

**Cover Photograph: Women waiting for Treaty
Payment at Norway House, 1910**

**A.V. Thomas Collection 172 (courtesy Manitoba
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Cam Giavedoni
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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 tépakohp (seven)

hk as in áhkosiw (he is sick)

ht as in mitátaht (ten)

hc as in anohc (today)

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

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CHAPTER 1

CHARLES QUESKEKAPOW REMEMBERS

Charles Queskekapow (Kwéskikápów) is a well-known Norway House elder. His wife is Helen, the daughter of James Robertson and Mary Grieve, and they have had eight children: George Arthur, James, Nancy, Lydia, Sally, Debra, Nora, and Priscilla.

Charles was born 26 February 1924 at Norway House, the son of Joseph Queskekapow and Lydia Captain. His grandfather was Peter Queskekapow, a well known fur trapper in his day, and his great-grandfather was Joseph Queskekapow. After his mother's death at Two Rivers, Charles, his three brothers, and one sister grew up in the homes of friends and relatives.

Charles lived with several families, learning and experiencing ways of survival in the wilderness. He spent many evenings listening to the stories and legends of the elders. Charles explains that legends are tools for teaching life values such as love, kindness, giving, and caring. Sometimes these values are depicted through legends about negative life forces such as greed, jealousy, and envy. Humour is often part of the stories, too. It is used to mock foolishness and register disapproval for inappropriate actions.

In the following pages, Charles shares some of the stories and their teachings.



CHARLES QUESKEKAPOW

THE TEACHINGS IN THE LEGENDS

Living in the wilderness camps with my elders, I learned many things by listening, asking questions, and observing my people doing things. Later as I grew older and matured, many of the things I learned I applied.

Often I waited impatiently for older men to return from their hunting trips. I wanted to hear the stories of long ago, many of which were called "Kayási Acanohkéwina," meaning old legends.

I remember while we were living at a place called Ininowi Sákahikan, an older man told the following legend.

WETIGO AND THE HUNTER

Long ago, people believed in wetigos (wihikowak), and feared them because they were ruthless killers. Wetigos lived like ordinary human families but they were cannibals who enjoyed eating people.



There was a man at this time who had a family to support, and food was getting scarce. Knowing he had to go look for game, he left home after saying goodbye to his family and telling them he would return in a few days.

After walking for a while, the hunter came upon moose tracks. He followed these tracks for a long time. Somehow the moose sensed they were being followed and ran away, leaving the hunter far behind.

Unaware this had happened, the hunter kept on following the tracks. Becoming tired, he sat down to rest. Two human-like figures came towards him. Realizing too late they were wetigos, he was unable to escape. The wetigos grabbed him and started carrying him away. The hunter was so frightened, he did not know what to do. All he noticed was that one of the wetigos was much younger than the other. They carried him on their backs for many kilometres until they finally arrived at their lodge. There they spoke quietly to each other, but the hunter could still hear what they were saying.

"The man is too thin to eat," said the younger wetigo.

"Yes, I think we'll have to make him fatter before we eat him," replied the older wetigo, "We'll have to get some moose meat to make him fatter. Fatter humans taste juicier."

The wetigos left the hunter in the lodge which was well secured. There was no chance for him to escape.

Sometime later, they returned with plenty of moose meat. The younger wetigo cooked a large portion and fed the hunter, who was so hungry that he accepted the food. Day after day, the wetigos fed him, and he became fatter and fatter.

One afternoon while pretending to be asleep, he heard the wetigos talking.

"He's getting quite fat now. I think we'll have to eat him soon," said the younger wetigo.

"Yes, I agree," replied the older wetigo, "We'll eat him the day after tomorrow."

After hearing the conversation, the hunter became very scared. He had to make a plan of escape. Some time later he looked outside and noticed that the younger wetigo was wearing snowshoes. That gave him an idea.

The hunter went outside (he was allowed greater freedom when the wetigos were nearby) and pretended he was going to make kindling for the morning fire. The young wetigo walked over to help him.

"My, you have a nice pair of snowshoes," the hunter said in a pleasant voice.

"Do you like them?" the young wetigo asked, highly flattered.

"Yes, I like them," the hunter replied.

"I'll make a pair for you to use when you're helping around here," said young wetigo.

"The plan is working well," thought the hunter.



In no time at all, the young wetigo finished making the snowshoes and gave them to him. The hunter put them on and began to haul dry wood from around the lodge. He made many snowshoe trails in every direction. Soon there were many paths leading everywhere.

The next day, the wetigos returned with more moose meat and the man was well fed again. Meanwhile, the fire started to die. As it got colder in the lodge, the older wetigo told the hunter to get some dry spruce boughs to start up a new fire. Now was his chance to escape. The hunter jumped up and went out quickly, put on his snowshoes, and hid those of the young wetigo. Both wetigos stayed inside the lodge, paying no attention to the hunter, who had taken some of the frozen moose meat and ran away into the forest.

A long time passed, and the young wetigo was getting cold and impatient. "The man is taking too long to get dry boughs," he said.

"We better go and find out what he's doing," said the older wetigo.

Once outside, the wetigos could not see any trace of the hunter. Slowly they realized they had lost their delicious food. They ran around the lodge looking for the hunter's footprints, but there were so many snowshoe trails, they did not know which trail to follow. The young wetigo became furious with the older wetigo.

"We should have eaten the man yesterday," he said, shouting angrily. "Now we have lost our food."

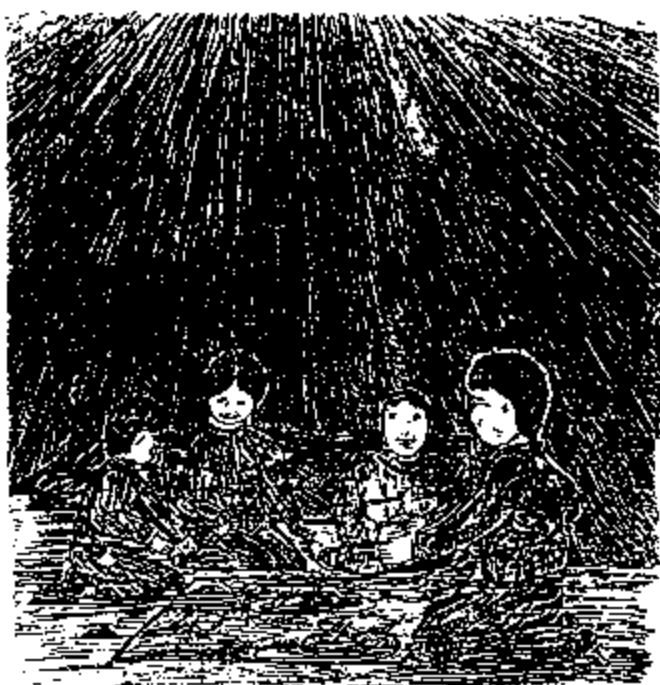
"Don't worry. We will find him tomorrow morning," said the older wetigo.

The hunter ran all night until he reached a large lake. The wind was blowing hard and the snow was flying across the open space. The man raced downwind. When he reached the far end of the lake, he looked back. As the snow had already covered his trail, he knew if the wetigos followed him, the drifts would hide his tracks. He made a hole in the snow along the shore, snuggled inside, and went to sleep.

The next morning, the wetigos lost the hunter's tracks in the middle of the lake. They gave up the chase, returned to their lodge, and were never seen again.

Later the same day a group of ordinary hunters came walking close by. The hunter emerged from his hiding place and ran towards them. He told them of his encounter with the wetigos. They believed him because they had already seen the wetigos' tracks in the snow.

After staying with the hunters for some time, the man decided to return home to his family. He walked alone for many days and nights, following the trees which stood along the way. He watched the stars at night. He looked at the sun every morning and evening. Finally, he arrived at his home. His family was happy to see him and the bag of moose meat he brought with him. That night everyone had a good meal.



LESSON

Be on your guard, lest some unforeseen danger engulf you. But even the most dangerous situation can offer some means of escape to the person who uses his head.

A legend such as the one above gave the elders a chance to teach children many things, such as how to avoid getting lost in the woods. With such stories as an introduction, we can learn how people used the heavens while they were travelling. They knew the location of the North Star, the most important compass of the old days. They observed sunrise, sunset, the moon, and movement of the stars. They received knowledge, understanding, and wisdom through observation and experience. When I was younger, I sometimes stayed outdoors late into the night following game. I saw the North Star; I followed it, and it took me home.

We can also learn how the trees were used to determine direction. Sometimes while they walked in the night, people observed the branches. The branches towards the north are shorter than those on the south side. The north side of the poplar trees is usually darker in color, and the bark is covered with moss and lichen. When people studied this, they could tell which way was south, east, and west.

The wind is an unreliable way of telling direction. It can shift every so often and confuse the hunter.

Most rock beds are found in a line stretching out from east to west. When people walked from one place to another, they used the rock formations to find the four directions.

At other times, the people followed rivers, creeks, and streams to find safety after being lost in the wilderness. The flow of a stream will eventually pour out into a large tributary, such as the main river or lake.

Muskegs and bogs are almost treeless barrens. In these barren lands, tall trees can be seen at a great distance. People used to follow the barren lands which would lead them eventually to a lake or river.

Here is another legend shared by Charles Queskekapow.

LYNX AND JACKFISH

One warm afternoon, Lynx rested sleepily on a tree which was leaning towards the river below him. The afternoon sun made him feel lazy. He did not feel like chasing any animals today.

While resting on the tree, Lynx noticed Jackfish hovering near the surface of the river. Feeling mischievous, Lynx wanted to have fun with him.

"Hey, you silly, scaly flathead, where are you going this time?" he teased.

"I'm going down river about three rapids below," the fish replied, abruptly. He was furious at Lynx's insult. "Furthermore," he added, angrily, "I curse you. In a while you will be dying. Be careful if you eat rabbit," he warned.

"Well, since you're going down river, I curse you, too. You will drown three rapids below." replied the Lynx, laughing.

Not long after Jackfish swam away, something did happen. At the third rapids, he was found floating. He had drowned.

Several days went by and Lynx forgot about Jackfish's warnings. One day he could not find any food to eat. While hunting in the forest, he remembered he had hidden a rabbit which had been killed for a later meal. He found the rabbit and began to eat. It tasted very good. Suddenly, the lynx felt a sharp pain. A bone was stuck in his throat. Rolling over and over, he remembered Jackfish's warning. He cried loudly.

Not far away, Wesakayjack (Wisakécâhk) was out prancing around looking for victims to trick. As he stopped to rest, he heard someone crying and coughing. He walked in the direction from where the crying came. He found Lynx rolling over and over, holding his throat with his front paws.

Wesakayjack saw what was happening and told Lynx he was going to help him. He took a medicinal plant and pulled off a piece of lynx's tail, which was longer in those days. Adding the medicinal herb to it, he made Lynx swallow them both. When they had gone down far enough into Lynx's throat, Wesakayjack pulled them out. Sure enough, the bone was attached to the furry part of the tail. Lynx thanked Wesakayjack and told him what had happened.

Wesakayjack forgave Lynx for the actions he had committed, but he told him his tail would not grow back. That is why the Lynx has a short black tail to this day.

LESSON

The moral in the legend is very important. In this story, we learn it is unwise to call people down for we don't know what our own fate will be. We must be humble and caring towards everyone and everything.

We learn that there are things in Nature that have medicinal value. Herbs and roots can be used to treat illness and promote healing.

Long ago, people told legends to their children. They explained the morals of the stories in a way which made young people think. Young people learned which values were most important.

The legends are still told; however, not many of them are used to teach the values of life. Below is a bible story to think about. It is followed by another legend we often heard when we were growing up. Both deal specifically with obedience and respect.



THE OLD MAN AND THE CHILDREN

It is written that an old man was walking along when he came upon many children. When the children noticed the old man was bald, they began to tease and laugh at him. While they were mocking the man, a wild bear ran out of the bushes and attacked and killed them.

THE HAND

A child was born to a young couple. As the child grew older, he became very disobedient, demanding, and bad-tempered towards everyone - even his own parents. One day the child took ill and could not be healed. In a short time he died, and the parents were very hurt at the loss.

After the child was buried on the funeral day, his hand appeared out of the grave. People wondered why this had happened. A minister was asked to help. When he saw the hand, he told the parents to whip it. The parents obeyed, and began to punish their dead child's hand.

The hand disappeared into the grave. This was a very important lesson for these young parents. They learned a child must be taught obedience and discipline. Sometimes a child learns a lesson after being punished. The legend also teaches parents not to be overprotective with their children.

Here is another legend which shows if one is willing and capable of doing something, success can be achieved.

THE PEOPLE WHO FEARED WETIGO

Many years ago in the spring, a group of nomadic people stopped near a big lake. They set up camp near the shore because they feared Wetigo. Wetigo was an evil being who lived in the forest. He was a cannibal.

While the people rested in the camp, an old man came out of his tent and talked to the villagers.

"Listen, I have something to tell. I feel something strange and bad is going to happen in our camp. I'm warning you, take care of yourselves," he said ominously.

After a while the people learned that someone was dying in their group. It was an older man whom everyone knew.

Later in the day, the first old man came out of his tent again. He told everyone something was about to happen shortly. Soon afterwards, a young man heard crying and shouting sounds coming from the forest. Then everyone heard them and began to run towards their canoes. They were going to get away because the shouts and cries were those of Wetigo.

As the people prepared to leave, the dying man came running out of his tent where he had been left to die. He jumped into the nearest canoe and yelled, "Come on, everybody. Let's go before Wetigo gets us."

Once anchored far off the shore, the people watched Wetigo searching for humans throughout the camp. Then they went away to look for another place. They laughed and chuckled amongst themselves for the dying man had looked so funny when he heard Wetigo coming near his tent. The man's body had looked so weak, yet he had run as if he were not dying. Even funnier, and stranger still, the dying man recovered from his disease.

LESSON

The lesson can be identified if the story is studied carefully. For example, people who always say they are sick are often hypochondriacs. They only imagine they are sick. There are cases where people have recovered quickly from such "diseases."

People are capable of doing almost anything. If they believe they can achieve success, they only need the willingness to make that belief a reality.



The following legend emphasizes the value of sharing.

WESAKAYJACK AND THE WOLVES

One winter day, Wesakayjack was walking along a river. He noticed moose tracks before him. He took no serious notice but kept walking. Wesakayjack had not gone far when he saw a wolf pack following him. He tried to walk fast but the wolf pack was faster. Wesakayjack began to run but in a short while the wolves jumped him. They were about to tear him to pieces with their vicious teeth when he thought of a plan.

"Wait! Wait! Don't eat me," he said in a trembling voice. "I saw some moose tracks back there. I'm going to hunt them later but I need to rest first."

The wolves stopped and looked at Wesakayjack. "Now, what did I get myself into this time," he thought.

"I did not want to follow them right away," he said to the wolves, "I thought I'd wait until early next morning when the moose would still be resting." There was a long silence.

Finally the oldest wolf began to speak. "You saw moose tracks back there. That is good. We'll help you hunt them in the morning," he said.

Now Wesakayjack was more afraid. He had gotten himself into a terrible situation. He knew the moose would have probably scented the wolves. Wesakayjack had to make a plan to escape before the wolves found out there weren't any moose nearby.

That evening the old wolf called three young wolves to hunt for moose meat. Later, the three of them returned with an old rotten log stump and told their exciting story. They said they had killed a moose and brought back a hind leg. But it was all make believe. The log looked like a moose leg, and as he was getting too blind, the old wolf could not tell the difference.

The old wolf invited everyone to take a piece of the meat. Wesakayjack played along with the wolves and took his share of the old rotten stump.

The wolves pretended to break the pieces as if they were bones. Some were loudly slurping on the marrow. There was no marrow but Wesakayjack continued to play along.



WESAKAYJACK MEETS THE WOLVES

After all of them had eaten their pieces, the old wolf told everyone to sleep. Wesakayjack was placed in the middle of the pack so he could not run away during the night.

The night was cold. The wolves smelled awful.

The next morning, the wolves followed Wesakayjack to the place where he had seen moose tracks. Soon, they saw them, too. Quickly, the wolves dispersed and ran into a large cluster of brush and tall trees. Wesakayjack followed because he was curious. Before long, he heard the wolves snapping and growling at something. By the time he appeared, the wolves had killed a moose.

