

Copyright © Nympha Byrne & Camille Fouillard, 2000

Individual copyright to their contributions is by the retained contributors.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means without permission of the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

Technical editing: Jane Billingham

Cover illustration (detail): © Mary Ann Penashue

Cover & inside graphic: based on traditional designs created by Innu women, hand-painted on caribou-skin coats

Printed and bound in Canada

Gynergy books acknowledges financial support for our publishing activities from the Government of Canada through the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP), and the Canada Council for the Arts.

Published by:

Women's Press

180 Bloor St. W. #1202

Toronto, Ontario, M5S 2V6 Canada

Managing Editor: Ruth Bradley-St-Cyr

The following contributions have been previously published and are reprinted by permission: Marie Pokue's "To the People I Lost" in *MCC Women's Concerns Report* (Winnipeg, MB: Mennonite Central Committee, May-June 1992), p. 5; Shanut Rich's "Mishtapeu" (under the title "Mistapeu") in *Innu Tipatshimun* (Sheshatshu, Lab.: Innu Resource Centre, June 1973); and Mary Jane Pasteen's "Women Speared the Caribou" & Mary Madeline Nuna's "Shaking Tents and *Anik-napeu*" can be found on the Innu Nation Web site at www.innu.ca.

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:

It's like the legend

ISBN 0-921881-56-8

1. Naskapi women. 2. Naskapi Indians — Social conditions. I. Byrne, Nympha, 1962- II. Fouillard, Camille.

E99.N18I88 2000

306'.089'973

C00-950035-9



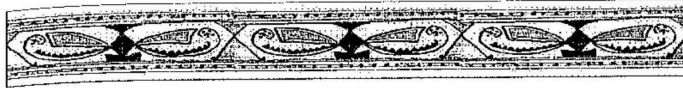
Contents

Introduction		
Nympha Byrne & Camille Fouillard		13
Grandfather Eagle		
Nympha Byrne		25
Mishtapeu		
Shanut Rich		27
Women Speared the Caribou		
Mary Jane Pasteen		34
Shaking Tents and Anik-napeu, the Toadman		
Mary Madeline Nuna		37
Tshenut, the Elders		
Mary Martha Hurley		40
An Orphan Grows Up		
Cecile Rich		41
A Child Learns Respect		
Elizabeth Rich		55
Eagle		
Christine Poker		62
The Elders Would Never Have Allowed It		
Maggie Antuan		66
Shushep and Me		
Madeline Katshinak		70

Louisa	
Christine Poker	77
It's Like the Legend	
Charlotte Gregoire	78
I Am Rich	
Nympha Byrne	89
Before My Father Died	
Catherine Poker	90
The Country Is a Healing Place	
Mary Jane Nui	99
Lonely for You	
Aldea Rich	104
I Think about These Things	
Mary Georgette Mistenapeo	106
Child	
Rose Gregoire	118
The Thunder and Mosquito	
Nympha Byrne	120
Early Childhood Education	
Caroline Andrew	122
Retracing Our Footprints	
Mary Adele Andrew	135
To the People I Lost	
Marie Pokue	144
This Land Is Still Our Home	
Charlotte Rich	146
Artists Know the Spirits	
Angela Andrew	152
I Can't Forget You	
Christine Poker	156

Like the Gates of Heaven Elizabeth Penashue	157
Life on the Edge of a Bombing Range Mary Martha Hurley	176
The Trickster and the Ant Nympha Byrne	190
Fifty-seven Days in Jail Mary Martha Hurley	192
Life on a Roller Coaster Cecilia Rich	205
Sorrow Christine Poker	217
I Am My Father's Daughter Nympha Byrne	219
Set My People Free Mary Adele Andrew	231
I Consider Myself a Full Native Natasha Hurley	234
Stories My Grandmother Told Me Pamela Hurley	236
Some People Get the Order of Canada: Excerpts of Prison Writings Rose Gregoire	238
The Government of Mischief Anne Marie Andrew	242
Chickadee Christine Poker	245
I Followed My Heart Nympha Byrne	246

Almighty Woman Nympha Byrne	252
In Our Culture, We Don't Sign Papers Justine Noah Jack, Katie Rich & Nympha Byrne	254
Who's Law Am I Breaking Anyway? Christine Poker	264
My Dad's Moccasin Rose Gregoire	268
About the Contributors	271
Glossary	290
List of Place Names	293



A Child Learns Respect

Elizabeth Rich

Elizabeth shares with us her memories as a small girl, trying to make sense of worlds colliding: the Innu world of survival, sharing and animal spirits, and the White world of trade, cleanliness and godliness. Now an accomplished beadworker, Elizabeth remembers the first time her family traded furs for beads in Emish (Voisey's Bay). She remembers the tyranny of a priest, who tried to snuff out their spiritual beliefs and practices, including that of the sacred drum. The animal spirits talk to the Innu through the drum to guide them on their hunt. The spirits tell them how to respect and take care of the animals, how to make offerings to the spirits, how to hang animal bones in the trees or burn them in the fire, which is also a spirit. If the hunter follows these laws, the animals will give up their lives to the hunter. If the hunters do not offend the animals and their spirit masters, they will continue to live in peace with each other and with nature.

I am only going to speak for myself and what I've seen and heard. In the early days the Innu never received food from the government. This is why they always went back to *nutshimit* (the country). There was no hope that the government would give us food. Sometimes we would run out of bannock or tea, but the

men would set their traps and fish and hunt caribou. The women were good hunters too. They hunted porcupine and partridge, set snares for rabbits and put nets out to catch fish. When the women went hunting, they took their children with them.

When I was a child I was taught to respect the Utinimatsheshu Caribou Spirit, the Giver of Food. Children were not allowed to make fun of animals or Utinimatsheshu would get angry. We were taught how to respect the spirits. I was told if I made noise outside, Utinimatsheshu would not share the animals with us. The animals were our food. We were not allowed to be negative toward our parents, like nagging at them or getting angry. The other important thing was to be careful about what we said to the hunter. We had to respect the hunter. This is what we learned. We survived by what we learned.

The Innu know that there is a Creator, and that the Creator told his own children to respect him. When I was a girl, the mother was also the one to teach her children to respect her too. She would talk to her children about Tshementun, the Creator. Tshementun is a God, the same as the Christian God. He helps people and looks after them. There is only one God.

The women taught their children that sharing and giving is very important. My mother, Akat, told us not to get upset during meals if there was not enough food to go around. Even when we had only a little bit of food, my mother shared it and gave it to the other people. As Innu, we were told that, if we were bad to the others and didn't share food with them, Tshementun and Utinimatsheshu would be upset. Parents were really happy when the children listened. Children were also happy for what they learned. We kept the things we learned.

Sometimes people were afraid when they were looking for fish. They were afraid they wouldn't be able to find any and they would starve. People would share when they caught fish. When the Innu woman cooked, she put her pot on top of the stove. I always knew right away when my mother did this that she would be sharing food with the people, the ones who were hungry. I knew the ones who were hungry. She would invite the rest of the

pec
a li
be
wa
get
if c
wi
we
we
for

(J
m
hi
sa
us
is
A
le
fa

W
w
tl
li
o
a
t
o
w
s

t
v

Elizabeth Rich

57

people in our camp to eat our meal with us. We were given only a little bit to eat, or sometimes we wouldn't eat. There wouldn't be enough for the children, but the adults would eat a lot. This was hard. But I always tried to do what I was told. We wouldn't get upset while having our meals. What I would be thinking is: if only I could be made happy — because I was really unhappy with so little food. Tshementun and Utinimatsheshu's teachings were very powerful. We would hardly play because the teachings were too strong. If we were bad, our parents wouldn't get animals for food. I never learned or heard about other things.

Right after the children had eaten, my father, Shushepiss (Joseph Rich), would send us to sleep and tell us legends. When my father told me legends, his stories were similar to what he did himself. I thought that his stories and his life were almost the same. My father also used the legends. For example, he would use Kuekuatsheu's thinking. Kuekuatsheu is the wolverine. He is a trickster. My father also had a story like the one about Noah's Ark, when the whole earth was flooded a long time ago. In our legend, Kuekuatsheu is the one who made the earth again. My father didn't use the name Noah in his story.



When we were in the country, we were always travelling. In the winter, my parents would tell us we were not allowed to go on the komatik while we were going to our next camp. Only the little ones would go on the komatik. I had my little snowshoes on and my mother would take care of me. We did a lot of walking and pulled all our things along — family things like the stove, tent, clothes and food. In the summer, we carried our things on our backs. Even the little children carried things. I was never sick when I was walking like this. Life in the country was very good sometimes in the old days.

In the middle of the winter, my father would say he had to go back to the store at Kauishatukuants (Old Davis Inlet). We would start walking back. My father wouldn't let us wander off

by ourselves. We would go as far as Kanishutakushtasht (Flower's Bay), and sometimes to Kapukuanipant (Jack's Brook), or to Kapapist (Big Bay) and Shankus (Sango Bay). Sometimes we travelled as far as Estinekamuk (Snegamook), not far from Sheshatshu. These are the places we would end up.

