.

One day, this trapper went to check his traps. He had not been to see them for some time, so he was confident there would be something in them by now. Taking a knapsack and an axe with him, he followed the spruce trees across the lake. There was blowing snow, and visibility was very poor.

While walking across, he suddenly noticed a young bull moose coming his way. The moose stopped every few steps, inspecting the spruce trees and gnawing on their bark and branches. Keeping his eyes on the moose, the trapper moved cautiously to the nearest spruce tree. He didn't know what to do. If he ran back, maybe the moose would chase him. If he stayed, he was also in great danger. So he hid behind the tree.

For some reason, the young bull did not pick up the man's scent. He came closer and closer. Finally, he stopped and nibbled away at the branches on the other side of the tree where the man was crouching. Afraid the moose might kill him, the man thought quickly. He had to do something to give the young bull a big scare. All at once, an idea came to him. As the moose turned its head to take another nibble on the branches, the man suddenly reached through the thick branches and punched him on the nose.

The moose was startled. He grunted noisily and reared up, his front legs pawing the air wildly. Then he slipped and fell on his back, his face slapping against the ice with a thud. Within seconds he jumped to his feet again, shook his head, and ran off in the direction he had come.



The man watched the moose from the other side of his hiding place. His knees were weak, and he wanted to laugh. It was the funniest thing he had ever seen, but he thought if he told anyone about it, who would believe him?

Told by Henry L. Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon

A Successful Hunt



Somewhere in the northern woods was a little lake from which a river flowed. At the mouth stood a log house overlooking the lake and river. In the log cabin lived a family of four. There was mother and father and their two children. These people was always happy and loved being out in the wilds. In the summer evenings they all sat by the shore watching

the sun go down. They loved to listen to the eerie calls of the loon, the howling of the wolves, and the occasional splashing of fish in the lake.

It was autumn, the time of the year when the men made preparations for the winter. They had to winterize their shelters with mud and muskeg. Their canoes and paddles had to be put away, their snowshoes, traps, and toboggans repaired, and fish and meat smoked, dried, and pounded into pemmican. The women and children all helped with the work.

One morning, father decided to go hunting for some fresh food. It would not be long now before the lake and river would freeze over. The days were getting shorter, and the outside temperatures were getting colder. As he was making preparations, he discovered he only had ten bullets in his box. He knew that was not enough to last him through the winter. The nearest trading post was far away from his trapline. To conserve his bullets, he decided to take only one with him. When he left his home, he took a light lunch, some tea, his gun, and his one bullet.

Walking along the shores of the nearby lake, he came upon a pair of moose tracks and followed them. Suddenly, as he rounded the curve of a bay, he saw two fat moose standing in the water - shoulder high. He quietly positioned himself where he could shoot them together with one shot. With

careful aim, he fired. The first moose fell, and the second keeled over into the water, too.

Not only did the bullet go through the two moose, it travelled further out into the lake and hit a mallard duck on the head. It ricocheted off the duck's head, and went underwater where it caught a fish swimming by. The fish floated up to the surface.

Happy with his successful hunting trip, the hunter leaned his gun against a tree. The gun slipped and fell down on some bushes below. A rabbit had been hiding there, and when the gun fell, it killed it. When the hunter picked up his gun, he found the dead rabbit. He was now even more excited. What a story he had to tell, but would his family believe him? He had killed two moose, one duck, one fish, and a rabbit - all from one gun and one bullet.

The man looked at his duck and fish floating out in the lake and wondered how he could retrieve them. He decided to use a log big enough to carry him without turning over. He used a long pole to push the log out. After retrieving his duck and fish, he looked at his kill. Two moose, one rabbit, one mallard duck, and one fish.

On his way home he saw some grouse on the trail. He throw rocks at them and killed three. When he arrived at his cabin, he told his family of his success. No one believed his story. It was just too wild. Even when they saw his catch, they were still unconvinced.

By Byron Apetagon

Stories like "A Successful Hunt" demonstrate how legends are handed down through the ages and can be made humorous. Perhaps at one time, a hunter may have killed two moose with one bullet. Yet most people who have experienced it will not tell, because they do not want to be embarrassed by the disbelief of their family and friends.

