

## MUINJI'J BECOMES A MAN

### AREA ONE AND TWO

Niskamij: Get up boy, get up. It's time we start to get ready to go on our trip. (Leaves wigwam and goes to the river.)

Nukumij: Go to the river and pay homage and give thanks to the spirits for all the good things we have. Wash your face in the clear, sparkling water. Face the East and thank the Kitpu for his protection. Face the South and thank the Nukumij. Face West and thank the Spirit world for accepting you when it's your turn. Finally, face the North and thank the Great White Bear for all he has done for us. When you've done that, come back and I'll have breakfast waiting for you. Then we'll talk about your trip

Nukumij: Muinji'j, when you go on this trip to sell your furs, you will learn again all the many things we've taught you throughout your life about how to survive. You know there are fish in the rivers and there's food on the land. You know what berries to eat. You will be okay.

You must remember the furs you're taking to the city are to buy things we need to get us through the inter moons. You have to be careful how you handle them and don't let them get wet.

I want you to take care of your niskamij. He's getting old and fragile. He's not as strong as he used to be, so I want you to take care of him. Most importantly, if anything should happen to your niskamij, you have to look out for him. Make sure he's warm and comfortable.

Remember, we will be praying for you and the spirits will be watching over you and your niskamij as you make this journey. Eat your breakfast while I prepare the bundle for you. I will put in your blanket and a good knife. I will also put in some of my favorite tobacco so that when the time comes to pray to the spirits for guidance, you can make your offering.

Nukumij: Remember, Muinji'j, we love you. You will have to be strong. You are the future leader of our people. Take care of your niskamij. I believe he is now ready to go.

### TRAVELLING AREA THREE

Niskamij: If you paddle too hard and too fast, you will quickly become exhausted. You need to pace yourself so you don't get tired. Or else you will be no help at all.

Muinji'j: I want to move faster. We've got so many things to see.

Niskamij: We have to go ashore now and make camp for the night. We will have Pitewey and talk more about our trip to the city.

Muinji'j: But Niskamij, the sun is still high. Why do we have to stop? We'll never get to the city if we're going to stop every time you feel tired.

Niskamij: We need to stop because we have to make camp before dark. We can't wait until dark because then we'll stumble around and hurt ourselves. Then we'll never get to the city.

### **AREA THREE**

Niskamij pointing to rock: Muinji'j, do you see that point of rock up ahead? Take your hook and line and go catch our supper. Niskamij starts the fire in the fireplace.

Muinji'j': The sun is high. I don't know why we have to stop when the city is so far away. Why do I have to go catch the old fish anyway?

Muinji'j: Niskamij, Niskamij! Look. I've got a fish! I've got a fish!

Muinji'j: Now I've ruined everything. I let our supper get away. We're going to be hungry tonight.

Niskamij: No, no, no, we're okay. It just shows that you have to be careful. You have to watch what you're doing and be patient. I know how we could have something good for supper. My father taught me a good trick. We're going to make wood soup.

Muinji'j: Wood soup? How can you make soup from wood? That's not possible.

Niskamij: Well, we'll see. You go back into the woods and find a nice stick that's not too dry and remove the bark from it. Bring it back and we'll make wood soup.

Muinji'j: My niskamij is crazy. He can't make soup from a stick. Maybe the cold air out here is doing something to him.

Perfect!

If Niskamij can make soup from a piece of wood, he's a real miracle worker.

Niskamij: You better take off your clothes and hang them by the fire to dry. I'm going to make us some wood soup for supper.

Niskamij: Take and wrap the qalipu skin around yourself to keep warm. You sit here and watch your cloths. Make sure they don't burn and I'll make supper.

Muinji'j: Wood soup. I bet it is going to be really, really bad. Whoever heard of wood soup before?

Niskamij: Oh, look! I found a piece of qalipu meat. Maybe I'll add that to the pot. I will add some of the roots and plants as well.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, are you pulling my leg? Are you really making wood soup?"

Niskamij: Come Muinji'j, see for yourself. See how good it looks.

Niskamij: Get up Muinji'j, Get up. We have to move again. We can't stay here all day.

Niskamij: Don't forget to make your offering for the day, to give thanks for all the good things we have.

Muinji'j: I think I'll have more of that miracle soup. Pause... Are you okay, Niskamij?

