



Bek'ésoredlie Yati Kón Lát'e

Respecting Talk is Like the Sacred Fire

Preface:

This web site is a collection of 16 stories from the Dene (Dene Suline) & Cree (Nêhiyawak) communities in Northwest Saskatchewan . Joseph Naytowhow (Sturgeon Lake, SK), a Cree speaker, has been gathering these stories from Dene and Cree Elders since October of 1995. Saskatchewan Elders say each of the poles of the tipi represent a moral value. Represented in this collection of stories are values borrowed from this model - reflective of both Cree and Dene worldviews. This site has four titles: Cree and Dene with English translations for each. The stories are also in both Dene and Cree with English. Welcome!

Elder's Biography:

Pierre Marie was born on August 25, 1908 at Dillon, SK, near the old band hall past where the church is situated today. At the time of his birth, only ten log houses, a Hudson's Bay store and Revenue (the fur buyer's building) was all the community of Dillon consisted of.

Pierre's family were hunters and trappers living off the land and moving from place to place. A fishing net and a gun were the main tools used for survival; without them, life in the wilderness would be much more difficult.

Pierre had three sisters and two brothers. He is currently married to Annette and they have three children and one adopted child together. With his first wife he had eight children. His surname Noltcho means "she took the earth" in Dene.

At ninety, Pierre still walks about Dillon keeping himself busy doing odd jobs like landscaping, gardening, carpentry and whatever is required for the up keep of the trailer he and Annette live in.

Pierre has had many jobs over the years including: being a sawmill worker and craftsman, a dam builder at the Upper Cummings, a fisherman, trapper and hunter. He is quite proud of the birch bark canoe he built which is now displayed at Robinson's Store at La Ronge, SK. Another project Pierre undertook during his life is the tanning of a moose hide. He wanted to know if it was possible for a man to do it since the tanning of hides is traditionally done by women. After much hard work and determination, Pierre tanned his first moose hide; an accomplishment he is proud of.

Pierre has seen a lot of changes during his lifetime. Horses, canoes and dog teams have been replaced by trucks, cars and airplanes. Conveniences such as electrical stoves, coffee percolators and microwave ovens have made life to appear easier in comparison with man's dependency on nature like it was a long time ago. Were Pierre to make a choice on the lifestyle he would prefer today, he would definitely choose the old way of life based on the natural environment.



T'at'ú Eghenay

(Survival)

Elder's Name:

Pierre Marie Noltcho

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1. This is a story about a Dene man from Buffalo River who faced a challenging situation; his right to fish for a living. The time when these events occurred was sometime in the 1970's when the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) was still in existence.

2. The Dene man had owned three fishing nets at the time, had just netted a boat load of fish and was drying them in his smokehouse when a man from the DNR pulled up into his driveway. He got out of his vehicle and without

introducing himself, began to speak. With voice raised and and body leaning forward, the government man spoke as if he were the supreme authority over who, when and where anyone could fish. It was obvious that he hadn't come to share in the feast of smoked fish the Dene man had prepared for family and friends that would come by from time to time; this being the custom of the land. After informing the fisherman of the wrong he had done, he grabbed the fishing net hanging on a nearby rack and set it on fire and then promptly left.



1. Ediri honj Ejeredésche hots'j dene begħa s̄j. Bét horená nórétth'er n̄j?á, bech'álanié tabít dat'uwj għa. Yanis̄j 1970 hoyághe, t'ahhú Department of Natural Resources (Asie Hołnie Dené) huj̄j t'u.