Wesakayjack stayed with the wolves and ate with them. While the wolves continued with their feast, Wesakayjack quietly trotted into the bush and went away.

LESSON

In this story, we can see the sharing and giving aspects of Indian values. Wesakayjack shared the moose tracks he had seen with the wolves. Later, when the wolves killed the moose, they allowed Wesakayjack to eat with them.

I remember some time ago, when a person died in the community, people got together to help the grieving family. They shared food, money, and other things which they could give. Sometimes I saw people going to all the homes. They carried three bags with them. People gave lard, milk, flour, meat, and many other things. When the three bags had been filled, they were taken to the home of the grieving family. Sometimes, people gave money to help buy coal oil and other things which were needed.

Sharing is an important Indian value. Legends are excellent tools for teaching such values, especially to children. A story teller must have the gift of understanding when telling them.

Here is another legend which stresses the value of intelligence.

WESAKAYJACK TRICKS BEAR

One day Wesakayjack was out looking for something to eat. Somewhere along the trails, he noticed Bear was looking for food as well. Because Wesakayjack was a clever old being, he devised a plan to trick Bear.

Wesakayjack slouched down to pick up some berries and began to squeeze the juice from them. He rubbed this juice all over his face. Then he began to roll over and over, making laughing sounds in order to catch Bear's attention. Bear heard the commotion Wesakayjack was making and came to investigate.

"What are you doing?" Bear asked.

"Oh, this is so much fun!" Wesakayjack said as he kept on laughing and rolling over and over.

Bear watched for some time. He saw Wesakayjack having fun.

"Can I try it, too?" Bear asked.

"Sure, just take a handful of berries. Squeeze the juice and rub it into your eyes," Wesakayjack said persuasively.

Bear squeezed the juice into his eyes. He began to roll over but he didn't have fun. The juice gave him so much pain, he could not open his eyes. He screamed from the hurt. Wesakayjack stopped rolling over. He stopped shouting and laughing. He saw Bear was suffering. His trick had worked.

Then Wesakayjack took a big stick. He struck Bear and killed him almost instantly. That was his plan for he wanted to eat bear meat.

LESSON

In this story, we learn to use intelligence to satisfy our needs. One of our needs is food.

Such stories have been passed down orally from grandfathers to grandchildren for generations. The stories were never written down and each orator gave the stories new meanings. The morals of these stories are valuable teaching tools.

VALUES GAINED FROM PAST EXPERIENCES

When I was growing up in the wilderness, I used to live in a log mikiwáhp. A mikiwáhp is a tipi-like shelter, conical shaped with an opening at the apex of the cone. This opening allows smoke to leave from the interior.

I slept on the bare ground during the summer. We had to do this sometimes because we used to travel all day and late into the night. I loved to sleep in the outdoors. I heard many noises all night long.

In colder seasons, I used to seek warmth in a nest-like structure. This shelter was made from sticks, spruce boughs, and grass. The walls kept the cold winds out, and a fire could be made inside the shelter.

These are the Indian ways which people used in the past.

In the days when I was more able and active, I did plenty of trapping and hunting. As there were no other jobs available, I had to collect fur pelts. I followed game everywhere and learned many hunting skills. I made close observations of the wind movements. I, and others like me, had to learn these things in order to meet the needs of our families. Everyone had to work and there was no room for laziness.

Long ago, there were no skidoos or airplanes. People had to use dogs and snowshoes, and walk by foot to get to their traplines. I could not afford to buy a skidoo or charter an airplane when I went hunting or fishing.

Sometimes I brought back fish from the trapline. I tried my best to put fifty on a toboggan to bring them back to Norway House, where I sold them for fifty cents a fish. However, I had to present them to the Conservation Officer before I sold them, as he wanted to know

if they had parasites. They didn't. We had to pull the toboggans for two to three days from the trapline. Now, with a skidoo the same trip only takes a few hours. An airplane takes even less time, but costs more money.

Today, my son George traps in the same area I did. He uses the skidoo, but it is still hard to make a living from trapping. It is cold, but not as cold as when we had to make camp outdoors all night. The coldest time of the year was always between January and February.

I do not wish to see my young people live like that anymore. I want them to live a good life but they must work very hard to meet their needs. In the past, people worked hard all the time. We must support the young people, especially by sharing legends which reflect the work ethic, so that they will learn to work hard, too. Here is another story which reflects the work ethic.

WESAKAYJACK AND THE BOULDER

One day, sly old Wesakayjack was roaming all over the forest. He was looking for someone or something to tease.

While walking along, he noticed a large boulder seated on top of a rock shelf. Wesakayjack smiled to himself and began to mock the boulder.

"Rock! Rock! Come on down and play with me," he said teasingly.

"I can't play with you. Once I have been placed here, you know very well I cannot move," the boulder replied.

"Come on down from there. Quit making excuses and don't be so lazy," Wesakayjack said, as he kept on teasing.

"I'm sorry, I can't play with you," insisted the boulder.

Wesakayjack kept on teasing. He knew the rock could not move even if he tried. In the meantime, the boulder was getting annoyed with Wesakayjack.

Just at this moment, part of the rock shelf slipped away, and the boulder could feel himself beginning to move.

"Okay then, Wesakayjack, I'll play with you," he said. He began to roll down hill and chased Wesakayjack. Wesakayjack ran ahead, laughing and teasing. The boulder began to roll faster and faster until he was right behind Wesakayjack. Wesakayjack felt him hitting his heels.

"Watch it, Rock. You'll trip me," Wesakayjack yelled back and began to run a bit faster.

But the boulder rolled more rapidly still, until he knocked Wesakayjack down and rolled on top of him. Wesakayjack could not move because the rock was too heavy.

"Rock! Rock! Get off me. You know you are very heavy," Wesakayjack said, barely breathing.

"I have told you before that once I stop some place, I cannot move for a long, long time," Rock answered. It was the last time he spoke.

For hundreds of years, Wesakayjack lay under the boulder. His nimble body could not move. His eyes, face, and hands became covered with moss and lichen. His clothes decayed. Wesakayjack was very sorry he had teased Rock about being lazy.

LESSON

Wesakayjack learned a valuable lesson. No one should tease someone else as this can lead to unforeseen consequences. There is another lesson also.

Laziness is a habit for everyone; but, in order to survive, one must work hard daily. As people get older, many become less mobile. They remain indoors or lie in bed until they die. The old and sick can only desire to be active and energetic in the outdoors, just as Wesakayjack could only desire to be active when trapped by the heavy boulder. We need to work hard when we are young and active, and not waste time as Wesakayjack did, because we will be unable to work when we have grown old.

MY STRANGE LOOKING STICK

Today, Alcohol is hurting us. Many bad things are happening to individuals and their families. The young people are greatly affected. As a people, we have to learn to put aside alcohol and the problems it can cause. It is difficult for an individual to quit, once alcohol has gained control.

Once I had a strange looking stick. It grew straight up from the bottom, curled in an odd shape at the mid-section, and then grew straight up again. When I saw the stick and its peculiar shape, I was able to relate it to my life from the time I was a child until now.



When I was a child, I was clean, honest, and learning to live by the values of my people. Just like the stick, I was starting out life straight and true. As I grew older, I began to leave those values. I did much exploring and experimenting with many things which made my life a terrible mess. When I saw the spiral section of the stick, I was reminded that I was very much like it. My life was a mass of confusion, conflicts, temptations, and trials.

The top part of the stick grew upright again. As we mature, we begin to understand the purpose of life. Now, my life is like that. I am old and I want to get away from wickedness. We must learn to comprehend using the values of life which have been given to us.

I kept the stick at the Cultural Centre and talked to many children about its complex structure.

I used to go with students into the wilderness camps, where I shared many of my experiences about life in the past. I remember telling them that if we made an attempt to straighten the stick, it would be a difficult task to do. With this example, I told the children that our lives are very much like that. Sometimes we have difficulty accepting the mistakes we have made.

NATURE'S NATURAL MEDICINES

Long ago, people used certain herbs and roots to cure diseases. This knowledge was passed down through the generations by word of mouth. It was never written down.

Indian people always had respect and honour for medicines. Only certain members of families were taught how to produce and apply them.

Today, doctors and hospitals are aware of the value of the medicinal herbs and roots. They want to know all about them, so they can record these remedies in books. They want to make money.

Our young people should make an attempt to record and publish materials on medicinal herbs and roots. They must try to do it soon, before another culture does it. We know our young people have a new form of education--they have a new kind of intelligence, wisdom, and understanding.

I have travelled. I have worked with other people. I have come to understand their values in life. Sometimes I worked with people who spoke different languages. I have come to understand some of the things they have told me.

I have shared many things, but the time has come to stop. I need more time to think and refresh my soul. Until next time. Thank you.

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

Originally told in Cree by Charles Queskekapow
in a videotaped interview with Gwen Balfour



A Cree Indian Camp, undated
Wm. Rackham Collection 95 (courtesy Manitoba Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

CHAPTER II

SARAH BALFOUR: IMAGES OF YESTERYEARS



SARAH BALFOUR

Sarah Balfour was born 19 March 1926 at Norway House, the daughter of Moses Gore and Eva Robertson. Her paternal grandparents were Charles Gore and Sarah Neepin. Her maternal grandparents were James Robertson and Maria Paupanekis, (Pahpanakis) daughter of the Rev. Edward Paupanekis and Margaret Stevenson.

Sarah's husband was Richard, son of Albert Balfour and Flora Stevenson. Their ten children include Beatrice, Valerie, Victoria, Richard, Alex, Nancy, Eva, Frieda, George, and Alfred.

Here is Sarah's story.

WHAT DO I REMEMBER?

I cannot remember my grandmother. I barely remember my grandfather. He died when I was about five years old. I remember people rowed and paddled around Towers Island when he died.

My parents lived a hard life. I remember my father used to take any job he could get. He supported and fed us well. Some types of work he did were fishing, ice harvesting, guiding, and freighting. He was also a church helper. He became deeply involved with church work.

People used to help each other when they built houses. Families used to work together; people shared.

Families had big gardens. My family had a garden and we learned how to maintain it. We were taught certain steps to care for a healthy garden. We seeded the potatoes. We hoed and weeded all summer long. By the time I was fifteen years old, I was already learning to be a responsible worker. I remember several families had cows and horses. I used to see the animals.

CHORES AND DUTIES

The duties around our house were routine, year after year. In the early spring when snow was thawing, our parents kept us very busy. We picked garbage and carried it away far from the house. Sometimes we burned it. I remember some people used to put unwanted things on the melting ice. As the river ice broke free, the wastes were carried down river.

We helped by hauling, cutting, and chopping wood. Later we piled the wood neatly beside our house.

Our home had an upper level, which was one large, open room. The large family room on the main floor had a partition enclosing it into two sections, and an addition to the house served as the kitchen. Many days we spent hours cleaning up the house. We cleaned the floors. We also changed the wallpaper inside our houses occasionally.

When we washed clothes, we used a washboard to remove the dirt and stains. We always used our hands; we did not have switches and knobs to do our work. Furthermore, when water was low, we had to haul it from the river.

I remember in the winter time we used to keep the fire burning all night long. Sometimes the nights were very cold. Our parents woke up very early in the mornings. No one was allowed to sleep late. Our parents had very strict rules; we had to be obedient. Many times we were told only once to do things.

We used to live on the Nelson River side of Mission Island. There used to be many tall trees in our yard. In the backwoods, huge boulders stood where we found many kinds of berries. We picked blueberries, raspberries, and strawberries. Today, I find there's hardly any berries around.

I remember everything was so peaceful. We used to have a radio; however, we didn't listen to it much. We were always busy doing other things.

SEASONAL ACTIVITIES

In the summer, people went everywhere by boat. They rowed and paddled as few people owned motors. Many times people walked to go places. Later, several families had horses, and we could see them going to the stores, to the churches, and everywhere. Sometimes they taxed people, too.

I believe the first time bombardiers arrived at Norway House was in 1948. The hospital owned the first bombardier. Next to get a bombardier was the Roman Catholic mission. Then the Bradburn brothers got one, and with it they started the local taxi service. I remember they charged fifty cents for one passenger in those days.

Several families would leave for their traplines in the fall where they remained all winter long. Sometimes they came home for a few days, but most families did not return for long. Usually, the men came back on occasion to pick up more supplies and goods needed on the traplines. The families came home late in the spring.

EDUCATION AND WORK EXPERIENCE

I attended the Jack River Day School on Mission Island. The building was small, and only a few students attended classes. I remember there were about forty seats in the classroom. The highest grade students could take was Grade Eight. I remember some parents pulled out their older boys to go trapping with them. My older brother James was one of these boys. As my father Moses used to trap, he needed James to help him on the traplines. While James and my father were gone, I helped my mother with the work which needed to be done. In the meantime, I received a Grade Eight education at the school.

Later, as I became older, I used to work for Mr. Israel Grosser, who owned a store at Crooked Turn. Basically, I cleaned and washed for which I received eight dollars a month. People did not make much money but we tried to help support our family.

On Sundays, people took big lunches with them when they went to church. They used to build fires near the church where they would boil tea and cook some food. People stayed around until about four o'clock in the afternoon.

I used to be part of a choir at the Anglican Church. A local priest led the choir. We learned to sing many songs.



A One Room School at Norway House

There were schools scattered all over the community. My younger sister Marion attended the South School on West Island. North School was another Métis School. Towers Island School, Playgreen School, and Neckaway School were federal schools.

There used to be a large skating rink near North School. People used to walk to the rink to watch hockey games. They stood outside to watch even if it was very cold.

The Trappers' Festival was an annual event in the past. The festival lasted for several days. It had foot races, snowshoe races, and many other games and contests. The games are still held in Cross Lake. As for me, I did not attend The Trappers' Festival very often.

Today, the community is rapidly growing. There are many changes. I guess it is good for the young people, but life will get harder later on.

I regret the changes and the way people live now. They have destroyed the way people used to live long ago.

I remember houses were whitewashed. There were only a few roads which were always used daily. The days used to be quiet; there was less noise and little commotion from events in the community. Things are also very expensive now. I would rather live the way people used to live in the past.

CREE PLACE NAMES I REMEMBER

Kettle Island - Askihko Ministik
Mosquito Island - Sakiméwi Ministik
Whitefish Island - Atihkaméko Ministik
Sípástikohk and Sípástikos Channels

There are many others but I have forgotten their Cree names.

That's all for now....

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

Originally told by Sarah Grace Balfour
in a videotaped interview with Gwen Balfour



The Old Anglican Church

CHAPTER III

FREDERICK MOORE SPEAKS



Frederick Moore was born 12 February 1908 at Rossville, the son of John George and Mary Moore. His grandfather was Chief William Moore, of an old Hudson's Bay Company family from Oxford House. Frederick had two full sisters, Emma (Mrs. Horace Budd, then Mrs. Alex Hart) and Clara (Mrs. Alex Tait). His father's second wife was Helen Osborne, and they had four more children, Henry, Matilda, Victoria, and Esther. Frederick married Bella Dorcas McDonald, born at Norway House 25 December 1928, the daughter of John McDonald, son of Levi McDonald, and Alice Omand, daughter of Isaiah and Bella Omand. Their eleven children are William, Ida, John, Emma, Peter, Lawrence, Frank, Gordon, Sandra, Frederick, and Winnifred. Here's is Frederick Moore's story.

I will share some things I know about the history of Norway House. I didn't attend much school; therefore, I have very little education, although I managed to learn how to count. I left school early and did not return. I preferred to learn the Indian way, a transition I made to survive in the outdoors.

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

Students who lived in the residential school were not treated well. Since I had been a day student, I used to take bannock for lunch. The children would ask me to give them my bannock as they did not have much bannock to eat. When I told them I could not share my bannock, I was threatened. I quit school then. For some time, I looked for employment, but I had a difficult time.

Later, I worked for a white man named Brutter, my Aunt Margaret Moore's husband. He paid me little, but it was an income.

There were two types of schools. One was the old boarding school. There were two levels or groupings within this school. One group was made up of the students who did well academically. Students in the other group did not do so well academically, and were given physical work to do around the school compound.

The other school was better known as the Day School and stood where the Pinaow Wachi (Pinéw wacy) now stands. At this school, students went home every day. Some Métis children attended the Day School, and I attended there for a little while.

BUILDING TRENCHES AND DRAINAGES

I remember horses were used to haul water for the school to use. As time went by, a pipeline was constructed to pump water into the building. Before the pipeline was made, the residential school got its water from the Old Indian Hospital.