Niskamij: Yes, Muinji'j, I'm fine. I'm just a little tired today. As soon as we eat, we'll load our canoe and head further along. We should reach the big river today if the wind doesn't blow and the spirits favour us. It's a mighty river, moving fast and furious. A lot of our people have lost their lives to that river. So, Muinji'j, today we have to be careful. Eat, my son, and when we're ready we will leave.

## **TRAVELLING TO AND AREA FOUR**

Muinji'j: Look, Niskamij. Look at the otters.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, is it going to rain? I hear thunder.

Niskamij: No, Muinji'j that's not thunder. That's the waterfall near the beginning of the river. Do you see that mist ahead of us? That's the mist that rises from the waterfall. That's where we have to be careful Muinji'j. We'll camp near the top of the waterfall tonight and tomorrow we'll portage around it.

Muinji'j: How many more times do we have to camp before we get to the city?

Niskamij: You have to have patience. It takes time to travel. We have to get all our furs down the river to the city. They can't get wet or all the work that we've done so far will be for nothing and we won't have any supplies for the winter. We have to be careful. Maybe when we get to camp you can go catch a fish again, like the one you caught last night.

Muinji'j: Yea, yeah, yeah and maybe you can make more wood soup.

Niskamij: No, we'll have fish tonight. If you use patience and I lend you my hook and line, I am sure you can catch our supper.

Niskamij: We have to stop soon, Muinji'j, to have some pitewey and rest before we finish our journey for today.

## **TRAVELLING TO AND AREA FIVE**

Niskamij: After tomorrow, you know, and another day's run, we'll be at the ocean. In one more day we'll get to the city. Are you excited, Muinji'j?

Niskamij: It's time we slept, Muinji'j. Tomorrow we wake up early and make ready for our journey downriver.

## **TRAVELLING TO AND AREA SIX (PORTAGE)**

Muinji'j: If this is hard work, it's going to be harder on the way back. We have to come back with all those supplies and do this over again!

Niskamij: Muinji'j, I don't feel well. We may have to stay here for a while until I've rested.

Muinji'j: Okay, Niskamij, we'll do as you say. Shall I make camp now and get firewood?

Niskamij: No Muinji'j, that's not necessary. We'll see how I feel as the day progresses and then we'll decide what to do.

Niskamij: This is good. This is good because you are taking responsibility. You will be a man before you know it. Perhaps when you are a man, you will leave me behind and travel to the city to live.

Muinji'j: No, I will be with you and my nukumji forever. That is my responsibility. That is my place.

## **TRAVELLING TO AND AREA SEVEN**

Niskamij: Muinji'j you must use the English I have taught you for the rest of this trip. You must practice. So we are ready to speak with the trader in the town

Muinji'j: Yes, Niskamij the practice will be good.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, what's that funny smell. It smells like something rotting.

Niskamij: What you smell is the salt sea air and when the salt air mixes with the fresh air it makes that smell. Once you reach the sea, you will realize that it's not something rotting, but something very powerful. It's the sea that you smell. We're not far away now.

Niskamij: No Muinji'j!

Muinji'j: Wow, this is crazy! This is so different, Niskamij. Is there something wrong with this water?

Niskamij: This is salt water. It is not fit for drinking, but there are things in this great lake, as you call it, like whales and seals. The salmon that we catch come from this water. It tastes different from what you are used to, but it's alive. It was put here by the creator. It just serves a different purpose. Tonight, we camp here and tomorrow we'll complete our journey to the city.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, how far is it to the city?

Niskamij: Oh, it's probably two days away. That is, if the wind is right and the waves are small because then we will make good time. If not, maybe we'll have to stay here for a month.

Muinji'j: A month! One whole month Niskamij? How could we stay here for a month? We'll go crazy on this little beach with nothing to do. Nukumij will be worried and she'll send someone to look for us.

Niskamij: No, It won't be a month, but it could be a couple of days.

Niskamij: I can't go anywhere today. I'm not feeling well. We'll have to stay here.

Muinji'j: Niskamij what can I do? How can I help you?

Niskamij: I don't know, Muinji'j. I don't know. It's my age and the hard work, you see. This may be my last trip to the city. The work is too much for me.

Muinji'j: You lie down and rest.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, can I help you in any other way? Can I get medicines for you?