In the summertime, we would travel to Kauishatukuants by canoe made of birchbark or made of canvas from the store. We would camp across the bay from there. There were no houses for the Innu in Kauishatukuants back then, only tents. The only White people were the store clerk and his family, and sometimes the priest. My father didn't expect anything from anybody when he returned to Kauishatukuants. He knew he would not receive food from the store clerk. He had no furs, no work, no money. And sometimes we were completely out of food. The way the Innu survived, White people wouldn't survive like that alone in the country.

My father would talk about the way White people lived. "They are a proud people," he would say. He would talk about how White people had everything, how they would show off, how they survived because they didn't have Utinimatsheshu. My father would tell us he couldn't let us go to *kakeshauts'* (non-Innu people's) homes. Only my older brother could visit these homes. My father would tell us *kakeshauts* had homes that were clean and had everything, like food. They didn't ever go hungry. He said *kakeshauts* pushed people away that were not clean. This made us uncomfortable, when we were told that we would make a White woman dirty if we went to her home. I didn't go to *kakeshauts'* homes.

My father didn't like to go back to Kauishatukuants. He liked to stay where there were not very many people. That's why now I like to be where there are not very many people. My father would tell us that we couldn't find any friendliness from the store clerk. My oldest brother, Napeu, who drowned, used to ask my father, "Let's not go there. Why do you keep trading furs with those people if you have no use for them?" My father didn't listen to him. He traded furs with the clerk whenever he could. But he

wo
giv
sor
bal
to

the
the
sho
sho
oth

wh
an
He
Th
ch
Ev
Ba

we
sh
My
sh
dic
sca

Pe
an
ab
aft
da
be
Me

fat

Elizabeth Rich

59

would tell us this was the last time, because the clerk would barely give food to the people for their furs. He would give my father some food maybe once a year — things like flour, butter, sugar, baking powder and pork. Then my father would tell us we had to go back to the country.

My father was the *utshimau* (leader), but he wasn't a leader that has money. He was the leader for the people travelling in the country, a leader in the camps. He would say when the people should camp, when they should keep going and when they should rest. Sometimes he would go hunting caribou with the other men. He would say to stay one week and then travel again.

Sometimes the priest would invite my father to the church when he was needed. My father could speak English. He was like an altar boy helping during the mass or when a baby was baptized. He would visit the people to give them the messages of the priest. The priest would never say we were not allowed to go to the church. That's the only White man's building we could go in. Everybody would sit very quietly in the church, saying prayers. Back then, the priest would stay only two weeks.

Many years ago, Mushuau Innu or Davis Inlet people never went to church. My father didn't. It was the people from Sheshatshu who told them to go to church. Sheshatshu Innu and Mushuau Innu would meet when they were travelling in *nutshimit*. Sheshatshu Innu would tell us to get baptized because we didn't go to church. This is what I heard when I was a child. It scared me.

Nothing was perfect in those days. The priest was in control. People showed respect for him because they were afraid of him and his control. They believed the things he said. He told them about the darkness of our drum, how we would be left in darkness after we died with only our drum, nothing else but the drum in darkness. I think this is what scared the people. We had our own beliefs, but the priest made us believe his teachings in the church. Me, I don't believe in the things the priest is teaching.

I sometimes wonder now about the things I've heard. My father told us one time there was a White man who didn't want

to help his grandmother. People asked the White man to help my great-grandmother because her husband had died. This is why my father thought the White people were too proud. This happened around Sheshatshu, where her people were from. The White man told my great-grandmother to come with him and he would take her and her granddaughter away. The young girl was probably 12 years old and she was my aunt. He said he would take care of them and feed them. They would be happy and not lonely. They would live well and not go hungry. They were never seen again. Nobody knows what happened to them. My aunt and her children must be in Happy Valley now. Maybe it is only her grandchildren that are living. I often think when I see a White person that he doesn't care about the people, the Innu.



I was taken away myself by a doctor because I had pneumonia. "I will take her away and she will be fine," the doctor said to my father. I had an operation in St. Anthony, but I didn't receive any abuse from this doctor. Later, when I was lonely for my family, the doctor said it would be okay even if he didn't want me to go back yet. Maybe I should have listened to him. But if I had stayed, later I would have had to look for my family like kids are doing today — those who were taken by Social Services and adopted away.

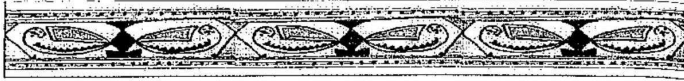
When I came back to Kauishatukuants, I was very surprised by what I saw. "Why is the government giving people money?" I thought to myself. I had not seen the Innu given social assistance before. When I was a child, I was never allowed to ask for food from other people. My parents and other parents kept an eye on us so we wouldn't do that. We were told to do something outside, but not to look for food in people's tents. I wonder now why the people don't go back to *nutshimit*. The reason must be something in the community. They are not going back because they get social assistance. This is what I think. My father didn't have any money. The government shouldn't have given me any money. I

Elizabeth Rich

61

don't like it. I liked it the first time, because I didn't know the difference. The government is giving the Innu money to pay us back for our land. That's why I don't like it.

Today young people don't go to *nutshimit* because no one is taking them out there. I like the old way, the way my father was treated by the government years ago. He never received social assistance. Only food was given to him. He never received any money. My father told us the stories of when they were poor and out of food. My father's stories — I still keep the things he told me in my memories.



Eagle

Christine Poker

A man had a dream about an eagle. He told his wife about his dream. As he finished telling her, he heard wings flapping outside their tent. He asked his wife to look and it was an eagle. He went out to see the great bird. It was big.

“What is wrong?” he asked the eagle.

“My grandchild, I am hungry. My claws are all cracked,” the eagle replied. “I was flying and I thought I saw a lot of caribou. I tried to grab them, but I grabbed an island instead. That’s how I got my claws cracked.”

“Don’t worry, Grandfather,” the man said. “I will fix your claws for you. I will make them sharp.”

So the man started working on the eagle’s claws. He sharpened them. When he finished, he asked his wife for a caribou hide. He asked the grandfather eagle to try his claws on the caribou hide. His claws couldn’t go through the hide easily.

“A little bit more and it will do,” the man told the eagle, and he worked on the eagle’s claws some more. He let him try his claws on the caribou hide again. This time they went through the hide easily.

“I will go hunting and try out my claws,” the eagle said and flew away. In a few minutes he returned with 10 caribou. He held five caribou in one claw and five in the other. He laid them near the tent.

for
 from
 the
 late
 tho
 So
 som
 gra
 a w
 the
 gra
 car
 his
 up
 wife
 tak
 to t
 sha
 mo
 his
 spe
 bac
 sad
 me,
 for
 ma

Christine Poker

63

"Those caribou are for you," he said to the man. "Thank you for saving my life."

Then the eagle told the man something that he needed to do from that time onward.

"Every time you cross the lake, always put some trees across the ice even if the lake is small," the eagle told the man.

The man did just that, until one night when he came home late from his hunting. He was too tired to cut some trees and he thought the lake was small.

"What can possibly happen to me?" he thought to himself. So he ran across the lake. As he tried to reach the other side, something grabbed him. He looked up and saw the eagle that his grandfather had talked to him about. This grandfather eagle had a wife who ate people. His grandfather ate animals. His grandfather had warned him about the grandmother eagle.

"If she grabs you, don't ever let go of your spears," his grandfather had told him. The grandmother eagle flew higher, carrying the man over the mountains and past the tents. He saw his tent and the light was still on. He knew that his wife was still up and waiting for him. He began to sing as they flew by the tent.

"You with the light on, the eagle has taken me," he sang. His wife heard him and started to cry. She knew that the eagle had taken her husband away and that she would never see him again.

The man was still holding his spear while the eagle took him to the mountain. He could see that the mountaintop was really sharp. The grandmother eagle took him to the sharp point of the mountain and tried to hit him hard against it, but the man held his spear up against the rock. The eagle tried again. The man's spear pierced her in the groin. She was hurt and carried the man back to her nest. There the man saw grandfather eagle looking sad. He asked the grandfather eagle to free him.

"It is not possible because grandmother eagle flies faster than me," the grandfather eagle replied. The man continued to beg for his help and the grandfather finally agreed.

"When the grandmother eagle sleeps, I will try," he told the man. They waited for the grandmother to fall asleep. Finally she

his
ide
enthe
ou.
ow

ur

le
a
vs
lee,
ry
ntid
le
n

did and the grandfather eagle told the man to go to the edge of the cliff. The man obeyed and the grandfather slowly moved toward the man, afraid that he would wake the grandmother. He grabbed the man and flew down to the ground, but the grandmother woke up. She flew to her husband and grabbed the man from his grasp. She took him back to the sharp rock and tried to kill him again. But the man still had his spear with him. When she tried to slam him against the rock, the same thing happened again. She hit the spear instead. She tried several times until she got tired and took the man back to her nest. The man told the grandfather that he would try to save himself from the grandmother.

