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HIGHLIGHTS:

- Legends concerning arrival of white men in North America.
- Parallels to the Norse (Viking) sagas. (Is this possibly an example of the oral tradition presenting the Indian view early Viking settlement?)
- Prophecies concerning arrival of white men and eventual return of Indian ways.
- Description of role of women in pre-Columbian America.
- Accounts of native medical practices.
- Linguistic evolution.

Alex: The following is an interview with Max Ireland of Oneida Reserve. The interview is being conducted in Toronto on July 27, 1983, by Alex Cywink. This is tape 2 of a set of two.

Max: We're talking about the women, of them being such a powerful influence, even in the past. They just said that around the year 1450, there was a great council of the Iroquois. It was at this time that they prevailed on the people to let them... next time they must stay, they must be allowed to stay. Because the prophets have said that there will be five hundred years of trial of tribulation for the Indians. And at the end of the five hundred years the Indian ways would again prevail.

There had apparently been two other attempts of settlement by the white people. The first one was doomed before it even came close to shore. They said that many, many years ago there was a boy -- he was so powerful that whatever he saw perished. He was not allowed to look at anyone because they would die right there. If he looked at anything for any length of time, something happened. And they said when they first saw this ship, or big boat, or whatever it was, coming; it was getting closer and closer and they were afraid of what it would be. So they said, "Well, let's get the boy." They always kept his eyes covered, they looked after him, fed him, led him around. He'd never look, he never saw anyone. They uncovered his eyes and he looked around, out in the sea, and he saw that ship coming. It was quite a way out yet, you could just see that it was coming in, it got closer, and closer. And quite a way out at sea it just sank, went right down into the water. And presumably everyone who was on it, they perished.

Now many, many years later there was another attempt. This time they were allowed to land. Of course the boy had long since gone away, died -- there was no indication of what happened to him. But these men came, they landed and they

stayed there for awhile and they said, "Well, we'll let them. You may stay here provided you leave our women alone." So everything went fine, but in due course of time, of course, some women were found out to be staying with these men. And there was a terrific battle there, but they were all killed off. Eventually, they all died, they were all killed off. Everything about them -- their houses were burned and all their belongings were either thrown into the sea, or carried off, buried, or thrown away where there was... tried to do away with all traces of ever seeing them, having them there, having been there.

We then pick up the story at this time. They said, "Well, the next time we come we'll let them stay." And the women at that time were discussing this openly, thoroughly. So they said, "Well, it doesn't matter when we start the five hundred years, but the sooner we start it the better." And they believed that the first contact after that was with Jacques Cartier in 1534, when he came up the St. Lawrence River. His man was suffering from scurvy. And I believe these people were Oneidas, because there are certain stories and songs that depict the landing there. There's one particular song where it says "captain". Now, Cartier was a captain and he introduced himself as a captain. That's the only foreign word in the whole song -- the rest is Oneida. And he was not a sea captain, he was a military captain. He had been to South America before this, before he came up the St. Lawrence River. And this I believe to be the beginning of the five hundred years. In the 2034, or '35, along in there, the Indian ways will have prevailed again.

As I told you before the old people used to come to our house. They would tell us stories. One of the things they used to tell us is, "Maybe, you'll see part of the beginning of what is going to take place, for the Indian ways will once again

prevail." Of course in my young mind I used to picture for Indians coming and going about their way. Because they told me

at that time that the last stronghold of the Indian culture and their ways will be in the north and the west. And I used to picture them come riding on horseback, throwing tomahawks, shooting arrows, and everything, and chasing the white man back into the sea again. Well of course, the older I got the more I realized this was not to be. I am now thoroughly convinced this will never happen. I didn't realize what "Indian ways will prevail" meant. I suppose there are people reading the Bible -- they all have different views and opinions as to what is actually going to transpire. But in my way of thinking "Indian ways" means exactly that -- the Indian philosophy of life.

If you look at today's non-Indian people -- how much they have changed. Probably the first meaningful exchange that went on between the new arrivals and the arrival here were between the women, the European woman and the Indian woman. We must realize what was going on in Europe at that time. They never had the freedom over there. Men and women didn't know what freedom was. They dreamt about it, but in those days a clergy, members of the nobility, could take any woman they wanted away from any man unless she had a title or some position. Keep her as long as they wanted and let her go. They lived under this sort of dread, particularly if a man had a attractive daughter or an attractive wife. She couldn't be safe, she could be just spirited away. So as a form of protection from the type of living under which... prevailed in Europe they came over here.

