HIGHLIGHTS:

- Inuit death story.
- Lillooet (West Coast Indian) creation myth.
- Account of a man's search for his lost brother.

The following is the taping of the storytelling session at the Social Gathering held August 17, 1983, in honor of those elders who have been interviewed for the Native Canadian Oral History Project. The first storyteller is Jens Lyberth, an Inuit man from Greenland who tells a story passed down to him from his father. This is finished with a chant and prayer to the Great Spirit. The second storyteller is Max Ireland, an Oneida Indian and professional storyteller who was interviewed this summer for the project by Alex Cywink. Mr. Ireland tells the audience the legend of the bear according to the native peoples of British Columbia, and an Iroquois legend about survival and progress.

Jens: I will tell you a little story which my parents had told me, particularly my father who is an elder now, and who I'm so happy to know because he is the one who has really given me his spirit to go on. The legends of the Eskimos are not much different from the legends of the Indians, though we are apart thousands of miles. We are dominated people. We have paid of the Great Spirit whom we call for as the man who made us. (Indian word) is the one we call the man who made us, the
Great Spirit. And this Great Spirit has given a gift which are many, but the most important gift he has given us the life and the life thereafter. And this is how it's done. (Talks in Indian). It started one day I believe not too long ago in a dream. You see I dreamt though something was wrong but I wasn't going to. No, really I think I dreamt. Anyway I got up, put on the towel and looked, and breathed the air. Beside I saw was the ocean, deep blue, (Indian words) nice, just like a river. In the east was a great sun just arising, the light of life. I saw standing there, I realized that I really dreamt but the mood, I would do it again. My heart was telling me that what I saw I felt.

I decided that this is a time to go and hunt. I go down to the beach pick up my kayak, sent it out. And I got in. Everything was prepared, so I left. And I paddled out to the great ocean in which I have done many a time, in which my parents, and my ancestors before had gone through. I paddled, I paddled, I paddled. I came to the place in which I thought that this is the same time for me to go through it again. As I'm sitting there, just still. Again the feeling came back and something began to happen. I still thought that I was dreaming, but no. No, I'm not sure if I was dreaming or not. The silence broken by the bird. The morning just arisen. The seal came up. I prayed to the Great Spirit. So I took my harpoon and shot it, and this is when the whole thing happened. As I'm sitting in my kayak and I take the animal. He can go faster and stronger than anything I have ever killed. The next thing I know is that I was in the water. All that I can see is light on the surface around me. I wasn't quite sure that this was true or not. I still was frightened with myself about the dream, or a feeling keeps coming to me. This happened so quickly. The animal dragged me down to a lodge on the bottom. Anyway, the next thing I know is I was standing on the surface of the water on the land, and I was walking on land on the water. I looked around and I looked around and really nothing happened. Except, no, I saw my kayak overturned. Then I did realize that my dream was telling me that these events were happening. You know that I realized that I had (inaudible). Here I am standing in the middle of the ocean on the land. (Indian words) the only mode of transport. I didn't quite understand it. But then I composed myself and decided, "No, I think I better go home and tell my family of what has happened." I started to go home, I'm stuck in the middle of the ocean, walking on the land. At times it would hurt in my heart knowing what has happened because my kayak is behind me and the land is in front of me. As I was getting closer to the shore line I saw nobody standing on the hill, looking for me. Then I realized this is not a dream, this is the reality. I decided that I was going to try to drag kayak behind me and walk straight towards my wife on the hill. As I was getting closer I noticed my sons coming out of the (inaudible). The young ones were crying, and then I noticed that my wife was crying. Looking for me. Looking out to the ocean. And I kept trying to drag the kayak behind me. And as I was closer and my children crying, I could see my oldest one being strong with his
composure, it's great, going towards his mother. And I heard him saying, "Mom, it's okay, I'm here." I got to my wife and I started to call her. You see I realized that my dream, the feeling I had of the events happening was right there behind me in my kayak, this is how I died. I explained to my wife the hope that she will bring, that nothing will change. I will always be there.