"I will burn the nest tonight," the man told the grandfather eagle. "If you want to be saved, you should not return to your nest tonight."

"I will stay and be burned with my wife and children," the grandfather eagle replied. "This will be your reward for saving me from starvation."

This was the hardest thing the man had ever had to do. He loved the grandfather eagle, but he also needed to go home to his wife and child. He told him that he would burn the nest when everyone was asleep. He gathered up twigs and put them around the nest. He lit the twigs and the nest burned so fast that the grandmother had no time to escape. He stood there and watched the nest burn. When the fire was out, he took his grandfather's back and stuffed it with grass that he found nearby. He gathered more grass until the back was full.

"I'm depending on you, Grandfather, to take me safely to the ground," the man told the eagle. He knew that the grandfather was listening to him. He took the skeleton to the edge of the cliff and crawled inside. He moved back and forth to push himself off the cliff. He held on as they bumped off and fell a short ways down. He was not far from the ground. He talked to the grandfather as he dragged his back to the edge of the cliff again.

"We've almost reached the ground," he told the grandfather, as he crawled back inside. Again he moved back and forth, and

Christine Poker

65

e of
ved
He
nd-
nan
d to
nen
ned
she
the
nd-

her
our

he
ng

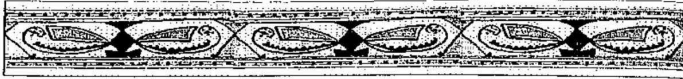
He
to
en
nd
he
ed
r's
ed

he
er
iff
off
ys
d-

r,
ad

with four more bumps, he had reached the ground. When he was safely down, he took the grandfather eagle and cut his back into small pieces. He threw these around in different places. Every piece turned into a small animal.

When the man returned home, he told his wife how he had killed the eagle and how his grandfather had saved him. He knew his grandfather had wanted him to save other people from the grandmother eagle.



The Elders Would Never Have Allowed It

Maggie Antuan

Through Maggie's memories, we discover how the role of some elders in Innu society has changed. She remembers how her grandmother looked after her as a small child and how she learned to take care of elders in turn. In the old days, elders were respected and made the decisions. Now that she has become an elder, we learn of her pain as she experiences the changing role of elders in Innu society.

I am going to tell you my story because my grandchild told me she wanted to hear it. I will talk about the old ways. So much has changed. The old days were quite different from today.

Every year we used to go to *nutshimit* (the country) in August and camp for the fall and winter. We would prepare to go by making the things we needed, like snowshoes, moccasins and clothing. After we had everything ready, we would start to move our camp. We would camp for a while in certain areas where the caribou were killed. The hunters used to spear the caribou and the people would chase them in canoes. Sometimes the caribou were scarce. When we couldn't get any caribou, we usually went back to the place we had camped before.

We
and to
from t
craved

I v
moth
remer
name
Out o
of th

M
alwa
mot
Mar
me,
wou

arri
him
rem

my
Th
ha
on
wo

fr
(N
ca
el
b
fr
c

h

Maggie Antuan

67

We often ran out of tea in the country. We had to have tea and tobacco in those days, although we didn't really need food from the store, like chicken, canned foods or sweets. We never craved that stuff. I remember this much.

I was at Mushuau-shipu (George River) many times. My mother told me that I was born there. I believe it, because I don't remember being born. The place where I was born has another name. It is called Kashatshipet-ashinin, or The Rock That Sticks Out of the Water. The rock is big and it sticks out in the middle of this deep lake.

My grandmother Miste Mani-Shan (Mary Jane Pasteen) was always telling me stories. She looked after me whenever my mother couldn't because she was busy doing other things. Miste Mani-Shan would take over, and when she needed a break from me, she usually sent me back to my mother. My grandparents would always tell me to help my mother.

I remember when I was baptized. Father Whitehead had arrived in Kauishatukuants (Old Davis Inlet) and I went to see him. I was eight years old when I got baptized and that's why I remember.

When I was taken to *nutshimit*, I was old enough to do things myself. I first learned to do things inside the tent, but not outside. The outside skills came later. When I felt I was ready to work harder, then I started to do things outside as well. At first I was only able to carry water and wood inside the tent. I learned to work still harder and I was taught how to chop down trees.

We used to cut wood for the elders at our camp. I had a close friend who would cut wood with me. Her name is Munik (Monique Nui). She married my brother Nuke. We would also carry water for the elders and gather boughs for their tents. The elders loved it when we did things for them. They paid us back by cooking meals for us whenever they had wild meat on hand from the hunters. We received meals from them every time we cut wood.

"The wood cutters are back. Get their meals ready," I remember I would hear someone calling when we came home from

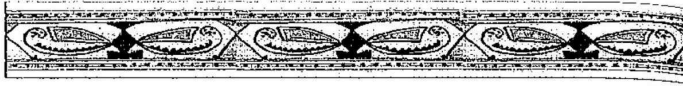
cutting wood. They always had meals ready for us.

I am really surprised how our lives have changed so quickly. We have been changed by White people. We work and do things like White people. They are taking over and running our lives for us now. I don't agree with this. I often wonder how our lives would have been if the elderly leaders were still alive. They would not have allowed this to happen. They would have been very surprised if they had tried to take over our lives back then. They would have wondered about them being around us and about what kind of people they were. I think about this often. The way we are living now is not good. We will never go back to the way we were in the past. That way of life is lost. White people are in control. This is how I see it. I am very surprised about what is happening now and how things are being handled.



My father died in Voisey's Bay. The Innu call Voisey's Bay "Emish" in Innu-aimun. We used to camp there, and I remember exactly where he was buried. I know I could find his grave if I went to look for it. I often think of going there to visit my father's grave. My mother was buried in Sheshatshu. I have many relatives buried in the country.

My father's name was Apenam (Abraham). His Innu name was Uitsheuake. Tshenish (Charles James Pasteen) from Utshimassits (Davis Inlet) knew my father. After my father got baptized, he married my mother. Men and women used to live together for a long time before the priests would come to marry them. Both my parents were baptized in Uashat (Sept Iles). My father was originally from Uaskaikan (Fort Chimo, or Kuujjuaq) and that is where he lived for a long time. I still remember our family leaving to go to Kauishatukuants from Uaskaikan. Then we would travel on foot from Kauishatukuants to Sheshatshu. We never travelled by plane or ski-doo. We always travelled on foot. I am still here today and I will be buried somewhere when I die.



It's Like the Legend

Charlotte Gregoire

Charlotte shares snapshots of her life as a small girl. She also shares thoughts about what happened to her people after we were settled into village life. In the past, many Mushuau Innu would travel from nutshimit (the country) to camp for the summer near Kauishatukuanis (Old Davis Inlet), a Hudson's Bay post. Here we would trade and see a visiting priest. In the 1960s, priests began to be permanently stationed at the post. One of these priests, along with some government officials, decided the Mushuau Innu should settle permanently on an island near the old post at a place we came to call Utshimassits, or Place of the Boss (Davis Inlet). The church and the government made promises of proper homes with water and sewers, paid work and a better life for the children if we went to school. On the island, people were cut off from their hunting territories on the mainland during freeze-up and break-up of the ice for up to six months of the year. For many, it was the beginning of the loss of our culture and our lives began to be run by the church, the school, Social Services, the clinic, the store and the RCMP. We began to forget Innu values, and alcohol abuse, gas sniffing, suicide and violent deaths became commonplace. In the 1990s there was no longer room to build

I v
Ka
wh
ch
in
bc
us
S
K
st

a
E
L
c
r

Charlotte Gregoire

79

new houses because of the surrounding mountains at Utshimassits. As well, there had never been enough fresh water around to supply houses. Many people put alcohol aside and began to fight for relocation to a site of their choice — Natuwashish (Sango Pond) in Shankus (Sango Bay). This place would provide them with year-round access to their hunting territories, as well as room for expansion and water. The federal government agreed to fund this move in 1996 and the move is scheduled for 2002.

I will tell the story about what I heard of the move from Kauishatukuants to Utshimassits here on the island, and also what has been happening since then. The Innu way of life changed after the move because of all the new technology introduced in our lives, such as ski-doos, televisions and out-board motors. There are many other things that the Innu never used before. Before the move, we spent a lot of our time in the Shankus area. The only time we used to move to Kauishatukuants was when the fishing season started in the summer.

Many promises were made to the Innu. We were told that, after the move, we would get water and sewers in every house. Everyone was excited. We thought that finally we were going to live in houses with good drinking water and sewers. But we found out that the houses were just empty shells: no chairs, no tables, nothing. Still today, no Innu person has water and sewers in his or her house. Only White people in the village have water and sewers. If only we had water in our houses, it would help us to clean our children better. Our health would be better.

