

Incorporating Traditional Nehiyaw/Plains Cree Education in the University

Myron Paskemin, Donna Paskemin (editor)

The following two linked pre-contact stories were obtained through the traditional Nehiyaw/Plains Cree protocol. The stories were told by Myron Paskemin, Resident Elder of the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, to a Cree language class during the winter of 1999. It was later audio-recorded and transcribed. The English translation and the Cree editing were conducted in partnership with the Elder.

The length of the recording was a brief 20 minutes. In reality, it would have taken days to tell the full-length story. The stories were a component of a graduating paper for a Masters of Education degree with the University of British Columbia in 1999. The author of the paper is Donna Paskemin. The protocol component in relation to these stories, in a series of lectures conducted by the Elder as a guest lecturer, could be obtained through the CINSIA 2000 (Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association) conference proceedings published through the School of Native Studies, University of Alberta.

Myron shared these two pre-contact stories about how the Nehiyaw/Plains Cree acquired the horse and the buffalo. These stories are very old, handed down through the generations through the oral traditions of the Nehiyawak/Plains Cree.

Pre-Contact Stories as Told by Myron Paskemin

Donna: Tânisî, awa ôta kâ-wî-pîkiskwêhâyâhk Myron Paskemin, nohtâwiy, kêhtê-aya, ê-kakwêcimâyâhk ka-wîhtamâkoyâhk, aya âcimowina anihi nîso pâmwayês mônîyâs ôta kâ-kî-takohtêt, êkosi anima, kiya êkwa

Myron: Kayâs, kayâs êtikwê ôki nêhiyawak ôtê ê-kî-hayâcik Nêhiyaw Sâkahikanihk,

êkotê nîstam ê-kî-ohpikihitot.

Êkwa ê-kî-~, kêtahkawê êsa pêyak kâ-nihtâwikit awâsis, ê-wâpâsot.

Êkwa, êkw êkwa, êkota ê-kî-wîci-ohpikîmât wîscâsa.

Kêtahkawê êsa ê-oskinîkîcîk,

“Hâw! niwî-sipwêhtân, niwî-papâmi-wâpahtên askiy, niwî-isi-sipwêhtân!” itêw êsa.

Ê-miyoskaminiyîk êkwa, kâ-sipwêhtêt.

Hâw êkwa, nâkatêyîhtam ôma itê ê-isi-sipwêhtêt.

Kêtahkawê kâ-otîhtahk sîpihk.

Mîhtwat êkwa osîhtâw.

Wiya ê-kî-kwêyâci-sipwêhtatât êsa ôhi pîsâkanâpîsa.

Êkoni ôhi ohci-tahkopitam ôma mîhtwat.

Ê-asîwahahk.

Nâkês mêtoni ê-hayât, nama-kîkway sakâw.

Nayêstaw êsa ê-paskwâyîk, wêpahcâyîw.

Kâ-wâpamât êsa paskwâw-mostoswa êsa ôhi êkoni.

Pîsîskiwa ôhi wâpamêw.