Many people's experiences are told in legend form. With each telling, the stories are modified and altered, often becoming somewhat exaggerated along the way.

An Airplane Ride and a Practical Joke

Some years ago, a man went on an airplane ride with its owner, a man who happened to be his friend as well. It was a beautiful morning. The snow covered the land, trees glistened with frost, and the wind was calm. It was a good day to go sightseeing in an airplane. The animals would stand out against the blanket of snow below.

Flying overhead, the pilot and his passenger scanned the snow covered ground. Once in a while, moose and caribou tracks were evident, but there weren't any signs of them. After flying for a while, they decided to go to the trapline of a man they knew.

Trappers usually didn't have too much store-bought food with them. They relied on wild game, such as beaver, moose, and rabbits, but the main source of food was fish. Trappers usually took their nets with them to their hunting and trapping grounds. If animals were not available or not abundant, fish became the main diet. In the old days, large amounts of fish were used at the traplines, often as bait in the traps. In winter, animals have a difficult time finding food, and the smell of fish brings them to the awaiting traps.

On this particular day, the trapper had decided to lift his net. He wanted to have some fresh fish. While he worked on his net, pulling the fish off the tangled mesh, he heard the faraway humming of an airplane. Standing up straight, he saw a tiny speck in the blue sky over the western horizon. He paid no real attention. It was not unusual to have airplanes fly over his trapline.

From the airplane, the pilot and his passenger noticed a dark figure far out in the lake ahead. At first, they both thought it was a moose standing out in the open, perhaps chased there by wolves.

The pilot lifted the flaps, and lowered the airplane to have a closer look. Slowly the airplane decreased its altitude, nose down, and headed straight at the dark figure on the ice.

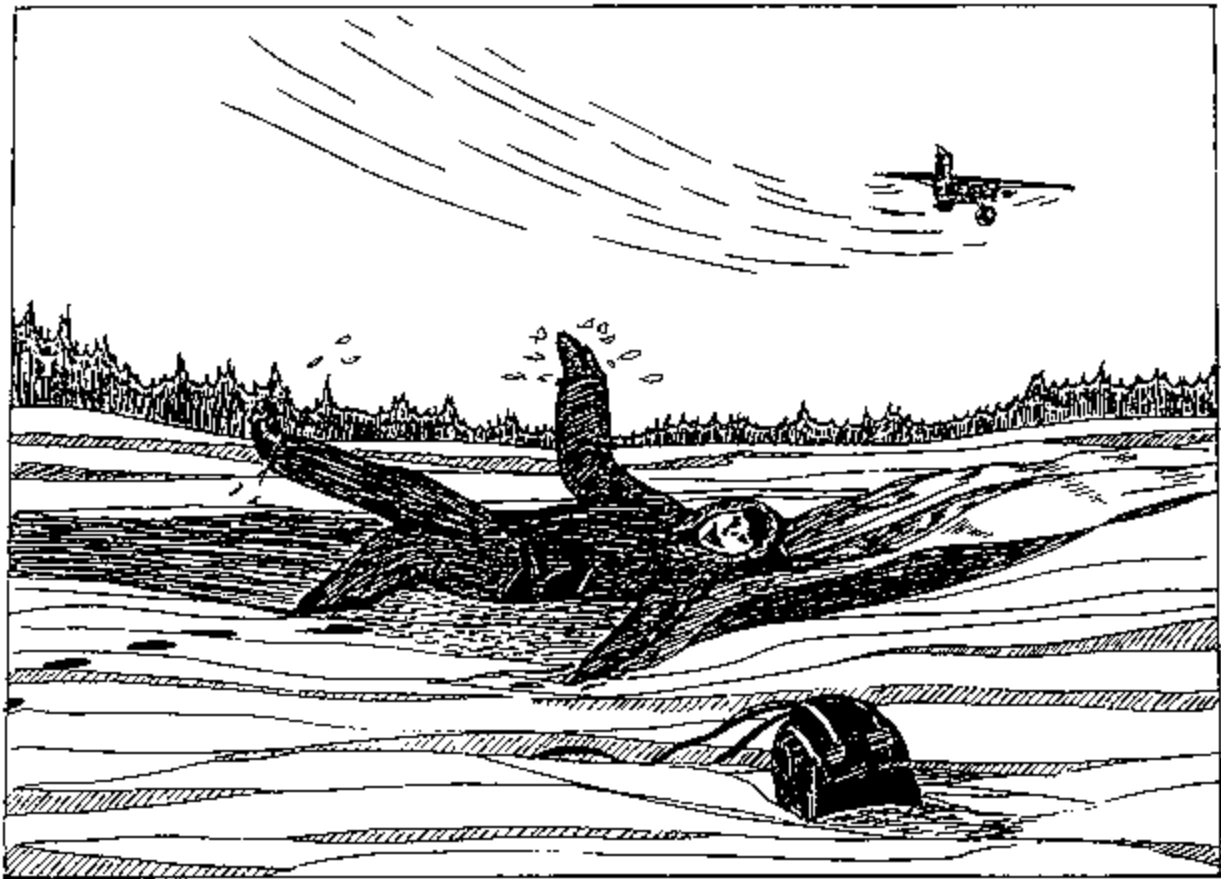
As the airplane approached the lake, the pilot and his passenger saw that it was the trapper lifting his net. Knowing who it was, they decided to give him a little scare. The pilot nosed the aircraft towards the trapper. The two men