King John had signed the Magna Carta in the year 1215 at the valley of Runnymede, and this was supposed to bring some sort of freedom to the people. But there was really not that much freedom. The vassal system still remained pretty well. There was really not that much change. The Greeks had invented the word, 2,500 years ago, "democracy". But it was only a word, no one really practiced it to a degree, because there was no basis of comparison, not till they found North America. Possibly this was one of the great finds the white man made... was

democracy at work, probably more meaningful actually than all the gold, and all the furs, and all riches he has harvested from North America. Possibly the democracy, and it's meaning, and the way it was practiced, perhaps was more meaningful than all the richness, material richness, he has taken out of North America, or what he has enjoyed. This was where he found the basis of comparison for the so-called democracy. People were voting rather than appointing people into government.

Freedom of expression, religion, and various other factors that are so important to the expression of life, one's life philosophy in this world. Great thinkers would gather and express their opinions and ideas without the fear of persecution by those in command of church and government. In fact they were encouraged to do this. They used to encourage visitation between great minds from all over. They were

welcomed at their various councils, and the way the government worked; how each one helped to support the other great nations that were flourishing at that time. And women had a great deal to do with it.

Now today you hear Mrs. Thatcher, and Golda Meir, Indira Ghandi. Women weren't even, they weren't allowed to vote in those days when the Europeans came here, in fact not until well into the twentieth century were Canadian women allowed to vote as well as England and the United States. Suffrage -- it was called women's suffrage -- it was a great issue. There were many indignities suffered by the women in order that they may be allowed to vote. They have decision-making capacities now; we hear of them being doctors and lawyers, mayors of towns and villages, other positions of respect. They are judges taking over responsibilities in judicial system. So that is only one aspect when you get the women involved in the thing of such magnitude. It is a real prime for Indian philosophy of life for these people to actually live the way our women were living a thousand years ago.

Another aspect is our way of living as far as sharing is concerned. They have a fairly good welfare system here. People are sharing now as they were a long, long time ago, before the coming of Columbus, or Cartier as I should say. Many of the things that were being practiced, like sharing, is now going on. Sharing of medicine is now becoming universal.

Education is something else again. The sisterhood of 1,200 years ago -- how they used to go out, young ladies of the community, young mothers, teenage girls, and even younger than that -- help to care for the younger ones, teach them, and teach them in a educated way rather than separating the boys and the girls as they did in Europe. The ways and means of what they call complementary living, boy-girl, man-woman. They were able to teach life skills to the young, how important it was to learn at an early age what you will be doing in later life. They taught them how to be happy together where they paired them off -- boys and girls going out to pick berries, or maybe hoe the garden, or water the different types of plants or even plant or whatever it is. Help to tan hides, or keep the fire going, heat up stoves, various other seemingly tedious tasks. But when they're with someone you love or like, the sisterhood taught them. And they had fun doing this. It was no long real hard task. It was, but still it came to the point that they enjoyed these tasks together. And fun is only one step removed from play. This is what they taught their young charges -- that in life, if you love your partner, life can be fun even though it's hard. If you're with someone you love, then the task is made that much easier by sharing it with someone you love.

Also, the Medicine Man had a great knowledge of the human mind as well as the body. He used to teach young women, perhaps a new mother, or someone with a sick loved one. He would teach her various medicines to use. There's certain times and

places... And I'm sure they had triangles in those days, he would advise the young couple or maybe a young man, or perhaps

a young woman, or boy, girl, or maybe even older people, how to perhaps relieve some of the frustrations of life, which befalls all of us at one time or another. He taught them how to get by with his great knowledge of wisdom, accumulated through many years of study of the human body, the human mind, and medicine. He was at least eight hundred years ahead of Sigmund Freud. We're never given credit for having any previous knowledge of this.

Due to my heart condition I'm supposed to take a daily dose of Digoxin. I find out now that Digoxin is just another name for foxglove that my grandfather used to prescribe for his heart patients a hundred or so years ago. And his lifestyle, the way he worked. He once went into a swamp to look for an old fallen log that he remembered was there, an old log. He scraped all this residue from under the rotten bark. He brought it back to a family who had a little girl who had been visited by a doctor and he had given up hope on this girl. He was in fear for the girl's leg, which had been bitten by a dog, a dog bite. And the doctor tried to save it, save it, so he kind of gave up. He said he'd be back the next week. If the leg wasn't any better he would have to amputate. This was in 1980, or 1880, that's more than a hundred years ago already. But when he came back he made a poultice out of this and he applied it to the leg. He cleansed it out first with plantain weed, poultice of plantain weed. He put that on for a while, took that off after it was all cleansed out, and then he applied this other poultice. When the doctor came back the next day he was surprised. The leg had completely healed. In fact, the girl was up and about. And of course he called it the witch medicine. He wouldn't try anything like the witchcraft because he is, the doctor himself is a very devout Christian. It was the work of the devil, he said, that's why the girl is up and about. It wasn't till more than fifty years later, somewhere around 1935 or 1936 that Dr. Fleming came along -- Alexander Fleming came along with his wonderful discovery, penicillin.

