SAHTÚ GODÉ DÁHK'É

Arakœ Túé Ba Agonáts'etî - Someone Dreamed at Arakœ Túé *by Christine Harris*

This was my first trip to Arake Tue. The closest I ever got to that place was in 1939 when I was eight years old. We went past Tutcho Tue (Aubrey Lake) to the treeline. I was surprised to see how small the trees were.

My father used to say that when we go somewhere new, we should take something home with us from that place. It could be a stick, a rock, or anything. That way we'll live longer. So I brought this nice willow stick back from Arake Tue. If I get sick, I'm going to give it to my children, and they'll live longer too.

During this trip to Arake Tue, it got really windy. So I went down to the lake and paid the water with tea and cigarettes.

That night, I had a dream. A woman came to me. She was a really nice looking woman. "Why have you come here?" she asked.

I told her that we were here to get meat. But the weather was getting too windy and cold. She replied, "It's nice to see all of these people here. Hardly anybody ever comes here. You're going to have a good time. You'll have good weather and you'll get lots of caribou. But be careful with your guns."

And what she said was true. We got lots of meat, and the weather turned out really nice. We had a good time, we were happy.

Then she said "I'm going back to where I came from now." She as she turned away, she looked back and waved goodbye. Then I woke up, and she was gone.

I didn't really recognize her, but I think she was one of the dead people from Colville Lake, maybe Alexie Blanchot's mom. She always used to go to Arake Tue in the summer with pack dogs.

ARAKŒ TÚÉ ÆUTS'ÚLA
Arakœ Túé Love Song
Niwana goda
Wi œœ
Dawôht'e?
Œœ
You're too far away from me
Wi aay
What am I going to do?
Aay

hunting trip to the

by Deborah Simmons

Seven years ago in the fall, some people from Colville Lake were doing some reclamation work out on the barrenlands. They could see caribou all around. They decided to delay their return so that they could hunt, and bring some caribou meat back to the community. The next year, funds were found to invite the entire community on a fall hunt at Arakœ Túé. Thus was revived an ancient annual tradition of the K'ahsho Got'ine.

As many people from Colville Lake have remarked, this year's fall community hunt was extra special. The Behdzi Ahda Band Council, in partnership with the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board, invited filmmaker Dennis Allen to record the event. The film will eventually be available for use as an educational tool.

At the last minute, the people of Fort Good Hope were invited to join the community hunt at the barrenlands. The community council put out a request for volunteers, thinking that a handful of hunters would respond. But the response was overwhelming. In the end, more than forty men, women and children were signed up.

As a result, the idea of the hunt took on a whole new meaning for the organisers. New funds were found to ensure that everyone could go. Youth in particular were encouraged to participate.

You didn't have to be a member of the K'ahsho Got'ine to participate. To my great joy, I was able to be part of the trip. There was also a Japanese guest, whose name sounds like the Dene word for berry (jíyé) – and she was soon affectionately called Blueberry. Cole Crook, the renowned fiddler and storyteller from Hay River, was an especially honoured guest.

We arrived over a period of several days in the yellow twin otter float plane – about 90 people from Colville Lake and Fort Good Hope, 17 tents and as many wood stoves, 2 four-wheelers, an inflatable rubber raft, and materials for building a wooden scow.

At 73 years of age, Alice Rabisca was probably the oldest person to make the trip. She and other elders had much to teach the rest of us, and they were the hardest workers.

There were countless young children, the youngest of which was Snowbird Kochon's daughter, only a few weeks old. Anne Kochon-Orlias, seven months pregnant, wasn't about to miss out on the action.

When we arrived, the rich resources of the land unfolded

Yą k'e - Heaven *by Alfred Masuzumi*

Tuk'e enikl'éshéné wáhé etsedekl'énídé nîhts'iduodíle. Writing on the water with a wooden pencil will calm the storm. (Joe Betsidea's father, Deline)

Long ago in my youth, an elder named Susan Gully told me that if I want to know how heaven is, I should go to Arake Tue in the summer. Finally this fall, my youthful dream of seeing that place became a reality.