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Wahwâ, koskwâpisiin! ê-wâpamât, nawac kî-kostêw.
Hâw, nâkatôhkêw êkwa kâwi êkwa, kâ-âsê-kîwêt.
Tâpwê, mêtoni ê-takwâkiniyik takohtêw nêtê.
Âcimostawêw wîscâsa, “hâw’ kwayask êkwa niwî-wawêyîn, miyoskamikohk wîpac niwî-sipwêhtân, wî-wîcêwiyani,” êsa itêw.
Tâpwê êkwa wawêyîwak, êkwa nâkatôhkêw kîkwây ôma kitâpacihtâcîk.
Hâw, tâpwê êkwa kâ-sipwêhtêcîk, kâwi êkwa êkotê.
Âh, pâyakwan êkwa êkosi itohtamwak mihtwat osihtâwak.
Wâh, sêsêsêkêyimêyiwa êkwa wîscâsa ôhi kika-wâpamâyit.
“Niwî-nipahâw awa nîscâs! Mahtêsi,” itêw.
Wiya, kâ-âniwêtâkot ôma kika-âcimostawât.
Tâpwê êkwa mêtoni ê-takahki-iyawêyik ôma nâmowin ohci, kâ-nâtîtâcimostawât êkwa.
Mêtoni kisiwâk, Hâw, ê-pasikôkwâskohtiyit, tapasiyiwa, ati-wêpakociniyiwa, nipahêw.
Hâw, êkosi ê-mêstâmoyit kotakak ôhi, pâhkonêwak êkwa.
Kahkêwakwa ê-osîhtâcîk, ê-pâsâkîk wiyâs ôma.
Ôma ostikwân êkw êkwa, manâcihtâw ôma êwako, ê-wî-kîwêhtatât.
Kita-âniwêtaht, kita-âniwêtâcîk ayisk, kâ-kî-îsinâkosiyit ôhi.
Mêtoni êkwa iyikohk ê-têpiwatêcîk êwaki ôhi sipwêhtatâwak kahkêwakwa.
Pê-kîwêwak êkwa, kîwêwak êkwa.
âh, kinwês nôcihtâwak wiya ê-nawohcîkêcîk.
Mêtoni ê-ati-takwâkiniyik ê-mâci-pâh-pîwêsiponiyik takohtêwak.
nôhtaw ati nakatamwak ôma mistikwân ôma.
Âh-âcimowak, êwako ôma ê-pêtâcîk wiyâs, kahkêwakwa ôhi.
Wahwâ, ê-mîcîcîk ayisiyiniwak, pîtos ispakwan, wîhkîstamwak.
Hâw, mistikwân êkwa kâ-nâhahkîk, ê-pê-wâpahtihâcîk ayisiyiniwa.
Wâh, koskwâpisiiniyiwa!
Mâka êkosi êkwa, wî-sipwêhtêwak. Wiya êkotê ê-kakwâtakâcîhocîk ôma kâ-pipohk nâtakâm.
Mâskôc nama-kîkwây pisiskiwa. Êwako ôhi âtotamwak êwako ôhi ê-osâmêtîyit êkotê ê-paskwâk.
Namôya ta-manêsicîk ta-mîcîcîk.
Wawêyîwak êkwa ayisiyiniwak kapê-pipon, ê-mâci-tâh-tihkâyâk, kâ-ati-kwêskâyâk âsay êkotê êkwa pê-sipwêhtêwak.
Âtiht êsa kî-kîsâtamwak, kêhtê-ayak êsa, ê-âyamihtêstamawâcîk.
Kâwi pâyakwan êkosi, mihtwatihk êkwa ê-asiwahahkîk kâwi ôma sîpihk, êkwa ôma kihci-sîpihk, kê-itamihk ôma North Saskatchewan River.
Êkosi êkota êkwa kâ-kî-ohpikihitocîk ayisiyiniwak.
Nânitaw, êkw ânima kâ-kî-îtihtawakîta ita kâ-âcimostawît kêhtê-aya, nânitaw ita Prince Albert kê-itamihk, êkotê nânitaw.
Êkotê êkwa kâ-kî-ohpikihitocîk
Ispîhk êkwa ê-sâh-sipwêhtêcîk, kêhtâtawê kâ-kî-tâwiskawâcîk kaskitêwiyasita.