Same material as this man had used on the girl's leg fifty some odd years before, and for God knows how long, God knows how long this had been used before that time.

There are other ways that we can say we had done it first. The very first metal workers were the coppersmiths. We used to go up along the shore of Lake Superior to get the copper from that area. That was at least five or six thousand years ago, possibly before that time. They were working copper at that time. So the of American Indian you might say was original metal worker of the world. Also in the south, in what is now around Arizona and those places down there, where they have cactus, they used to take bird eggs, and the shells, and various other objects, or even stone. They would dip this in grease, or paraffin, whatever was available, some kind of grease. They would mark this a different ways, designs. Then

they would dip them into the cactus juice. Some of the things were very acidic and they would eat right into the stone, or bird's egg shell, or whatever they had. After a certain length of time they would wash away the covering of whatever was left of the paraffin or grease. They were the first etchers the world has ever seen.

Some of the records they left behind. Camp fires that were lined with clay. They are little wee microscopic needles in the clay and they are like, very much like our present day compass. They point north and south. But they freeze in that position once the clay is burned. And from these records we can tell how long ago the fire was there. We now know that the north, or the magnetic pole, is always in motion. It doesn't stay in one position all the time. Your magnetic needle and your compass will vary from year to year -- very little, but still... This is called magnetic variation. Some of these fires have been there even before the days of Christ several thousand years ago. Oh, incidentally, they say that since the days of Christ the magnetic north pole has wandered around -- 1,300 miles it has travelled since the days of Christ. And

from these we know just when that fire was there by the position of these locked-in magnetic compasses; you might call them compasses, these little things in the clay.

Almost tell what food they had to eat. We can also tell what type of language they spoke, or various other foods they had. And at one time they used to have dogs. They ate dogs in that part of the world, in Meso-America, people in Mexico. They seem to divide up, say, five thousand years ago. Certain parts of that... certain linguistic dialects there "meat" and "dog" mean the same thing. So we know that part ate dogs. But some people moved away. Some people moved away and they have two different words; one meaning "dog" and the other one meaning "meat". So we know they moved out before they began to use dog for meat. That means they were out of there more than five thousand years ago. This is some of the studies that I have done. Some of the words that make up...

Getting back to the women. Our language is built in such a way that around the household all the things that are hers -- her table, her chairs, her cups, her saucers, everything is hers. Because this is the lifestyle of the Indian. The women were very important around the house, around the living quarters, all over in the community -- that is hers. And when a mother teaches her child she teaches her the simplest words to pronounce. And the most natural sound you can make is "O", not "A," "E," "I," or any of the other vowels because you have to move either your tongue, your jaw in a certain position to say this. But if you just say "O" you don't have to move anything. It's the most natural sound you can make. So the language in this way and it was thought, I suppose, that the most important subject of your talks will always be man himself. So the language was designed around man. And in the Oneida language all the anatomy of man begins with the letter O, the sound "O". (Indian), which means their hair; (Indian), which means their

head; (Indian), which means the nose; (Indian) teeth. Goes

right down to (Indian), the legs, the arms, and the hands, the nails (Indian) the thigh. Everything. (Indian) means the foot; (Indian) the heart, even the internal organs. Again woman stands out. They say (Indian), that means the womb. Only a woman has a womb and it's hers, structured this way, it's the only one, it's hers. It's her child carrier, where she carries a child, or whatever it is. That's what it means and it's hers. That's the only exception to the rule of the "O" that I know of.

Of course I haven't studied that much, but I have studied some as to the structure and the so-called synthetic languages and fall into the scruple(?)... Synthetics, where you can put different words together and come up with a name. That's another thing that we know about our people, how the language was structured. The Cree of Alberta, they say (Indian), they don't say (Indian), they say (Indian). But the Cree of the far north, where not very long ago, where the real important foot in that area was a man's, because it was his foot that did the chasing of the game in order for the family to survive, so quite often they use (Indian) up there. But their body parts also begin with "O", I think. (Indian) is the hair; the back is (Indian). So their anatomy, quite a bit of it, begins with "O" also.