The Eskimos told this to me and Great Spirit and the life of the speaker. The Great Spirit has given so many lives. And that's the story. If you die, you're always there. No matter where you are, you will always be there. In the night it was happen, we will hear your voices on the tapes, those of us who are young. Those of you who are elders, when you go on to the next life and you don't know if you can speak to us, you will always be there no matter where you are. And we'll be able to listen to your voice and gain experience when you go.

Amongst my people when you have gathered together with the elders, the elders will always be singing a song, or a chant. I had a drum, unfortunately it's not there. But as you can imagine a drum of Eskimos who has a beat of love. I will chant you a prayer. It's a prayer calling the Great Spirit to always remain there, never to leave because the moment of the Great Spirit, the very great gift and this is how the chant goes. (Chant is sung in Indian). (CLAPPING)

This really is a big honor. This came from another storytelling session of that (inaudible) And I came to Toronto for three months. The ones who tell stories and do some acting and whatever at CBC radio, T.V. and there was (inaudible). After the three months were over I went home, so I could very possibly come back and do some more things. So, when this winter Alexander asked me for a tape recording for him, this is exactly as it was recorded. I don't know, I made one tape uninterrupted and then a Blue Jay game came on. We were almost finished two for them, so I don't know how that second one will turn out. Now our friend here from the north -- by the way I'm an Iroquois, the ones you read about in your history books, the bloodthirsty Iroquois, Oneida. So to us falls responsibility, I suppose, of knowing other Indians, native people, across Canada, the States, north and south. We are supposed to know all of this, you know, as well as the people from the north. Their cultures are similar in many ways, but nevertheless you realize that their environment is different to what we have. And some of the things that they had, some very important to them are relatively minor for us. To them, in their culture they understand the woman of the house was dressed by the member of the clan. These are very important things for them. To us, like attending the fire for all the way along the line. The Longhouse here. Our traditions are very strong. I like to credit the people who originated some of the stories I tell and usually I try to give credit where credit is due. This particular one I'm going to tell you belongs to the Lillooet people of British Columbia.

It is said that many, many years ago along the valley in the
springtime, along the valley (inaudible) reached Columbia. The bears came down from the mountains. These were the grizzly bears, huge powerful beasts. And also the black bears came out of their hibernation. They used to mingle together. They lived together, they played together, they fished together. There was room for all the bears. And in the springtime they become playful. There were young bears, two of them were there. Of course there were more than that, but these two liked to play together and they were playing, and they began to get a little rough, and get rougher, and rougher and finally they got to the point where they were really fighting. And the black bear, being older than the grizzly bear, killed the grizzly bear. When the grizzlies saw this they got together and they went back up the hill. Then they began to worry. The black bears got together, "Do you know what's going to happen? He killed a grizzly, what is going to happen now? They're going to come back down out of those mountains and kill every one of us. You know they will, what will we do? We can't go anywhere, can't run because they'll hunt us down. They're great hunters. They can run faster than we. They're stronger. We'll have to think of a way, by trickery, by outsmarting them, some way or another we'll have to, we've got to do something to get through, to survive this crisis." So they began, various ideas came forth. Everybody had a chance. Finally one of them said, "Well, why don't we stand up, walk around like this? You can see those bears coming a long way, we can look around. Well, let's try it." Well, everybody was walking home. "You know, this isn't bad. You can see a long way. This is not bad. Look. And I can reach for berries that I couldn't reach before. So, this is pretty good, don't you think so?" "That's not a very good idea neither." "Why not?" "Those ears you've got, I can tell you a long way, way over there I could tell you're a bear." He says, "As I was coming back, I could see you (inaudible) standing up there." By the way, this is a sign, real sad sign for a bear. So this is what they were doing, were standing over there around the hill. "What can we do?" So other bears go up and said, "This is what we can do." And he grabs this fellow and pulled his ears down and he kept pulling them down and he was hollering. And he said, "Now, that looks better. You can't see your ears anymore." He says, "Yeah, but boy, you know that hurts." "Nevertheless we got to do it, everybody." So they all, if a fellow wouldn't do it himself, the other bear can and he pulls his ears off. Finally, all their ears were down. And he says, "That looks better. I can look over there. Grizzlies can't tell, even if they come from that direction." "Hey, look at that long snout. I can tell you're a bear, you're all alike when you look that way." "What are we going to do?" Well, there's this great big black bear he gets and walks over and says, "I can tell you what to do. In fact, I'll do it gladly." He grabbed this other fellow by the nose and pulled it right flat. He says, "Isn't that better now? You can't tell you're a bear. Look, even from the sides, see, both sides, your ears are down and your flattened out face, walking up like this. You don't look like a bear at all." "That's what you think. Look at that
hairy leg. I got hairy legs on me. Well you got to do anything about that?" "Come here." So he walked over and he starts going, "Ouch, ouch, ouch, hey take it easy." They pulled out every hair out of his body and he says, "That's cold. I'm cold like this without any hair." "Well, get that piece of bark and put it around yourself." "Hey that's better. It's not that cold after all. I think I could get used to it." Everybody did it. And he says, "Yeah, don't look like bears at all now. Only I know that you're a bear. But those (inaudible)." He said, "Well, sit down." Good thing because here they come. "Look at all the grizzly bears coming. Look they're over here too." The grizzly bears came, and they're snooping around (inaudible). Something smells. "Do you know what it is?" "I don't, but look, what are those things?" "Yeah, that's what it is, it's those things that stink, eh. What are they?" "I don't know. I don't even want to even get near them. Let's get out of here." So the grizzly bears left these things standing around. They didn't want anything to do with them. "Hey, what about the black bears?" "Heck we won't bother with the black bears, not today, not while these things are around." So they didn't realize that they were looking at the first people in the world.