Niskamij: Yes, Muinji'j. Do you know the medicines I need?

Muinji'j: I don't know, Niskamij, but if you can show me or tell me. I can gather them for you.

Niskamij: First, Muinji'j, you have to climb the flats above the river and find some beaver root. You reach into the water and pull out the roots from the pond. Then you must gather alder. After that, you will have to dig in the moss to find the yellow root. Next you must find and collect balsam fir and the leaves from the blueberry plant. Along the river you will find wild cherry and wild dogwood trees as well as ground juniper; collect some from these as well. If you can find those things and bring them to me, I will show you how to make the medicines to help me get well again.

Muinji'j: Maybe some day I can become a Medicine man.

Niskamij: Now, we need to build a sweat lodge. We have very little hide to make a covering so this is what we'll do, Muinji'j. I want you to dig a hole in the sand as deep as you can make it for now. Then we'll make a fire. We'll put rocks on the fire to make them hot. We'll build a shelter over the hole using alders, birch bark, balsam fir boughs and anything else we can find. Inside, we'll put the hot rocks and we'll bring the medicine into the lodge. Those medicines that you have made will help make me well again.

Niskamij: I have to lie down now, Muinji'j and let the medicine work. Tomorrow we will see what happens. So we rest now and wait until tomorrow to see what the Creator will have in store for us.

Muinji'j: Niskamij, Niskamij! Are you okay?

Niskamij: Yes, Muinji'j, I'm still here, but I'm very sick and very weak. I don't think I can make the journey to the city. I would like some Pitewey. Will you make some for me? Then we will talk.

Niskamij: Muinji'j, I'm old and weak. I don't think I can make the trip to the city. If I taught you how to sail the canoe and if I taught you what to look for when you get there, would you be okay?

Muinji'j: But, Niskamij, I've never been to the city before. I'd be too afraid.

Niskamij: Come now, Muinji'j. There's nothing to be afraid of. Come and we'll go to the canoe and I will teach you how to sail the canoe by yourself.

Niskamij: Get in the canoe, Muinji'j, and try sailing around this little harbour. When you feel comfortable, we will load the canoe and you can sail to the city.

Muinji'j: I'm ready, Niskamij. I'm ready to go to the city.

Niskamij: Good, Let's load this canoe down with furs and we will see what happens. Muinji'j, I will stay here at the campsite and drink the medicines you have collected for me. I will try to get well so that when you return from the city, I will be strong enough to make the journey upriver with you.

You go to the city and trade our furs. When you get the supplies, come back and meet me here. Beware, for there are many traps in the city. Muinji'j, you have to be tough. The trader will try to cheat you out of your furs. He will tell you that the furs are no good or that the prices he has to pay you are low. There are two traders in town. When you get to the trader, ask for the other trader, Pierre. Tell him you have furs to trade. Immediately the trader will know that he's got competition and he will want to give you a good price. So, as soon as you have the supplies load them into the canoe and leave the city. Come back here and we will start our journey home. Muinji'j, be careful and extra cautious.

Muinji'j: Okay, Niskamij, I'm ready to go.

## **THE REST OF THE STORY**

Muinji'j: Shoo, Shoo, Shoo...Shoo

Muinji'j: Wow, they're afraid of me. Now I don't have to be afraid anymore. I'm the stronger one here.

Muinji'j: I guess the ocean is saying that I can go now.

Muinji'j: Those people never sleep. They're moving around all night long. Don't they have any wigwam? Don't they have a nukumij to take care of them?

People in City: Who is he? Do you smell that? What does he want? Ohh, he smells. He is kind of dressed funny. Do you smell that? Look what he is wearing. he looks different. I wonder who he is. I haven't seen him in town before. I wonder where he is going? Is he lost? I suppose he is here to trade. I don't see anyone with him.

Trader: What do you want, boy?

Muinji'j: I have furs to sell, sir.

Trader: You have furs to sell? What kind of furs do you have, boy? You have squirrels? You have rabbit furs?

Muinji'j: No, sir, I have beaver pelts, otter pelts, fox pelts, muskrat pelts and lynx pelts. I have all kinds of furs and they're good furs, too. My grandfather says they are good furs.

Trader: Where is your grandfather, boy?

Muinji'j: My grandfather is...my grandfather is with the canoe, sir. He's watching the canoe. He asked me to come and see if you want to buy our furs.