Pítos ê-isi-pîkiskwêyit, hâw, ê-môsci-âyîtinamâtowak.
Piyisk kî-nâh-nisitohtâtowak êsa, ay-âstê-kiyokâtowak mâna.
Âstam itê êkwa, nâtimihk isi, kâ-pê-is~ pê-t-îsi-mihcêtit ayisiyiniw, ê-
papâmpicit wiya
ê-kî-misi-tawâyik.
Namôya mêtoni nimah-mêtoni-âtotên ayisk kinwês nikâ-âtotên wiya ka-mêtoni-
âtotamân. (external break)
Myron: ôma êkwa kâ-âniskê-âtotamân ,
ayihk, kîkwâya ôhi ohci kâ-kî~Yêkoni kayâs âcimowina.
Kêhtê-ayak kâ-kî-pê-âcimostawâcîk kâ-âniskê-âcimostawâcîk
Osk-âya, êkâya ta-kakwê-wanihtât, êkâya ta-kâwi-wanikiskisit ayisiyiniw,
nêhiyaw ayisiyiniw ôta.
Tânisi ê-kî-pê-isi-aya-ayisiyiniwiyit kayâs,
ê-kî-pê-isi-pimâcihot mîna, êwako ohci kâ-kî-mâmiskohtahkik,
ôhi kâ-kî-âcimostawâcîk osk-âya.
Êkoni ôhi kayâs-âcimowina, mâka namôya ôhi ê-pê-mâh-mêtoni-ayâyân ôhi kâ-
âtotamân.
Kâh-kinwês ôhi nîso ôhi. Kâh-kinwês ê-kî-âtotahkik, ê-kî-mêtonêcîk, êkwa kâ-
âniskê-âcimoyân. Êkwa kâ-kî-otôtêmicîk ôhi kaskitêwiyasita.
Waniyaw êtikwê kî-ati-nisitohtâtowak.
Kêhtâtawê, pêyak ê~Yayihk, nâpêw êsa,
kâ-pawâtahk ta-pê-sipwêhtêt, ta-sipwêhtêt, ê-mihkosit pisikiwa.
Wîhtamawâw ta-âpacihtât.
Tâpwê, êkwa kâ-sipwêhtêt nâtimihk ê-isi-sipwêhtêt,
wiya ôma, kâ-kî-isi-wâpahtahk askîhk êkwa ôma kâ-isi-sipwêhtêt,
ati-pimi-nisitawinam
itê ôma kê-itohtêt, hâw, mêtoni êkwa nâspici-kîkisêpâyâw
ê-kî-otihtahk ôma sâkahikan, kâ-sâkêwêtotahk êkwa,
wâh, koskwâpîsin êkota, mêtoni ê-mâh-misikitiyit ôhi pisikiwa,
mêtoni sisonê sâkahikanihk misiwê ê-hayâyit,
kâ-ati-sa-sipwêhtêyit, ê-ati-pâh-pâhkopêyit, aspin
êwako ôhi êkota âtiht ê-hayâyit, itohtêw, (external interruption)
tâpwê êkwa kê-itiht anima, êkosi itohtam, tâpakwêwêpinêw ôhi pêyak,
pê-sipwêhtahêw, pê-pimitisahok, ôhi êsa ôhi kotakak nisto
âh, kapê-kîsik êkwa têhtapiw, wiya êsa ê-kî-itiht,
âh, ê-tipiskâyik itê ê-nêstosî, sakâpitêw
ê-mîcisoyit, ê-wâpaniyik, âsay mîna,
aya, kinwês wâhyawêskamik ôma kâ-kî-itohtêt,
tâpwê, takosin kâwi wâh! koskwâpîsinwak ayisiyiniwak,
mâka kayâhtê wiya atimwa, ê-kî-hayâwâcîk,
atim, kâ-isiyîhkâtihcîk ôki “dogs”
êkwa ôhi ê-wâpamâcîk, ah, mistatim, êkota anima misatim kâ-ohci-isiyîhkâsocîk,
misawâc ta-ohpikihitowak, ê-ati-isi-ohpikihitocîk, êkosi, kâ-ây-âso-miyitinâwâw
kahkiyaw awiyak,
piyisk ta-têpipayiw, kî-itâw ôma