smiled and snickered to themselves. The trapper squinted against the bright sky, and saw the airplane coming down straight at him. He looked and looked. Something was wrong with the airplane. Perhaps an engine malfunction, he thought.

Keeping his eyes fixed on it, the trapper tilted his head back as the airplane came closer and closer. As the airplane flew right above him, he tilted his head so far backwards he fell over the deep snowdrifts and landed on his back.

As the aircraft picked up altitude the two men roared with laughter. Behind them, the trapper slowly picked himself up. He knew a joke had been played on him. He couldn't wait to go back to see the pilot. He knew who owned the plane.

Told by Henry L. Muswagon and written by Byron Apetagon



Indian people have their own way of telling stories to other people, especially children. Many animals have different calls which can be related to some English and Cree words. Some of the calls even sound like people's names. In the following are some examples.

Frank Goes Hunting

Early one spring morning, Frank went to hunt for some fresh ducks and geese. Not far away from his home was a marsh which had a creek running through it. Many migratory birds landed there to rest and eat.

Walking carefully along in the tall bushes, Frank looked around for the birds. He did not want to frighten the ducks which rested nearby.

Suddenly, up ahead in a cluster of tall grass, Frank could see a duck's head turning left and right. Getting down on his knees, he crawled toward it, dragging his shotgun along beside him. Frank moved slowly, his knees becoming wet from the soft, slushy snow. Not far away, a crane and an owl were curiously observing him sneak up on the mallard.

When Frank was close enough to take aim, there was a commotion. The crane began to cry.

Somebody's Coming!
Somebody's Coming!
Somebody's Coming!