I haven't really studied it that much, but it leads me to suspect that there is a... way back there, somewhere there's a commonality of tongues, if we studied it deeply enough. But it will require concerted effort on the part of several people together, maybe a whole group, oh, a lot of people from various sections of North America; this has never been done. Oh, linguists have gone out into the world in search of some certain knowledge, but they're always so competitive, not cooperative, in saying "I know something you don't know." Isolating some of their study. It is only after they come out with a thesis or perhaps some sort of theory, then they will advance this. And immediately there's a big onslaught of their

colleagues trying to kill this new-developed theory or thesis that is brought out to them. It happened with Einstein, it happened with Darwin's theory, the "Origin of Species," always different things that...

And the one thing about languages too... Morris Swadesh brought out a certain thing he thought was very important. He got note of something of dating ways and needs, certain words, and his colleagues immediately attacked and said it wasn't any good. And I agree with this, I agree with him totally. In fact, I'll go as far to give you an example of what he means. When I grew up, well, when I was just a little boy going around the reserve, they used to fix the road up. Sometimes they'd dump gravel or whatever it was, and sometimes the gravel wasn't available, but they had a least a team of horses and they used to grade the roads or scrape, they used to call it a road scraper. This is what it literally did -- it scraped the road.

Usually it two men; one to drive the team, one man at the back handling the simple thing with a screw, a screw-operated affair that lifted the blade and the other one tilted it and so forth, but somehow or other they were able to grade, get the road half straightened up to desirable... a roadway, anyway. This kept going for a number of years until... Of course, this type of operation gradually became outmoded, and only to be superseded by the scraper -- but this was motorized. It did about the same thing -- it graded the roads, put a gradient in on the road, so the water would run off, kept it smooth. By this time of course the vehicle traffic began to increase.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

Max: ...as time went on, of course, things changed again. They became much heavier machines and not only were they scraping or grading the road, the road graders turned into

another machine. They evolved even to more useful piece of equipment, they became more versatile. They put what they call wings on them, they began to put snowplows and various other attachments to them. And they became an offroad vehicle as well. But they took the word "road" from in front of the grader and now they are just graders, they are able to perform that one function yet, mostly, grading. They can dig ditches with them, they can even clear land now with them. Various other attachments that they can use, but it's a highly versatile piece of equipment now, very sophisticated now but they are still called graders. The word has changed as time went on but it's primary function has remained the same. It went from road scraper to scraper to road grader to grader. This is what Morris Swadesh meant.

And I can tell you just about what time those things took place. (tape was shut off) I remember in the, I suppose, the late '20s and during the '30s, I saw those teams pulling the road scraper along. They had this on the reserve for quite a number of years even into the, I would say, probably into the '40s. And after the War there of course, they had one of those road graders. There was sometimes the words at that time were interchangeable between road graders and road scraper, but road grader finally won out after road scraper, road grader. And it kept going for a while until I suppose into the late '50s, when the new breed of graders arrived. And this is when they stopped using the term road grader and just applied the grader, because now they were not, they were no longer a road vehicle -- they could go anywhere. They weren't restricted to the road anymore -- they had many other things they could do; parking lots, and firebreakers they used to drive them out to gouge, to use as a fire wall, firebreak by gouging out the earth. And these different little fires they used to have and they used them for practically everything -- even for pulling, power, pulling and pushing, even lifting. That was only another thing they, that we can use as a model.

And the word (Indian) was a universal term, which was used as a term of greeting, (Indian). It has many, actually many meanings, this one word, (Indian). (Indian) "Are you still there?" (Indian) yes that meant, "Are you still working there?" And you can see (Indian). When you say this, you think, "Do you want anymore." Maybe you're eating and say (Indian), that word (Indian) means, "Would you like more," or just "more." (Indian) also means "yet." It has many meanings, "Are you still my friend?" "I still love you." In fact, you can put that in there too (Indian). (Indian), "Do you still believe?" When they say this, they are speaking of our religion, if you are still a believer. It's almost a sacred word. In fact at times I believe it was a sacred word in those days. (Indian), when you greeted a friend. And when two fellows get together it's sort of almost a slang term when you say (Indian). And that means you're a male friend. (Indian), I remember a man saying that to me when I was a little boy. (Indian). I didn't know what this meant -- I thought he was trying to be sassy with me. I later found out that this is a term that's used for some fellow or friend, a buddy, whatever you wish to call it. But it was sort of a strange word to me at that time, but I learned what it meant. Now that word (Indian) was added onto (Indian) and it became (Indian). So it seems that the Oneidas were lazy in saying (Indian) they just said (Indian).