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ékwa ôhi, wîwa, ê-kî-ostêsiyit, êkwa wiya awa, ê-kî-pôni-pimâcisit nâpêw êkwa
ana
mîna iskwêw, awa iskwêw ocâhkosa,
nâpêsisâ ôhi, ocihkwacimisa, kî-ohpikihêw, êkwa awa nâpêw awa,
namôya cîhkêyimêw ôhi ocihkwacimisiyiwa,
ê-ati-oskinîkisit awa êkwa, misatimwa awa kâ-ohînât, ê-mihcêtoyit ôma
ê-têhtapit,
kâ-pê-miskâkot ôhi osisa, kâ-nîhciwêpinikot,
“môya kiya, kâ-kî-miyikawiyân,” kâ-itât
hâw, êkosi, nêpêwihik,
êkosi, pah-pimisin, ê-tipiskâyik êkwa kâ-sipwêhtêt,
sôskwâc êkwa ê-sipwêhtêt, tânitê êtikwê piko
kêhtâtawê, ê-ati-nipât ôma,
kâ-pê-otihtikot kê-itêyitahk kêhtê-aya ê-wâpistikwânêyit,
“hâw, êwako ôma ê-at-îsinâkwahk askiy êwako êkota ta-pimohtêyan”, ana itik
“kimiyyitin pisiskiwak, mihcêt,” itik, “mâka, pêsowatwâwi, ayisiyiniwak
sôskwâc kê-itêyitahkik ta-isi-otinamâsocik, mâka, wiya kisis, êkâya kîkwây
miyâhkan,” kê-itikot,
hâw, ê-waniskât êkwa kîkisêpâk, kâ-sipwêhtêt êsa,
wiya ôma askiy kâ-wâpahtahk, kê-itêyitahk, êwako êkwa pa-pimohtêw,
wâh sôskwâc êkwa ê-sipwêhtêt,
tâpwê, otihtam ôma, itê kê-itiht ôma, misâkamik êkotê misatimwa wâpamêw,
pêyak ôhi, ê-kîs~Yê-kî-kiskinohamâkow ê-îsinâkosiyit êkoni ta-otinât,
tâpwê sôskwâc itohtêw,
nîpawiyiwa, êkosi, pê-têhtapiw,
wâh! pimi-sâkamik pê-pimitisahok,
ha, tâmayikohk pê-na-nôhcitakwê, kâwi-otakosin,
êkwa ôma êwako ôma ê-osêcasiniyik cîki,
êkota ôma kâ-hayâcîk ôtê ê-nawihâtîcîk,
êkotê ê-sâkêwêhtêhtapit,
mêtoni, môsci-akwanahamwak, ispatinâw ôma, misatimwak ôhi kâ-misâkamik,
wâh, koskwêyihamwak ayisiyiniwak,
êkwa kî-wanihâw wiya, tânitê êtikwê piko ê-kî-na-nitonâht, kêhcinâ êwako, ê-
takosihk,
êkwa awa, ohcîkaw êsa kayâs ê-kî-pê-ayêyîkin,
otênâwihâtîcîk pêyak otêpwêstamâkêw ê-kî-ihâtakot,
êkwa awa êkwa êkotê itohtêw awa, tâpwê, pôti êkoni ôhi
hâw, wîhtamawêw sôskwâc ta-otinastimiwêyit ayisiyiniwa,
“mâka, ka-wîhtên ana kisis, môya wiya kîkwây ‘ka-otinât,’ itêw,
êkosi, êkota ôma kâ-kî-ohci-otêmicîk ayisiyiniwak,
kêhtahtawê, ê-ti~Y ê-hayihkîk, êkoni ôki kaskitêwiyasîtak, oskinîkiwak êtikwê,
ê-kî-pê-kiyokêcîk
ôma ôtê, nâway ê-ati-kîwêcîk
ati-kimotatostimiwêwak
êkwa, ôki, ê-wâni-astimwêcîk pê~Y

“Kêhcinâ êkoni kî-ati-otinêwak ôta kî-ayâwak, oskinikiwak,” itwêwak.
Tâpwê, êkwa, pê-nawastimiwêwak, tâpwê, êkotê miskawêwak,
Piyisk kihtwâm, tânitahwâw êkosi ê-ispayik,
piyisk êkota kâ-kî-ohci-mâyi-wîcêtocik ôki pîtos iyiniwak,
tahk âyiwâk kâ-kî-ay-âso-kimotamâtocik,
êkosi êkota kâ-kî-ohci-mâh-mâyi-wîcêtocik.
Piyisk êkwa, wâpiskiwiyâs kâ-kî-takosihkik,
pêyakwan êkosi kî-hayihkin,
kâ-kî-wâh-wîtaskîhîcik êkwa âstamispihk,
êkosi anima âta wiya ôki wiya, ka-ati-pa-pônipayik
kâwi êkwa, kâ-ma-miyo-wîcêtocik ôki pîtos iyiniwak.
Hâw, êkosi.