That's one story that we attribute from the people of the west. So they have storytellers too. In fact it was one of their storytellers who (inaudible). There were others. I don't know just which one I should tell you now. I have a lot of them, but... I had one picked out here but I've forgotten, it must have been a lot. I thought I'd give you the true function about storytelling.

There's a drama going on about you all the time. All you have to do is look around you. You don't have to go out. This is a story right here. Everything, what you do today, can be made into a story. So don't think that you can't tell a story. It happens every day, different times of your life. In fact, last week or so I was at my little place telling a story... The storyteller he must have a lot of stories. Oh yeah, some good ones, yeah. Tell me which is the best story you've ever told? When did you tell it and where, and why? Oh, I can tell you that with no problem. It's a story I told the other morning at four o'clock in the morning when my mother caught me coming in. I had to really think quick to come up with a real good one.

There are many stories that, of course they all have to do with people. Some are fables something to do with animals that talk, stories of the (inaudible) people. They live way up in north, in the north, Sweden, Norway. Talking to them and they have the very same stories we do. And I'm sure that we have some stories that are very similar to those, almost word for word. Some are based on fact. This story book, document this is how we keep our history alive. I thought perhaps I could tell you an Iroquois story. This one has to do with... well, let me see. Which one will I tell? There are so many of them.
In a co-operative society you always have a certain amount of things that you and I can do. I can't do everything myself. Maybe George can do something, maybe Ron. We all must get together and contribute so much to our survival and our progress. Many of our stories have this in common. There are little segments, too, that go along.

One of the fables goes something like this. This boy Jack had been lost. The old people, they were old now, they were always expecting their son would come home. And the fox, he said, "You not only go way in the night (inaudible)." "Who is it?" "Jack. I'm home now." And they went to the door and they opened the door (inaudible). What can we do to that fox anyways? Did you ever see these snakes (inaudible) you put on your finger? (inaudible) once you put it on you can't take it off. "Then you put a hole in the door and you stick your finger in and you put that on there, then hang onto it and I'll get a stick." Sure enough, two nights later there was a knock on the door. "Who is it?" "It's Jack. I'm finally home."

"All right then. Oh, by the way, stick your finger through that hole in the door." In the dark slowly he puts his finger, "Ouch, ouch," and he opened the door (inaudible). Well, I'll give you one guess who that was. Either it's some of the things that takes place in the story, this is only one episode to this, there are so many things that these people do. Like going back to the co-operative thing. You see that this boy had disappeared a long time ago and his younger brother is growing up, and he's going to look for him. It's a sort of a fact.