I'm not saying if we got everything, we'd be like White people. As an Innu woman, I like who I am now. I don't want to follow another people's culture. I like the close relationship we have with the animals and the animal spirits. I like to live in a tent. There are so many things in a house. The tent is a small place and I can finish all the things I need to do in one day.

PP. 91 - 103

It has been 28 years since the move took place, and still today nothing improves in Utshimassits. Nothing good came out of it. Instead we saw more drinking, and gas sniffing came along a few years later. The government built the airstrip, which made it easy for anyone to bring in alcohol or order liquor from Goose Bay. I'm not saying the airstrip was a bad thing. It helped to save many lives in our community. But how many young people have committed suicide since we were placed on this island? Some outsiders say the children are sniffing because the parents are drinking, but what I see is that there are many parents who don't drink and yet their children are sniffing. The children are frustrated with the poor living conditions. Our children are not the children of 30 or 40 years ago. Today's children know how the White government has mistreated the Innu. Many people have passed away without ever seeing water and sewers in their homes. Living conditions are worse here than they were in Kauishatukuants, where we lived only in tents. It is not our fault. It is the fault of the government who put us here on this island and then forgot about us.

It's like the Innu legend "Aiasheu." Aiasheu was a boy. His father took him to an island and left him there to die. But Aiasheu didn't die. He asked many sea birds to take him to the mainland, but they were all too small to carry someone his size. One night he dreamt that a dragon had come to rescue him. The next morning he saw a sea dragon with antlers. He asked the dragon to take him to the mainland. The dragon agreed. The boy used the dragon's antlers to show him where to go. This is how he survived. On the mainland he had many obstacles to conquer before he could find his mother and he had to kill his father to save his mother. He probably did this because he was sorry to see him always beating his mother, abusing her. At the end of the story, the boy's mother becomes a robin.

This is what happened to the Innu after the government moved us. Now the White people will see what is said in our Innu legend. The government put us on this island and forgot about us, but we survived. Now we want to move to the mainland. For

year
not
on t
the
mai
if t
forg

rab
ani
sev
the
So
tel

liv
wi
pr
of
of
W
or
p
li
w
w
a
r

Charlotte Gregoire

81

years we have been talking about relocation to Natuashish, but nothing has happened. It is like the government wants us to die on this island. But Aiasheu stood up to survive, and we are doing the same. Like young Aiasheu, we are fighting our way to the mainland. The government is paying for what they did to us. But if there is no apology from the government, there will be no forgiveness from us.

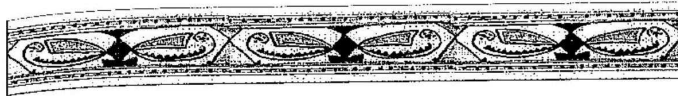
There are times now when there are a lot of partridge and rabbits close by the village on this island. But after freeze-up, the animals move to the mainland and we cannot hunt them. About seven years ago, caribou herds migrated as far as Natuashish. For the last five years, the caribou have even come right to this island. Some walked right into the community. The caribou spirit is telling us he wants the Innu to move to the mainland.

Once the move takes place at Natuashish, I'm hoping that living conditions will improve. I'm not saying that all the problems will go away automatically. But as we continue along, some of the problems will be solved. What has been lost will reappear in front of us. Problems will be solved when our children understand more of our culture. After the move I hope we don't have too many White advisers. The elders will not be with us forever. I'm hoping our future leaders will take the right direction and follow the good path. I tell my own children to live as Innu, to learn our way of life. My husband and I take them to *nutshimit* to teach them the ways. How many times have I told them not to use English words when they speak to me? I tell them to talk to the elders as much as they can, to learn our path. We must follow one road, the Innu road. If we miss this road, we will fall apart.



I will tell you about the things I remember when I was still young and lived with my parents and grandparents. These were hard times, but I really miss that way of life, especially in *nutshimit*.

Once when we were in Shankus, my father, Tshenish, left for Kauishatukuants to get relief. He brought back enough grub to



The Country Is a Healing Place

Mary Jane Nui

This story begins with glimpses of Mary Jane as a small girl and her close relationship with her grandparents. Many years pass and Mary Jane, now a grandmother, returns to the place where she was born, this time to find healing. Here she participated in the first mobile treatment program organized by addictions workers from Utshimassits (Davis Inlet). This type of healing was one of the recommendations that came out of the 1992 People's Inquiry that followed the house fire which killed six children. Before this program, many Innu had been travelling out to treatment programs all over Canada. Leaders wanted to set up their own program in nutshimit (the country), which they felt was the best place to go for counselling and healing. In nutshimit, the Innu can practise their way of life, cut wood, feed their families. It is the best place to open up and to get anger and hurt out. Participants can be a part of nature, walk on the land, in the woods, by the water, and talk to the Creator. Nutshimit is also a place where the whole family can be treated, rather than only individuals. Elders from the community, as well as elders from away, have been involved and old ways of healing such as the sweat lodge have been revived. A number of programs have since been held

for families from both Utshimassits and Sheshatshu. The Innu front-line workers who organized this program were trained in addictions intervention by counsellors from the Nechi Training Institute of Alberta, a First Nations-run addictions centre.

When I was growing up, we would head for nutshimit whenever my grandfather Miste Ueapeu (John Pasteen) said so. I would be very happy to go. One time my grandfather asked all of us to get into a canoe. I wondered why. The canoe was so small and there were so many of us. How were we all going to fit?

"Where are we going?" I asked my grandfather, as we set out.

"We are going to Mushuau-shipu (George River) and it is very far," he said.

I was maybe four or five years old back then. My grandfather carried me on his back while he walked. I was too young to paddle, so my grandfather did all the paddling. One time, as we were going down the river, we spotted a house covered with moss.

"What is that?" I asked my grandfather.

"It is an *esiutshiuap* (moss house)," he told me, and we headed for the shore.

People had left some of their belongings there, but there was no food. Before my grandfather got out of the canoe, he said he knew how to find out if there were people camping at Mushuau-shipu. He could tell from the freshly cut trees and footprints left behind. When he came back, he said there was no one at Mushuau-shipu. We left again and canoed down the river. There was a rock sticking up out of the water.

"What is that?" I asked him.

"It is called the Kashatshipet-ashinin (Rock That Sticks Out of the Water). People pass here all the time and see it," he explained to me.

We set up camp on the Mushuau-shipu in a place where there were no trees.

I don't
we did
Shan
of me
perso
we d
gran
did r
was
need
my g
they
V
gran
take
gran
to b
any

I tr
ou
I w
pre
we
th
pa
w
m
pe
fe

Mary Jane Nui

101 ❖



I don't remember everything about when I was small, but I know we didn't always run out of food. My grandmother Miste Mani-Shan (Mary Jane Pasteen) and my grandfather took good care of me. My grandfather was a good hunter and a conjurer — a person who knew a little about the animal spirits. That is why we didn't run out of food. When we were in the canoe, my grandfather would kill caribou and catch fish along the way. We did not go hungry. He was very strong in his tradition, and so was my grandmother. Sometimes we ran short of the things we needed, but other times we had plenty. I am very proud of how my grandmother raised me. I really missed my grandparents when they died, because they always took very good care of me.

When my grandfather was getting old, I looked after my grandmother. She was also old and I remembered how they had taken care of me when I was a child. The name I had for my grandmother was Kakuskuesh, or Porcupine Girl. I was very close to her. But she became very old and I couldn't take care of her any more. My grandfather was old and sick too.



I travelled to *nutshimit* two years ago in the spring. We ski-dooed out to the barrens. We set up camp in the place where I was born. I was very happy to be going to the country, this time on a healing program (mobile treatment program), although sometimes the weather was bad when we were out there.

I wasn't sure how I was going to make out with my healing at the time because I was a person who was always looking at the past instead of the future. I think if I had looked to the future, I would have done better. But finally I made some changes for myself after I talked with the young Innu counsellors. These people were trained in the Nechi program. I changed and now I feel better about myself. I wasn't sure if I was going to make it

through the program or not. I wasn't sure about the young people because what they were doing was very hard, but I was wrong in my thinking. These young people are very powerful in what they are doing.

There were a lot of people in the camp working on their healing. I heard there wasn't enough money that time and there were more people who had wanted to come up. The mobile treatment program really worked for us. I was very happy to be around the other women. They were very good to me. We learned many things out there. The elders were there too and they taught us a lot of things. They worked very hard. When we were getting ready to leave the camp, I wanted to stay a while and canoe to see the spot where I was born. I hadn't seen that place, only from the plane. There were other women at the camp who were born there too. I was very sad when we left.

After we arrived in Utshimassits, I was very unhappy. I found the community so contaminated. A lot of things weren't going right for me. I got sick. The muscles in my legs bothered me. My family went back to our cabin in Kanishutakushtasht (Flower's Bay). I remembered how the sweat lodge had helped me during the healing program, so my husband and I built a sweat lodge at our camp and we had a sweat in this place where we raised our children. After we had the sweat, I felt better. I wasn't sick or depressed. We went back to Utshimassits and I felt a lot better again.