Later a fellow by the name of James Clyne, better known as Tipiskáw, and I went to inquire if we could work on the construction of the pipeline. The main task in preparation for the pipeline was digging a trench.

The pipeline needed a pump and a trench to drain water from the school. James Clyne and I were hired on and we worked all through the fall and winter season at that time.

When the weather became colder, we covered the trenches with spruce boughs. Digging by hand and spade was tedious, physical work. I recall that only the stronger men could throw wet gravel and mud up from the inside the trenches. We had to dig deep into the ground; therefore, it was a slow process, but necessary. I remember one man whose strength, patience, and endurance I admired as he threw gravel from the bottom of the trench. His name was Alec Moodie. He was a powerful man.

Sometimes we had problems as we dug deep into the ground. The underground seepage would overflow the trenches. We had to use pails to empty out water which had poured in during the night.

I remember when we first began digging, we worked at a quick, comfortable pace. However, at the tail end of the construction, there was so much underground drainage water seeping in, the work was slowed because we had to keep bailing it out. The most difficult part of the trench to dig was located where the old pump house stands at Rossville. There was much underground seepage at this spot. We slowly moved along while another group of workers fitted the pipes. The pipe fitters came from elsewhere and were fed and accommodated at Forestry Island. The work was very tedious and physical; many men quit working. This was one type of job I did when I was much younger.

CORD WOOD

The school used wood for heating. Cutting wood provided an opportunity for men to find work. I found a place where I could help cut cord wood. Every winter we used to cut five hundred cords. The price of one cord was \$1.25 in those days. When we had finished cutting, the school-owned horses driven by the older boys from the boarding school hauled the cord wood to Rossville. Although we did not make much money, it was still a source of income for several local families.

The old boarding school, also known as the Indian Residential School, was destroyed by fire in the spring of 1946. The school was built around 1917. Students travelled from Cross Lake, Oxford House, God's Lake Narrows, and Island Lake to attend school. The majority of them were from Norway House.

The old boarding school was heated by a furnace room where the fire was believed to have started.

Students attended academic classes in the mornings and did industrial work in the afternoons. Some of the industrial work consisted of cooking, sewing, cutting and hauling cord wood and hay, gardening, bush cleaning, and tending to the barn animals.

BURNING OF ROSSVILLE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

I remember when the boarding school was destroyed by fire; I had only been married for a short time. The principal of the school was a man by the name of Mr. Jones. I recall he had gone to Winnipeg just before the school burned down, leaving on one of the Lake Winnipeg boats from Warren's Landing. Somewhere between Norway House and Winnipeg, the local authorities informed Mr. Jones about the school fire, but he did not return until two weeks later. When Mr. Jones did return to Norway House, he sold many of the things retrieved from the fire. Other buildings were erected which were used as temporary classrooms until the school was later rebuilt.



The Boarding School at Rossville

SCHOOL MAINTENANCE WORKER

After the boarding school was destroyed by fire, I found employment. I helped with the building of two temporary classrooms. I earned forty dollars a month. Once the temporary classrooms had been completed, I found work as a maintenance worker for the classrooms. In the mornings, I would set the fires to heat the schools. Another chore was keeping the floors mud-free. There used to be much mud and dirt. I also cleaned the classrooms. I cleaned up everything. Sometimes my wife used to help me.

AT WARREN'S LANDING

Every summer, I used to go to Warren's Landing. I had saved some money to buy food in bulk at the store there. Flour, sugar, tea, and other things were sold there in bulk. Sometimes I worked at Warren's Landing, where there were fishermen who needed men to help them.

WELFARE VOUCHERS

Despite my casual employment opportunities, I had to go see the Indian agent in order to assist my family with food. It was a hard life in those days. When I told the Indian agent I was in need of assistance, he used to scratch his head. He knew he had to help me, even if the ration was not available. In the end he would give me some assistance. It was not much, but enough to survive on until the next ration. He used to give out food vouchers.

With the food voucher, I made sure I bought things I needed the most. I knew I could not ask for more until the next rations were distributed to the people.

I always managed to find casual work. While working at the schools, I received very little salary. Once I asked for a raise and I was given one. However, I managed to find extra work. I became the caretaker for the Indian agent's home. That also helped a little.

Later, I worked at a Métis school. Basically I did the same things I had always done.

When the new school was built at Rossville, once again I inquired for work. I was hired on with other men to do carpentry. Two other men, I remember, who worked as head carpenters at the school were Stephen Towers and Jimmock Muskego. Already in those days, there was electricity being used.

While I was working at the Day schools, the Indian agent approached me. He informed me I could not work there anymore because they needed someone who could read and write. I found myself out of work once again with no income to support my family.

One day, James Apetagon came to talk to me. He asked me if I would be a church helper. The duties there were to keep the building heated, ring the bell, and be a doorman. The work allowed me to be busy every Sunday and every Wednesday evening during church services. I received two dollars every Sunday and one dollar every Wednesday. It was not very much but it was an opportunity to keep working for myself.

I agreed to work in the church. The Women's Auxiliary knew I had a family so they gave me other chores to do. The women purchased a lawnmower for me. I used to cut grass around the church and at the cemetery. I worked with dedication, and usually I finished my duties early.

BOILER ROOM NIGHTWATCHMAN

An opportunity came for me to work once again. This time someone was needed to maintain the operation of the boiler room at the Rossville School.

I was told by the authorities that I had to prove to them I could be a dedicated worker. I was told if I missed work due to alcohol, I would be laid off immediately. I informed them I did not use alcohol which causes many people to fall and lose jobs. I worked very well. I did not miss work unless I had a very good reason. I proved I could handle the operation of the boiler room. I worked there for almost sixteen years. While I worked there all those years, I remained sure that alcohol was not a good thing.

The work in the boiler room was all routine. There was a big tank into which I put water every day during the late afternoon. The tank was quite large; therefore, the water did not boil quickly. So, usually, I put the water in at about four o'clock, and by six thirty it was boiling. The steam from the boiler was transmitted into the school building. This was how the various rooms in the school were heated.

During the night, I would make my rounds to all the dormitories. I made sure everything was operating smoothly. I examined all the pipes which were scattered throughout the building. I made sure everything was operating well. Sometimes I found myself working as a supervisor. I used to catch students being in places where they were not supposed to be and would report them to the authorities. When I did this, I earned respect from everyone.

The principal of the school at the time was called Mr. Lee. Teachers used to live on the top floor of the school. Mr. Lee did not permit anyone to have or use alcohol at anytime in the school.

I remember I used to see all the residential students in one room studying their books. They used to study for two hours every evening before they were sent to bed.

ELECTRICITY BROUGHT CHANGE

One day I was approached to see if I wanted to have electricity in my own home. I agreed because I saw the opportunity for my children to do their homework with plenty of light. My home became "electrified." It was a new thing. At first, I was paying twenty-five dollars a month for my hydro bill.

There were families who could not get electricity immediately because they lived too far from central Rossville. For example, the families who resided at North end had to wait.

HOME AWAY EDUCATION

Before a high school was built at Norway House in 1981, students were sent to Winnipeg, The Pas, Brandon, Portage la Prairie, Teulon, Birtle, and Thompson to continue their education. Many of the students stayed in residential schools. Some were placed in private homes where they lived with other students who had chosen to live in private homes, too.

My children attended school at Rossville. Most of them did very well when they were younger. However, as they got older, they began to drop out. They were not getting along with other children and with their teachers. There were divisions taking place amongst the children at school. Then some of my children reached the age they had to leave home to attend school elsewhere. I recall the people who were responsible for this idea. One was Verna Kirkness, a Cree Indian from Fisher River. Another person was a man by the name of Jim Wasacase, a teacher here at the time. The other people or teachers I can remember were Stanley McKay and Mr. Bradford. Mr. Bradford is Evelyn Omand's husband.

I found out my son William was being sent to high school at Portage la Prairie. Later my daughters, Ida and Emma, were gone, too. My other son John could not go because he had a handicap, a hearing problem. He spent some time in Winnipeg where he received therapy. He was gone for a long time. When he returned home, he would not go back to school. He had to wear hearing aids which Mr. Lee had found for him.

THE BAND MEETINGS

I used to attend many meetings. The men debated and quarrelled over important items. Once I remember a policeman was asked to be there to settle the people's differences.

I remember one chief. His name was Chief Jacob Menow. In those days the Indian agents had much power over the chiefs.

I remember in one meeting, Chief Jacob Menow requested two hundred pigs from the Indian agent. He wanted to raise them. The Indian agent hesitantly responded, "You can't have two hundred pigs. That's too many. I don't think you can have any." That was the end of that request.

Some time later, another meeting was held in the same building. Jacob Menow was still the chief. There were many people present. Many of the people had walked to Rossville to participate in the gathering.

In the meeting a white man named Mr. Morris, all dressed up in his finest suit, had come from the government to hear the local people's concerns. When given the opportunity, Chief Jacob Menow arose and told the white man of his request for pigs from the Indian agent at the last meeting.

Chief Menow gradually worked towards another request. He asked, "Now, Mr. Morris, I ask you if you can give me two hundred pigs to raise. I could not get any from the Indian agent." Mr. Morris could not answer. However, the policeman spoke, "We have two pigs. They eat lots. How can you manage to feed two hundred pigs?" Chief Jacob Menow did not answer. It was clear he could not persuade Mr. Morris. This incident proved that Indian people did not have much voice. The Indian people did not make decisions for themselves long ago; what the Indian agent said was final.



Norway House Band Hall at Rossville

THE FIRST ENGINE, TRAVEL, AND FREIGHTING

I remember one policeman had a 7.5 horsepower motor. Later a doctor had a four horsepower motor which made a loud sputtering noise. It had a putt - putt - putt sound.

Much later, another man named Richard Stevenson had a three horsepower motor. As far as I can remember, he was the first local native to own a motor in Norway House.

I remember, before changes in travel occurred, dog teams were used to transport mail and freight to faraway places, such as Riverton. The dogs would race off across Lake Winnipeg to Riverton where the train took the mail on to Winnipeg. The dog mushers also went to other outlying posts, such as Island Lake. There were many trails in the wilderness.

With the construction of a railroad, connecting the north with the south, the mail, freight, and cargo were taken to Wabowden (Méskanáhkáníhk). The mail route to Wabowden was faster and more efficient. The dogteams were still used; however, horses teams were also used to haul freight and mail. The horse teams were more suitable because they carried more weight. One of the best known mail carriers was Charlie Campbell.

Sometime afterwards, two bombardiers arrived in Norway House. Charlie Campbell drove one; another man named Mowatt drove the other.

With bombardiers, the mail moved even more quickly. They also transported passengers between Wabowden and Norway House. Sometimes I came in on these bombardiers. These are some things I remember about travel long ago.

HORSES AND OLD TRACTORS

I remember while local men were cutting cord wood, horses were used to bring wood to the school. The residential boys drove the horses.



Hauling Wood to Norway House Residential School
(courtesy Western Canada Pictorial Index)

Later, the school purchased an old bombardier from Cross Lake to be used for hauling wood. The bombardier did not work effectively and required many repairs to keep it operating. So, the school bought a tractor from a man called Herbie Mowatt. Herbie was a good mechanic. He made sure the tractor operated well before he sold it; and it was used to haul wood for a long time.

LEADERSHIP ROLES

I did not get involved in leadership roles in the community. I never was a councillor. But I did work to help the community be a better place. I did this when I participated in the

band meetings and discussions. I remember one leader, James Apetagon, who was a councillor for many years. He knew many things about the procedures involving the Government and band systems. I did not want to get involved in politics because I valued my work with the church more than anything else. I did not want any conflicts of interest. I also realized that handling and managing large sums of money was an important responsibility to have - one must know the books. I was afraid of making mistakes.

BAND CONTROLS ITS FUNDS

On behalf of the Government, the Indian agents informed the band leaders of the opportunity to control their own finances. One of the first steps the band took was to brainstorm ideas of how it could invest monies given to it by the government. Many discussions took place in the community and several people had excellent ideas.

I remember speaking loudly for having a farm where domestic animals could be raised. I believe this idea would have helped local people buy cheaper meat and dairy products. Gardening would have been a part of the whole concept, too, so that people could buy local vegetables. Trapping, fishing, and hunting were already declining at the time, partly because of hydro electric development. I also mentioned the best place to have a domestic farm was at Hope Island where cows, chickens, and other animals could be kept. Furthermore, cutting cord wood and clearing land for big gardens would have created more work for people. Because cows would have been bred and raised, a butchery could have provided another means of employment for some people. This idea did not get approval. I was not the only person offering ideas and suggestions; there were other worthwhile ideas, too.

Later, some ideas were generated by the band. One was to have a site where young people could learn about hunting, trapping, and fishing. These were mainly survival and life skills. I knew, although I did not debate it, that survival and life skills would go into transition. People were getting hydro into their homes; life was getting easier and new roads were being build to the outside world.

My idea was not completely forgotten or dismissed, as I now see young people tilling soil for new gardens all over the community. I'm glad part of the idea I had is happening. Gardening is not a new thing in Norway House, however, as people always had gardens.

I remember when I mentioned having a domestic farm, some people told me it would be difficult maintaining food for the animals. I feel people are lazy today. In the past, horses and cows were common in the community. Men used to go out to the surrounding lands to cut hay and make haystacks. Once cut, the hay was left to dry for two to three days before being piled. Later, horses travelled to various places to haul the hay back to storage places in Rossville.

I remember one man, David Chastellaine, used to supervise the boys cutting hay. They piled many hay stacks. The work is not difficult, but I recognize the fact that hydro damming is destroying the hay lands.

FUTURE IS DIM

Today, almost everything is being reduced to waste. The lands, forests, and waters are spoiled. Because of that, people are losing their way of life. People rely now on changes made possible by technology - technology such as electricity, which is one expensive asset and necessity.

Long ago, wood and coal oil did not cost much. People managed to survive, but I don't know what our natural resources will be like in the future. It looks very bleak for our young people, unless they adapt to the changes like we did.

Now I hear electricity is being sold to the United States. That's a great deal of work to provide electricity for the Americans. I don't know what will happen to us, but it is the young people who will experience the outcome.

CREATING HOUSING WITH PEELED LOGS

I remember the sturdy log houses which were built by local people in the old days. Some men cut and peeled logs to make a living; I remember my father was one of them. He used to peel about sixty logs per house and sold them for a dollar each. (An average house took anywhere from sixty to one hundred and twenty logs.) He collected and peeled fresh logs in the spring, the season when the peeling is easiest.

Sometimes my father was hired to build houses from the logs he had sold. Some houses he constructed had an upper level where families slept at night. Log houses were common when I was very small.



Houses Past and Present

More recently, newer types of houses were built by using boards instead of logs. I remember an Indian agent requested some houses for the older people who could not work for themselves. The buildings were constructed neatly and, although they appeared quite small, they had a touch of beauty to them. I remember the Indian agents assigned these houses to the following elders: Martha Clyne, Jojum McDonald, and Moses Tait, while Nellie Monias and Louisa Muswagon shared one. These people were old and needed shelter. Someone was assigned to care for them.

Later, the housing in the community changed even more. The houses were bigger, more attractive, and made with what appeared to be better quality materials. I remember these houses were given to community members by the government but they did not last long, unlike the log houses which lasted for many years.

BRUTTER'S ISLANDS

Mr. Brutter bought two islands just off Chubb's Point. When he left, he sold the islands to a Rev. and Mrs. Richardson for five thousand dollars. Later, they were returned to the band. The band, in turn, advertised in the community the sale of the log house that stood on one of Brutter's Islands.

PLACE NAMES I REMEMBER

Joe Island: also known as Long Island. (by Forestry Island)

Népémakáhk: a tiny peninsula across from Rossville.

Kischi Akámihk: probably at York Village.

Mistoso Ministik: (Bull Island) My elders used to tell a story about Bull Island. A young bull had charged and killed a young Hudson's Bay clerk. Later the bull was taken captive and sentenced with the death penalty. The bull was taken to the island where he was tarred all over and burned to death. Later the island came to be known as Bull Island.

Paskánakáhk Ministik: It is named that because it is a flat, rocky island.

Néhonán: It meant people used to paddle near or by the point. Nehonan is on the north shore of the Little Playgreen Lake, across from the Rossville settlement.

