

As with any culture, storytelling and lore are an important part of childhood. Whether it be reading Harry Potter or a good scary Stephen King novel. Story telling soothes the inner child of all ages and usually the story comes with a lesson, a virtue to attain or a warning to not delve in things we are better not knowing about. Nipissing Nation has been gifted with some research interviews conducted by Ms. Lise Hansen of stories, lore relayed by the recollections of John Jr. O'jeek, Ban. During my childhood Elders in our communities would relate stories to their children.

Lawrence Commanda, Ban, who related to Leatherdale the Story of the Manitou's in the book Brule to Booth. We have heard the story showcased in the entertainment of a local tourist operated touring boat about the Nipissing Princess who threw herself into the burning of the stake of her Mohawk love. My father tried to regale to his children the story of the Shad Fly Princess which was entertaining but I as my brothers and sisters knew he was trying to give us a little levity and humour. I also overheard my parents talking of the bear walker stories and fireball transformations of individuals capable of doing misdeeds. My childhood friend and I loved visited her Nokomis and listening to the headless horseman and his horses echoing terrorizing hoofs beating through our village. I loved the tale of the appearance of the handsome man who visited and the people he visited only seeing his hooves under his long coat as he left the house. All stories entertain but I am not the only person who knows most lore are delivered to not only enrich our entertainment urges but that some stories have been told over centuries and unintentionally have been changed by the culture of the **day and time** the person is relating the story or lore. You will read this in John Jr.'s description of animals such as tigers and lions and this description is probably just meaning a big cat i.e. lynx, cougar. There are also references in John Jr.'s stories that have an element of messaging being handed down through the story telling. One, is the repeated reference to 'fasting' and dreams of our animal protectors where his stories relate to teachings of present day.

Readers remember that John Jr. was born in the year 1900. It was 33 years since the new fledging Canada and the Indian Act came into existence and change our culture at Nipissing. The timing of his birth was 52 years after Shabogestic and his principal men signed the 1848 letter with the doodems.

Keeping the above in mind, Nipissing Culture and Heritage is looking for stories and lore told to you about our people, to either support or add to the stories recorded by Ms. Lise Hansen.

John Fisher O'Jeek Jr.

On December 12, 1900 John O'Jeek Jr. was born. His father was Jean Baptiste O'Jeek and Sarah Amikwate (McQuabbie). The McQuabbie family were in summer months resident of the French River area. John Sr. and Jr. were lifelong residents of Garden Village Tiganing. Henrietta Goulais was raised on Garden Island. John Jr. and his wife Henrietta Goulais O'Jeek named their children, Rita, Marlene, Mildred, Joseph and Arthur. They raised by the custom of Nipissing adoption practice a grandchild, Alfred. Nipissing Nation members who are descendent of John and Henrietta are Barnes, McDougall, Penasse, Beaucage, O'Jeek (Fisher) and Goulais.

Like his Nipissing ancestors and Nation members, John Jr. had as many homes as the seasons. Fishing, trapping, hunting and guiding were his primary occupation in his young adult life. He located his seasonal camp sites where resource subsistence required his location. In his early life he trapped and hunted at sites on a seasonal basis that required his relocation too. In later years, as many Nipissing practiced, he sought employment in the lumber and tourist camps located in the Nipissing Territory. He relayed to the writer of this paper that his first job as a young man was at a lumber camp and he earned \$1.17 a week, which he thought was a good earning for that time. In later life, around 1960 he worked as a salaried worker ensuring fellow Nation Members obtained assistance from different government agencies. He was also the Nipissing Fire Warden.

His daughter Marlene O'Jeek Barnes has memories of her father and mother living with her grandparents John Sr. and Sarah (check date of John's death Marlene thinks only her Mother was alive when they lived there) until they built their home they retired too in Garden Village. She has vivid memories of her family residing on the French River where John worked as a guide in summer months and moving back to Garden Village in mid fall. In winter months they resided in Mosquito Creek to take advantage of close proximity to Sturgeon Falls for the children to attend schools.

One of Marlene's earliest memories was the time when her father was placed in a hospital in Gravenhurst as his health was compromised by tuberculosis. She remembers very clearly that she and her brothers and sisters were playing in the front yard of their grandparents home when Indian Agent drove up in his big car. She saw her father come out of the house with a suitcase and getting into the car. John Jr. spent 14 years in different hospitals until he was deemed cured and safe from transmitting his ailment.