I like sewing and working on snowshoes. I like to work at different crafts, but sometimes it is hard because I also have a lot of grandchildren to look after. I am not comfortable having other people look after my grandchildren. I would like to have enough work stamps to receive Employment Insurance cheques, so I can have a little bit of money to feed my grandchildren.

I don't want to lose my culture and the way that we survive on wild meats and food. I don't want to lose my way of living,

Mary Jane Nui

103

the things I used to carry on my back and the animals I used to eat. I don't really like to eat store food. My children still eat wild food.



One time I went to Ottawa for a protest and I kept thinking about what I was being given to eat there. Maybe it was a snake! A Native woman gave it to me and I took a bite. I was thinking I should eat it because the woman was Native too, and maybe this was part of her culture. She was also helping us. I felt bad. Next time they give me this kind of food, I will have to eat it.

I am very happy that we will have help relocating our community from Utshimassits to Shankus (Sango Bay). I want to be strong to make sure relocation takes place. Maybe we will have the strength to make the government realize we need to relocate because we are unhappy on this island. We have many problems here. I am not sure what it is going to be like when we relocate. Maybe there will be changes. When I was young and we were living on the mainland in *nutshimit*, in Estinekamuk (Snegamook), everything went well, although we were poor. We didn't have problems, only sometimes when people were sick.

The big changes happened to us when the elders died. I wonder what God was thinking when this started to happen. At first we were poor, then the elders died. I wonder what God is thinking now. We used to look after the elders, but after we settled on this island, we developed many problems. There were a lot of other deaths and some parents did not look after their children. The children started sniffing gas. The heavy drinking took over and there was a lot of violence. This is where the problems really started. Maybe if the young people had more Innu education, we might have stayed on the mainland instead of this island, and all of this would not have happened. We didn't have a school there, but the children were learning about life in the country.



I Think about These Things

Mary Georgette Mistenapeo

What does a mother say to her troubled children after one of their siblings has committed suicide? Mary Georgette sees with a chilling clarity the tragedy of alcohol abuse and gas sniffing faced by her children and grandchildren. She shares her struggles to move beyond despair and find healing for herself and her family. She talks about old ways of healing and Innu medicines, as well as new ways, such as the healing circle, a support group that meets regularly where people can talk about their problems, break the silence and discover new ways to live more healthy lives.

When I was a child, I was always in *nutshimit* (the country). I never dressed the way I dress now that I live in Utshimassits (Davis Inlet). I dress like a White person now. A long time ago, I dressed only in caribou skin. When the White man came, I changed my ways and forgot the ways of *nutshimit*. But lately it has got me thinking and I am trying to go back into *nutshimit*. Every year I go now. I want to teach my children about life in *nutshimit* and how my father used to hunt. I want my grandsons to learn these ways. My children did learn these skills when they were young, and today they are still watching and learning from their grandfather Tumisish (Thomas Noah).

V
my g
go b
to le
lear
abo
Ue
and
also

afra
nut
bur
do
fo
an
In

fo
ch
fo
th
fo
g
is

I
I
v
v
v

Mary Georgette Mistenapeo

107 §§

When I am in the community, I can't stay very long because my grandchildren, who live with me, miss *nutshimit* and want to go back. I can't say no to them. I go right away when they want to leave, and we don't worry about school. They work hard and learn more in *nutshimit* than at the school. As a child I learned about this life. I learned to do different things. My mother, Ueuetemiskueu, or Outdoor Woman (Alice Noah), taught me and now I do these things without her help both in *nutshimit* and also in the community.

I don't want to feed my children store-bought food. I am afraid they will get to like this food too much. They always want *nutshimit* food and they don't eat too much of the store food. I buy flour to make bannock because they love bannock, but they don't like other things too much, like sweet stuff. In the old days, food from the land was the main thing we ate. We were strong and healthy. People never got sick very much, but today many Innu are sick all the time.

This sickness comes from the White man's food. Most of this food is in tin cans. A lot of it is not fit to eat because it is full of chemicals. White men grow their food and breed their animals for food. They feed the animals themselves. We don't do these things. We get our food from the wild, and these animals get their food from nature. We are very careful not to waste any kind of game that we catch. But for White men, they enjoy the food that is sent in to the store.

In the past when I was in *nutshimit* and first had my children, I never fed them canned milk. I would breast-feed them. When I looked after other children who were given to me, I wasn't sure what to do for milk, so I had to give them canned milk. They would always get sick, but my children were never sick when I was nursing them.

I nursed all my children, but today I wonder what is happening. I have almost lost the Innu way of life. Years ago, I didn't see people drinking too much alcohol. I only saw older people drinking, but today I see a big difference in the age of the drinking. Now children are drinking. I never used to drink, but

gall-bladder problems, high blood pressure, arthritis and diabetes. We never saw these diseases when we lived in *nutshimit*. Everything about the hospital is killing all the Innu medicines. There are all kinds of Innu medicines in *nutshimit*, but knowledge of Innu medicine is no longer around. Why has it been killed off?



It is important to get our children to learn not only in school. If they want to follow an Innu way of life, they need elders to teach them. This kind of learning doesn't happen when you ask students to draw something on paper or on a chalkboard. It is very different. You have to experience the Innu way of life to learn to do the kind of work.

It is very important to keep our culture alive. A lot of Innu and other Natives have lost their way of life because of modern technology. A lot of teenagers don't care about Innu culture because they think life is easy today and it was hard yesterday. It is very bad to lose our traditional ways. This loss will take everything that matters away from our lives. If we lose our culture and language, it's like a person who dies and doesn't come back again. When our culture and language are gone, our life will be like a dried-up lake. We must work hard together, like the old people used to do, and keep our culture growing.

did the hiring were very nice to him. I guess he didn't know what was happening. He mentioned that he didn't have to pay for anything. Everything was free, like sleeping in the motel, and booze was given to him for free as well. The place he called home got bigger. Houses were built everywhere and the place turned into a community. I guess the people didn't really need him and later abandoned him. They gave him a house and that was probably just to get rid of him, just to shut him up. He must have thought they were being friendly. He didn't know there was big money involved in this land where he was living. There were more and more people coming off the train each time it came in.

In 1989, I travelled to Mista-paustuk (Churchill Falls) with the people who were making a film. They took us to where the dam was built. We left by plane from Goose Bay. There was me, my sisters Elizabeth and Rose and my daughter Clem. When we arrived at the dam, I was very tired. I had a hard time breathing, but I was told to keep talking for the camera as I was walking. I was telling Elizabeth a story about how hard it was for a woman when she had to carry her baby on her back in the old days. The woman's family had to portage many lakes while they travelled in *nutshimit* and the woman had to rest to breast-feed her baby. She would nurse her baby and then start walking again to catch up.

After the dam was built, it was dangerous to go in that area. The same thing happened in Schefferville. At first there weren't many houses built. A few Innu people were working there and they would use the train to go back to the country. They were dropped off by the train at the places where they wanted to camp. But Schefferville got bigger and the people kept coming and the land got destroyed once again. I guess the people thought that things were easier for them, like it was easier to travel back to the country on the train. They only had to go on the road and get on the train.

But the things they were missing were the land and the lakes where we portaged to get to our hunting territories, which were very beautiful. And the wild meat tasted so good. The Innu

Mary Adele Andrew

139

always had fresh meat when they were paddling the rivers and lakes. We hunted mostly beavers, porcupines and ducks on the way. We ate healthy food and we were happy to be living in *nutshimit*. It was a healthy way of living.

Today we don't see Innu travelling to *nutshimit* on foot. In the past we walked everywhere. We walked from as far away as Uaskaikan (Fort Chimo, or Kuujjuaq) to Kauishatukuants and Nent (Nain). We also walked to where the land is recently being destroyed — the place called Emish (Voisey's Bay). The people used to go there all the time when they came from *nutshimit*. Many used to camp there until the ice broke up and then we would canoe to Kauishatukuants. Today the Innu are lazy. They can't even walk to *nutshimit*.

In them days the man and his wife were always travelling together to hunt. We didn't get money from Social Services for food, although we did get relief from the store clerk in North West River. That's how the Innu bought their food and boats. We always had enough food from this relief to go back into *nutshimit*. We mostly gave furs to the clerk to pay our bills. When we returned to the community, we had already cleaned the furs for the clerk. After we began leaving our children in the community to go to school, we always returned home with lots of food from *nutshimit*. We also had lots of furs to trade.

I'm sure the Innu didn't realize once again what the non-Natives were doing to them. I guess the Innu made the clerk very happy when they arrived from the country. He must have waited patiently for them. He was probably a wealthy man. The Innu must have made him rich, because he didn't give the people cash for their furs. He only traded food and he gave out liquor too. Sometimes he would just give an Innu a small glass of liquor for his furs. The furs must have been worth more than a small glass of liquor, but the people were happy with him. I guess they didn't really know what he was up to. They probably thought that he was doing them a big favour whenever he handed them a drink.

