

## CHRONICLE: INTERVIEW WITH A SENECA SONGMAN

NOTE. Richard Johnny John is one of the leading singers & makers-of-songs at the Allegany (Seneca) Reservation in western New York State: descended from singers, some of them, like the two grandfathers he mentions, very important in their own time. The narrative is a piecing-together of bits from a series of interviews between us in August 1968. I asked him to speak about his life as a songmaker (poet too in the use of both words & word-like sounds) & about the practice of his art as carried on within the heh-non-deh-not-ha or traditional Iroquois Singing Society.

The "woman's dance" songs mentioned throughout are the most popular of the secular or social dances, also the most interesting from my own point of view; i. e., they're the only ones still being made with any frequency, & they often do have words to them, whereas most Seneca pop songs (& many sacred ones as well) are "wordless." Typical structure of the contemporary woman's dance song is: intro sung by leader; repeat of intro plus 2nd part, by leader & chorus; repeat of whole by leader & chorus. Instruments are horn rattles for chorus, water-drum for lead singer. While I was at Allegany, in 1968, the principal makers of woman's songs for the Cold Spring Longhouse Singing Society were Herbert Dowdey (then absent in Canada), Avery Jimerson & Richard Johnny John.

The Kinzua Dam is the flood control project on the Allegany River, backwater from which was supposed to sweep over that part of the reservation on which most of the Senecas were living. They put up a strong fight for an alternate plan, but lost & are now resettled on two sides of the proscribed land, still waiting for the waters to come in.

The Gaiwiyo ("code" or "good message") was brought by the Four Beings to the Seneca prophet, Handsome Lake, in the last decade of the 18th Century, & resulted in a fundamental reformation of the native religion. Even so it retains many ancient features, both in the public ceremonies (or "doings") at the longhouse, & in the rituals of the various medicine societies. It is today one of the principal vehicles for retaining a deeply-rooted Indian way-of-life among the Senecas.

—Jerome Rothenberg

1.

How I really got started with songs was from the old-time Singing Society that they used to have amongst the oldtimers, amongst the older men. At that time there was a lot of older men that was in the Singing Society, and I kind of picked it off from them, the ways that they were singing. I guess everybody's got their own way of singing and how to make up songs.

There's quite a few old men that I remember. I can't forget my two grandfathers — they were both singers — and a lot of others besides. One of my grandfathers was Chauncey Johnny John naturally, and the other was Howard

Jimerson. Then that goes all along through Amos Redeye (he used to do a lot of singing), Wesley White and Willy Stevens, Clarence White, Sherman Redeye: there was quite a few of them. And old John Jimerson used to do quite a bit of singing himself, made up a lot of songs. In years back too you can't forget Ed Currey.

All them oldtimers talked about even older men than they were, they called them oldtimers themselves, and there were still some older ones than they were. Even up till today we sometimes talk about the oldtimers, and we sing songs that's even older than what we are as of today. Sometimes we get in the mood to sing some of these oldtimers' songs, and they're really, I wouldn't be afraid to say that there may be some of the songs that we do sing today that are over a hundred years old; I wouldn't be afraid to bet that they are older than a hundred years old, some of them. Among the social dances too — like the old Moccasin Dance we have, that's a real oldtimer, I don't know how long back that has started up. Some of these dances and some of the songs that they do today have been danced from way back when the Gaiwiyo first came to Handsome Lake. We used to have all of these different social dances, and some of the songs are still sung as we remember them.

In the old times, you know, when all these oldtimers used to get together, they'd pick out a spot, they'd go to somebody's house. In them days they didn't do like we do now: sometimes we go right to the longhouse and sing at the longhouse, have the singing group come to the longhouse; but in them days there was so many of them, that sometimes on both ends of the reservation there was singing. There'd be maybe a group down in Quaker Bridge, and then there would be another group singing in Cold Spring, all on the same night, there was that many of us singers in the old days.

Now we're so far apart and there's so few that really can sing, but in the olden days they would mostly go on foot to these houses, they were so close together. They all lived, I guess, in one big circle right around Cold Spring and Quaker Bridge; that was right in the middle of the reservation, and most of the longhouse believers were right in that circle. It was more or less handy for them to pick out a place where they could meet and sing on this one night, and then sometimes maybe if there wasn't any singing in Cold Spring, some of the Cold Spring people would come down to Quaker Bridge. The two groups would come together then: then you could really hear some good music.