Going to Arake Tue was like going back in time. As we arrived, the elders said, "Quick - break off a branch of willow. Chew a piece of it and spit it out. Pray for good weather and success in hunting." They were telling us how to pay respect in a strange land.

When that big wind came up on the second day of our trip, I thought that maybe someone had neglected to do the land ritual. My dad always said we should give something to the water and the land. When it's windy, he told us, the land and water are asking for something. So I took some sugar, tea, matches, bannock, and 22 shells down to the lake and threw them in the water. I talked to the water: "Grampa, help us. Stop the wind." And I wrote "sun" on the water with a wooden pencil.

Later I went hunting, and the wind changed. That night, we paid the land again at our fire feeding ceremony with everybody at the camp. When I spoke at the ceremony, I felt the presence of spirits. Spirits of the past. Later, the wind died down.

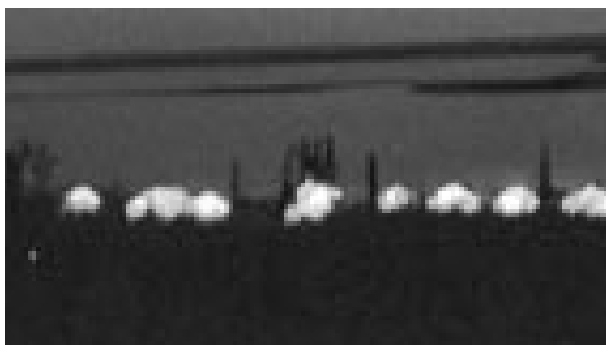
There was a grizzly bear around the camp, but it didn't bother us. There is an old saying that the bear knows when you speak of it. So the elders tell us not to think about the bear, and it will mind its own business.

The trip was a learning experience for both young and old. I myself learned how to butcher caribou properly, and how to pack meat in a caribou hide.

My son, Peter Charles Masuzumi, shot his first caribou at Arake Tue. He will be twelve years old on November 6.

We will give a portion of caribou meat to all the elders in the community so that Peter will be blessed by them, and they will give predictions of his future.

PLACE OF STORIES



barrenlands

K'î Æelá - Birch Canoe

Gabe Kochon, Fort Good Hope

Interviewed by Alfred Masuzumi and Deborah Simmons - Transcribed and translated by Rose Kochon

During the trip to ArakœTúé, some people got to see the old birch canoe there. They were amazed to see that thiscanoe had no nails in it. There was a big bush growing right in the middle of the canoe.

I never got to visit Arakœ Túé, but my parents used to travel around that area before we were born. After we were old enough we used to travel to Œyoni Kî. The Táshini Got'ine were the clan that used to live at Horton Lake. They used all the barrenlands area – Sháli Túé, Táhgun - all that area. All the elders that travelled around down that way are gone.

My dad and grandfather used to tell me about the birch canoe at Arakœ Túé. That canoe belonged to Michel Blanchot. He had lots of brothers, and there are still many of his relatives living today. This must have been way before I was born. I don't know if Blanchot's grandsons were told about that canoe.

Blanchot was a Dogrib, related to Alfred Blanchot from Fort Rae. From there he moved to Deline for two years, then he travelled to Arakœ Túé and started living there.

In the old days, people from Fort Good Hope used to travel to Arakœ Túé and meet with people from K'áhbamñ Túé. There was a girl that was supposed to get married to one of the young men, but he wasn't a hunter. Blanchot was always hunting and bringing good food back to the father of that girl, so he wanted Blanchot to marry his daughter. Blanchot married her, and he had lots of sons. So all the Blanchots are part Dogrib.

They say he was really smart with his hands. They say he built the birch canoe here in Fort Good Hope, then he carried it all the way to Horton Lake. Maybe his brothers helped him get that canoe out to Arakœ Túé.

The reason he made the canoe was that he didn't like to use a raft to check his nets or go around the lake. He made it in Fort Good Hope because there are no birch trees in K'áhbamñ Túé or anywhere in that area.