One of John Jr.'s passions was for storytelling. These stories of lore of Lake Nipissing has been told to anyone who wanted to hear of times long ago. He kept a daily journal where he journalized dates, events, happenings and weather. The whereabouts of this journal is not known. John Jr. loved relating the stories that he heard as a child from his Elders. His mother Sarah also contributed to John's cache of lore. He most likely heard these stories as a child and in his lifetime retold these stories to the children of T'ganing.

Ms. Lise Hansen was a Phd candidate who documented the Nipissing People as part of her thesis. Ms. Hansen has provided the following interviews of John's lore of the Nipissings. We thank and acknowledge Ms. Hansen's contribution of these stories that now will be once again relayed to the children of Nipissing.

Interviewed on July 18, 1979 by Lise Hansen:

Manitou (Devil) Island

Five families caped beside the lake on Manitou Island (on Lake Nipissing) one winter. They cut a hole in the ice on the lake (on Manitou Island) to get drinking water. One day, they saw a big sturgeon in the water (through the hole in the ice). The people had nothing to eat so they caught and killed the sturgeon, but it wasn't really a sturgeon. The people were so hungry that they decided to eat the fish right away, all except an old woman and a young girl. Young girls could only eat smoked fish.

The next morning, the old woman and the young girl rose early, but no one else (in the camp) was stirring. They looked in the tents (birch bark wigwams) and saw big, fat snakes. One person was just turning into a snake and warned the old woman about what had happened.

So the old woman and the young girl left the island (Manitou Island) and travelled to the Mosquito Creek (on the north shore on Lake Nipissing).

'Cheez kod'¹ (Shaking Tent)²

The people would take strong saplings, stripped of their bark, and put them into the ground about two feet (deep with the rest of the saplings above ground) so they were solid and couldn't move; (they were arranged) in the form of a circle. The (circle of) poles (was) then enclosed with birch bark and a blanket was put on top of the poles.

The medicine man or magician would get inside the enclosure and soon the tent would start shaking and he would call animals to him – beaver, muskrat, otter, lion, tiger – and talk with them. The animals would be identified.

He (medicine man) could find lost articles – once a man's canoe upset on the Lake (Nipissing) and he lost his only hatchet – couldn't afford to buy a new one. He asked the medicine man (for help) and he produced his hatchet (the one lost on the Lake) from the 'cheez kod'.

Apprenticeship of Medicine Man's³ Pupil

The medicine man ('Kitchie B'wankins'⁴) would send a young boy (his pupil) out into the bush or even put him in a tree. The boy got not food, just a thimbleful of water every day. The boy stayed as long as he could up to nine days; he was there to dream. The Medicine man told him when to come out, when he figured he (the pupil) had learned enough.

Not everyone was able to stay-most failed.

They had to be trained by an old medicine man. Only men were magicians (medicine men).

Fire balls, bears and owls, and people transforming themselves to do harm or even kill or make victims ill

Some people, with the use of medicines made from roots, could change themselves into balls of fire, or could put the skin of a bear or owl on their heads and become a bear or an owl.

They could cause people to get sick or even kill them.

¹ This is how I wrote the word down in my notes-phonetic spelling of what I heard John say. The Ojibwe People's Dictionary (<https://ojibwe.lib.umn.edu>) translates shaking tent as 'jiisakaan'.

² John said his mother claimed to have seen a shaking tent at the mouth of the Sturgeon River. People used to gather there (mouth of the Sturgeon River) in the summer.

³ John noted that the medicine man was helpful to people whereas those who transformed themselves were not helpful; but harmful.

⁴ This is how I wrote the word I hear-phonetic spelling.

They would take revenge on people for insulting them or for refusing to lend them something.

They would go to great lengths to create situations whereby they would have a reason for taking revenge because they couldn't harm people without reasons.

Interviewed on March 26, 1980 by Lise Hansen:

When asked if 'amik nindotem' meant anything to him, he said he didn't understand until I explained that I understood that when two people met for the first time, they would tell each other their names and their totem or dodems. Then he said he understood but that was lost a long time ago. John then told the following stories.

Magic Man and the Apprentice⁵

A magic man would get an apprentice, seclude him/her in the bush or a cave with only a thimbleful of water every day. The apprentice fasted for a maximum of nine days. If he didn't get a dream during that time, he wasn't taught further. If he dreamed, the animal that he dreamed about became his helper and source of power. The magic man then gave the successful dreamer three round stones, about four to five inches across, and they were the source of his power. Every day, the magic apprentice had to go to where they (the stones) were concealed and take care of them and make sure they were covered up. If he didn't go every day, then they lost their power and when he did go to find the stones, they'd be gone. John said he didn't know how they disappeared – maybe the devil took them. When they (not clear if he was referring to the stones or the apprentice) had power, they could use the shaking tent.