They went to different houses too. They didn't have a certain night where they were going to sing, but anybody could say well, tonight we'll sing maybe at my place, and then maybe the following night they'll say well, we'll go down to Quaker Bridge and visit some of our friends down there. This was a spur of the moment as I would say it. It wasn't like anything today. Today now, you're lucky if you can get three or four singers together, cause everybody else here is riding in cars, and there's so many things going on. Especially in the summertime: you can't get the singing group together in the summertime too much. It's more or less fall, winter and spring, I would say.

I've belonged to the Singing Society ever since I was 14 or 15 years old; that was in Cold Spring where we used to live. Old Lindsey Dowdey was our president at that time, and that's been a good many years ago, pretty close to, I wouldn't be afraid to say that was a good forty years ago when I first started to pay any attention to these singers.

I remember I used to sit over on the side. There was quite a few of us at that time that was about my age: some were a little younger and some just a few years older. They used to have us sit over on the side and listen to the older men sing. I guess we were just a bunch of listeners for the first time, the first three or four meetings we attended, and then pretty soon they started to ask us to come and join the older men, and that's how they told us what to do, how to play the rattle and the drum and everything. They started teaching us how to keep the beat with the drummer. And one thing that they didn't really appreciate was anybody fooling around when we were trying to learn. They always told us to take it serious when we got there and to try to learn as quick as we can.

We all started on the rattle, I guess. They taught us how to hold the rattle and how to beat it and how to keep time. For my part it didn't take me too long to learn it, because in my old homestead where my grandfather used to stay, my grandfather was always singing something; you know, practicing some of those society songs that they have, the ceremonial societies, different ones. He was always trying to have us two — that's my brother and I — try to sing along with him. A good many nights, especially in the winter, we used to sit and sing some of the ceremonial songs that he used to sing. But at that time I didn't pay much attention, so today I guess that's my misfortune. I never did pay much attention to what he was singing; now I really *am* sorry that I never did learn *all* that he used to sing.

I guess about two or three years after I started going to these meetings, there was someone I forget who it is) that asked if I knew the songs my grandfather Howard used to sing. I said maybe I could remember. Well, at that time they put me in amongst the older men and, well, I got kind of nervous the first time: I was so used to the rattle that I tried to tell them that I would rather use the rattle, and they said, no, you have to use the drum. They said you can never be a singer, not unless you can play the drum right. So, there I had to, I just had to learn.

They were playing the woman's dance songs. That's what those singing societies were always singing when they ever got together; they tried to out-sing each other, I guess, in making up these woman's dance songs. So, they finally gave me the drum and they said to sit here; they said well, we want to hear some of your grandfather's songs if you can remember them all. They said at least one set anyway.

I was pretty nervous at first, and when I started singing, my voice kind of got shaky and I didn't know which way to go, or start crying or laughing. But after the first song, it was all right, and then the older folks kind of encouraged me to keep on and not to . . . well, in the first place they said not to

be bashful. They said, we can't have you as a singer and you might as well forget it if you're going to be bashful or anything in that way. And well, after they gave me the drum, like I say, the first song I didn't know which way to go, either start bawling or go on and laugh with them. Well, I started it off and I pulled through pretty good.

It wasn't until, oh maybe when I was in my twenties, I guess, when I ever started trying to make my own songs up. And after I made up one and took it into the first meeting that we had and sang it, the old folks said that was pretty good. They liked the song, and they said to keep it up and just to keep on trying to fix up songs and make up songs; and that's how I happened to keep on going, to keep making up songs. Some of the older men started passing away, and they wanted some new songs made up, and that's the way I happened to: right up till today, I can make up some of my own songs without any help from anybody else.

## 2.

At first I'd forget the songs I made. Maybe somebody else would learn the songs, and when we'd get to these singing sessions, they'd kind of remind me of the songs that I had made up. At that time we didn't have no tape recorders or anything; we couldn't put it on tape, so I had to depend on somebody else to kind of remind me of the songs that I had made up.