I think this problem is still happening with the Innu today. When an Innu person gives booze to his own people, it is a crime.

IT'S LIKE THE LEGEND

officer tried to get just one caribou, probably to bring to the court for evidence. But the people screamed and we stayed close together and we stopped him. We were so happy and proud when the officers left empty-handed. We felt so strong.

After this, the wildlife officers seemed to lay off for a while. They didn't harass us any more.

But in 1989, when we were out at Minai-nipi near the NATO bombing range, Innu rifles were taken by game wardens and police. One of them was my son's rifle. The hunters still have not got their rifles back today. The game wardens took geese as well, and then they were no good to us because they had spoiled.

The wildlife officers leave us pretty much alone now. But the animals are scarcer, especially along the brooks or along the roads, where there are cabins owned by White people everywhere. The White people always want to be the first to hunt in areas where the Innu have always hunted.



We always regarded the priest as a very sacred person. We didn't understand what was planned for us. We treated the priest with great respect. There was no school when I was young. Father Pierson taught us and he always told the parents, especially the mothers, not to go to *nutshimit*. Many Innu thought it was wrong not to obey the priest. I guess we never foresaw what the future would be like once we lived permanently in the community. My mother and father did not understand back then about the abuse and wrongdoings of the church.

The priest would go to my mother, Miste Mani (Marie Gregoire), and sit close by her, talking to her for a long time. He lectured her on how to bring up her children. He would say he was the only one with all the answers.

"If you take your children into the country, the government will take away your family allowance," the priest would say to my mother. "If you take your children into the country, they will be hungry and cold."

It
will b
H
reme
were
"
said
This
"
the p
I wo
thou
to d
prie
I
so t
Inn
the
wre
and
to
ch
to
ca
we
br
Po
ar
tir
ha
I
to
w
li

Elizabeth Penashue

161

It's better to stay in the community year-round. Your children will be schooled."

He encouraged my father to go to the country alone. I remember my parents had this surprised look on their faces. They were very concerned and unhappy about the priest's advice.

"Why don't you go out in the country by yourself?" the priest said to my father. "Leave your wife and children in Sheshatshu. This way you won't lose your family allowance."

"No! We will all go out to the country," my father said, after the priest had left. This caused an argument between my parents. I wondered if the priest was making my parents fight. My mother thought we should listen to the priest. She did not know what to do. I now realize how my parents were manipulated by the priest.

Many other parents also felt intimidated. They were scared, so they reluctantly sent their children to the White school. The Innu people listened to the priest as if he were Jesus.

The Roman Catholic Church had a very negative impact on the Innu. Now we understand the destruction the church wreaked on our lives. The abuse of the priests — sexual, physical and even spiritual abuse — has been exposed to the light of day.

I speak personally when I tell this story. I cannot use the words to describe what the priest did to my sons. As a mother of nine children, I carry a lot of shame and guilt over what the priest did to my sons when he sexually abused them. My sons, too, must carry this pain and suffering throughout their lives. My children were innocent and pure. The priest stole their innocence and broke our hearts and souls. My husband, Kantuakueshish, or Porcupine Hunter (Frances Penashue), and I get very upset and angry when we remember what the priest did to our children. At times we wonder if we could have changed the past, if only we had known. I wonder now what kind of holy man this priest was. I say to myself he was not a holy man. He was a man who came to destroy my family and our lives. I thought I was the only parent who had endured this, but I found out there are other parents like me, who have the same stories.



The priest's mission was to teach Innu children about the White education and religion. First we attended school in his house, and then he built a small school. Every few years a larger building was erected. I believe the buildings changed five times, until we had the big school up on the hill. With each new building in place, our connection to our culture was lost even more.

In the school, there is no teaching of the Innu way of life. Innu children learn from White books and then they go home to watch television. They learn and copy from what they watch on television. The school only makes Innu children lazy. Sometimes the children feel good about learning in a White school because they are told they will find proper jobs when they finish school. The children are very young and can easily be convinced. It becomes harder to break away as years of teaching about another society continues. The children become really convinced about the promises that have been made to them.

But these are broken promises. Innu children find nothing once they finish school, only an unpleasant life full of wrongs. They find themselves in court. Today, there are courts for very young Innu children and they are being sent to jail. Our children seem to be appearing in court at a younger and younger age all the time. This kind of behaviour comes from learning the White society. As a parent, I know from experience that prison does not help our people. It seems they just get more angry and abusive to one another. Our children would benefit more if they were sent out for treatment in the country so they could learn more about their culture.

When Innu children were in *nutshimit* all the time with their parents, they were happier. The children learn about their culture in *nutshimit*. Young girls learn from their mothers, while the boys hunt with their fathers. Today the children are led into a life that is strange to their parents. The children get frustrated because their parents can't give them any direction in a society that is

Elizabeth Penashue

163

foreign to them. The children get upset and vandalize the school. One time a teacher made my son Max leave the school. He was angry and frustrated, and broke a window. He never went back.



I see so many changes in our lives. For example, the elders dress differently today. When I was a young girl, we would dress in traditional clothes, with an Innu dress and hat, according to Innu custom. Now you don't see one Innu person dressed this way. Children are so fashionably dressed. They have become so modernized by the White culture. They are now so critical of themselves because they don't have toys or clothes the same as or better than those of their friends. They compete so much with one another, like the White man. Innu children don't act like Innu. They are so unpredictable. They seem so angry and rebellious toward one another and toward themselves.

The Innu people are being bombarded with all these pressures. The Innu don't know what to think any more. We are all exhausted with emotion. The government should never have come here and forced its laws and ways upon the Innu. We wouldn't have any of these problems today. This leads the Innu to turn to heavy drinking. Alcohol never existed in our lives like this a short time ago. Our children are confronted with other unhealthy products as well, such as newer drugs and gas, which they sniff. People may have new vehicles and a higher standard of living, but there is so much depression and frustration. The Innu don't know where to turn. We are confused. Sometimes we feel hopeless, because it seems the White man is going to control us forever. The governments must be happy to think the more we drink, the less we'll care about our land.



After I got married, my husband and I had all sorts of problems living in the community. I always liked to listen to my parents

Elizabeth Penashue

165

at all. I was very depressed and saddened to see my children in that state, having to watch me being beaten up. My young boys were too small to fight back for me. But when they got bigger, they could stop their father from fighting with me.

Alcohol is the number-one problem we face in the community. My husband's will to stop drinking was weak for a long time. I drank too. My husband and I hurt each other too many times, and we started to hurt our children. We didn't care for them. There wouldn't be any food for them and we didn't give them the love they needed. Then all my sons began drinking a lot as well. I don't know about my two girls. For a while one of them did, but then she stopped.

When I went for help to stop drinking, I did not realize how much it would hurt me to realize that I had not cared for my children. It hurts me today when I think about it. My husband and I went to a treatment centre for help. My five sons also went to get help for their drinking. Two of them went back to drinking and one is drinking a lot again. I still sit with these two sons and try to talk to them about my experiences abusing alcohol. I tell them it is a hard way to live if they continue to drink.

You get worried sick about your children's safety. Nowadays, when the children get mad, they try to commit suicide by taking an overdose of drugs. The parents find it hard to sleep when they know one of their children is drinking. They always wonder how they are. Are they in fights or vandalizing the belongings of other people? Alcohol causes great pain to families and their children.

We brought our children to *nutshimit* to help them to heal. For example, before my son Jack went out to a treatment centre, my husband and I took him out to *nutshimit*, and I felt so proud and happy for him. I don't quite know how to describe these feelings. I would see him working very hard. He would hunt and set traps during the day. Sometimes he went with his father on hunting trips. But when he was here in the community, he was always in trouble drinking, and once he took an overdose of pills. He almost died and was taken to the hospital. When he was in *nutshimit*, he lived very well. He was happy and he didn't drink alcohol.

Nutshimit is like that. People go to *nutshimit* to stay healthy, but once they return to the community, all their problems come flooding back. They come back to a life of confusion and chaos. That's when the Innu turn to alcohol sold by the government.

We talk about how things were so good in the past. There was no alcohol and people would visit each other often. They shared everything they had. I remember what they would talk about.

"How many animals did you kill? Where will you go hunting tomorrow?"

"How far did you walk today? Was it dark when you got back to the camp? Did you have a hard time finding your way?"

There were so many things they talked about. I used to listen to them and it was so nice. Now the people's talk is dark.

"Where will we go drinking this weekend? Will we go dancing again?"

"Are you going to play bingo tonight?"

All the talk is about money. People want what others have — a job or a new car. The child might be happy that his father finally got a new job. He thinks maybe now they will have food. Maybe he will get a new bicycle. But his father wastes the money on alcohol. The child only ends up more hurt.

So we talk about the past, about all the things we should do to bring the things we value from the past back into our lives. But we don't do anything about it. I want to believe it when we talk about Innu traditions and values, but then we don't do anything. People tell me to wait, "Wait for the band council," "Wait for the Innu Nation ..." A few years ago, when the people wanted to do something because it needed to be done, we would just go ahead and do it. Now we spend all our time waiting and nothing happens.