2. Ediri dene taghe tabít bets'j n̄j, kú hotié tabít għa nahja hots'j nijay hhét, i'ághe ts'i dánél?á t̄ue talúe hhét biníé ú, hotié yeyóretth'e hha yoríde n̄j. Hotié dásonj t̄fesbeschené n̄jkeḥ ú, Asie Hołnj hots'j dene ha'tj k'í. T̄fesbeschené yéhots'j hághija ú, t'ahhuk'e

hots'j ha'tj chú t'á ha'tj tth'i nuhhét kóli ekódi?ile hhét ya'tti héjá nuhts'én. Darichá ya'tti hhét, nuhts'én dánij̄j ahót'j ú, nuhts'én k'adorétther t'ahúk'e dene tabít dat'uj̄ chú t'ahhú tabít tth'i dat'uj̄e għa, sa't'á lát'e?ile yati nezu?ile á nuhts'én yagh̄jtti ts'éthij̄e?ile. Dene súfiné begħanéyídígh dé, nuhech'álanié s̄j dene bedháredie hha, kólú ediri dene za bóret'j shétj hha hati?ile. Hotié Asie Hołnj k'adorétdher ú, eyer tabít dathela narej̄j hha h̄j̄tchu ú, i'áht'i neȳjla ú, yerétk'á ú, yech'azí náhja.



3. Undaunted, a few days later the Dene man rowed out to the open waters to set another fishing net. Again, just after he had made a fresh catch of fish the government DNR official reappeared. He became angered about how anyone could question his authority and once again grabbed the second net and set fire to it, again right in front of the Dene man.

3. Yeghānānedher lāt'e?ile ú, tth'i dene tabít dat'ú kanáhk̄i. Hotié tue déle ghā nádher hoyághe tth'i Asíe Hoŋni yeghānik̄i. Hílch'é ts'éthié?ile hhét tth'i tabít nailchú hhét nayerétk'ā, hotié dene súŋiné neté.

4. Left with his last fishing net the fisherman rowed out once more to the open waters and cast his net. Again, the fisherman prepared this batch of fish for smoking and hung his final net up to dry when the DNR official drove up to his home once more. Both stood facing one another, the last net hanging to the side between them.

(he) once again grabbed the second net and set fire to it, again right in front of the Dene man.

“ Hílch'é ts'éthié?ile hhét tth'i tabít nailchú hhét nayerétk'ā, hotié dene súŋiné neté.”

4. T'anāde bets'j tabít hhét, dene súŋiné nahk̄i tabít dat'úwi hha. Etddháye naheŋts̄j ú, t'ayzane etddháye dathe?ā ú, tth'i Asíe Hoŋni dene nija. Eŋts'éhel?a ú, etehenel?j ú, t'ahyí tabít betanizé thelay hhét, ekónt'ú etehenel?j heheyj.

5. This time the Dene man held a rifle in his hand and with assurance spoke to the government man saying, I had three nets. You destroyed two of them because you deem yourself to be the authority over the lake I and my family depend on for a living. Before you decide what it is you are going to do today, think about my family and what they will eat over the long winter season ahead. If you decide to burn my last fishing net you leave me no choice but to defend myself.

5. Kú duhútdú dene baŋtth'i?ile hhét telk'ídhe hutón hhét Asíe Hoŋni dené ts'én t'adi, “Taghe tabít sets'j n̄i, seskáne beba nesthen á nakóresther n̄i, náke sets'j tabít k'átané seghā besdóthiŋtsi nen k'óldher n̄idhen á hotárelýú asíe ts'én. Duhú dziné k'e beghā nánúdh̄i seghā asíe h̄iŋchu hadé, seskáne beghā nánúdh̄erítdu t'at'ú hhaiye tth'i nuhhét h̄idhi hha. Ediri t'anāde seghā tabít besdóthiŋtsj dé, edlát'ú seskáne hhaiye dóná hha?á? Sitt'h'i edek'esdi h̄ot'esá seskáne beba.”



6. There was a long silence. The government man slowly turned around and walked up to his vehicle. He quickly got in and drove off and did not return ever again.

6. Thá hoyazı horı?á ú, Asıe Hoŋı dené naréya ú, bets'ı t'ı'esbeschené yé naja ú, náhja, ıřáh kóli eyi dene nast'ıle sı eyer nisı hots'ı.