Horton Lake was Michel's hunting and trapping area. He used all the old Dene trails that go through Táshín Túé, Líhsigóhlin and Táhgun.

before our eyes. We were surrounded by fat caribou, juicy blueberries and cranberries, and just enough trees and dead wood for setting up camp and keeping our fires going.

There was much work to be done. But many of us had to be taught the necessary skills. Sharon Pierrot from Fort Good Hope was experienced at cutting up meat. Even so, she soon realised that both she and her teenage daughter had a lot to learn in deboning, cutting and smoking caribou meat so that it would be lightweight and preserved for the trip home. She said to her daughter, "You and I are going to school for a week. This is our time to learn." Soon many of the youth were teaching each other how to cut meat, break bones to extract the marrow, and gather rotten wood for smudge fires. None of them had to be taught to pick and eat the sweet blueberries.

We also had to learn ways of respecting the land and the caribou that were rooted in thousands of years of experience passed on in the form of stories through thegenerations. Some of these were shared at informal gatherings in the tents after darkness fell. As the stories unfolded, the surrounding landscape took on anaother, animated dimension.

Often the stories were told in the Dene language. Even when the storytellers were fluent in English, they would say that the story never sounds quite as good in translation.

Evenings were also a time for stories and music, for drumming, dancing, fiddling. And for hand games. There was intense competition over two evenings between the Fort Good Hope and Colville Lake teams in the dim light of the kerosene lantern as onlookers crowded around. The beat of the drum and the sound of gambling chants floated over the encampment. Northern lights flickered in green and pink across the star spangled sky.

One day early in the trip, we heard the eerie cries of several loons flying past our camp. The elders said this was a sign of bad weather coming, and sure enough a wind whipped up that kept the boats grounded. This was the occasion for a return to the ancient land rituals.

There were signs of the long history of land use in the surrounding area. A decaying birch canoe said to be brought all the way from Fort Good Hope. A corral used for hunting caribou before the days of guns. Inscribed in the land was the history of a people. And, some would say, a crucial aspect of its future.

Everyone felt that the trip was too short; there was still much left to be done. But there was deep satisfaction upon our return as the meat was shared out to numerous households in the community.

Máhsi cho to the K'ahsho Got'ine and Behdzi Ahda community councils, and especially Ronald Pierrot and Joseph Kochon, for organising the community hunt.

This special issue of Sahtú Godé Dáhk'é was produced with the assistance of Alfred Masuzumi and Rose McNeely. Susan McKenzie of the Sahtu Land Use Planning Board created the map. Rob Kershaw and Anne Marie Jackson provided help with layout and design.

Beauty of the Land

by Charlie Tobac

I would like to share a little on our trip to Horton Lake, which is about an hour and twenty-five minute ride from Fort Good Hope by twin otter. I heard about this place from those who had been there before. I was very honoured to be part of the group and experience such a beautiful place.

When the elders share with me, they talk about the barrenlands, they are close to tears. I imagine they experienced the same beautiful feelings on that land that I did.

When the lake is calm it looks like glass. The loons are in the background and their cries are lonely and wild. The trout and whitefish in the lake are of all different sizes, very tasty.

You can see far into the distance on the barrenlands. The hills and valleys have very few trees. Each valley has small lakes surrounded by ground packed hard by caribou herds. You can see the caribou wandering around and feeding.

One evening we did the feeding of the fire ceremony with drums and songs. This was to give thanks, to respect all of creation, to humble ourselves, and to pray for those that may be buried throughout the land. From a distance this would have been a beautiful sight.

I want to thank our leaders for organising such an event for our community. What I saw was a powerful connection with the land and with each other and our families. Our ancestors before us had this kind of close connection with each other and with different clans and tribes throughout the land.

This gathering was more like a family affair. Parentswere teaching all of their skills, passing on what they know to the children. Every tent had its own tipi, with stages strong enough to hold and support meat from as many as three or four caribou. The meat was smoked and dried all day long. From morning to sunset, people were busy cutting up meat, deboning it, making dry meat, and working on caribou hides. There was always wood to be gathered for the tents and tipis. Branches were gathered and laid down for the tent floors. Then we also had to cook our meals. Yet everyone tried to find time to relax in between all these activities.