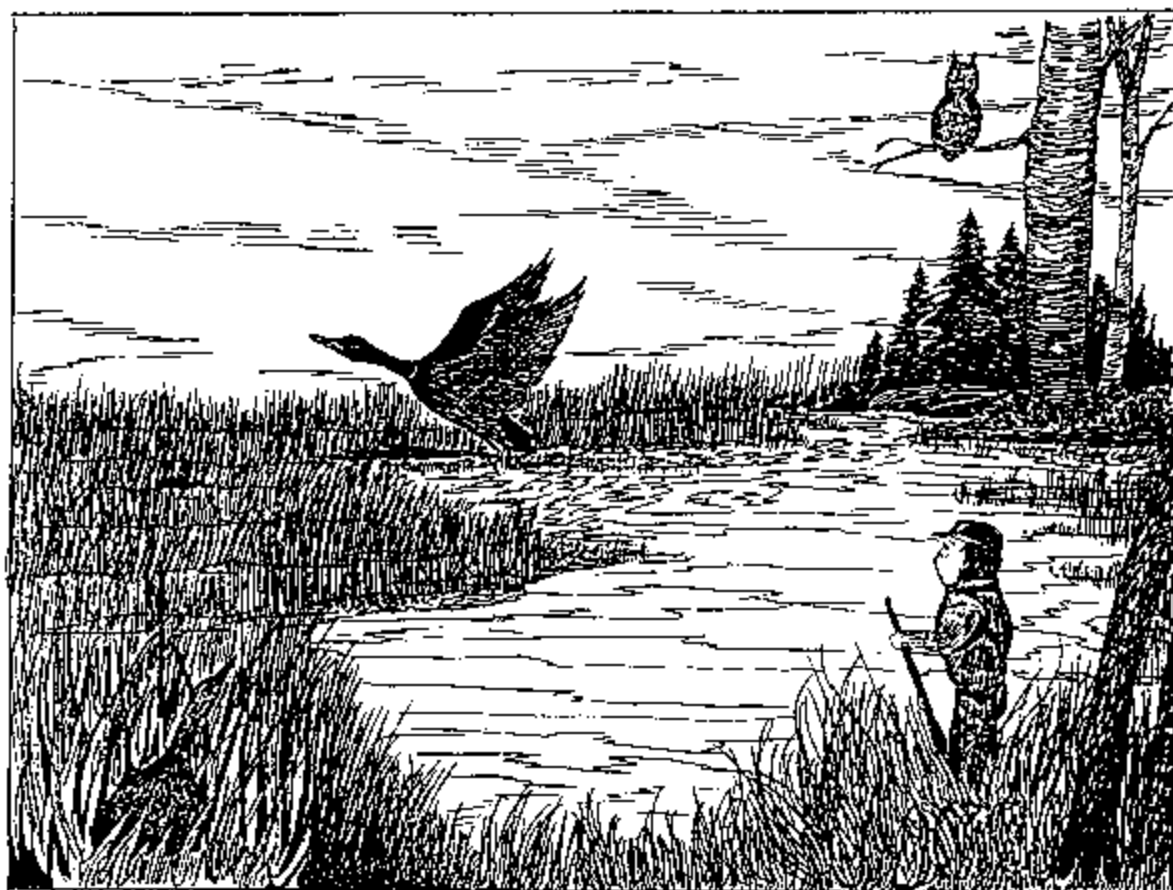
Over in the treetops, the owl was alarmed by the sudden call of the crane. The owl cried.

"Who?"
"Who?"
"Who?"

Hearing the calls, the frightened mallard flew up shouting,

"Frank!"
"Frank!"
"Frank!"

With all the noise and commotion, Frank missed the shot. He stood and watched his supper flying away.



As he walked home, he thought about what he had heard. The call of the Crane did sound like “Somebody’s Coming”, the owl had certainly responded with “Who?”, and the duck’s quack sure sounded like “Frank.”

Although he did not get any wild supper for his family, Frank had a story to tell.

By Byron Apetagon

New Canoe!

One summer, Andrew bought himself a new green canvas canoe. He needed a new canoe because his old one had decayed over the years.

One hot day, Andrew went hunting on the mighty Nelson River with his friend. It was the time of the year when moose came out of the bush to escape the insects. Since Andrew and his partner were experienced hunters, they always knew where to find them.

Later in the evening, after setting up camp on one of the islands, the two men decided to go for a quiet canoe trip. They were going to listen for moose at different points along the river. The tiny crack of a stick, a rustling movement in the willows along the shore, or tracks would tell them a moose was nearby. Seeing or hearing any of those signs, they would anchor quietly in the river and wait for the moose to come out for a swim. Sometimes, it took several hours of waiting, but if they were patient, the moose would come.

As the two men paddled along the river, they could hear the fluttering wings of the ruffed grouse, quacking calls of the ducks, splashing of the fish, and the moaning sounds of the distant water falls. It was a beautiful evening. The sun still had two hours of light left before it closed the curtains for the day.

Andrew sat at the front while his partner steered the canoe. Suddenly, somewhere in the tall weeds near the shore came the call of a loon.

"Neo Canoe! Neo Canoe!" called the crane.

The men looked at each other. They began to chuckle.

"The crane is proud of my canoe," said Andrew. "You noticed it said 'New Canoe! New Canoe!'"