And my mother was very surprised one time when she was a young girl. She and her grandmother were walking along somewhere, and this man came along and said (Indian). I said, "Why did he say that? You don't say that? You're a woman. They don't call you like that, that's for talk between two males and you're a girl and he said to you." The old lady laughed and she said, "Well, we must make allowances. This is something that we can't hold back. People are getting lazy with their tongues, some of them. And they get lazy at the wrong time

with the wrong words. But I could do no more than answer him." I distinctly remember this. My mother was most surprised when she heard this term (Indian) applied to greeting a woman. That was a first time for her.

Many years later, of course, I was surprised too. I could hear the word (Indian). I never heard it. I knew what (Indian) meant but I'd never realized that this was, what they would be known as a postmoninal part of (Indian), or a suffix of that word. Far as I knew (Indian) meant something, could have been derogatory, but (Indian) is something that was never used anymore -- only when it was spoken along with the other word (Indian).

We had different words, I suppose, which had died out. We was cold on the shins I suppose. I never had high boots and thermal underwear, and various other warm clothing in those days. Quite often our shins were bare or lightly covered at the most. And they would say different words for cold. Had a different word, I believe it's something like (Indian), that

meant it was cold on the shins. Today we just say (Indian), that it's cold -- you don't necessarily have to be cold yourself, but in the old days it expressed a certain feeling that you were cold, part of your body was cold, it would probably be your shin. The exposed part of your body. There are many things like those words. We used to say (Indian), that's where the moon has come up. Now in the old days they used to say (Indian), that is, it says the same thing but you use a different word. So, it's like that even in English language. Very few people know what a cobbler means and he's a shoemaker. Treacle is another word, syrup -- only two examples. So I guess we need not feel ashamed of our gradual evolutionary change in our language.

In many of my speeches, particularly to the non-Indians, I go along and tell them "Now you people are voting, your women are in command of many things, you are going to school, you're learning, where years ago it was not allowed. You have a

medicare program, your welfare system is good, you have day care centres, you have hospitals, you have teachers; and lecturers are the same as our storytellers. All of these things," I said, "you have. Your military tactics are not the same as they used to be, where (inaudible) shows you how to conduct war. All of these things." Then I said, "Then you people have come up and told me 'Oh, you poor Indians, we white people have changed so much -- you have become like us.'" And I kind of laugh at them. So I tell them, "You people didn't know how to use your horses. You never used your horse in agriculture until the year 1755. You didn't know how to grow your produce in rows, row crop, it was entirely new to you, you didn't know what it was. The only way you could grow things was by broadcasting, like wheat and oats, where a man walks along with bag and dipping his hand in there and throwing the seed in all directions and hoping it would grow. You used to harvest your things different ways."

Our farming was done differently. We produced things in rows, in crops, and so people could walk in there and harvest the different things that were growing there. Potatoes and corn were all different, differently grown. Our women saw to it that this -- the most extensive use of the earth -- was used. This is the way they devised ways and means of getting the best out of the land that they had. You could actually carry water into your garden. Whereas, if you grow everything all over the place, you couldn't do that -- you squash lot of the plants. Things were done in hills, rows. Quite often they grew things together such as a bean, corn and squash -- the Three Sisters. I say that somewhere in our world, our original mother is buried and we call her "Mother Earth", even in death she teaches us a lesson of co-operation, co-existence where the corn is helped by the bean, to help support against the wind and the rain, and help to divert the stream of water away from the short roots of the corn plant. Roots are short so it won't rob its sisters of any moisture. It stores most of its moisture in the body, in the stock. And the corn grows and

support its sister. And the beans grow on vines and they hang down. They don't touch the ground, they don't touch the earth. But the squash lives right on the ground. And its leaves are broad, thick, and very dark. This helps to save the moisture from evaporating, helps to keep it level so its sisters can draw water from it. They all drink from the same pool of water at the same time. The shade controls the weeds under the leaves of the squash, the sister, the squash helps to control the growth of weeds. So it will not undermine the growth, steal the growth rate from its two sisters, the beans and the corn. This is how man should co-exist with... we all learn from this example of co-existence. We must support each other. This was probably the last lesson that our original mother left, is a legacy for us to follow. There were other things as well that we, I should remember, I should say.

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