English Translation of Pre-contact Stories as Told by Myron Paskemin

Donna: Greetings, Myron Paskemin here who we are going to get to talk, my Dad, an Elder, we asked him, to tell us a story. There are two of them of the time before the European arrived here. That is all, it's your turn now.

Myron: Long ago, a long time ago, the Nêhiyawak, they lived over there at Cree Lake, (Saskatchewan). This is where the population began to grow. At that time, there was a baby who was born, who was light skinned, and it was there where he grew up with his cousin. Once, when they came to be young men, “I am going to leave, I am going to go and explore the land, I am going to the south, I am going to leave,” he said to him.

It was in the early spring, that he then left. He kept track of the direction of where he was going. He came upon a river. He then made a raft. He had already brought with him, raw hide rope. With these he used to tie up the raft. He crossed the river on it. Further away on shore from the river, there was no more bush. It was all prairie, the land was kind of rough and hilly. He saw the buffalo (at this time they were not named this). He saw these four-legged animals.

He was surprised by what he saw, he was kind of afraid of them. He carefully watched where he came from. Sure enough, it was in the late fall when he arrived there. He said to his cousin, “Ok, I am going to prepare properly. I will leave early spring, if you want to come with me.” Sure enough, they got ready and they were careful as to what they needed to use. Sure enough, they left to where he had explored in his first trip. Then, they did he same thing, making a raft.

His cousin was afraid to see these animals. “I will kill it, you'll see cousin,” he said to him. It was his cousin who didn't believe him when he told this story in the first place. There was a really nice wind blowing. He approached his prey from against the wind. While he was crawling on his knees toward his prey, now, from up close, he shot at it with his bow and arrow, as it jumped up, it fled, it fell over, he killed it. So while the rest ran away, they skinned this one. They made dried meat by drying the meat. The beast's head now, he saved it, this, he would take home, as he wouldn't be believed, they wouldn't be believed, how this beast had looked like. When they packed all that they could, they took dried meat with them. They came home.

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They took a long time to get back because of their packing (heavy load). It was in the late fall, when there were light flurries, that they arrived home. They left the beast's head a short distance away, They told the story many times. They brought this meat, the dried meat. The people ate it. It tasted different. They liked the taste of it. So, then they went to retrieve the beast's head to come and show it to the people. They were amazed by what they saw.

Ok then, so they decided they will leave. The people in the north lived in hard times in the winter. There were probably no animals. They told of many there in the prairie, they will not run out of things to eat. So, the people got ready all winter and once it began to thaw, to melt, when the season changed, they come to leave. Some stayed, some old people, they were concerned for their hardship in the people's travel. So, once again they crossed the river using the raft, using the raft they crossed the great river. The one called "North Saskatchewan River," and there they grew in numbers these people. About where, that what I had heard the Elders tell, somewhere near Prince Albert area, as it is called, it was there where the population grew in numbers.

When people began to explore other areas, they came upon the Blackfoot tribe. They spoke a different language. They used sign language to communicate. Soon they began to understand one another. They visited one another, back and forth. The population grew and started moving to the west. He moved his camp often as the land was wide open country. They continued to move to the west.

That's all for this story for now. I did not tell the whole story because if I did it would take a lot longer to tell the whole story. Now, this story I am about to tell, it links to this previous story. The purpose of these stories of long ago, were told by the Elders to the young. They told these linking stories so that the young would not lose the knowledge, for the young not to forget about the Cree tribe, here. How their living in the past and its relation to their unique identity developed. This is why he talked to the young about these stories. These stories of long ago, that I am telling, I am not specific and am not telling them in full length. Just these two stories take a long time to tell. They used to take a long time to tell these stories, they used to go into the specific details in these linking stories.