Even today when I start making up songs, I'll take it maybe one song at a time, or when lucky I can make up two songs at once. Then I wouldn't try to make a set (you know, six or seven songs) all at once, because it's easy to forget. That is why I never rush myself or try to make up a whole set in just that one night or just that one time. I'd rather, for my sake, try to make up one song maybe today and memorize it so I know just what it sounds like, and maybe two or three days later, make up another one. In that way maybe it takes me a week before I can make up a whole set.

It seems to me that the songs have come easier to me now than they did when I first started that first song. I still don't know how a song comes out, but sometimes it's when you're thinking about one of the old songs . . . this has happened to me. You know, I'm working off by myself on the end of the line up there in the shop, and all these late songs that I've made up have been made up right there in the shop, cause I'm all by myself on the end of the line and sometimes I think of the old songs — you know, just humming or whistling or whichever way I'm thinking about these old songs. Then pretty soon I try to make up a new one. That's how I get *my* songs. Most of my songs. I call them my shop songs, because where they were mostly made up is right there in the shop when I'm working.

Then it all depends too how the man is feeling, what kind of a mood he's in. Sometimes I make up three or four songs and still remember them: a

lot of times that has happened. If you're kind of happy, why you come right ahead and sing out a good song, but if you're kind of moody-like, you have a rough time trying to make a song out of it: you can't get it. This usually happens a lot of times with me when I start making up a new song. Sometimes it will just come right to my mind and I can sing it right off; then another time I try to make up a song and it takes three, four or five days before I can get it straightened out. There's some of the songs that we've made up — that is, to my experience — there are some where the words kind of get jumbled up amongst themselves and they can't straighten them out.

Well, if there's a little word or a sound that doesn't sound just right in the music, we try to cut it off or add a few words to it. Another thing that usually happens, when we do have a new song, when we get down to the Singing Society where everybody else is along, maybe a lot of times the song will straighten itself out there, because whoever's there (maybe six or seven of us singing at the same time at this one meeting) could straighten it out for you. A lot of times it has happened with me. I'd start a new song, then I can't get it just right. Well, at the next meeting we have, I try to sing this song, and the rest of the group will help and straighten the song out for me. A lot of times this has happened. Maybe I just get the introductory part to it and then I can't get the middle part, then the rest of the society would try to straighten it out, and pretty soon we've got a new song.

Or getting back to sets again, if you make two songs or three songs that sound almost alike, you can easily lose your first song to your own mind cause you've already made up two or three others that sound almost alike and it gets complicated. If you're trying to teach these songs to the rest of the singing group, it's kind of hard. Lots of times it has happened, we thought we knew all the songs and we started singing the songs: we got through with one and the head drummer started to sing another one that sounded almost just like it, and by the time we got to the halfway mark of the song, everybody was singing something else, and that kind of made us sound silly. That's why I say if you're going to make up some songs, try to make a variety of them, with different pitches to the songs,, not just make up one song and then pattern six or seven right after it.

My grandfather Chauncey, when he was teaching us to sing, he'd always say when we start off with a song, if it's any kind of dance, he always said start off your singing real slow and then work up to the right tempo. He says always go according to how the dancers are doing: if they start dancing good, then he says that's where you're going to keep your speed. Like you start with this slow tempo and then work up to where the dancers are really enjoying themselves. He said never try to do it your own way, go according to how the dancers are doing, let *them* set your tempo. You can always notice when they start having a good time, when they start enjoying themselves, doing whatever dance you are singing to them: you know that that's just where you are going to keep your beat.



In composing songs too or in working them out, you always start off with a slow beat: in this way you can find out just where your mistakes are. Another thing is (I always said this, and that's just the way I was taught) not to sing too high. You don't go right up into a high pitch so you can't reach the right pitch to the song and the words that you have put into it, cause if you're going to teach it to the rest of the group, you have to sing it slow, so you can get the right pitch to the song and also get all the sounds in it. Now, if you start out real fast and sing high, the person you're teaching won't understand what you're trying to put over, while in this other way you take it real slow and they've got a better chance to understand what the song is, how it's going to sound, and the sounds that have been put into it.