(END OF SIDE A)

(SIDE B)

...so he told him this story. He's going out to look for his brother. He says, "Maybe I can find him." "Yes, I have nothing to do, I'll go with you." And they later come to a man who has this bow and arrows and he's, finally he lets it go. And he came out walking all day he says, started to talk. "Yeah, what were you doing? There's nothing up there." "Oh," he says, "there's a butterfly up near the sun." And he says, "My grandfather needs that butterfly. He has to have it for his medicine, he's a Medicine Man." Later on as we were talking this arrow came back with the butterfly on it. So (?) things were going along. He saw another man later on, and he was standing there listening. And then he goes to another place, there sort of a garden where he was listening. He came over and he says, "Hey, what are you doing?" "Well, I planted some corn about a week ago. I thought my seeds were bad, but I hear they're growing, they're coming up through. Did you hear the corn growing?" He said, "Oh yeah." So they invited him on their quest and he came willingly. And the fourth man was a farmer, he was standing there blowing and blowing away at the edge of a lake, so they asked him what he was doing. "Well, way on the other side of the lake, way back inland they don't have any water. And what I do, when I blow on this, it sends that water way back, fill their wells and whatever. The dried up rivers get water in them again, everything. It helps them
with their gardens and things of that sort." He says, "Whenever I blow like that, water goes in other directions." So finally they all got together and they walked and walked. They came to a clearing after a few days travel and they found this clearing and it had several buildings around there. They saw a woman, a very beautiful woman was walking around there.

She invited them in and gave them a meal. They began to talk and he said, "Hey, what's that path? There's a real straight path, where does it lead to? Maybe my brother went down there." "Oh, that doesn't go anyplace. It just goes way up there and there's a, that's where I get my water. There's a little dip up there, a stone on the ground and there's a dip in there. That's where I get my water. And I can only get a little bit at a time, a bowl about so big. It's good enough for dozen. It's a long ways though, but I don't mind, it's all I have to do anyway." "What do you do then?" he said, "Well, I like to race people." "That's what you do, eh? Well, where do you race?" "Well, usually we run down to... Who can bring the water back is the winner." "All right," he said. "Any of you race?" "Well, he does, he'll race you." So it was all arranged and they both had a bowl. All right, and they took off. Of course the runner, he was so fast he was out of sight in a little while, and the woman she, she kept going. He got the water and he was coming back and he met her. She says, "Oh, I give up. I can see you're much faster than I. Well, here, just sit down for a while." And she began to stroke his hair and everything. First thing you know he fell asleep. I've never had the pleasure of having a woman put me to sleep that way. But I guess it's quite a, I don't know, you ladies must have done it in your days. Anyway this is what she did to him. And finally they could see somebody running back. "Hey, that's not our man, it's that woman. I wonder what he's doing," said this fellow. "He's sleeping. I can't wake him up, and you can't run down there because he's the fastest runner we've got." (Inaudible) "Oh, yes he's awake, oh yeah, that woke him up. Well, what's he doing? He's running but he's going the other way. Going after some more water.

There's no water down there because he must have got the water and the bowl and bring it back." He said, "Well, wait a minute. Couldn't you blow some water in that well down there?" "Oh yes, no problem." So he started blowing and when the man got back there, there was water in there, so he scooted up and ran back and the woman was quite close then. He kept running back and back, and finally he appeared at just a little way from the finish line and he passed her. So this woman started to cry. She had been beaten. She said, "I've never been beaten yet." He said, "Well, for this you may go over to that big rock there." And something had been placed against it. There was a cave in there, and things have been placed against it. So when he done this, pull everything away quite a few young men came out of the cave and this fellow's brother was one of them. He looked around to look for the woman and all he could see was a huge circle and it's maybe the wind. So this woman... Our legends are full of women who were actually
serpents who could become beautiful women at will and she was
one of them. And their job was usually to entice men into
foolish situations, conquer them and keep them as captives.

Well I've held you up long enough so those are my two
contributions for the perpetuation of our culture. Thank you.

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