We protested the NATO presence on our land because we want to maintain control of our land so that Innu children in the

Mary Martha Hurley

177 ¶

allows for moments of reflection, and the following are excerpts of Mary Martha's musings, which she wrote in her journal that spring.

May 24/89

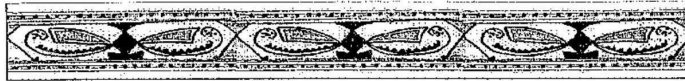
Shores of Minai-nipi (Burbot Lake)

In the country we are here as family and friends. We feel so safe in Nitassinan when we don't hear the jets flying over us. It is so peaceful out here. It is very good for every one of us in my family to feel the closeness of each other. We care about and love each other. Being united with the people makes us feel strong. In the community the people are divided. We see different kinds of problems that arise. Everyone must know that alcohol is to be blamed for all of this. It makes us weak and have no power.

When I look at my brothers today I feel so proud and happy for them. I know deep inside they are hurting because they, too, wish our father was alive, but I suppose that's the way it is. I watch my mother struggle so hard to do everything she can for my brothers. We should be so thankful to her that the Innu have never given up our land to Canada or to any foreigners. We have never given them the right to use or claim Nitassinan.

The other day I was listening to a tape of an Innu elder singing and beating the drum. Before he started to sing, he first talked about how the Innu people respect their belongings and how these are so sacred to them. For example, he said if you ever see an old snowshoe that is worn out and lying on the ground, you have to pick it up and hang it on a tree. I started to think about my people and how they sure were strong fighters to prove who we are now.

If a NATO base is established in Goose Bay, it will destroy the Innu culture, and everything that we once loved will be a huge mess, with war toys all over the land. Whenever the Innu go out in the country, non-Natives always bring up the point about how the Innu leave garbage behind in their camps. But just think about it a minute. Do they ever complain about what the military are leaving around this area? They drop dummy bombs around our hunting grounds and leave a mess of them in the rivers. This kind of thing is more dangerous to the environment — to the lakes



I Am My Father's Daughter

Nympha Byrne

In the vast open spaces of the barrens, life when Nympha was a small child was safe and secure. But when her family moved into a house in the new village of Utshimassits (Davis Inlet), her life became filled with peril. In nutshimit (the country), the Innu were connected to each other, to the land, to the water and to the animals. This connectedness contrasts sharply with the turmoil of community life. Alcohol became a way of life. Suicides began to happen and continue today in both Sheshatshu and Utshimassits at a rate unparalleled in the world. The suicides are connected to the booze: to feelings of shame, fear, abandonment and feeling trapped. Everyone in the village knows each other so well, yet they don't know what devastation each carries within the heart. It happens over and over, so that suicide has become eerily normal. When someone dies, people will grieve for him and try to be there for the family, but then they carry on with their lives. Nympha believes the Innu have lost touch with their spirits, with the animal spirits and with the Creator. They remain in a black hole. They need to use their grief to show them the way out. She herself has found healing by returning to the land to reconnect with herself and with the spirits. She looks to the elders as her teachers to show her the way.

When we were living in the country, I was only small. I remember we were always doing things together with our parents, Shishin and Tami (Cecile and Tommy Rich), and my grandmother Matinueskueu (Monique Rich). My grandmother was like our mom. She would make things for us, like moccasins. She adopted and took care of my younger sister, Shutit (Judith). I remember my grandmother and mother made me a parka out of caribou one time. The hair was on the inside. At first I was afraid to put it on, because I was worried I would suffocate when I tried to get it off again. But after a while, it was my favourite special coat. I was the first one in the family who had one and I didn't see many other children wearing a parka like mine.

When my father came back from hunting, we all used to sit around in the tent to rummage through his game bag to see what animals we might find. My parents used to clean the animals together. As we children got older, we would help pluck the feathers off the birds, like geese and partridge. Sometimes my father would not catch too many animals, maybe only a few partridges. My mother would cook gravy. We would get just one small piece of meat, like one leg of partridge for each child. When he got rabbit, my mother would make lots of gravy. There were always leftovers.

When we travelled in the barrens, I remember it would be really cold. The wind would blow. I remember I could feel the frost on my cheeks, and my breath would freeze on my scarf. Sometimes my parents would go on ahead, and we would walk behind, pulling my grandmother on our komatik when she was really tired. We travelled by dog team with eight or nine dogs. After we had set up camp and we were all settled in, my father would make a really big pot of food for those dogs. I would watch him make the fire and fill the pot with water. He would mix in some grains, seal fat, the guts of the caribou and stir it all up. I remember watching those hungry dogs. They would scramble around the pot, and I was told to keep an eye on them to see that each one got to eat. There was always one dog who was the leader. My father wanted to make sure that he had enough food

Nympha Byrne

221

to eat. Sometimes during our travels to the country, the dogs would have puppies. When it was really cold, we would carry one of those puppies close to us to help keep us warm. We would walk a long ways, stop for tea and keep on going.

In the night-time, my father used to tell us legends until we fell asleep. My sisters Kistiniss (Christine) and Akat (Agathe) and I would cuddle into each other. My brother, Antane (Andre), would be curled into my dad. We would fill the stove with wood and leave the candle burning. I remember one time my brother said to my father, "You are too tired now. Don't tell any more stories." He would get on our nerves, because he knew we wanted to hear more stories. He was the spoilt one. But I was the girl my father liked to spoil.

When the weather was really bad, there was one story that helped to turn the weather around the next day. It was about a boy called Aiasheu who was left on an island. At the end of the story, he turned his mother into a *pipitsheu* (robin) and his little sister into a *shashakuatipeshish* (sparrow). He himself became a *metshu* (eagle). This boy told his mother and sister that they would always be around the people, but they would not see the eagle very often because he would be off in the mountains. When the robin sings, it announces the rain, while the sparrow's song brings the good weather.

When my father told legends, the stories were so real, I felt like I was in the legend. I would imagine myself in the story. I could picture the trees, rivers and lakes. I could see how beautiful they all were. Kuekuatsheu, the wolverine or the trickster, was another story. This one had no ending. This story has many parts and keeps on going all the time. For example, the geese have long necks because Kuekuatsheu tricked them and stretched their necks. He also killed and ate them.

When the weather was bad, we used to play string games, or my grandmother would tell us stories about her life. Sometimes when my mother and grandmother made moccasins or mitts, they would give us the scraps to make things too. We used to play with a file for sharpening. We would throw it into the

boughs. If it landed standing, the thrower would get another turn. Sometimes we would go off hiking and hunting by ourselves or with my mother or with another adult in the camp.

When my father got back from his hunting trips, I would help him take off his moccasins and hang them to dry by the stove. My grandmother and mother would take turns cooking. They would always have a hot meal ready for him when he returned. My sisters and I watched and learned how to cook this way. We all got along so well. It was a happy time in the country.



When we came to live in Utshimassits, my parents started drinking. It was really bad. It hurt everybody in the family. My sisters and I started drinking too. There was a lot of violence. When we were in the country, we used to listen to our parents all the time when they wanted us to do something. But in the community, we didn't want to listen to them.

My parents started drinking because there was nothing to do. There were no jobs. But when I was really young, we would be out in the country and come back to the community. My father had a job with the priest working on the houses. Those days were good even if we were in the community. A lot of people were always helping one another. Men would be out hunting together. They would be playing checkers or cards all night. Women used to do things together too to help one another. Instead of turning to homebrew, people were always visiting and sharing meals together. The women would make a big pot of food and people would help themselves. There would be a big pot of tea. This would happen on the weekends, rather than when we were in school.

As I got older, I didn't see this happening much. There was more drinking. Now, women are fighting one another. Women used to tell their girls not to do stuff, but now they just let things go. A lot of women are drinking with their husbands too. When I was young, my dad would drink but my mother was always with

Nympha Byrne

223

us. When she started drinking, it got really bad. We were left to look after ourselves. In the mornings when it was time for school, we would sleep in. There would be no meals on for us. My parents would be drinking very early.

My parents' drinking really hurt me. I always felt like my parents didn't want me. I felt like they didn't love us when they turned to booze. It still hurts.

When they were in the country when we were getting older, they used to drink in the country too. When we knew we were getting ready to go, we would run away. We didn't want to go because of the booze. We would walk back to the community. We would have to do all the work they would tell us. I didn't want to be around them when they were drinking. They would stay up all night.

We always had to try to make them happy and we thought they would stop drinking if we listened. But even when we listened to them, they wouldn't stop drinking. We would have to cook the meals. They would get us up in the middle of the night telling us to cook meals. When my parents were out drinking, my older sister looked after us. She was like a mother. She would cook meals and do the laundry. My dad used to hit us when he got really mad. My other sister was the hard case and she would fight with my parents.