Old Indians buried around the Lake (Nipissing)

At cross Point, there were a number of old graves. Some time ago, some tourists bought the island just inside the bay by Cross Point and hired Dominic McQuabbie to build a log cabin for them. When it was finished, the brought all their furniture to the island by boat and that night, they heard noises of someone cooking in the kitchen. When they turned on the lights, there was no one there, but as soon as the lights were put out and all was quiet again, cooking noises started. So they abandoned the cabin and told Dominic to tear down which he did and rebuilt it for himself at Frank's Bay.

Also at Cross Point, people were sitting around talking when they heard voices coming from the other side of the Point. When they went to investigate, there was no one there.

⁵ See transcript 18-07-1979

His mother (Mary Sarah O'Jeek Fisher nee McQuabby) told him about three graves and crosses on Dokis Point, long before the lake was flooded (by dam on French River) and the Point became an island.

His father (John O-Jeek Fisher Sr.) told him about an old grave at Charlie Britton's camp. It was pile of stones in line with the path between the cook house and the guide's cabin. Britton wanted his father to move the stones, but John Sr. knew what it was and refused, so Britton started moving the stones himself. He go about ¼ of them moved before night fall and that night, his bed kept shaking and he couldn't sleep. John Sr. told him he had to put the stones back or he'd get no rest at all, so he did. John says the grave is still there.

Little Indians of Trout Lake

I asked John if he had ever heard of the 'mide'-wah'. He thought for a while and said the only thing he could think of was 'me-de-ow-ag' or Little Indians of Trout Lake. Very few people ever saw them, but knew they were there because whenever a hunter went there (Trout Lake), they (the Little Indians) would make noises in the bush to distract him. They disappeared about the time that the railroad came through. A lot of Indians moved into the area (not clear if he was referring to Trout Lake) at that time as well and the Little Indians just disappeared.

His mother told him about a man who was hunting around Trout Lake. He heard the Little Indians in the bush making noises, snapping twigs, etc., and decided to trick one so he could see it. He lay down on a large flat rock facing the direction of the noise. He lay there for a long time and the noise came closer and closer until finally a Little Indian stepped out of the bush and walked up to the sleeping Indian very cautiously. The Indian didn't move a muscle but opened his eyes just enough to see what was happening. The Little Indian looked the Indian over very carefully and said 'So, that's what a Big Indian looks like' and walked back into the bush. The Little Indian was fully grown but was just three and a half or four feet tall. No one knows how they made their living or even where they camped around Trout Lake.

Manitou Island, Iron Island

The old magic men used to have suspicions about Manitou and Iron Islands. They didn't know what was there or if it was good or harmful, they just knew there was something there. As it turns out, uranium was found on Manitou Island and iron was found on Iron Island.

Pictographs

John remembers paddling through Canoe Pass in the area of the French River and seeking drawings (pictographs) on the rock face. They were made a long time ago and he doesn't know what kind of paint they used but it must have been pretty

good because the drawings are still there. The drawings are about chest height on the rock face if you stand up in a canoe.

There are two drawings, both of a canoe (shown as a shallow upward curved line. The smaller canoe has three or four men in it; he thinks it was four, and is certain that there were six men in the larger canoe. The men were represented by perpendicular lines, about ½ inch thick.

Skulls

He recalls seeing a few (human) skulls on a small island in the middle of the Lower French. He was told that at one time, there were enough skulls to go around the entire island, possibly 200 skulls. They were supposed to have been Iroquois skulls.

The First Indians to Come to Lake Nipissing

John's father (John O'Jeek Fisher Sr.) told him this story which may have been told to his father by his father (Nawdwe or O'Jeek).⁶

Montreal Man or 'Moon-ya-ne-nay' paddled up the Ottawa River from the Montreal River along the Mattawa River and across the portages and Trout Lake, etc. to Lake Nipissing. He thought he was the first Indian to see the Lake when he meets Black Moose or 'Ku-day Mooz'. Black Moose had thought he was the only one there (Lake Nipissing). Montreal Man and Black Moose stayed together that first winter and when spring came, Montreal Man said he was going back to Montreal River but he'd be back. But if he wasn't back by the following, then Black Moose could have the Lake. Montreal Man never returned, but other Indians followed his route and appeared at the Lake.