Trader: Well, I really don't want any furs. I have lots of furs and the prices are down.

Muinji'j: That's okay. My grandfather asked me to find out where the trader named Pierre is set up.

Trader: Pierre! You don't want to talk to Pierre about furs; he'll cheat you, he'll rob you. Bring your furs here, boy. I'll give you a good deal even though I don't want any furs and the prices are down. Don't go to Pierre.

Muinji'j: How would I get them here, sir?

Trader: Well, I guess I could get someone with a horse and wagon to pick them up for you if you tell me where you are.

Muinji'j: I'm at the end of a big cove and there's a great big house on top of the hill nearby.

Trader: Alright, I'll send a wagon there later to pick up your furs and talk with your grandfather.

Muinji'j: Okay, I'll be there waiting.

Little Girl: You! You! You! Do you see what you've done? You've ruined my dress!

Muinji'j: I'm sorry. I didn't mean to.

Muinji'j: Perhaps I'll see her again and perhaps this time she won't be so mad. Maybe she'll talk to me. Naa, that probably would never happen. Anyway I have to get my furs ready.

Trader's Helper: Where's your grandfather?

Muinji'j: He went into town. He left me here to load the furs. We'll meet him in town, sir.

Muinji'j: Who is that?

Trader's Helper: Oh, you don't want to go up there, boy. Those people don't like you.

Muinji'j: What do you mean, they don't like me?

Trader's Helper: Well, they just don't like you. So don't go there. Don't bother them. Leave them alone.

Trader's Helper: I didn't see your grandfather.

Muinji'j: Oh, he's around. He's probably visiting his friends.

Little Girl: What are you doing here?

Muinji'j: I came for supplies.

Little Girl: Supplies for whom?

Muinji'j: These supplies belong to my grandfather.

Little Girl: Where do you come from?

Muinji'j: It's a long way from here.

Little Girl: But how did you get here? Who brought you here?

Muinji'j: I brought myself. Do you want a candy?

Little Girl: No, I don't want a candy. I'm not allowed to eat those sugary things; they're not good for you.

Muinji'j: Oh, I think they're good. I've never tasted anything like them in my life.

Little Girl: You smell funny.

Muinji'j: So do you.

Little Girl: What do you mean, I smell funny?

Muinji'j: Well, you don't smell like the woods and you don't smell like you've got beaver pelt on you. You don't smell like the smoke and you don't smell like the ocean. You have a different smell and that is funny.

Little Girl: You smell stinky.

Muinji'j: Well, so do you. You don't smell as good as me. I've got beaver pelt on me. I've got bear fat in my hair. I've got wood smoke all over me. I smell good. You smell funny. But I like your eyes. Your eyes are blue, just like the sky.

Little Girl: You haven't told me what you're doing here.

Muinji'j: I told you I came to pick up supplies. These are my supplies for my grandfather and my grandmother. My grandfather is sick so I had to come here alone.

Little Girl: How many days did it take you to get here?

Muinji'j: Well, I think it was about five moons to get here.

Little Girl: That's a long time.

Muinji'j: Oh, it was lots of fun with my grandfather. He is very smart and he knows all kinds of neat stuff. We live on the land and off the land.

Little Girl: We live in that big house up on the hill and we have servants to take care of us.

Muinji'j: What are servants?

Little Girl: They're people who cook our food, clean our clothes, that kind of stuff.

Muinji'j: Oh, well, we don't have servants. All we have is my grandmother who takes care of us. I don't wash my cloths. I only have one set of clothes.

Little Girl: Yeah, I know. It smells like that too.

Muinji'j: You keep talking about my smell. What's wrong with my smell?

Little Girl: Well, you smell funny. You smell different. Your hair is long. Has no one ever told you to cut your hair?

Muinji'j: I can't cut my hair. That would mean that I lose my strength. Then the spirits would stay away from me.

Little Girl: I have to go. I have to go home.

Muinji'j: Maybe I'll see you next year?

Little Girl: Very unlikely. Very unlikely.

Muinji'j: Where are you Niskamij? Where are you?

Niskamij: You did good. You did good. Muinji'j. Come ashore and have some fish. I've caught lots of fish. Your medicine was good. Your nukumij will be pleased we're ok.

**THE END!!**