This was an important event for our children. It was like an investment in their future. They lack so much experience with the land. They need to know about their hunting, trapping and fishing grounds of their great grandfathers. Without this teaching, they will have very little say in the future. They need this knowledge to protect the land, and for self-government.

This is why I look to the leadership of our community to support youth programs on the land. Sometimes we focus too much on our social problems. We forget how much everybody can benefit from the beauty of the land out there.

hunting trip to the barrenlands

Voices from K'áhbamñ Túé

Rose Kochon asked a number of people from K'áhbamñ Túé for their thoughts about this year's trip to Arakœ Túé. Here's what they told her:

Every year I got out to Arakœ Túé. This year was better because there were lots of people from Fort Good Hope. Linda Kochon

I went out to Arakœ Túé for six years and this year it was really good. I was so pleased that the Fort Good Hope people joined us on the caribou hunt and trip. Joe Martin (Elder)

Every time we go out to Arakœ Túé we feel really good. The land smells fresh and looks new. When people bring their kids out there and they are sick they get better really fast, and they don't get sick again. Sarah Kochon and Elizabeth Blanchot (Elder)

This was my first trip to Arakœ Túé. I reallyenjoyed myself. It was a lot of work but it was good because everybody was working together and sharing their traditional knowledge. We need to get more youth to go out on the land and explore the beauty of the land. Trudy Kochon

It was my first trip to the barrenlands. If I had a choice I'd stay out there. It was good because a lot of the women were showing the youth how to make dry meat and cut meat. I had a good time. If there's a trip set for next year I'm going out again. Katrina Gully (Grade 11)

Itwas so nice to see Fort Good Hope people, and not only that, even a person from Japan, and the filmmaker guy, and people like Debby and Cole Crook. The youth participated in all the work that the elders had for them. They were really enjoying themselves.The best part was seeing the two chiefs working together and helping their people. The weather was really good. Roland Codzi

The elders always want the youth to get involved with the traditional way of life. It's important to respect the land rituals. If you don't do those rituals, it's like walking past a person and not shaking their hand. That's why we all paid our respects to the land and water. And we had really good weather. Marie Kochon (Elder)

I liked playing and skinning caribou legs, and washing dishes, and seeing lots of Fort Good Hope people. Carla Tutcho, Grade 4

I enjoyed sharing with my family, listening to stories by the elders, and playing. It was good to see people from Fort Good Hope. Kyra Kochon, Grade 3

It was lots of fun and good to be amongst other people. There were lots of caribou. Ryanna Kochon, Grade 8

I had fun watching people working on meat and making dry meat and picking berries and watching caribou in the field. Estelle Kochon, Grade 6

map

Place Names New and Ancient

Many of the traditional Dene place names will not be found on official maps. But these names and the stories that go with them contain much information about the land and its history. Below is a list of the names used in this month's Sahtu Godé Dáhk'é. Names, translations, and locations are provided by Gabe Kochon and Alfred Masuzumi, with the assistance of Rose McNeely. Translations of the Dene names are in italics, followed by the names as they currently appear on official maps.

Arakœ Túé (Inuit Lake) – Horton Lake
Bedzi Rayú (Female Caribou Ridge) – Belot Ridge
K'áhbamñ Túé (Ptarmigan Net Lake) – Colville Lake
Líhsigóhlin (Red Mud Place) – a place on the Anderson River where red ochre is found
Œyonih Kî (Phalarope Dome) – Maunoir Dome
Sháli Túé (Shawl Lake) – Kilekale Lake
Táhgun (translation unknown) – Unnamed creek
Táshín Túé (Stump Lake) – Lac des Bois

A note about spelling: We have not yet been able to acquire an up-to-date dictionary of official spellings for North Slavey terms. Community approved names are spelled according to the listing compiled by the Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre. Other Dene names are spelled phonetically, using the alphabet defined by the North Slavey Standardisation Committee in 1990. We welcome your input about language and spelling issues. Contact Deb in Fort Good Hope at 598-2055, or at our post office box.