As to the songs themselves, the style of the songs hasn't changed at all, I don't think, from the old Singing Society to this one. I don't think that it's changed any at all, cause some of these songs that's being made up today are from the oldtimers' songs. They're based on the old-timers' songs. Some of the songs that I've made up — I just can't say which group it is, but maybe the ones I made up in '66 — there's two or three songs in there that I've based on my grandfather's songs. What I do is take a few words or the introductory part, and put in a few words and just a few different sounds to it. Almost the same melody. But not exactly the same and it hasn't got the same sounds in it — in some places I've shortened it or added to it.

Some of the songs that I've made up from the oldtimer' songs I used the introductory part, but in the second part to the song where the whole group is singing, then I've added different songs to it. Sometimes I've put together maybe two or three or four different old songs, just parts, and made it into one new song. Or I've added a few words to a song, or cut off some of it and put in new words to it and combined it with a different old song.

I guess we "modern singers," as they call us now, the ones that are making up these new songs, really base our songs on the oldtime songs. I guess that's the whole basic idea, to try to revive some of the oldtime songs but still add on a few sounds yourself, just to keep the melody and the song kind of in remembrance, for memorial purposes more or less.

Some of these "woman's dance" songs that were made up come from other social dances, like the "fish dance": there's some songs that's made up from the fish dance and turned into the woman's dance. Like I say, you can take a few words out of a song and still add some on to it and make it into a woman's song from the fish dance. Like the "war dance": there's quite a few songs were made up from the war dance, from the different songs, and put into the woman's dance and a few words added on, and the tempo fell right into the woman's dance songs.

Then there's quite a few that's been from the sacred songs — like the Quiver Songs, the Changing Rib and the Death Chant — quite a few songs that's got just a little from these ceremonial dances put into the woman's dance. I don't know, these late years they just don't seem to care too much for being too strict on using these sacred dance songs, and they put it into the

woman's dance songs. I guess they passed the stage where they were so strict against it—you know that years ago they didn't dare to use some of these songs and change it into a social dance.

I've got quite a few songs that I've made up, I never even taught to the group because I figures it this way: it's got too much of the sacred songs into it and I'd rather not put it out to public, because I know there are some people that are really strict against having these sacred songs put into modern woman's dance songs. You'd get criticized why we have made up songs to have the public hear, so I usually try not to put any too much sacred songs into it. Maybe I do put in maybe a little sound here and there but just not too much.

There's quite a few songs too that's been made up from hillbilly music—you know, western hillbilly music. Sometimes you'll be listening to some of our old music, and then in just a little while you turn on your T.V. or put on a few recordings of western music—well then, sometimes you can get music combined from these, you can put the two ideas together and make one good song. From the western type of Indian music too: we have tried to make up a few songs from that.

Nowadays in making up new songs I use the tape recorder quite a bit. You know, I listen to these older songs, and that's where you get your new ideas from. Tape recorders are an awful lot of help with that. Then maybe if you got an extra, empty tape, you can always put your new songs onto it. In that way you can't lose your original song that you have made up: like if you've made up a new song and try to remember it, oh maybe say two, three days after, and then try to sing it back, sometimes you lose it altogether. That has happened to me a good many times before I had the tape recorder. Then some of the other songmakers, you know, they take a notebook and write it down on notebooks. I've done that too, and I found that to be a lot of help.

That's for the words naturally, not the music. We've never had any way of writing down melodies, just go by ear, I guess, as to what it sounds like. Well, in school I did actually go into it a little bit but, you know, after I got out of school I forgot all about how to read notes from a paper. What little music that I do know of—white music—well, it's mostly hillbilly songs, like "coming around the mountain" and all that, or "hand me down my walking cane" and all that. So that was all taken up by ear: if they put it in front of me in writing, I would never know how to read it.