Hope Island - Pakoséwi Ministik: Long ago, the island was owned by the boarding school. The minister who had been here used to ask for monies to clear land for gardens and cord wood. Every year people cut wood for \$1.25 a cord. Later, the gardens were planted and seeded. This was what the minister had asked for - hoped for.

CREE NAMES ON PLAYGREEN LAKE

Playgreen Point	-	Paskoskákanihk
Whitefish Island	-	Atihkaméko Ministik
Warren's Landing	-	Neyáwahkáhk
Duck Point	-	Asawisipéwinihk
Mud Point	-	Néchéskowakáhk
Kettle Island	-	Askihko Ministik
Sandy Island	-	Mistawakám Ministik
Narrows (Sandy Island)	-	Kasípáyásik
Catfish Point	-	Manamékonociwinihk
Sand Point	-	Niyáwahkasihk
Little Mossy Point	-	Néskamikasik
Two Rivers	-	Ayitawakám Kásípiwahk
Narrows	-	Wápanakáhk
John Bull's	-	Pakitawáwkansihk
Whiskeyjack	-	Kwíkwisowacihk

CELEBRATIONS

I remember that people who kept dog teams used to organize races. I was told people cherished their dogs, and that it was the white people who introduced dog racing to Norway House. The dog races must have gone on for a long time, but eventually that type of contest came to an end when the local dog owners defeated the white people who owned dog teams. Today no one owns dog teams anymore. That is gone.

The York boat races they have today are a new thing. Long ago, people did not have races locally. York boats were working boats.

My elders used to talk about a special dance which was held at Cross Lake long ago. It was called Ininiwisimowin. (When translated, it means an Indian dance - probably a pow-wow dance of some sort.) These dances were usually held in the summer and many people gathered at Cross Lake.

THE MEDICINE MAN

I used to hear my father talking about a medicine man who was powerful and well respected. People knew him as "Okosápahcikéw" which means "One who foresees things." He was better known as "Opámohtéwikimáw" which means "One who travels around like a boss or someone of great importance."

Once I remember my father telling a story about Opámohtéwikimáw. My father and other men were returning from Nelson House at the time. Along the way near Cross Lake, they met a group of people who were camping along the river. My father and his companions had heard about the Opámohtéwikimáw and his great power to communicate from a strange looking place. (This was probably a reference to a shaking tent). Anyway, my father and his friends were very curious to find out more about this magic man.



A Shaking Tent
(Courtesy Manitoba Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

They decided to send my father to ask this man to show them his great powers. The old man, Opámohtéwikimáw, agreed, and my father and his friends were quite excited to be able to witness such an event. They were ready to pay the medicine man for his show, but later that evening, Opámohtéwikimáw returned to tell them he could not perform because there was an old woman dying. His wife had told him not to perform at such a time.

My father and friends understood the old man, but they were quite disappointed because they had heard some strange stories about the Okosápahcikéw Opámohtéwikimáw.

IN CONCLUSION

I have said many things already. I have told you what I have heard and experienced. I trust I have not told lies, but if I have made inaccurate statements, I apologize. I realize a storyteller must be careful not to make false statements and mislead people.

We look at our lives. God, our Creator, gave us life to meet our needs. The food we eat comes from the land. Sometimes money is a bad thing and forces within the government give us a hard time. We must try to return to the way our aboriginal forefathers lived.

Men worked hard then. Women did much of the work after men killed a moose. They treated the hides, using bones to remove unwanted meat. This was hard work; I saw it being done.

There are many procedures to follow when tanning hide. The hair is removed with a sharp object, and that meat is scraped off with a chisel-shaped bone. The hide is turned over and over again. I used to see people feeling its thickness. They were very careful when they prepared hide, from which the women later would make clothes. Today if our young people tried this, they would find it very difficult.

One must know the ways of the land. In the past the young people learned to hunt moose. They were expert hunters; the gun was used well.

Inflation is affecting everyone. Perhaps we'll have to return to wood heaters and coal oil lamps; then maybe, we can show our young people the past. The Government will not look after us. We must be like our aboriginal grandparents, who were good hunters and trappers. Our young people need this understanding.

Let's ask our Creator to help us more in our walk of life. Let's ask with love and thankfulness for earth's resources. We must thank each other and everyone should remember our Creator. With humbleness, I ask the Creator's blessings.

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

Information shared by Fred Moore
in a videotaped interview with Gwen Balfour

CHAPTER IV

MARY FARMER'S STORY



MARY FARMER

Mary was born at Norway House 1 January 1915, the daughter of Thomas Farmer, originally of Oxford House, and Martha Laughier. Her husband, who served as a soldier in the First World War, was Donald Crate, son of Willie and Agnes Crate. Possibly because there is another Mary Crate in Norway House, Mary is known by her maiden name.

Mary shares some brief memories of her life as a child growing up in Norway House. She also shares her feelings as she speaks of the changes and frustrations she has experienced. This is her story.

SURVIVAL NEEDS - FOOD

Every fall we went to our winter camps in the wilderness to find food and collect animal furs. Many other families moved along with us. We stayed away all winter long, and did not come back until the late spring when the rivers and lakes had opened up.

When our families came home, I remember the boats were filled with all kinds of wild food. No one seemed to mind eating the same old fare of rabbit and fish day after day. People were well adapted to eating wild food. They were always healthy. I guess it was mainly because the wild foods we had were clean and rich. I remember our mother used to pound meat into dried pieces which they later mixed with animal grease. This was called **pemmican**.

I loved the food I ate when I was a child. I miss it now. That is probably the reason I do not eat much store-bought food. I believe that's where many strange diseases come from. People were healthy in the past because they ate mainly wild food. There were plenty of edible animals such as rabbit, moose, caribou, and ducks. I used to help set rabbit snares. I would see many rabbits scurrying away as we walked in the snow-covered forest, a sure sign of plenty to eat near our winter homes. Rabbit was always a favorite meal; no one tired of eating it every day.

LEARNING TO WORK

My father was ill for a long time, so he could not do everything the average trapper and hunter did. Therefore, he taught us skills. When we became older, we were able to help with the traps. Whenever an animal was caught, we would watch our father skin and stretch the pelt. It was not long before we could do this work for him while he looked on. When we finished, we used to hang to dry the pelts of animals we had caught outdoors.

Many times I saw older men and women stretching and tanning hides. I used to help in the process and soon learned how to work with animal pelts by myself. Today, very few people do these things.

In those days everyone had to help with the work, even the small children. They were taught to do the basic chores, such as hauling dry sticks of wood from the bush which they later cut, chopped, and piled neatly.

At other times, children carried water from the ice holes. Nothing stopped our elders from teaching us to do work. We hauled water through blizzards, cold winds, and even slush. We used to mop the floors. In those days we did not always have soap. I remember once being told to use ashes from the stove to mop the floor. Believe me, I didn't think it would help any, but to my surprise, the floors turned out very clean, absolutely clean! It still amazes me how black ashes made the floors clean - somehow it worked!

SHELTERS

I remember the shelters we lived in during the winter. Many logs were cut and peeled and later carried to an area where the house was to be built. First, the walls were erected, then the roof was put on and covered with roofing paper. When roofing paper was unavailable, narrower logs and soil were used instead. I never recall seeing those roofs leaking when it rained. Later the younger people would go into the forest to collect spruce boughs. As children, we collected lots of them. These were used to cover the bare ground because some cabins did not have wooden floors. The spruce boughs were placed carefully with each one overlapping the other. Finally, when they covered the entire ground, a tarpaulin was placed on top of them. The spruce boughs were changed occasionally. The houses were always kept neat and tidy.

AT THE WINTER CAMPS

Sometimes in the winter, fur buyers and traders arrived at our camps, bringing food and supplies with them. They sat down to look at the furs while the families chose supplies such as flour, tea, lard, and other necessities. In those days the buyers paid well for the pelts, and people could buy many things. I also remember things were not expensive but they were available in limited quantities only.

When we were coming home in the spring, we used oars and paddles. In those days, there weren't any motors.

In the spring just before the ice and snow melted, there was much slush all over the land. As many trappers did not have waterproof shoes, they had to walk on the wet slush with their moccasined feet when they went to check their muskrat traps. Later, more and more people purchased waterproof shoes, but if one wanted long rubbers, one had to place a special order.

DISCIPLINE, RESPECT, AND OBEDIENCE - TODAY AND LONG AGO

The children are very stubborn today. They are very disobedient. They have no respect for parents and other people. They run around at all hours of the night. They are exposed to many negative things. These things motivate the young people to become disobedient and disrespectful. The children are not punished anymore, and get away with many things - even with the R.C.M.P.. The young people do not want to work or help their families meet their needs. They would rather go from house to house to find a place to eat and sleep.

When I was a child, if I did any of those things, I was severely disciplined. I could not go outdoors after sunset. I was told to relax and rest. Every morning, I was told to get up early and most times it meant getting up before the sun rose. There was much work to be done.

I was taught to be kind and respectful, as well as obedient and thankful. I obeyed my mother. She was a special person. One day she became very ill, and was taken away to a place not far from Brandon. Some time after she left, we heard news that she had died. Her body was never returned to be buried here. I always think of her. She was good to me and I obeyed her.

Today, the young people are rebellious towards their parents. But when they need something, they run to them for help. However, because many elderly parents received Indian values, they still show their young people those values regardless of the disobedience, disrespect, and ignorance their children possess.

Sometimes I try to counsel my young people. I am still kind because I was raised to be that way.

I remember I had to do things I was told. One thing I remember I hated doing was working with raw fish. Whenever fishermen went out, they would bring back many fish. I hated dressing and filleting the catch but I had to do it because I was told to do it.

If Indian people try to return to the old ways, they will never succeed because there is cultural conflict. The children are living in a white man's culture. It is too late to return to the old ways, to the way Indian people used to live.

Life in the past was different in many ways. Food was abundant and the instinct for survival strong. The difficulties began when people became more centralized. The old ways of life vanished when people were given rations, welfare, education, and medicine. Many people took that route and only a few remained with the old ways. The old ways are gone and they'll never return.

THE LATER YEARS

My children have gone their separate ways. I stay at home peacefully where I spend much time thinking about my young people. I worry for their future. The discipline I had is not used anymore. The children have much freedom. They can do anything they want to do; they have everything. I didn't have everything when I was a young girl. We could not attend school because we had to go with our families to our winter homes on the trapline. We learned another kind of education - survival education.

Today, I work with other women where we get together to make homemade handicrafts. I make good money which meets my needs. Sometimes I go to people's homes where I do housework. At other times, I find odd jobs nearby. I do all this to continue supporting myself. I have difficult times. Sometimes I have a hard time paying my bills.

I remember when my children were still small, the only income we had was the family allowance. Welfare only came sometimes. I remember I had to go to Welfare for help when I was in need. Sometimes they gave me just enough to get by, but there were times I could not be given assistance.

My children did not go to the hospital often; I gave them my own medicine. I cared for them.

MORE WORK

My family used to live near Hope Island, located at the north end of Small Playgreen Lake. There were other families living there at that time as well. I remember seeing hundreds of frozen fish stacked in racks. This was one way people preserved the fish that had been caught in the fall.

In those days the log cabins did not have electricity, but some houses had coal oil lamps. People used to go to bed early. Sometimes the fire in the old stoves provided a little light inside the homes. These fires were kept burning all night long.

We used to haul wood every day. Many families used dog teams for this purpose. We piled the wood near the entrance of the doorway. Our parents were strict and wanted us to be good workers, so we worked hard.

When I became older, I continued to help my family meet its needs. I would walk across to Rossville to work for other people, and in this way, assist my parents.

ROSSVILLE

Long ago, Rossville was covered with brush and tall trees. There were only a few open yards and a narrow trail along the shores of the lake. In those days, no one dreamed of highways.

The boarding school owned much of the land. The trees and brush were gradually cleared for big gardens where potatoes were grown. There was a big long fence all around the school yard. No one was allowed to walk through the school property, and local people had to walk around the fence to bypass the yard. The school children worked very hard. I know this because I worked in the school when I was older and saw the students working.

It's not like today; no one wants to work. In those days, one had to work with diligence and dedication.

RATION AND TREATY DAYS

When I went to ask for my share of the rations, I received flour, tea, lard, and sometimes sugar. One of the people who gave out rations was a man called George Balfour.

I remember the treaty days when people received their annual treaty monies. The chiefs used to help give out the money. Whenever there were monies or rations left over, some local people went to get more.

LOCAL DOCTORS IN NORWAY HOUSE

There was a hospital in Norway House but some families lived far away, so the midwives were important. There were many midwives in Norway House.

When women were in labour, the men sometimes rushed them to the hospital by dog team, but usually they did not go unless they were very ill. Most times the midwives were called upon to help. There were few mishaps when midwives were delivering children. I know of some women who had difficulties while in delivery but the midwives always knew what to do in these cases. Evelyn and Priscilla Osborne and Sophia McDonald were three midwives I remember.

Evelyn was one of the best midwives in Rossville, delivering many children in her day. When women were near delivery, she was there all the time getting ready, often spending several days and nights waiting for her patients to go into labour. When the child was born and cared for, Evelyn Osborne would leave. If asked how much she charged, she would usually say "Five dollars." She asked for payment if she needed money. Other times she refused payment altogether. The midwives were our doctors.

Shared by Mary Farmer in a videotaped interview with
Gwen Balfour and written by Byron Apetagon, 1987



Residential School and Hospital at Rossville

CHAPTER V

MEMORIES OF TOMMY YORK

Tommy York was born 19 January 1908 at Si-pastikok near Norway House, the son of James York and Bella Hall. His father was the son of Jacob York, who came from around the Red River area, and Rebecca Omand of York Factory. His mother was the daughter of Tommy Hall and Catherine Hart of Oxford House. His brothers and sisters include Daniel York, Bill York Sr., Jean Folster, Rebecca Saunders, Betsy Towers, and Helen Folster.



My name is Tommy York. I want to share some of the things I saw and experienced while I was growing up in Rossville.

LIFESTYLES

TOMMY YORK

The way of life long ago was not easy. I remember seeing families moving away each year to the surrounding lakes and river tributaries where the men set their nets to do some fishing for a good part of the summer.

Sometimes the men hunted, too. Other members of the families picked berries. There were people living all over the land.

TREATY DAYS

Treaty days were a main attraction long ago. I recall when they were held at Rossville. People and families came from all over to join in the festivities and collect treaty payments.

Treaty Days were usually held around August 16 every summer. When people arrived at Rossville, tents were set up near where the Hudson's Bay store, Lakeside Restaurant, and the cemetery are now. The tents were all lined up in long rows.

In those days a big boat filled with tourists, pedlars, and Indian agents arrived at Norway House. I remember a man was hired to be an informant. Whenever these people were about to arrive, the informant went around Rossville shouting and telling people the Indian agent had arrived. Then the celebrations would begin.

A big tent was set up where the treaty payments were to be distributed to all the recipients. When the Indian agent finished his preparations, the man who had been hired as an informant told everyone it was time to collect the treaty monies in Rossville. Only the father or the headman of a family went to see the Indian agent. Each reported the number of people he had in his family.

While the treaty people collected their money, the pedlars laid out goods, food, and other merchandise which the people purchased from them.

The pedlars came from around Selkirk and Winnipeg. They usually followed wherever the Indian agents went to distribute the treaty annuities.

I remember things were inexpensive in those days. A twenty-five pound bag of flour sold for a dollar, sugar and tea were five to ten cents a pound. Lard was ten cents a pound, and salt pork was under fifty cents a pound. Once I remember my father bought flour, sugar, tea, and salt pork for less than five dollars.



Receiving Rations at Treaty Time

RATION

Just before the treaty days were over, the event began for which everyone had been anxiously waiting. This was the giving of winter provisions, better known as "The Ration."

A large table with goods and merchandise was laid out on the open grass where the Lakeside Restaurant now stands. Once everything had been carefully sorted out, people sat around the table forming a large circle. The people who gave out rations stood at the centre of the circle.

One by one, the families received their rations according to the size of their families. The main necessities were the only items distributed. They included flour, tea, sugar, lard, salt pork, and white beans.

The flour was given out in portions determined by family size. Tea and sugar were also given in scoops by the pound. I remember the salt pork was thick and had plenty of meat. Beans were also given out in portions by the pound. Bullets and shells were provided and were again given according to size of family. Both parents received one bullet and one shell each. Other items distributed were thread for fish nets and rope for each family.