Then both men laughed so hard that every moose in the vicinity ran away, and never returned. Not at least while Andrew and his friend remained in the area.

Written by Byron Apetagon



Bob!

One cold winter day, Bob was carrying water from the river. It had been bitterly cold, so cold that even the wind had calmed down. Trees made cracking sounds in the woods. The sun was shining in the clear blue sky.

As Bob walked down to the river, someone began to call out his name.

“Bob! Bob! Bob!” the voice cried.

It seemed faint and distant. He stopped and squinted his eyes, looking up and down the river. There was no one in sight.

Thinking it was just his imagination, he continued on his way. He had taken only a few strides when he heard his name again.

“Bob! Bob! Bob!” came the voice.

He stopped and listened. The voice stopped. Bob began to feel strange. He had heard peculiar stories about people who have heard their names being called mysteriously.

As he neared the waterhole, he squatted down on the ice and began to bail the water into his water pails.

After they were full, Bob was making his way up the bush trail when he heard his name again.

“Bob! Bob! Bob!”

This time the voice was closer, but as he looked around, he could not see anyone. Fearful now, he felt like dropping his pails and running home. He listened but did not hear the voice again.

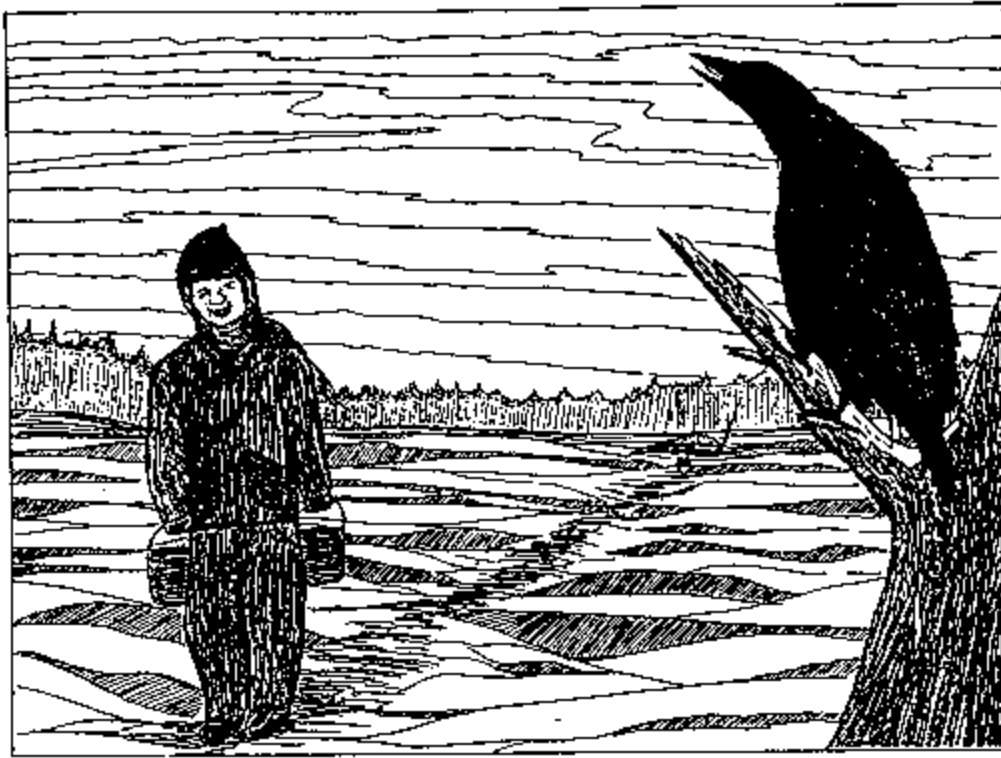
He began to take the voice as a bad sign. He remembered a superstition. When you think you hear your name, something bad might happen to you or to one of your relatives. It was a warning, a sign of evil, when people heard their name called like this.

As his eyes inspected the area ahead of him, he heard his name again, except now the voice seemed closer. He looked in the direction it was coming from.

Further up on the hill where his house was, a tall spruce tree stood. High up, near the top sat the black figure of a raven. Laughing to himself, Bob realized what had happened.