Mostly these new songs that we make up are for entertainment—like those gatherings we have, just to pass the time away, most of it. But there are a few, especially those that *have* got words in them, that are more serious. Like ever since they've started this Kinzua Dam, I guess everybody has tried to make up songs about it and how it was going to affect the Indian and everything, wondering where we were going to go after the Kinzua Dam really got up to where it's supposed to be, up to where our old houses used to be, where the water's all covered over now. Well, my brother Art's got one song that's got quite a bit to say about that, and I've got one that's a little

more, I wouldn't say more criticizing the white people as Art's is, but maybe I've got a little more meaning to it, I guess I would say.

I don't know if I can remember just how that song did come to be. I guess one night, it was down at the longhouse at the Singing Society, we had the singing there at the longhouse one evening, and while we were singing at the middle of the council house there — we had the singers' benches out and quite a few of us sitting there and singing — pretty soon Harry Watt come up to me. I was sitting at the end of the bench, and he says could you make up a song that would say something like what was going to happen after Kinzua Dam was in, and have a word or two saying just let the Indians go back to heaven or something like that. It took me quite a while before I finally did come up with one, and it has something about the Kinzua Dam and about the Indians going back to heaven on account of the white people taking our land away from us and putting water there where we used to live.

What I'm going to do is give you the idea of these two songs that's been made up between my brother and me, and show you the older, original song I used in making up mine. My brother made up the first song, and after Harry heard this one, I think that's where he got the idea that he wanted to have something with more meaning to it. Anyway, this is the way Art's song goes:

they're going to do us dirt  
they're going to do us dirt  
when they come & build a dam  
at allegany

we won't know where to go  
we won't know where to go  
when they come & build a dam  
at allegany

Now, the way I made up mine, I got it from an old melody. This Canadian got married to one of the girls on our reservation, and he used to sing this at our singing gatherings and practice sessions, and this is the way it goes:

now ain't that something!  
say the singers —  
of all them pretty girls  
not one was dancing

yahweyho yahweyho yahweyho  
heyhono noheyo  
of all them pretty girls  
not one was dancing



Well, afterwards Harry asked me to make up the Kinzua song, and here's the way I finally made it out:

now ain't that something!  
say the singers —  
the dirt we're being done  
by our white brothers

the way we see it is  
let's all get up & go  
back to the sky —  
let's get on back!

So, in this one I'd just say the original idea was from that Canadian song and that it took me quite a long while, maybe three, four weeks before I could really get it to where I wanted it. I started off with the first introductory part, the first few words there, then I couldn't put the rest of it together. I'd get just so far and then I'd get stuck. If I just started off and tried to sing it, it didn't sound right to me, so I had an awful time before I could get it straight: the melody change in the second part and the way I wanted to word it.

In non-word songs you can get that quicker than you would the word songs. Like the word songs do have quite a lot of meaning into them: like that one there, it's just more or less to remind us what has happened to us. My idea of it was to save the song as long as we can, and maybe in a few years some of the younger generation will learn it, and like everybody else they ask questions about the song. But the songs without words are just more or less for amusement, I guess. To make up non-word songs like that, just change one sound to another and combine and rearrange them some other different ways, and try to make a new song out of them.

There's no limit to the number of sounds that you use: you can use as many as you can. The whole idea of it is to try to combine and rearrange different sounds and see how many you can make up that way. There may be some odd sound that maybe you heard it by somebody saying something at one time or another, and you can try to get that certain sound into a song. Like you're just talking with somebody, and maybe he'd say some odd little thing like "hey yar" or something like that, and maybe say "I don't know," and then you say "No hey yoh see." That's how you change it. Maybe he's talking along, and maybe he'll say quite a few such words as that: then after you've talked with him, you sit around and think of what he has said and pretty soon you can almost get a song out of it.

It's not every song that's made up that way, but mostly when you combine sounds and melody, you have to think what sounds should go into the melody you're trying to follow. You have to follow a pattern. You can almost make up the words as you go along just as it comes to your mind, I guess, and then try to pull them together and make a good song out of it.

Maybe sometimes it does come out all right and sounds pretty good, and sometimes it's just the opposite. You get the melody in and then you can't get the sounds together to make it sound right. You can say it gets kind of muddled up there for a while and then takes quite a while to get it straightened out.