This Blackfoot tribe, who they befriended, in time, they got to understand each other. (in talking and using sign language together) It happened to be, there was this one man. He dreamt that he was to leave, to leave. He was given an animal. He was told to use the animal. Sure enough, he left, he left to the west. How he saw the land and the direction where he was to go, he recognized the land (as he saw it in his dream) where he was going. He had already arrived at the lake, but in the morning, so then he came over the hill to approach the lake. He was surprised to see these really huge animals. All along the lake, there were these really huge animals. They were walking away, walking into the water. (they didn't surface, they didn't show again) There were some there, he went there. Sure enough, what he was told (in his dream) he did.

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He put a rope around the neck of one of them. He led the animal away, the animal following, along with three other animals. All day he rode it, as he had been told. At night when he got tired, he tied it up. It ate. It became morning again, it was a long way where he had come. Truly he arrived back home (from where he had come). They were amazed, but they already had “dogs,” dog, these that are called “dogs,” by what they saw.

Horse, that is where they got their name. Anyway, they will multiply, everyone will pass the horses on to one another, there will be enough for everyone. Finally at last he rode it, as he was told. See, his wife had had an older brother. He passed away this man and also the sister-in-law of this woman as well. This boy, he raised his nephew, and this man didn't like his young nephew. As he was becoming a young man, he took this one there were a lot of people about, he rode it.

His uncle come and found him and threw him off the horse. AIt wasn't you who was given these,” was said to him. So then, he became embarrassed. So he just laid there. When it became night, he left. He decided then to truly leave without a specific direction in mind. Once then when he was sleeping, he thought an Elderly person with white hair appeared to him. “How this land looks (the Elderly described the land) this is where you are to go,” he was told. “I give you animals, many of them,” he was told, “but when you bring them the people will take them as they think, but your uncle don't give him any,” he was told. When he woke in the morning he then left. As he saw the land, he walked that way (from the description of the land he was given). The description of the land he thought he saw, he followed. He truly took off.

He surely got there where he was told to go, there he saw many horses. He went to take this one, the one he thought was described to him. Sure enough he just went there. It stood there, he come and rode it. There were many that followed him. It is uncertain how long it took him to return. He arrived back to where he had left. Near where from just behind the hill, and here where they had lived, from there he came up and around the hill.

There were so many horses they covered the whole hill. The people were amazed. They had lost him, uncertain of where he had gone. He had been searched for, “must be him that has arrived.” It happened that there has always been one person, at camp, a crier/messenger. So, this man he went there to see who it was, it happened to be the one. He told the crier, he told him, that the people were to take a horse which ever one they thought they should take. “But you will tell that my uncle cannot take one,” he told him. So this is where people started to have horses. Then there was a time, these Blackfoot, young men came to visit over here. On there way home, they stole horses, as they left. These people that lost their horses, were told that “it must be them who took them, these young men who were visiting here,” they said. So they did come after their horses. Sure enough they found them there, and then again how many times that happened. It was because of this reason that created the conflict with this different tribe. It happened more often that they kept stealing horses off each other. This is where they began to have conflict with other tribes.

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Then (years later) the European then arrived. The same thing kept happening, (there was still a conflict between the tribes when the European arrived) until the tribes made peace with one another. That is how the conflict ended. Once again all tribes were able to get along, become friends again.

That is all for now.

I am forever grateful to my Father, Myron Paskemin, for sharing these stories with us. We are thankful to the School of Native Studies, University of Alberta for their financial and moral support. I am thankful to both of my parents and our relations, who had the tenacity and love to teach me the language and the values as a Nehiyaw, which has enabled me to assist in sharing these valuable stories with you.

For more information contact: Donna Paskemin paskemin@ualberta.ca and check out our Web site at <http://www.ualberta.ca/~nativest/index.html>, or call us at 780-492-2991.