Additional information provided during interview on 1-04-1980. All the first Indians that followed Black Moose's route came from the east; they may have been Iroquois. It was later that Ojibway from Manitoulin Island came up the French River to Lake Nipissing.

Medicines

'Muk-em-dos': to prevent any kind of sickness, pick this leaf and its root; it's a three pronged tall leaf that grows in the swamp. Dry the leaf and its root together, then boil it in water. Take a tablespoon a day.

'Wee-can': Its root is dried. Its hard to get in some areas but it grows at the mouth of the Village creek. For heart trouble, boil a 1 inch piece in ½ pint of water for 10-

⁶ Nadwe was the biological father of John O'Jeek Sr and Julian O'Jeek. When he died, his wife married O'Jeek, and children were given/took the name of O'Jeek.

15 minutes. It gets stronger the longer it is boiled. For indigestion, eat a very small piece. For toothache, put a small sliver of the root in the cavity.

Balsam pitch: Take 1 drop for a sore throat. Put 2 drops on a clean cut, then wrap the area with a clean cloth with a few drops on the cloth; this will clear up the infection in the cut. Two drops (ingested) are good for your 'water system'; more than 2 drops will act like a strong laxative.

The following stories were copied from
John's book on June 25, 1980 by Lise Hansen

This is the Story of Lake Nipissing. Whom were the First Indian who come in Lake Nipissing the very First Indian By name Moonia inni he Came From way Down East and come and Find this Lake and is not how Long he live alone on this north Shore of the Lake or south. Any way can't be to long not long. Could be 2 or 3 years.

And then the next one Came along. And he thought he was the First one on the Lake. He Didn't know there was one here Already. His name was Makate mooze. And then they met here some place. live together may be a year and then or more.

Moonia inni Decide to go Back where he came From. and he Told Makate Mooze if I Don't Come Back you Claim the Lake and all the Hunting & Fishing grounds, and moonia inni never Came Back. and Makate Mooze was all By himself here for good while and Finally some others come and Find the Lake Too. also met Makate Mooze.

Them Days them old Indians. they were known as a magician some. Not every one. this was Learned By them and not Every one Could learn that To be a Magician. or a medicineman. whatever I would call. and when any one in a Family was To learn that By the magician. he or she Had to Stay alone for 9 Days that was the limit. If any one cant stand to learn in 9 Days never learn and when he sleep he Suppose to Dream some animal. Or Some Crature. and all he was getting to Eat. Just Thimble Full of water once a day Nothing Else. For the time of his Training there the limit was nine Days. the magician. this was his Rules he put his Trainee some place in the Bush alone and then he go see him evert Day and give him Timble Full of water and ask if he Dream any thing magician this is a True Story that was doing here at the mouth of the River about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile up the Mouth of Sturgeon River. On the west side of the River that's where the Indians use to gather in a Spring when the Hunting & Trapping is over and the Trading post was open there to

Some time and then another Trading post open here. Dokis point. And the Reginald name there Dokisis not Dokis there Right name are Migigie. that means

Eagle in English the Reason this Dokis he got that name when he ws young 2 years old they use To call him Duck. little Duck his Father & Mother call him Duck so. I guess they change it then To Dokis.

This was During 1800 Hundreds

This is the news of the First Indian Came here and Find this Lake Nippissing

The Right name of this Lake is nibeeshiug and By name (Moonia.inni) he was Cone From Down East Montreal or Nova Scotia Erea and he Didn't Stay here Long. Maybe one or 2 years. all alone. and then another man Came here Did the same he thought he was the First one. Find this Lake Didn't know. one was here already and then they meet here Someplace and the next man Find Lake by Name (Makate.Mooze) Black Moose And they met here some place and Moonia.inni didt Stay long. maybe.2 or 3 years. and he went Back down East. where he Came From.

And he Told Makate. Mooze if Im not Back Here next Spring when the River and Lake open. By that time. If I Don't Show up I wont Be Back and you Claim the lake and he never Come Back. and there Makate.Mooze was here all Alone. For Some time

And after. Few years. more people come To this Lake Indians From East. and then. they were live here and there. Id say they weren't. live Together Id say some live at the Mouth of Sturgeon River. and some other places and then Later. Some white people. Come here and Some one of the Start a Trading post at the Mouth of Sturgeon River And then the Indians were Deal. With the Trader and he didn't Stay Long. Some thing Happen and he was gone.