On cold days Ravens usually keep still, but every once in a while, they mutter a sharp croaking sound which sounds like “Bob.” When ravens make “Bob” sounds, it means the weather is very cold. The muttering raven is complaining.

Written by Byron Apetagon



Long before modern means of travel were introduced to isolated Cree communities, people used to travel by dogteam, snowshoes, and birchbark canoes. In those days there were some travelling missionaries who roamed from one village to another. They taught the Indians the Word of God. The Cree were willing to learn about the God who had created all things in the universe. Even though they could not speak English well, many of them made an attempt to understand the language.

Goose Comin!

Long ago a missionary lived in a small Cree village and often visited the people there to see how everyone was doing. One morning, two men were constructing a new birchbark canoe, when they noticed the missionary coming their way.

“I wonder what he wants now,” said one of the men in Cree.

“I know he wants something. That’s the only time he checks things in the village,” replied the other man, chuckling.

Soon the missionary arrived and began to ask questions about the new canoe. In time he made known the purpose of his visit.

"I will be away this Sunday. I must go to the next village to say mass there," he explained.

The two Cree men winked at each other, knowing they were going to be asked to take him, but neither said a word.

"The priest there had been called to go back to his home country. Therefore, the villagers requested I bring mass at least once a month," he went on.

The two men looked at each other, then discussed the matter briefly in Cree. The journey would only be a day and a night, and it would also be a good time to break in the new canoe. They told the missionary they would take him.

Only one of the Cree could speak English fluently. The other man hardly had a clue, but on this trip, his friend would do all the talking.

"We will take you to the next village in our new canoe. But we don't have enough food to take with us. If you bring enough for all of us, we will be glad to help you out," the one man said to the missionary.

The missionary agreed. As he walked away, he muttered something about getting ready for the canoe trip. The men continued to work on their canoe. By evening, they were trying it out on the river.

Early next morning, they were already waiting in their canoe when the missionary came down with his bag of books and food. Hopping on, the missionary seated himself in the centre. In the front seat sat the Cree Indian who spoke English, while the other sat at the stern. When he had to speak to his Cree friend in the front, he had to call over the missionary's head.

They paddled across the lake, down a narrow river, and over several portages. Throughout the trip the missionary sang hymns from his books, while the two men paddled in rhythm with the songs. Near evening of the first day, the men stopped. They were hungry and needed to eat before they went any further. With his head down, the Cree who spoke English humbly asked for food.

"Father, did you bring lunch? he asked. "We're getting hungry."

“Yes! Yes! of course! I have bought some bologna sandwiches and biscuits,” he said cheerfully.

The two Crees looked at their lunch. “Bologna sandwiches,” they thought to themselves. Both men were annoyed. They had worked so hard all day. Their supper did not look very appetizing.

After they had eaten, the three continued their trip, the two men hoping to shoot some ducks or a goose for a late supper that night.

“Hey, Father!” said the Cree who spoke English, “If you see any ducks or geese, tell us right away, and we will make a good supper for all of us.”

The missionary kept his eyes open. A roasted bird was a good idea. Not long after, two geese came flying by. The missionary spotted them first. Excitedly, he turned around and pointed at the geese with his finger, nearly touching the Cree who could not speak English.

Still pointing, he whispered loudly to him, “Geese Comin! Geese Comin!”

The man was puzzled for a moment, then he grabbed the missionary’s finger and bit it. The missionary screamed loudly. The Cree man in the front turned around and saw his partner biting the missionary’s finger.

“Why did you bite him?” he asked in Cree.

“Well, he told me to bite him, and I obeyed,” he tried to explain, “He’s a priest!” he went on angrily.

Speaking to the missionary, the other man said, “I’m sorry he bit you, but what did you say to him?”

“I saw two geese flying on his side. I whispered, ‘Geese Comin! Geese Coming!’ Then he grabbed my finger and bit me,” he said unhappily.

Then the man understood what had happened. He explained to the missionary, and he began to chuckle. Then both Cree men laughed. From that time on, the missionary never said “Geese Comin!” again, because in Cree it means “bite me.”