Whenever there were leftover goods and merchandise, they were stored away. Later these supplies were used at community events.

Just before the treaty days ended, the pedlars lowered prices on their goods and merchandise. People purchased more necessities they might use later. Before leaving for home, the pedlars usually sold all their goods to the local people.

CHIEF AND COUNCIL MESSAGE

The very last event of treaty days was a general public meeting called by the chief and council. Everyone attended the meeting - even the children. The Métis were also present to hear the chief and council's message as they had taken time off to participate in the events during the treaty festivities.

The message usually lectured the people to respect each other and behave accordingly. Kind words of encouragement and fellowship were emphasized also.

There was not much alcohol in those days. Those who used it were well behaved and did not publicly display rowdiness. The R.C.M.P. came in to help with treaty days and walked all around Rossville seeing if everything was all right.

In those days, I never saw canned foods. Everything was in bulk. For example, the butter was kept in a box-like carton. When someone bought butter, it was cut and weighed. Jam was also kept in a box-like container and sold by the pound. The sugar was sold in scoops at eight to nine cents a pound. There were no fancy cookies, except for sweet biscuits and pilot biscuits. Things were very cheap long ago, but were sold in limited quantities.

In the evenings, dances were held. Children were not permitted to go to them. Sometimes the mothers stayed at home with their children while the men went. As children, we used to listen to the people having a good time.

During the day, people played games such as soccer. The adults always had a good time. While some played soccer and others danced, the old men sat around in little groups all over Rossville shuffling and playing cards. The old men shouted and roared with laughter. Everyone had a good time. Usually the police did not have much to do, except be a part of the treaty payments.

When treaty days ended, the people once again packed up and dispersed in their boats. They returned to their homes and began preparations for another winter.

FALL AND WINTER ACTIVITIES

When the treaty day festivities ended, families returned to their homes and began to prepare in earnest for the fall and winter seasons.

The men cut wood for days. They also went out to hunt moose nearby, while the women smoked fish and meat. Sometimes families went around picking berries and did more fishing. When enough wood had been gathered and food preserved for the winter, the men left for the traplines where they hunted and collected fur. They took their dogs and sometimes their families with them. Therefore, many children could not attend school. They helped out in any way they could at the traplines.

When animals and birds were killed, nothing was thrown away. The feathers of geese and ducks were used to make down-filled sleeping robes. The animal bones were cut into smaller pieces for use in soup. Sometimes bone marrow was used to make grease.

After the trappers and their families moved away to their winter camps, they lived in mikiwáhp. Mikiwáhp are shelters made from logs, muskeg, moss, and spruce boughs. They have a conical shape something like the prairie tipis. These shelters were heated by making a fire place at the centre of the floor. There was an opening at the apex of the mikiwáhp which allowed smoke to leave the lodge.

All through the early months of the winter, the men trapped, skinned, and stretched pelts. They hunted moose, rabbit, and ptarmigan. Some kept nets in the water to catch fresh fish.

CHRISTMAS FESTIVITIES

Prior to Christmas Day, people returned to Norway House to visit their friends and relatives. Those people who had remained behind made early preparations for the Christmas feast. Women were asked to bake and cook food; men donated fish and moose meat.

There used to be a day school where the Pinaow Wachi (Pinéw wacy) now stands. In that building the women set up long tables for the feast, while a man made a fire outside the school for a big pot in which he boiled tea. As people arrived at the feast, they were given hot tea to drink. People came from all over the community. Everyone had a good time talking and visiting with each other. The tables were filled with all kinds of food. There were several settings. Groups of people sat down and were served as each setting took place.

The feast ended with a dance. Most people loved to dance. Those who did not participate went outside and played games.

NEW YEAR'S DAY

In the aftermath of the Christmas feast, people made more preparations. Only this time it was to celebrate New Year's Day. In those times, it was called "Ochémi Kísikáw," meaning "Kissing Day" when properly translated. Once again the women baked and cooked. The men helped by providing wild game.

The New Year's feast was much like that of Christmas except, as people entered the school building, everyone had to kiss everyone else. Once again, a man boiled tea in a big pot outside the old school building.

The feast ended late in the afternoon. Then, it was time to go to Balfour's Hill where the adults went sliding. Later in the evenings, the children were taken home to rest, and the parents went over to the old school to dance until midnight.

As the Christmas and New Year's festivities ended, it was back to the traplines to begin the whole routine of fishing, trapping, hunting, and cutting wood all over again. While some people stayed behind, the rest left by dog team for their winter homes.

MY OCCUPATIONS

When I became older, I was placed in a boarding school at Rossville. It was called a boarding school because local children were kept there to be educated. I stayed for about nine years. I did not learn much but I managed to go beyond Grade Seven. I learned how to take care of horses, pigs, cows, and chickens. I became quite knowledgeable about horses which were used to haul wood. I knew how to take good care of them.

I left the boarding school after nine years and moved away to a farm in Southern Manitoba. I lived and worked on farms for seven and a half years. I did not have a hard time working with domestic animals because I had had some experience at the school at Rossville. I knew how to milk cows and drive horses. While I was there, I began to use alcohol and spent most of the money I made. When I returned to Norway House I didn't have much. In those days, making forty dollars was a lot of money.

I stayed at Norway House for a while, then went up to God's Lake where a new gold mine had opened. I stayed at the mine for two months.

I returned and found employment at the boarding school where I worked as a boys' supervisor. I did the same things with the boys as I had done when I was going to school there; that is, fed the animals, took care of horses, hauled wood and gravel, cleared the land, pulled stumps, made fences and many other things. I helped there for three years.



A Game of Football on Christmas Day at Norway House, undated
(William Rackham Collection, courtesy Manitoba Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

I changed occupations to work at the old hospital where the band building now stands. I looked after the machinery there. It happened I had to move away from Norway House to Nelson House. I stayed there for three more years working at the nursing station. By that time I was married to my first wife. We had six children. We lost one daughter later.

We moved back to Norway House and I worked at the new hospital where I stayed on for another thirty-three years until I retired.

Now I live with my wife, Mary. We are happy. We live with one dog who barks at any visitor we get.

Sometimes we go to the local bar to have a few drinks. We go there mainly to see and visit people in the community we don't get to meet regularly. I have many grandchildren. I turned seventy-seven years old on January 19 this year. I am getting old but I can still get around slowly.

TOMMY AT THE BOARDING SCHOOL

In the days when Tommy stayed at the old Boarding School at Rossville, he gained much work experience with his responsibilities. Here he describes those days.

BUILDING ROADS AT ROSSVILLE

There were many children boarding in the old residential school which was better known as "the boarding school" in those days. There were few houses at Rossville, located near a small creek which flows out from the thickets and brush.

Much of the area around Rossville Bay was densely covered with brush, thickets, and tall trees. Only a small rough trail existed along the shores of the bay.

At that time, the school authorities made the boys work, and making better roads was one of the things they had to do. The boys were assigned to construct a decent road, one which everyone could use, from the school to the church at Mission Point.

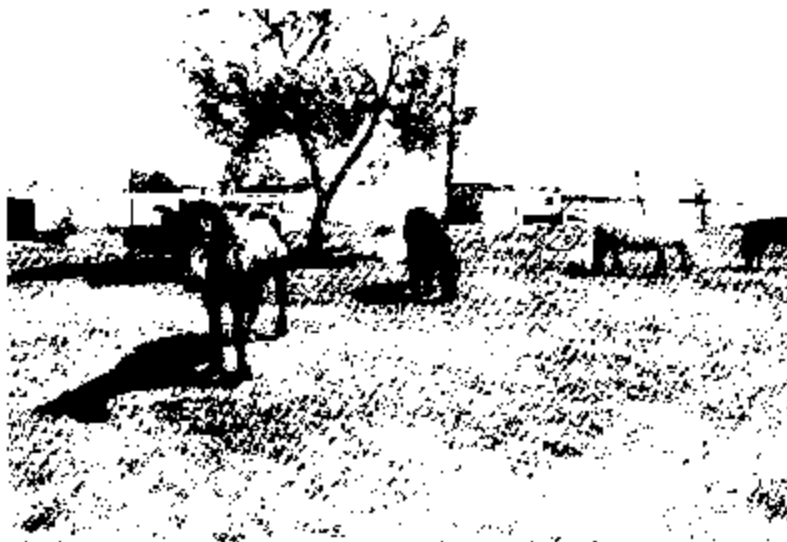
We boys were told to haul gravel from the bay at Rossville. All summer long this was our work. We took the gravel to Rossville and dumped it over the old roads to make them smoother and wider for easier accessibility.

When we completed the road between the school and church point, we continued to make other roads. Another one was made from the school to the creek at the bay. This was a better road, much better than the old trail which had been there previously.

We hauled more gravel from Rossville Bay for other roads. Sometimes we hauled it from the shores near Chubb's Point, too. We used the sand, not only for road building but also for making cement foundations.

In those days, there was no fancy machinery, machinery such as tractors and cement mixers. Everything was done by hand and with a few tools such as axes, pitchforks, shovels, and spades. We made cement - lots of it - with the use of big containers and shovels. It was hard work even with the use of wheelbarrows.

Not only did we pour gravel to make cement foundations, we also made cement for fences. Once again the boys had to haul gravel from Rossville Bay and Chubb's Point.



Horses at Mission Point, 1989
A reminder of bygone days

THE STUDENTS AT THE BOARDING SCHOOL

When summer holidays arrived, there were always a few students who remained behind to help in the boarding school. Usually it was the older boys and girls who stayed on to work. There were five to six boys, and an equal number of girls. They were paid by the day for their efforts.

The girls cooked, did laundry, and kept the buildings tidy. The boys worked in the gardens, weeded, and turned up soil, milked cows, groomed and fed horses and cows, made and repaired things, and did many other jobs.

For the work we did all summer, we received twenty-five cents a day. Ten to fourteen days prior to the new school year, and before the students returned to the boarding school, the summer students were allowed to go home and visit their families. I remember when we received our pay, I went home thinking I had lots of money. In those days twenty-five cents a day was plenty.

While we were working at the school during the summer, we had more privileges, unlike the regular school year with its rules and regulations. Still, we had a curfew. We had to be in by eight o'clock at night. We were awakened at seven o'clock every morning to begin our chores almost immediately. The work was routine. We went to the gardens, cleared stumps and brush, and took care of the animals in the barn. There was always something to do in the school yard. There was a supervisor helping and giving directions. He was the person in charge and assigned the many tasks for everyone.

We built a road and fence all around the school yard. There was also a fence near Laughter's Point which extended to where Joseph Apetagon now lives. All that area was fenced in and used for the gardens and cow pasture.

I would say it was the boarding school students who cleared the land for what is now a good part of Rossville. With the use of horses and oxen, we pulled out the stumps and tilled the soil for bigger gardens. The children spent many hours working on the land. Although some local men were hired to help with the tedious work, it was mainly done by the children in the boarding school.

WORK SCHEDULE

Some children went to classes in the morning while others worked in the gardens, barns, and school yard. In the afternoons, they were switched around. The "morning students" went to work outdoors and the "afternoon group" went to classes. Everyone had the same duties and received the same amount of education.



Barn and Shed at Residential School

SCHOOL ANIMALS, GARDENS, AND FALL WORK

There were many horses owned by the school, at least forty at one time. There were some cows, chickens, and a few other animals as well.

The horses were important workers. Driven by the bigger boys from the boarding school, they pulled and toiled as they tilled new gardens. In the winter, they hauled cord wood every day. There were long rows of piled wood right behind the barn.

The gardens were very big. Although there were other vegetables grown, carrots and potatoes were the main crops. In the middle of September, it was time to harvest. Potato picking was the biggest job to do. Many of the boys worked - even the small boys. We pulled

and were left to dry for some time. Later we put them in one hundred pound bags. A horse drawn cart went around and carried the potatoes away to the storage house which was better known as "the root house."

I remember when we picked the carrots, too. What an opportunity for us to steal a few! It was risky but one could not resist. Sometimes we got caught and we were punished for stealing. Other times we were innocent but got blamed for stealing anyway. We were punished mainly because all the crops from the gardens were the school's supplies for the whole winter season. Once all the crops had been completely harvested, we went back to the gardens to pick up all the remaining debris. We piled it into large mounds and later the horse carts came around and disposed of them far away. This was in preparation for next year's gardening.

When the horses were finished their work, they were let free to wander around and eat grass in the pasture. The pasture extended to where Joseph Apetagon now lives.

By the first week in September, children returned to the boarding school. They came from all over. Some parents of these children would be leaving for the traplines and winter homes.

REMINISCING ABOUT THOSE DAYS

Today when I walk by the school and Balfour's Hill, I think back to my younger days. I remember the times I worked hard on those big gardens and at building roads, pulling stumps, clearing brush, turning soil, and feeding the animals.

I don't see the many trees that once stood there. All have been cleared away for new homes.

I remember when other roads were built from Rossville to Jack River and when a road was cleared to the Roman Catholic Mission School at Fort Island.

I remember the times I could not go home from the boarding school. We only went home when our parents came and took us for a short visit.

Today there are few of my fellow classmates alive. I remember names of some who were there: John Muswagon (Miswákan), Donald Paynter, Sammy Anderson, and Nellie Cromarty. I remember Nellie clearly. She was one of the girls who worked at the school; she left the same time I did.

YORK BOATS: THE TAIL END OF AN ERA

Tommy has clear memories of many interesting aspects of our history. He remembers the last days of the York boats and changes that swept away that type of transportation. Here he touches on these changes.

Long ago, York boats, or "Mistiko Címána", were necessary for hauling freight, supplies, merchandise, and transporting important people. Many local men worked on those boats. It was a means of support and a way of life. In June, York boats used to arrive from as far south as Red River, Selkirk, and Riverton. The boats crossed the lake, passed by Warren's

south as Red River, Selkirk, and Riverton. The boats crossed the lake, passed by Warren's Landing, and eventually drifted into Norway House. Other York Boats arrived from the north, sailing up the mighty Nelson, and out the mouth of the river near Hope Island. Hope Island is to the north of Rossville where the Nelson begins its long, rough, and meandering flow. Sometimes these big wooden boats came from places like York Factory, Nelson House, Oxford House, God's Lake, Split Lake, and Cross Lake.



York Boats at Norway House, 1989
The "Campbell" in the foreground; the "Muminawatum" in the rear.

I vividly remember seeing them arrive at Rossville Lake. We used to hear them coming from the mouth of the Nelson River - moaning, thumping sounds beating in rhythm. Some time before the big boats actually appeared, everyone prepared to go down the bank to see them pass by. Sometimes there were two, three, four, five, and even six boats - all in a line. We could see the men pulling and heaving on the oars. It was quite a remarkable sight to see.

In those days, we lived at York Village. It is about three miles across the lake from Rossville. Many families lived there before it became deserted in the 1940s. It was there I remember seeing the York boats. I was just a small boy but it was something I could not forget. When the boats came into the open waters past Hope Island, they went on the north side of Long Island and Forestry Island. Once the wooden boats hit the open lake and caught a tail wind, they used their sails to go across.

Sometimes the York boats dispersed to the Hudson's Bay Fort, to Hyer's Point where the R.C.M.P. detachment is now, and to the Indian agency at Rossville. The boats usually stayed for one to two days. They were unloaded, loaded up again, and would leave one by one. Some headed towards the south and others to the north, all returning to where they had come from before.

Sometimes the York boats met here in Norway House. The people who worked on them were fed and accommodated at the Hudson's Bay Fort.

In those days, the Hudson's Bay Fort had a wall all around it, making it look like an enclosed compound. The wall must have been about six to seven feet high. The only entrance to the fort was through the Archway Building. The Archway Building was originally built in 1843; however, renovations were made in 1864, 1880, and finally in 1961. The building had many uses. It had been used as a store and warehouse for goods and merchandise. A bell sits inside a small steeple on top of the Archway Building. It had belonged to a ship called Sea Horse. The inscription on the bell reads, "Ship Sea Horse, launched March 30, 1782, Hudson's Bay Company." The bell had been brought in to Norway House by voyageurs from York Factory in the early days. Many people from the community went to see the arrival and departure of the boats.

The arrival times of the York boats into Norway House were amazing in those days, especially in view of the fact that modern means of communication were almost nonexistent. The authorities knew of those times because letters had been sent to them previously. The York boats travelling from far had to make portages, go against storms, windy lakes, and other bad weather conditions. Generally, little time was lost reaching destinations; only occasionally were there overdue boats.