Ts'õdun Rákoy£ - Child's Play

by Alfred Masuzumi

I have long been told stories about the huge mountain called Œyoni Kî, and it was a delight to see it rising from the surrounding lowlands as we were flying over to Arake Túé from K'áhbamñ Túé. It looked still and silent, and I remembered the story about Œyoni Kî and its sister mountain, Bedzi Rayú:

Once upon a time the people between those two mountains were as plentiful as the trees. Now, the two mountains looked at each other longingly - elaghayahda dedi - for now the place was empty of people.

Œyoni Kî named after the little phalarope, who is said to have once beat the great whistling swan in a test of strength when no other animal would dare take him on. This mountain is known as the birthplace of all the Inuit and Indian nations of the country.

In the beginning, the people had the innocence of a child.
They had no knowledge of what was good.
They had no knowledge of what was bad.
No one knew what disagreement was.
There were no borders on the land.

One day, a young Inuit boy and a young Gwich'in boy were playing together, shooting arrows and chasing after them. When they came upon an owl up in a tree, they both took aim and shot at it. The owl fell out of the tree, and the boys started arguing about who killed the owl.

The Inuit boy's dad tried to solve the dispute by reaching over and taking the owl away from the boys. But as the Inuit father turned away, the Gwich'in youth shot him in the back.

Thus started a great war in which mothers turned against their mothers, fathers against fathers, sisters against sisters, brothers against brothers. The lush forest was trampled. There were piles of bodies everywhere, and a lake of blood was formed. To this day, there are no trees on Œyoni Kî, and a lake of blood can still be seen on top of the dome.

Finally, a truce was called. The people said "This fighting is crazy – we're all one family and we're killing each other off!" But Akaitcho was so enraged that he wanted the bloodshed to continue. There was a big council fire, and the wise ones of the family said "We can no longer live together. We must all go our separate ways."

There are two versions to the legend of Œyoni Kî – the human version and the animal version.

In the human version, the people dispersed from the council fire. The children went east, the mothers went south, and the young men of twenty years went west. But before the young men left, they put some meat by the council fire. This was for the gray haired old man who was too old to go anywhere.

The young men who went west are the Inuit people.
The gray haired old man is the K'ahsho Got'ine.
In the animal version of the story:
The young pups went east.
The wounded dog went south.
The beaver went west.
The old gray wolf stayed behind, for he was too old to go anywhere.

The symbolic animal of the Inuit is the beaver. It is said that the reason the Inuit are marvelous craftsmen is because they are of the beaver.

Their igloo homes are the same as the beaver lodge.

The old people used to say, "My goodness, they can make a piece of crooked driftwood straight! What a wonder it would be if they lived amongst the trees with us."

We call the Inuit Arakœ (pronounced ah-rah-kay). We call our mukluks arakœ k£, and our parkas arakœ æœ after the Inuit people.

The symbolic animal of the K'ahsho Got'ine is the gray wolf, for our people are known to be as wise as the old gray wolf.

Since that time long ago, we have told this story to remind us not to get involved with the arguments of children.

It is natural that a parent would become defensive when other children beat up on their child. But it is certain that if they are left alone they will soon be playing together again, maybe ten minutes later or maybe the next day.

For they have no knowledge of what is good.
No knowledge of what is bad.
They are innocent.

One day in the future when all the family members pay homage to their birthplace at Œyoni Kî, they will say - we are of the children, we are of the mothers, we are of the fathers.

From your Grandfather, K'ahsho Got'ine

SAHTÚ GODÉ DÁHK'É PLACE OF STORIES

WANTED WRITING • PHOTOGRAPHY • ART

Send your submissions to Sahtú Godé Dáhk'é, PO Box 239, Fort Good Hope, NT X0E 0H0. Writing may be in Dene (Syllabics or Roman orthography), French or English languages. All submissions must include the name and contact information for the author. If you wish your work to be returned, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope.

Please also send letters to the editor with your comments and feedback!