They would want us to get water to make their homebrew. We used to help them. They would show us how and we used to make it for them. It's like enabling, that's what my sisters and I were doing. To make them happy, we had to do it. When my parents were drinking, we didn't want to stay home. We would go to my aunt Nushin's (Lucy Rich's) house and spend time there. Then we started to act up. We were drinking and we missed a lot of school. It seemed the homebrew bucket was more important to my parents than the children.

One time I tried sniffing gas. There was nothing for us to do in the community. When my father heard about the gas sniffing, he was really upset. I was really afraid of him. He told me not to do that again, that it wasn't good for me. He told me he would

go and get five gallons of gas, bring it inside and watch me sniff. That was the end of it. I never sniffed gas again.



I remember when I first went out with my husband, Lou, before we got married. A nun sent for my father in the country to let him know that I had done something wrong going out with a non-Native guy. She sent the chief to the country to find my father's camp and to bring him back to the community. The chief went on his ski-doo to pick up my father. I felt that the nun wanted to see how my father would react about me going out with Lou. My father didn't say anything when he saw me, but he went around the community and started drinking.

"What did you do wrong that I have to be picked up in the country?" he asked me later. He already knew that I was seeing a non-Native guy.

"I am seeing Lou," I told him.

"Is that all you did?" he asked.

"Yes."

My father was upset with me, but I knew he was more upset with the nun. I was mad at the nun too. I didn't like the way she was treating people in the community, like everything was her business. The nuns and the priest were telling people what to do all the time. They judged our parents and tried to make us be like them. They thought that they owned our lives.

When I was pregnant, another nun, who was the public health nurse, asked me if I wanted to think about adoption for my baby. I said no. I asked one of the girls what the word "adoption" meant. In those days, when I didn't know English, I would just say no. I didn't want to give my child away to the White world or to another Innu family. There was a lot of drinking in the community, even with my parents. I did not want my child in the arms of someone who was not capable of looking after a baby. Nobody could have talked me into doing this. I guess the nun thought that I would not know how to take care of my

Nymphæ Byrne

227 ❁

mother would start cleaning the whole house. She had to haul water and heat it up on the stove. She never had cleaning supplies and the women would often share what they had with each other. When we first moved into the house, it was empty. There was no furniture and we could hear an echo when we walked around. I remember we slept on the floor.

I remember how the priest would have the women go off berry picking for him. My mother would go off in the boat to Shankus (Sango Bay) and leave us behind. They would leave in the morning and be gone all day. When the men went hunting, they were also expected to share their food with him.

When the school was built, everyone in the community was put to work. It was like a labour camp and the priest had everyone working — mothers and fathers and children. My mother made me a bag to carry sand over my shoulder to the spot where the school building was erected. I was only small then, maybe seven or eight years old.

When we were in school, the priest and the nuns taught us. I remember one time, my friend had just come in from the country, and she was behind in her schoolwork. All the students' marks used to be posted on the blackboard. I was doing well with my English. My friend was having so much trouble with hers that I had to teach her. When the nun saw me helping my friend, she walked over to the blackboard and erased all my marks and put in a zero instead. It was like I didn't know anything. These things that happened could easily make you feel low self-esteem.

Another time, the priest wrote something on the board and asked me to read it. I didn't know how. He stormed across the room and tipped my desk over.

"If you don't want to learn, we might as well leave your desk this way," he yelled at me. His face was so red and scary. All the students were looking at me. I didn't want to be in school. I was afraid to learn. I felt so humiliated. I could feel his anger, like he would hit me. He would hit the students with a ruler back then. I wanted my father to take us back into the country.

"Be good to your neighbour and help them if they need it.

❧ 230

IT'S LIKE THE LEGEND

the only way out. I often hear elders talk about the suicides. They are new to them. They never used to experience these tragedies in the past. Now another death had shaken our community again.



One night when we were camping, I went outside to look at the stars. The wind blew my hair softly off my shoulders and whistled in my ear. The wood crackled inside the stove. The smell of split wood outside the tent was so purifying. The air was so clean. I felt as if I were not alone at all standing there. Every part of nature was watching me. Our ancestors before us were present standing next to me. I looked around and the tree branches were covered with snow. The mountains looked as if they were covered with white satin sheets from the moon's light shining on them. Inside the tent, I cuddled into the blankets. I blew out the candle. The moon was so bright and I could see the shadows on the canvas walls of the tent. I could see the shape of every twig from the tree branches. I feel so rich whenever I'm in the country, because the land is my survival. Nature takes care of me.

Katie Rich

When I was growing up, I was taught that this was Innu land, that the Innu have always lived according to their own values, traditions and laws. My parents taught me this. We have been looking after our own affairs for centuries. I have not considered myself a Canadian citizen for many years. As for the Queen, I believe she is in Britain, not in Canada.

Yes, I hold a Canadian passport; I signed the application. I have a Social Insurance Number, I have filed income tax returns, I receive child tax credits, I have applied for Unemployment Insurance and I swore allegiance to the Queen to get work with the Newfoundland government. I feel all these things are crumbs offered to the Innu people.

All the agencies in my community are controlled from the outside. When I was growing up, I listened to the elders. They told stories about threats made to them that if they didn't send their children to school, their family allowances would be cut. At that time, only a handful of Innu spoke any English. Outside officials worked with the priest to instil fear. But we have always known that these crumbs came from the revenues from the resources on our land. We only see the crumbs of this. This is why you see the social problems that exist in our community. What choice do we have? These policies are made for us. There is a policy, which has existed since 1954, that Innu people should be wiped out.

When you look at the people in Utshimassits, you see how your agencies have been involved in the destruction of our nation. Over the years we have said the same thing over and over, but it seems to go in one ear and out the other. I felt I had to take the action I took when I asked the judge to leave. I needed to do something.

I receive a child tax credit, but I pay taxes like anyone else in this country, except for people on reserves. The way the system is designed, it is like we don't exist. I took this action because you

J.N. Jack, K. Rich & N. Byrne

257

need to recognize that my children have the right to exist as human beings. The children in Utshimassits have the same dreams as any other children across this country. As parents, what if we decided that we would get all the revenue that have been taken out of our land? But I don't think the governments would be prepared to turn them over because basically we don't exist for them.

Only a few years ago, the outside world heard about Utshimassits, how children were living, why there were so many social problems. We as parents don't have a choice but to apply for these benefits. My income tax returns are only crumbs from the government. I take what is coming to me, and this is not even half of what I am owed. I have much more coming to me.

We have never known boundaries on our land. We never issued passports to any of the other Native bands who would sometimes visit this area many years ago. I don't think the government would recognize Innu Nation or Mushuau Innu Band Council passports. Nothing of what we have shown of how the agencies have downgraded the Innu has been heard. If we used our own passports, they would probably be thrown in the garbage. That is what you do to everything we try to do.

When we try to stand up for ourselves, to correct the wrongs, we end up in court. We are branded as criminals. I don't see myself as a criminal. I did what I had to do. Ever since I was born, I have seen these things happen. My mother never understood English. The only person who could speak English was the priest. He would explain to my mother what forms he was sending out — family-allowance forms, birth certificates. In our language, there is no word for "birth certificate." When you are bombarded with these things, when it is implanted in your head that you must live differently from what you have known, you end up with chaos. And this is what has happened to the Innu.

I left my community to attend high school when I was 13. I hated being an Innu because I was the only one in my class who was different. I had brown skin, black hair. I was weird, I dressed weird. All the time I was there — for three years — I never spoke a single word in class. But I listened well and I learned a way of

life different from mine. I was so involved being out there, seeing the big city of St. John's, that I hated myself as an Innu person. And I found it difficult to fight back.

No matter how much mascara, blush or lipstick I put on my face, I didn't look right. I just couldn't play the part. Realizing that I couldn't be a White person, I had to accept the way I was. Being an Innu then meant being drunk all the time. That's the way our people lived. I came back to the same routine as anybody in Utshimassits. I didn't have a care in the world. Believe it or not, I once had a Canadian flag in my room. Then I started to think, "These are the same people who are treating my people like this." I swore I would do everything in my power to change this. I'm not ashamed of what I did.

My people have been crying for a long time. No one has listened. Only when we took this action, we stopped everybody in their tracks. By the time our children grow up, I want them to recognize their dreams. When I talked to my children, I told them if the court decided to place me in the correctional centre I was willing to make that sacrifice because I felt that we were once a defeated people. But we are not anymore.

I have also found out after being a leader of my community how much hatred exists for my people because we would do anything simply to be recognized as human beings. If I had another opportunity, I would do it all over again. You haven't heard the last of me.



On December 16, 1993, the circuit court was in Utshimassits. At this point I didn't know Judge Hyslop existed. For two days, I listened and watched. I didn't like the way the court was being held. At one point, an Innu woman was asked a question. She was asked to tell the court the ages of her two children. She said, "The oldest is 1, the youngest is 6 months." I don't think she realized what she said, that she couldn't have one child that was one year old and another that was six months old. It was then I