The Archway Warehouse on the left, 1989



A Close Up of the Archway Warehouse, 1989

ARRIVAL OF THE ENGINES

By the year 1927, people were getting more small engines, such as outboard motors. There were many more canoes as well. With the wider distribution of the engine and canoe, the era of the York boats came to an end. I can remember this happening quite well as I left school in 1927. With the demise of the York boat, many local men became canoe freighters.

The last York boat which arrived from the North sat at the Hudson's Bay Fort for a long time. Later it was taken away to a museum in Winnipeg. It is still there. I saw it and read the inscription written on it. It says it came from Norway House, the last York boat from the North.

THE FIRST AIRPLANE

My father began to shout, "Here it is!...Look to the West!...You can see it!" We all looked towards the western horizon, and clearly I saw a strange looking spectacle. We all looked with curiosity and were quite uneasy.

The day was Sunday. It was late afternoon, very peaceful and calm. A loud thundering sound was heard all over the silent lake. It sounded like it was going to storm, but all that noise was coming from the airplane. As it came closer and closer, the noise increased and the airplane got bigger. It flew over the lake, lowered its altitude, circled over Drunken Island, hovered over Fifty Cent Island, and landed on the waters passing Bull Island. It sped over to Forestry Island where it docked safely.

In the meantime, people jumped into their boats and canoes and paddled to Forestry Island. Some went very close; many others watched from their boats in the open waters off the Island.

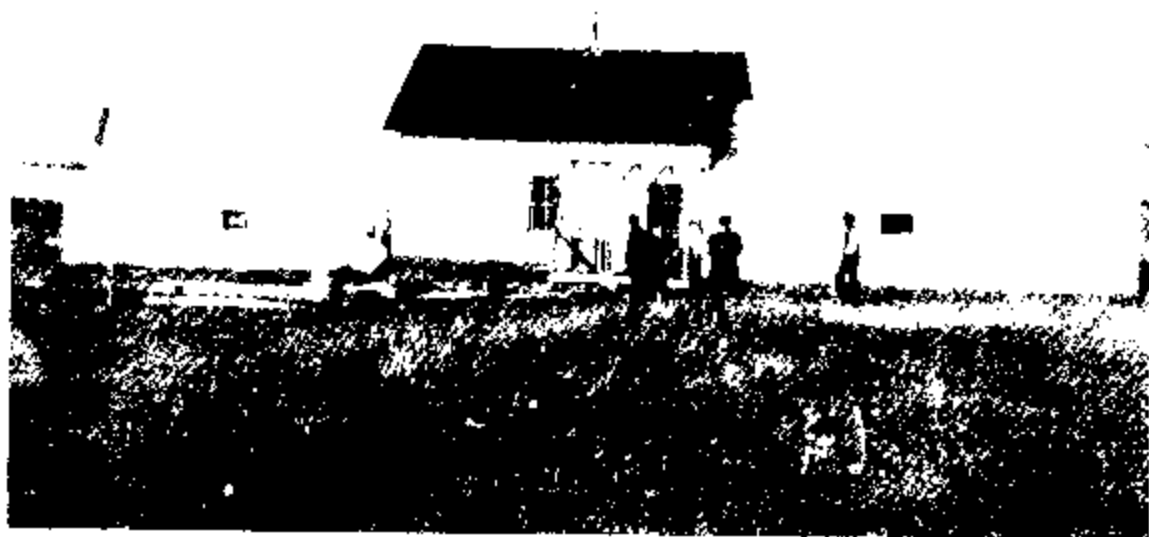
This was the first airplane to arrive in Norway House. It came during the summer of 1920 or 1921. In the winter of 1924-25, two more airplanes landed at Norway House. They were heading somewhere to the North. After that, several other airplanes arrived occasionally.

Because airplanes were not generally available for transportation, dog teams and canoe brigades were still used for hauling and carrying goods. Later people began to use horses to deliver freight and mail to Wabowden.

DOCTORS, NURSES, INDIAN AGENTS... AND WAR VETERANS

While growing up at Norway House, Tommy recalls a chronology of dates and names of doctors, nurses, and Indian agents who arrived and left.

The first doctor I knew was named Norquay. He was here just before World War I, and I believe he was the first doctor to remain posted at the old Indian Hospital at Rossville. This hospital was small, not much more than a shabby nursing shelter. It had a few hospital beds for the very sick but there was a limited amount of medicine. Norquay had a second job as well. Besides working as the local doctor, he served as Indian agent. The war began in 1914 and doctors were needed. Doctor Norquay left to join the army, and Norway House was left without a doctor and Indian agent for some time.



A Temporary Hospital at Norway House in the Early Years, undated
(Reproduced from a picture originally owned by Mary Jane Muswagon)

Another medical person named Miss Bolster arrived to take charge of the hospital at Rossville. She brought her father with her. Mr. Bolster eventually died here and was buried at the Rossville Cemetery. Not long after his death, a Dr. Dent arrived at the hospital and worked alongside Miss Bolster. They were married shortly after.

During the war, another man named Jones arrived and worked as an Indian agent and minister. Like Dr. Norquay, Mr. Jones also left Norway House to join the army. For a long period, Norway House was without a resident Indian agent. However, arrangements were made with the government to send an agent twice a year for a week long stay at a time.

In 1915, Mr. Jones returned to Norway House as a recruitment officer for the army and persuaded many men to join.

Later, Dr. Dent left the hospital to join the army, too. Mrs. Dent was already the Nurse-in-Charge and remained here. Her husband never returned to Norway House. He had left his wife.

Finally, another doctor from Selkirk or Riverton arrived, but only for week-long visits. He saw patients and travelled by dog team. This doctor was an older man and had other responsibilities because of the war. In the meantime, another nurse was stationed here to assist Mrs. Dent at the hospital.

When World War I ended in November, 1918, people in Norway House were unaware of it. In the summer of 1919 or 1920, Dr. Stone arrived at Norway House. An Indian agent named Taylor arrived at the same time. He was a war veteran and chose to be posted here.

Mrs. Dent eventually became the Matron of the old Indian Hospital. Some time after her appointment, the hospital burned down. The year was 1923. Doctor Stone was still here then. I remember we were cutting hay at the time it burned.

After the fire, about six cabins were built to accommodate the sick patients. Each cabin had wood heaters and two to three beds. A separate lodge was built for Dr. Stone and Mrs. Dent. They used the lodge as a nursing station where they treated their patients with limited amounts of medicine. George Balfour and old Nathaniel Queskekapow worked there to keep the fires burning in the cabin stoves as patients had to be kept warm.

By 1924-25, a new hospital was built. I worked there in later years. Mrs. Dent and Mr. Stone continued to work in the new hospital which had sixteen beds in it. It also had some equipment.

After 1925, George Balfour and Nathaniel Queskekapow continued to work at the new hospital. George worked with the dog teams, cows, and horses. The hospital got its milk from the two cows it kept. Both men hauled wood and hay with the horses, and sometimes local people came and sold wood and hay, too.

Besides horses, oxen were used for hauling. At that time, the government provided two oxen for Norway House; one for the Jack River people, and one for the Rossville people.

Chief William Moore also had two oxen. In the winter he hauled wood for everyone in Rossville. He had to do this because he was the chief and it was his responsibility to take care of his people. Later, more people began to have their own horses which eventually put the oxen out of the wood business. The oxen were later killed and butchered for food.

By 1926, the York boats began to disappear. Canoes, motors, and dog teams were used more and more. In the same year, Mrs. Dent died and was buried at the Rossville cemetery. Soon after, Miss Oliver and another nurse came to replace her.



Norway House Hospital, 1989
(Built in 1953)

FIRE AND FLU

Around 1915, the old school burned down and was rebuilt the following year. By 1917, the second school was finished. I remember this because I had entered school in 1918 in the fall. The school was cold. It was constructed from lumber and required wood for heating. It burned down again in 1946. Before I entered school in 1918, the first minister I can remember was Mr. Lousley. He had been a principal at the old school, also. But when I began school, he was not there anymore.

In 1919, the flu epidemic took many lives in Norway House. Children, adults, and whole families were stricken ill by the disease. This happened right after the first war.

There used to be a deserted house where the Lakeside Restaurant now stands. It belonged to a man called Sandy Crate who had moved away to Cross Lake. That winter, when people were dying one after the other, the men who were healthy could not dig graves fast enough. The dead were left in the deserted house all winter long. People were too busy caring for the sick and dying to take time to bury the dead.

In March, 1919, the flu epidemic came to an end. Many families had recovered. The bodies of the dead at the deserted house were all buried at last.

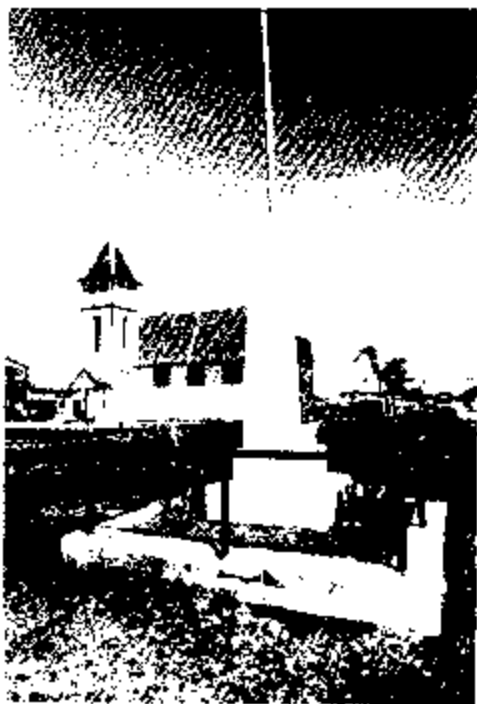
I remember many children in the school were sick from the flu. Everyone was sick, except for the principal's wife and some of the older boys. I saw the big boys cooking fish for the sick children. The principal's wife helped too. Only one girl and one boy died in the whole school building. When the flu ended, we were not allowed to go outdoors right away. Everyone was well taken care of by the bigger and older children. This was a horrifying time because many people had died.

WAR'S END

One warm spring day in March, 1919, the principal came out and shouted "The war is over." It had taken almost five months for us to find out!

Not long after, two veterans returned, John Neckaway and John Morris. Everyone was eager and anxious to meet and welcome them home. When they arrived, they went all around Rossville with their uniforms on. People were proud of them.

Later in the following summer, the rest of the war veterans returned home on one of the Lake Winnipeg boats. Today, a monument stands at Mission Point with the names of those men who never returned home inscribed on it.



The War Memorial

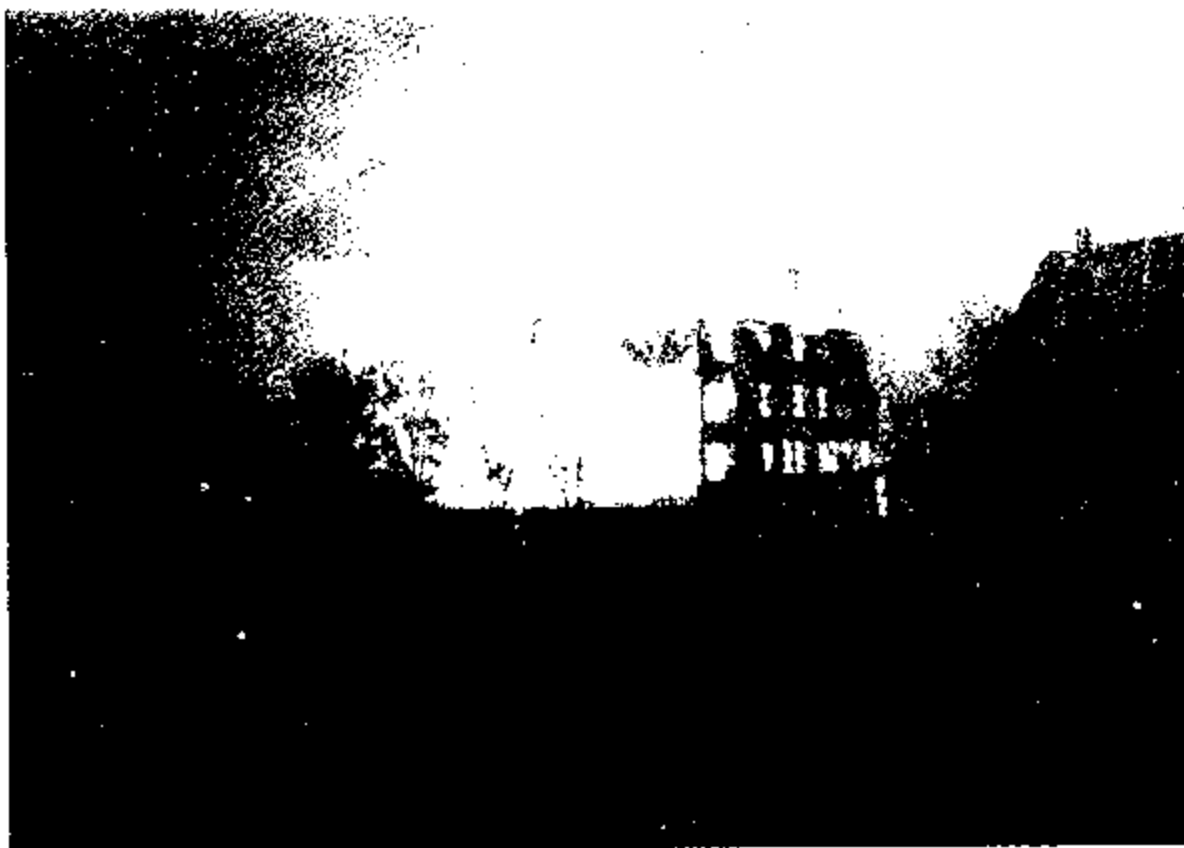
CONCLUDING REMARKS

While I worked on a farm down south, another man, Dr. Turnbull, arrived. He interacted with the people and soon learned to speak Cree. When I came home in 1933, I worked in the hospital. Dr. Turnbull left shortly after, and another doctor came in. His name was Dr. Cowan, and he stayed only temporarily. Later, Dr. Turnbull returned and stayed until 1939, when he left Norway House permanently. In that year, Doctor Quareen arrived at the hospital. He was a very strict man and quite mean and sarcastic in his manner.

Later, I left to work at the Nelson House Nursing Station where I lived for three years. Then I came home with my family and continued to work at the hospital until February, 1953. Then I retired.. that's all.

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

Based on a videotaped interview with
Tommy York, by Gwen Balfour



Residential School Burns

CHAPTER VI

RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL BURNS

THE HERO: DONALD A. BEARDY OF CROSS LAKE, MANTTOBA

On May 29, 1945, at about 2:30 a.m., a fire started in the old Boarding School at Norway House. The fire which began in the boiler room destroyed the activity that had been going on in the school for many years previous.

The students living there were from Cross Lake, Grand Rapids, Poplar River, Oxford House, Island Lake, and God's River. The quick thinking of one these students saved over one hundred children and staff members. The student, Donald Beardy, was from Cross Lake, but had relatives living in Norway House. He was attending school so he could receive both a good education and work experience. However, on that particular night, Donald was sleepless. Something was in the air.

The following is based on Donald's story as told to his wife Ruby Beardy:

May 29, 1945

The fire started at 2:30 during the night. Donald was awakened by a burning sensation in his nose. When he opened his eyes, the dormitory was filled with smoke. Donald jumped out of his bed and ran towards the window which had been left partially open. He pushed the screen out and looked down onto the ground. He could see flames gushing out from the wood bin in the furnace room. Instinctively, he woke up his friend, Oliver Sinclair, who was sleeping in the bed next to his. Oliver leaped up and obediently followed Donald's orders.

The two young boys quickly woke up everyone, telling each one to make much noise. All the boys began to bang and hit the beds. They did this to wake up the little girls who were sleeping in another dormitory just below their floor.

Donald ran out of the dormitory to wake up the boys' supervisor, Mr. Organ, who then went and rang the fire alarm. Mr. Organ told Donald to go outside and catch the girls as they came flying down the fire escape pillars. Meanwhile, Oliver was catching the boys at their fire escape.