Interview on July 9, 1980 by Lise Hansen

John said his mother told him all of his stories; his father never told him any. His mother also taught him about the (traditional) medicines he knows.

Th following is additional information about the story of 'the magic man' or medicine man⁷

The apprentice dreamed of an animal – tiger, bear, lion, wolf or any other animal, and that animal became his helper in his career.

⁷ Refer to interview 18-07-1979 – Apprenticeship of Medicine Man's Pupil

Usually the apprentice dreamed after 4 days of fasting, but if he hadn't dreamed after 9 days, then it was obvious he could never learn to be a magic man.

The apprentice was given 2 rocks, about 4 inches in diameter, and he was to care for them, they were his responsibility. If he forgot just once to go where he hid them, he could never find them again and he'd lose his power. Because those rocks 'could disappear like that', they must have been actual rocks but something else.

Story of 'Memengqueswuk'

They used to live across the Lake (Nipissing) at 'Memengques Wabek' (Split Rock) before there were many people living here. People used to see them – they looked like men but non one cold get closer than 300 or 400 feet so they didn't know what they looked life for sure. When more people came to live her around the Lake, they disappeared.

Memengqueswuk disappeared just the way the 'Mide o wug' (or 'Metē o wug') Trout Lake Little Indians did when more people moved into the area. The Mide o wug didn't like Anishnabek to hunt around Trout Lake so they'd make noises in the bush to frighten away the game and sidetrack the hunters.

Story of Nanibush and the Ducks and the Lions

Nanibush was all alone. He didn't see anybody around. He didn't know how to catch the ducks he saw but he was hungry and wanted to eat them. Then he thought he'd make a dance, a party for the ducks. So he called over one duck and told him he was giving a party and everyone was to come – all the ducks, loons, divers, all the water birds.

They all came to the party and when they started dancing, Nanibush told them to close their eyes. Then he grabbed one as it passed him, twisted its neck and killed it. Then he grabbed another and another. After a while, one of the dancers (ducks) opened his eyes. The (hell)diver saw what was happening and yelled to the few remaining birds, "He's killing us." They all started to run away, but Nanibush was angry at the helldiver and managed to kick him in the butt as he passed for squealing on him. That's why the helldiver's legs turn outwards now.

Nanibush next decided to cook the ducks he had. He made a fire on top of a mound of sand. Then he cleaned the ducks and buried them in the sand with just their legs sticking up. He stoked the fire again and lay down to sleep while his dinner cooked.

Two Indians soon came along in a canoe and saw the duck legs sticking out of the sand in a circle around the fire. Those two Indians quietly dug up the ducks, broke

off the legs and put the legs back in the sand. Then they left as quietly as they came.

Nanibush woke up from his nap and thought his dinner must be ready by now. He pulled at one of the legs and it came out of the sand. Nanibush thought his ducks were well done for sure and started to dig them up but didn't find a single duck.

Nanibush didn't know what to do now and had no idea who had stolen his duck dinner. He was still hungry and had nothing to eat. He lay down again but couldn't stay still for long because he had a bad itch on his butt. He didn't know how to stop that itch. Then he had an idea. He went to the top of a long smooth rock that sloped into the Lake and slid down it with no clothes on. He scraped his bottom badly and it was sore and bleeding. He went into the bush and wiped the blood off on some white bushes – 'swabun jesh' – and they turned red with his blood. His butt was still sore so he slid down the rock and scraped the scabs off his butt and they became the lichens on the rocks – 'nanbush migeesh'.

Nanibush started walking along the sand beach. He heard voices from up on the shore – it was two lions arguing who could pull a stump down with his tail. He listened to them arguing for a while and then they walked away. Nanibush got inside the stump which was hollow. He could do anything he wanted to. The lions soon returned and one of them put his tail around the stump and tried to pull it down. Nanibush said to the stump 'Don't fall down, don't fall down.' The lion stopped pulling and told the other one he heard a voice coming from the stump but he (the second lion) didn't believe him. The lion tried again and Nanibush told the stump, 'Hang tough, don't break.' The lions gave up trying to pull the stump down and they went back into the water where they came from.

Nanibush got out of the stump and hid where he could see the stump clearly because he expected the lions to return. They did come back and one of them pushed the stump down with ease. They started to argue that someone must have been inside the stump when they tried earlier. Just then, a canoe came along with a couple of Indians and Nanibush and the lions hid from the Indians.