Less than a half hour later, all the children were out of the building and secure in the care of local people who had run to the burning building to help. The matron of the school lined up all the children and head-counted each one. All were saved, including the staff members. Most of the children were wearing only their night clothes and socks. Donald had his pants and socks on. Within an hour after Donald and Oliver had awakened everyone in the school, it was completely demolished by the raging flames.

The principal, Mr. Jones, had gone south a day before the school burned down. He was travelling on the Keenora to Winnipeg. Local authorities managed to contact him at Berens River.

The next morning, most of the children had breakfast at the hospital. The students from Norway House returned to their homes with parents, guardians, or relatives.

Donald and his sisters were taken to Douglas McIvor's place and stayed there for almost four days. Then Donald, Alice, and Christina went home to Cross Lake. Six canoes travelled to Norway House to pick up the Cross Lake students. The paddlers included Jimmy Magnus Ross, Jimmy Muswagon, George Mason, and Zacheus McKay among others.

Before Donald went home to Cross Lake, he was promised verbally by Indian Affairs in Norway House that he would be given a house to reward his quick thinking and brave actions. However, to this day, Donald Beardy still has not received the promised reward. Ironically, he has not even received an official "Thank-You" from anyone for saving one hundred or more people.

In the following list are most of the students Donald Beardy saved:

CROSS LAKE STUDENTS (35)

Beardy, Alice	McKay, Katherine	Ross, Arthur
Beardy, Christina	McKay, Lillian	Ross, Charlie Isaac
Beardy, Jessie	McKay, Morris	Ross, Elizabeth
Beardy, Kenena	McKay, Verna	Ross, Freddie Isaac
Beardy, Roderick	Monias, Clarence	Ross, Gilbert
Beardy, Thomas	Monias, Florence	Ross, Jessie
Garrick, Sarah	Monias, Jean	Ross, Virginia
Halcrow, Horace	Monias, Richard	Sinclair, Jane Mary
Halcrow, Katherine	Monias, Ronnie	Sinclair, Oliver
McKay, Betsy	Muswagon, Isabelle	Spence, Betsy
McKay, Christine	Richard, Katie	Yellowback, Rebecca
McKay, Herman	Ross, Annie	



Children at Norway House Residential School, undated
(courtesy Western Canada Pictorial Index)

NORWAY HOUSE (62)

Albert, Alex	Crate, Jane	Muminawatum, Martha
Albert, Hattie	Crate, John	Munroe, Tom
Albert, Samuel	Crate, Mac	Muskego, Albert
Anderson, Luke	Cromarty, Sandy	Muskego, Andrew
Anderson, Moses	Cromarty, Thomas	Muskego, Jimmock
Apetagon, Eva	Darcee, Francis	Muskego, Johnny
Apetagon, Mary Ann	Darcee, John Robert	Muswagon, Alex Thomas
Apetagon, Matilda	Ettawacappo, Fred	Osborne, Angus
Apetagon, Norman	Ettawacappo, Wm.	Osborne, Dorothy
Balfour, Arthur	Farmer, Jessie	Osborne, Jimmy
Budd, Betty May	Folster, Agnes	Osborne, Sarah
Chubb, George	Folster, Katie	Osborne, Sidney
Chubb, Tamar	Forbister, Louisa	Qeskekapow, Andrew
Clarke, Bertha	Gamblin, Reggie	Qeskekapow, Milton
Clarke, Clinton	Grieves, Helen	Qeskekapow, Wilkens
Clarke, Eleanor	Houle, Matthew	Scatch, Michael
Clarke, Ida	McDonald, Jane M.	Settee, Alex Joe
Clarke, Maria	McDonald, John C.	Settee, Doreen
Cline, Mary Jane	McDonald, Roderick	Settee, Katherine
Cline, Zacharius	Monias, Thompson	

GRAND RAPIDS

Lillian Ross

POPLAR RIVER

Victor Spence

OXFORD HOUSE

Henry Chubb

Betsy Hart

ISLAND LAKE

John Flett
Elizabeth Harper

Charlie Harper

GOD'S RIVER

Naomi Trout

NOTES:

1. Local people say the date of the fire was June 6, 1946. Donald Beardy's date is May 29, 1945.

2. Some of the persons mentioned on the list may have left school prior to the fire. For example, Norman Apetagon Sr. was out of school when the fire took place. He was at home on Jack River when a cloud of smoke was seen rising from the Rossville direction. Later, he learned that the school had burned down.

Shared by Donald Beardy & Ruby Beardy

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

FIRE DESTROYS BOARDING SCHOOL AT ROSSVILLE

As told by Charles Queskekapow and written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

After spending some time in a hospital, I came home to Norway House on June 5, 1946. I had served in the army during World War II.

At about four o'clock on June 6, in the wee hours of the morning, we were awakened by the loud sounds of the school bell. Everyone rushed outdoors after someone called out, "The Boarding School is on fire!" Because I was not physically well, I hurried along as best I could towards the school. I could see the flames shooting high into the dark skies. The flames gave much light - a great circle of light - all over central Rossville. People ran around shouting excitedly. As I arrived at the scene, there were already many people standing or running around. Others were trying their best to keep people from going too near the blaze.

The school was constructed primarily of wood and timber, making attempts to put the fire out useless. Little by little, the building crumbled into the raging flames below. We stood and watched helplessly as the ashes and smoke drifted into the dark skies. The children who were residents in the school had all been taken from the building. They were all accounted for; no one was missing. I believe most were taken to the nearby buildings and homes where they were cared for until their families came for them.

Although some men were said to have entered the school while it burned, it was difficult to retrieve anything. Other men stood guard near the outbuildings making sure they did not get burned. These buildings included a barn where animals were kept, a stone building, and a root cellar.

The fire appeared to have started on the northwest side where the furnace room was situated. The furnace used wood to keep the buildings heated, and pipes were laid all over the building. The kitchen was also situated in the same section of the building. There used to be a cook stove there where all meals were prepared for the students.

I'm unsure of this, but I believe there was a power plant near where the band offices are now. It gave light to the building. I believe James Muchikekwanape was the nightwatchman at that time. He had been working there for some time and may have been the one to notice the fire before anyone else did.

I also believe Hedley Ross was the mechanic of the school at that time. His job was to maintain the machinery around the Boarding School compound.

Later, I remember people talking about the fire and speaking of those who entered the burning school to retrieve some things.

One man, Sandy Scribe, was said to have gone in and run out with a large bundle of clothing. When it was checked, everyone laughed and chuckled. It was a bundle of girls under clothing! As for the man, well, he was teased for some time for his efforts at the great fire in Rossville.

The principal of the boarding school at the time was an older man called Mr. Jones. He had boarded one of the Lake Winnipeg boats the day before, and was on his way to Winnipeg. After the school burned down, people contacted him at Berens River, and he returned two weeks later with plans for a new building.

WORK SKILLS WERE A LOSS

The school was a loss for our people. The children who attended were taught well. They learned to read and write for half a day, and the other half day was spent doing industrial work. The industrial work involved survival skills such as sewing, cutting cord wood, breaking and tilling soil for gardens, milking cows, brush clearing, mechanical work such as small engine repair and pipe fitting, and other types of work which needed to be done around the school yard.

As children received both academic and industrial work at the school, it provided them with better survival skills. When the school was destroyed by fire in 1946, another school was built and officially opened in 1952. This time, it was all academic work. Children went to school to learn to read and write all day long. The industrial work was no longer emphasized.

DARK CLOUD OF SMOKE

As told by Norman Apetagon

I had been out of school for one year already. I was at home at Jack River when we spotted dark smoke rising. Later we were told the school had been destroyed by fire that morning.

SMOKE AND FLYING CHILDREN

Donald tossed and turned; he tried but just couldn't sleep. There was something strange about the Rossville School dormitory on that morning of June 6, 1946.

All the boys were fast asleep. Donald knew the doors were always locked, but that was not why he found it hard to relax. Lying under the warmth of the blankets, the air in the dormitory was making Donald feel like sneezing. Something was making his nostrils quite itchy. Finally, Donald sat up to clear his nasal and throat passages; it was then he noticed the room was full of greyish-black smoke. Clearing his eyes, he knew instinctively everyone was in great danger. He shook his friend Oliver, who was sleeping in the next bed. He did not need to show him the smoke, as Oliver had woken up and could see it for himself. Donald ordered Oliver to wake up the rest of the boys while he woke up the girls in the next dormitory.

Donald tried to open the door which the supervisors always locked. He kept banging and pushing until it finally gave away. He ran to the girls' dormitory and told everyone to get out quickly. By this time, the boys were already getting away through the fire escapes. Soon, one by one, the girls came flying down the fire escapes, too.

Down to the ground below Donald and Oliver hurried, so that they could catch each one as they came sliding down.

The school bell rang loudly and was heard all over Rossville as the fire and smoke raged higher. Many people arrived at the scene. Some of the children were taken to nearby homes, while others were taken to the stalls in the barn. Every student and staff member was accounted for before the building sank into the flames.

Luckily, everyone was safe. If it had not been for Donald's sleepless night, many children and staff could have died in the fire while sleeping.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Donald and Oliver are not fictitious characters. Their full names are Donald Beardy and Oliver Sinclair, and they were the two boys who saved everyone when the Rossville School burned down on June 6, 1946. Donald and Oliver were residential students who originally came from Cross Lake.

After the school burned down, two large freighter canoes transported the Cross Lake students back to their homes. Some were placed in the Cross Lake Residential School which was still in full operation at the time.

Based on information shared by
Ruby Beardy and Charles Queskekapow

Written by Byron Apetagon, 1987

Norman Apetagon was born 5 July 1929 and died 4 September 1989. He was the son of Frederick Apetagon and Mary Ann McLeod. His paternal grandparents were John Apetagon and Annie Hart. His maternal grandparents were Donald McLeod and Sarah Neepin.

Ruby Beardy is the daughter of John Paupanekis and Lydia Anderson. Her paternal grandparents were Joseph Paupanekis and Margaret Garson and great-grandparents, the Reverend Edward Paupanekis and Margaret Stevenson, James Garson and Adelaide Crate. Her maternal grandparents were Robert Anderson and Emily Swanson.



The School at Rossville Today

CHAPTER VII

PLACES OF INTEREST

"JOHN BULL'S"

John Bull's is a name given to an inlet forty to fifty miles northwest of Norway House and is situated on the northern end of Big Playgreen Lake near the Whiskeyjack Narrows. The bay is quite large, with several islands jutting out at various points. Hidden reefs can be noticed easily when the whitecaps pound against the rocky shores. Much of the region is covered by rocky terrain, muskeg, bog, and marsh. Trees grow abundantly along the shoreline; a wide variety of coniferous and deciduous trees can be seen all around the inlet.

A number of backwood potholes and a smaller lake on the southern end of the bay empty into John Bull's. The inlet has a Cree name commonly used by the Native people. It is "Pakitahwákansihk", which means a place of fishing. The Cree name indicates why John Bull's was a common place of retreat for the people of the past.

In the old days, John Bull's channels, creeks, and small rivers were excellent spawning grounds for many species of fish, much better than they are today. Not only did the area provide a natural habitat for the fish, but many types of game were also adapted to the surrounding boreal forests, muskeg, and rock outcrops. The birds, too, were attracted to the marshy areas of the region, and returned every year to nest there. Because of the availability of wildlife, people also migrated to this area to harvest its riches.

For many years people arrived at John Bull's early in the fall. They made preparations and stocked food for the winter. Shelters had to be built and maintained, nets repaired, and old clothes mended or new ones made to keep the children and old people warm. Furthermore, fish and wildlife were preserved by methods such as smoking, drying, and freezing as well as by making pemmican.

In the early fall season, men and boys were always busy catching fish and hunting. John Bull's produced many fur bearing animals which were another source of family income.

Year after year local people went to John Bull's to catch and stock fish for their winter's use.

At a later time, companies from southern Manitoba such as Booth Fisheries and Canadian Fisheries experimented with winter fishing there. Several Norway House men were employed for several winters. However, because of its location and distance from Norway House and Warren's Landing, the fishery ceased. Fish populations decreased drastically as winter fishing progressed. Transporting fish back to Norway House and Warren's Landing was costly and difficult.

Nearly all the trees in the area were excellent for building purposes. The early inhabitants around John Bull's lived in lodges arranged in small clusters. The lodges were usually wigwams or log shelters. Many of the dwellings had little furniture. The floor was usually bare ground covered with spruce boughs and grass on which the people slept at night.

Fish, rabbit, moose, and beaver were the main courses for the inhabitants' meals. All year round people hunted animals for food, clothing, and materials for tool-making.

CHAPTER IX

STORIES FROM THE PAST

A PECULIAR EXPERIENCE ON THE GUNOSAO



Rock Paintings

Late one summer, Frederick Apetagon and Edward Albert, two Norway House residents, went up the Gunosao River to trap at Little Jack Lake. The Gunosao consists of many rapids and portages and much of the terrain up river is overgrown with muskeg and tall trees. At intervals along the way there are marshlands. Further up, the land rises higher with rock outcrops and shelves.

Frederick and Edward had been travelling for at least two days when one evening they decided to make camp at a place called Ká Kinwá Wáskák, meaning a place where the river makes a long curve. Across the river from their camp, large rock shelves were visible.

The two men pitched their tent and ate a light supper. It was about eight o'clock in the evening after they had spread out their bedrolls to sleep when they heard a humming sound. Thinking it was only some animal making noises, they listened to determine which animal it might be. But the sounds were not of an animal or a bird. Curious, they went outside to listen. The sounds were coming from the rock shelves across the river. The two men listened carefully, trying to determine what was making the peculiar noises. However, they could not figure them out.

Edward suggested that they go across to make a closer observation. Reluctantly, Frederick agreed. Drifting slowly to the rock shelves across the river, the men heard the noises growing louder and clearer. They listened. It sounded like drums beating in rhythm, and

During the evenings, the people socialized amongst themselves by gathering at certain lodges where stories, legends, and myths were passed down to the younger men, women, and children. As they listened to the stories, a fire at one end of the room kept the lodge warm and comfortable.

Later, people began to centralize at Norway House. Many did not return to the inlet, choosing instead an easier lifestyle where stores, a hospital, and churches were available. Only a few families continued to live in the old way of life at John Bull's.

Today, an occasional visitor, hunter, or fisherman will enter the bay to camp for a few days. Signs of the old log houses and sites can still be seen; however, much of the land is overgrown with new plant life.

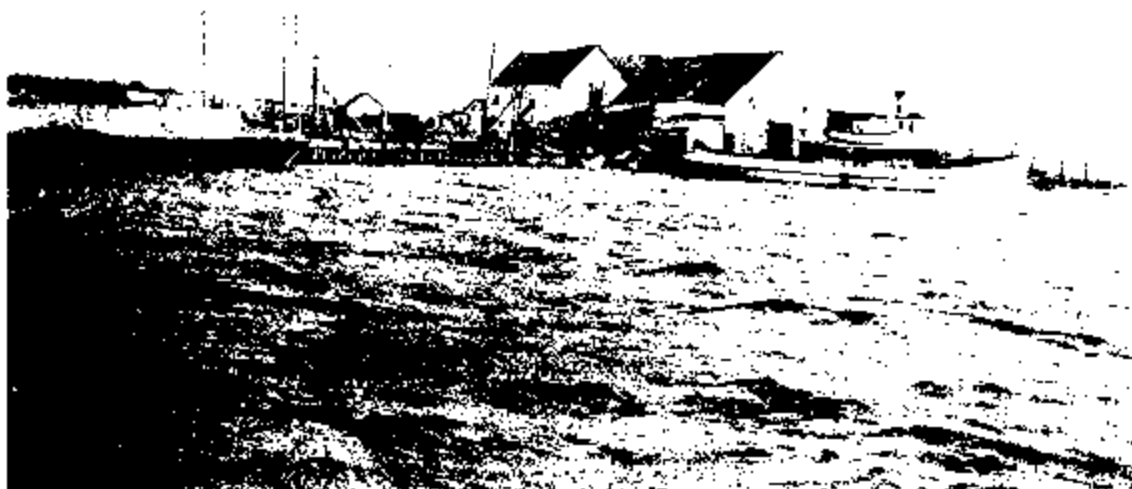
John Bull was a man who trapped, fished, and hunted at this place for many winters. The bay was eventually named after him.

Written by Byron Apetagon
Based on interviews with Donald
Muswagon Sr. 1988 and Charles
Queskekapow 1989



John Bull at Age 100
Brother-in-law to Chief Thomas Mestagon or Balfour
(courtesy Western Canada Pictorial Index)

WARREN'S LANDING



Warren's Landing, Lake Winnipeg, 1922
Joannidi Collection 13 (courtesy Manitoba Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Warren's Landing is situated at the narrows where Lake Winnipeg meets Playgreen Lake. The people used to make their summer camps there to fish and hunt. Across from Warren's Landing are the rivers where they used to spend many evenings calling moose, catching sturgeon, and shooting ducks.

In the old days, York boats made camp at Warren's Landing because it was strategically situated for incoming boats from Lake Winnipeg. People who migrated back and forth from the south would stay at the camps there. Consequently, people loved to go to the Landing because it was also a place where they could meet old friends, relatives, and strangers.

On account of its strategic location, Icelandic fishermen from the south made a fish storage camp there. Shortly, other southern fishermen arrived because they had heard about the fishing camp. After their arrival, people from Norway House moved to Warren's Landing every summer. It was like a summer resort for them. It had an excellent beach where children could spend many hours swimming and splashing each other. And, behind the campsites was a beautiful forest where the women and men could snare rabbits and hunt grouse. Many of the men from Norway House worked as shore hands, fisherman's helpers, and guides. The income was sufficient. It met their needs for the coming winter.

Early in the morning, even before the sun rose, the sailboats would make their trips out onto the lake. There, the fishermen would set their nets, then move to another area of the lake to lift ones set the day before. They always caught fish. Sometimes there were too many to put into the sailboats, so that part of the catch had to be thrown back into the water.

Lake Winnipeg was a dangerous place to be during stormy or foggy weather. After the storms, many boats returned safely while others never came back. Several fishermen lost their lives for the kind of work they loved doing.

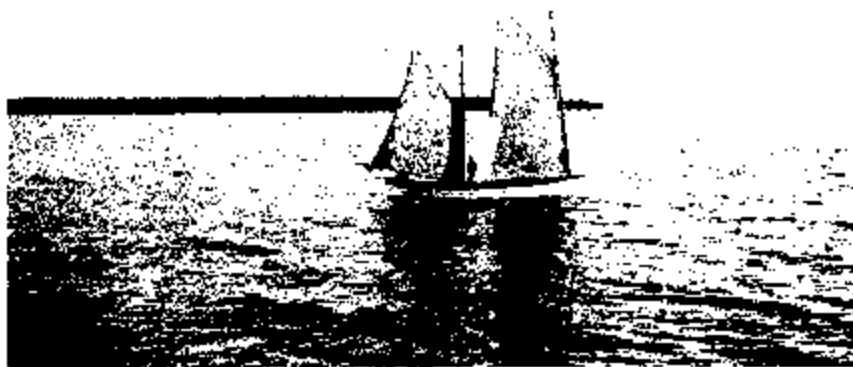
Sailboats were not built for fishing; they could not carry large amounts of fish, and the men in the boats had to work hard on the masts after lifting the fish. The work was endless and exhausting. The winds even made it worse when they shifted to different directions. Sometimes the boats were blown far off the shores in the windy lake. Many men remember the storms and the lives of those who were lost. The strongest gales are never forgotten.

One time, the winds blew up after a beautiful morning. Many of the sailboats were caught in the white caps of high rolling waves. All came in to safety, except one. There were three men on that last boat. After the storm had calmed down, another sailboat making its way to Warren's Landing spotted the vessel. All the fishermen could see was the nose of the missing boat. Further off, they saw the broken masts and poles. They could not see any survivors nearby. The news of the missing boat arrived at Warren's Landing soon after, and the search began immediately for the three men.

Several days passed before the bodies of two drowned men were recovered. The third man could not be found.

The body of one of the drowned men was located near the river across from Warren's Landing, while the second was found afloat on Lake Winnipeg.

Edward Albert and Donald Muswagon had gone out to set nets when they noticed far out in the lake a dark figure, submerged upright. It was one of the drowned men. The body would disappear, reappear, and disappear again as the waves carried it along. The men soon figured out a way to retrieve it. Heading straight at the drowned man, Edward throw a rope and lassoed him, then threw a tarpaulin to cover him. When he had done that, both men pulled the body into the boat. It was a tricky thing to do. They had to estimate the speed of the waves because the drowned man appeared at certain intervals. The timing had to be right because, if they had missed the first time, they could have interfered with the movement of the body which was being carried by the waves.



A Sailboat on Lake Winnipeg near Warren's Landing, 1922
Joannidi Collection 48 (courtesy Manitoba Archives,
Provincial Archives of Manitoba)

Later on that summer, while Paul Fletcher and a companion were taking a missionary to Grand Rapids in a canoe, they located the third man near Limestone Point. Paul had seen a seagull pecking at something. He knew of the missing man, and decided to investigate the seagull's food. As he went closer, he saw that the drowned man was covered with sand, with only the arm and shoulder exposed. The men buried the body there, and the R.C.M.P. later returned it to Norway House.

After these three men drowned, sailboats were not used for fishing purposes. Gasoline-operated tugboats, which were safer, but much noisier, now made their appearance. Men trusted the bigger boats. The gas-powered boats made many overnight trips. They had bunk beds and kitchenettes aboard. Furthermore, they had the instruments needed for navigating in fogs, storms, and other emergencies.

When the boats returned daily to Warren's Landing, men would rest after their well deserved meals. Many people sat around sharing stories and discussing their catch for the day. Children ran around. For them, this was a holiday; school would not start until September and everyone had fun.

Some evenings, people would gather around the stage platform where square dances were held. Fishermen, men and women, young and old, danced until late into the night. Dancing was something people loved doing in those days.

By the end of the summer, the southern fishermen from Gimli and Selkirk returned to their homes. The people of Norway House came back. Children would soon be starting school, men would be leaving before long for the traplines, and women would be preparing the winter clothing.

Today, Warren's Landing stands like a ghost town. There were a few long time residents, but because of change, they now live in Norway House or have moved elsewhere.

Occasionally, the former residents return to visit their old homes. Others go back to reminisce about those good old days they had at Warren's Landing long ago.

Told by Donald Muswagon Sr. and
written by Byron Apetagon, 1988

Donald Muswagon was born 8 September 1908 at Norway House, the son of John Henry Muswagon and Elizabeth Allen. His paternal grandparents were James Muswagon and Catherine Cromarty. His maternal grandparents were James Allen and ? McKenzie of Churchill or York Factory.



CHAPTER VIII

IRENE MUSWAGON'S HERBAL REMEDIES

RED WILLOW CRYSTALS



The red willows produce sugar-like crystals in the spring. Usually the crystals form from a sugary substance which seeps through the pores of the willow bark. This substance becomes hard once it is on the outer bark.

Herbalists collect red willows, scrape off the crystals, and wrap them in a cloth bundle. Such crystals are collected and stored in large amounts. Later these crystals are pounded into a powdery substance.

This produces a medicine used to soothe teething pains for smaller infants, and for other tooth and gum complications.

The crystals are divided into smaller bundles which are then moistened in water and rubbed along the infected areas of the gum and teeth.

Usually the rubbing will cause the child to salivate. Sometimes the child will swallow the saliva which allows the medicinal element to enter the internal system.

Rubbing with the crystal bundles is repeated until the patient shows improvement.

BALSAM GUM OR SPRUCE GUM

Balsam, or spruce gum, is a sticky substance which seeps from the trees, collects on the outer bark, and hardens. Once it is on the outer bark, it changes into a dark brownish-grey colour. Later, this hardened gum can be chipped off and collected in large amounts.

The hardened gum is placed in a pot or can where it is melted over a hot fire which separates the gum from the unwanted debris of bark and wood. When the gum is still hot, lard or animal grease is added and the whole thing is mixed well. The mixture is left to cool in a shaded area, away from heat or warm sunlight. This medicine is used as an ointment to soothe scabs, itchiness, open cuts, and sores.

MUSKEG LEAVES

Káiképakwa means "forever leaves" in Cree. Káiképakwa plants grow in areas where there is plenty of water and muskeg.

The plant usually has a stem which can grow as high as thirty-five centimeters. The leaves are narrow and grow as much as five to seven centimeters in length.

The leaves never all die off at once, regardless of what season it is or what the weather is like. This is the reason why they are called "Forever Plants" in Cree. They can be collected in all seasons, including winter.

These plants are used for medicinal purposes. They soothe and heal internal pains and digestive complications such as those relating to the intestine. Other uses include soothing and curing ulcers, gall stones, and pains in the diaphragm.

The muskeg plants are collected, then tied and bound together in bundles. They are usually stored like this until they are needed for applications.

The leaves are boiled in a large container for some time. As they boil, they give off a bitter odour and the water becomes very dark-colored like strong tea. After the liquid has cooled, it is used as a drink for stomach pains and complications.

It is said this drink was used to remedy diseases like tuberculosis and reduce cancer symptoms. It was also used to ease diarrhoea as well as menstrual problems in women.



PINE NEEDLES

Pine needles are collected in large numbers and placed in containers. Water is added and the mixture is boiled for a long time. An odour is given off by the pine needles. Once the mixture is steaming, the patient covers his head and bends over the container. The patient remains under the covering and inhales and exhales the steam given off from the mixture. This method soothes and opens up the throat and nasal passages for easier breathing.

It is said the medicinal needles and steam can relieve coughs, colds, and headaches by clearing the nasal passages. They can be used for other purposes as well.

It is said pine cones can be substituted if pine needles are not available. The results are the same.

GINGER ROOTS OR WÍHKÉS

The ginger root, better known as wíhkés, is found in marshy areas where cattails and bulrushes grow. One can quickly find the roots in marshy areas. A sense of smell is important here because, in areas where wíhkés grow, a strong sweet odour is given off.

This root is used for medicinal purposes. It soothes toothaches, headaches, stomach ulcers, indigestion, and stomach cramps. There are several ways to apply wíhkés. It can

be chewed directly and placed over the toothache, or it can be kept in the mouth to treat headaches and colds.

The wihkés can also be boiled and later the steam from the boiling wihkes is inhaled to soothe and cure headaches.

Sometimes wihkés is mixed with warm water and consumed in the same way as citron. This soothes stomach ulcers and internal body cramps.

Information shared by Irene Muswagon and
written by Byron Apetagon, 1988



Irene Muswagon was born 6 December 1909, the daughter of William Kirkness and Mary Clarke. Her paternal grandparents were James Kirkness and Mary Miahm (Miyáham). Her maternal grandparents were Thomas Clarke Senior and Victoria Chubb of God's Lake. Irene had one brother named Gilbert, who died when he was around thirteen or fourteen years of age.

they could hear people's chanting as if they were singing a song. Fred and Edward continued to listen for some time from their canoe. The sounds were indeed coming 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 be coming from below the rock where they were standing. Realizing this, they walked away quickly, knowing it was extraordinary for people to hear such strange noises in the wilderness. Frightened, they left in their canoe. As night fell upon the land, they did not build a campfire. The sounds continued to hum.

The two men could not sleep. Their minds kept drifting back to their families. Maybe this was a sign of something bad which had happened at home. At midnight, the drumming and chanting stopped. Just before they stopped, the sounds grew louder, then ended abruptly.

Next morning, the two men continued on their trip to Little Jack Lake. They had had little sleep after an incident which neither man would ever forget for the rest of his life.

The following spring, Frederick and Edward returned home and told their story to several people. It was explained to them that those sounds were made by *mémékwésiwak*, or little people who live in the rocks. These little people are sometimes called Rock People. They are 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, 1987



Hyer's Old Store at R.C.M.P. Point

THE LOG HOUSE AT MISSION ISLAND

When I was a young girl, I lived with my mother at Mission Island. In those days, travel was not easy. Most people had dogs, good dogs, which could pull heavy loads and even carry families on visits. The dog teams were used mostly for trapping and fishing.

I remember we used to walk to a local store. The owner was kayás móniyáwi(ni)iw, meaning a white man of bygone years. He provided most of the people's needs. His store was situated where the R.C.M.P. Detachment now stands. People from all over the community used to walk there.

In the winter, people used their dog teams, and in summer they went by boat and canoe. At first people rowed and paddled, but in later years, they used motors which made much noise. The people had to go to the store to buy their basic needs such as sugar, tea, lard, and flour. In those days, people did not have much money, but whatever income they had was spent wisely.

Old Móniyáwiniw's store was a large wooden log house where everything was sold from food to cloth, and it was heated by a woodstove. Part of the building was his living quarters. He always allowed visitors to come at all hours of the evening because he knew the people didn't have everything in their homes.

In later years, old Móniyáwiniw left Norway House. His store was bought by the band, partly from money earned by the Homemakers' Sewing Club. The log house was given to the community people for their use, and was taken apart, log by log, board by board, and transported to Mission Island, either by boat or horse sleds. Upon its arrival there, men worked voluntarily to set it up.

For years, the log house was used for various purposes. Here, people held square dances regularly, wakes when someone died, and feasts and other celebrations as well. The log house developed an atmosphere of friendship and good relationships. It was a place to meet old friends and talk about former days. It was a place to keep informed about the latest news and local gossip. The building stood for a long time. It slowly aged but it did not show signs it was getting fragile. Unaware of its hidden dangers, people continued to use it for celebrations and other important events in the community.

One day in 1959, there was a wedding at Mission Island and a reception held at the log house. While the meal was being prepared upstairs to be served on the floor below, the old people sat around talking about local news and current events. Once in a while, they broke into loud laughter, then it was back to politics.

By late afternoon, more people had arrived to see the newlyweds. Because they were packed together so closely on the main floor, some of the well wishers went upstairs to join the old folks. More joined them to make room below as the people cleared the reception tables and put back the chairs in anticipation of the square dance.

Unknown to everyone, the big log beams which held up the top floor had weakened, their decay hidden under layers of paint. They began to crack and creak as more people arrived, but there was so much laughter, hustling and bustling, no one noticed.

A few people had gone outside for fresh air. They did not realize they would soon be saving people's lives.

In the meantime, people sat or walked around the main floor, talking and waiting for the dance to begin. The newly-wedded couple was the center of attraction. People wished them happiness; old timers lectured them about their marriage. The couple waited and listened earnestly as each elder came and spoke to them. This was the custom when young couples joined hands and made their vows.

Upstairs a large crowd had gathered. Unnoticed, the old beams continued to give way. The excess weight was too much for them. Then, suddenly it happened. The top floor caved in on one side, crashing down heavily to the main floor below. Screams and shouts were heard all over the building. Many people were trapped on the lower floor. Many could not escape the weight which had fallen on them.

As the floor continued to fall to one side, the people upstairs went sliding down. The woodstove on the lower floor began to burn the paper covered walls. But people outside the building acted quickly. The men tried to open the door but it had jammed as the building shifted. They tried kicking it down; they tried pulling on it. But everything they did was useless. Then someone came running with a log. The men grabbed it and ran at the door, smashing it open with several blows, and hurting in the process a young girl who was stuck between the fallen top floor and the wall.

Then one group removed men, women, and children from the top floor while another fought the fire. Other people were trapped under the debris, and they had to be rescued quickly before they panicked. Logs provided leverage to raise the fallen floor as one by one these people were pulled to safety.

Luckily, no one had been killed. A number of the people who had been trapped were injured. Most of them were treated immediately.

After all had gathered outside, some men went inside to examine the building's destruction. Food, clothes, pots, and pans were all over the place. The stove pipes, still hot from the fire that had cooked the reception meals, lay scattered.

As the men looked up where the floor had once been, they saw a tiny hammock. Inside the hammock was a small baby who had slept through the whole commotion. A gasoline lamp still burned where it hung from the ceiling - giving the light needed to help the men quickly rescue the little infant.

Right to this day, people talk about this breathtaking experience. If people had not responded to the danger immediately, many lives could have been lost that evening. For years, the building which had been a store, a dance hall, a gathering and meeting place stood empty. No one ever thought of reconstructing it again. It was not very long ago when the log house was demolished and taken away by local people to be used for firewood. Although the building was untouched for years, people who walked by late at night claimed they could hear music and laughter. Other individuals claimed they saw people looking out the windows, but when they went near the house, they found it dark and empty. These incidents caused people to have jitters run up their backbones.

Today, when one walks by where the house once stood, the old days are still remembered, especially the day the floor of the log house collapsed.

Told by Irene Muswagon and
written by Byron Apetagon