Some of the sounds that we use are more or less fixed. Like most of the woman's dance songs start out before the introductory part with "heya" and "yo-oh-ho" or something like that. (Some of the other dance songs, they just start out without having them sounds with it.) Then I think most of the songs, even the different dances, use a lot of the "o" in them: "ho," "yo" and "o" I guess are the most popular in all these different dance songs. I believe in all these different dances they have got a lot of that in there. Like going into the middle of the song, you use a lot of that.

Like I say, you have to follow a pattern. There are even some sounds we have that you may say rhyme or repeat themselves. Like the sounds in the introductory part. You use the whole introductory, and then in the middle and end parts you rhyme it back or repeat it. A lot of woman's dance songs are made up that way. The oldtimers used to try to make it that way, but now there's so many different songs and sounds that you hear, we've kind of worked away from it a little bit, like us combining three, four different songs at once, so in that way you can't very well rhyme with the first part.

Anyway, it's all according to how the song is started out. If you can get the beginning part, the introductory, from there you can go on to try to combine other sounds with it. Then you have to get the pitch of the song to it. I guess all composers have the same trouble as we do, even some of these great composers, the modern-day composers of English songs. Sometimes they have the words there, they have the lyrics there, and still they don't, they won't, they can't be satisfied with how it's going to sound like in the melody part. Maybe the sound is there and you want to use it, and still in your melody that you're trying to think of at the same time, it won't fit in. Or maybe the sound that you're thinking of is too long to go into the melody, and then sometimes maybe it's too short: then you have to add on a few other sounds to go with it and then fit that into the melody. Sometimes I come to see it that the sound and melody kind of contradict each other, and that sometimes gets real complicated that way. It's not, as you would say, that it makes a song better. It just takes a little more thinking to that: sometimes it turns out to be a big joke after a while.

### 3.

With these social dances at the longhouse, we're there just to have a lot of fun anyway, while with the sacred dances we're thinking more serious of what is going on. You think that these sacred songs will help the person, whoever is sponsoring them, whatever the doings are; and I guess, to my

opinion, it has helped a lot of people — the sacred dances, that is. But even there, the attitude all depends on how the person sponsoring the doings is feeling. Like if the speaker tells us that the person who is sponsoring the doings is feeling all right, well, he notifies us right away that we can have a little fun. That's why we get into all these comical acts that we put on when we're dancing these pumpkin songs, for instance, just to have the sponsor have a little fun with us. Sometimes that does happen: sometimes he clowns more than the rest of the group does, so that's a good indication that the song does help him quite a bit.

All of this has been brought down from the time the *Gaiwiyo* came on the earth. They had been dancing all these songs before, and now the Prophet of the Senecas had tried to stop it at that time; but later on this little girl got sick, and they tried to get the Prophet to tell her fortune. It took him a long time before he consented to tell the fortune of this little girl, and that's what he found: it was a song that was bothering this little girl! It was one of those society songs — you know, like the Dark Dance and the Quivering and Changing-a-Rib and the Death Chant — and, well, at that time the Four Beings had told him that people should cut out all the dance songs that were on this earth. But later on the Beings came back again, and they told him that if it couldn't be stopped, then it was to continue. Before the *Gaiwiyo* came on earth, you know, they used to have hard drinks at all these doings; but after they had come back, they told him that if the dancing or the songs couldn't be stopped that one time, that they could have the berry juice, like what we use now in the Dark Dance ceremony. And they told him at that time that there was just going to be just that once, but after they did have this once for this little girl, everybody else started to get sick about something, so from then on, they started to do all these different songs and dances that they had before the *Gaiwiyo* came to earth. Nowadays, with most of the dances that we do, we *think* this is the way it should have been done years ago. but I know we have lost quite a bit from what the oldtimers used to do and what they believed in. Today it's just, I guess, to keep it up as far as we can go with it.

The sacred songs, like I've said before, are already in a set group: their setting has never changed. A long time ago people were traveling in the woods — there was a lot of traveling in the woods then — and they kind of heard these songs in a way. Like the Dark Dance there: this one night, this young lad was sleeping out: pretty soon he heard all these voices, and he didn't know where they were coming from. So he kind of crept around in the dark, and pretty soon he found a little group. There was a little group there, all in a cave, and it was awful dark, and they were singing these songs. That's why they call it the Dark Dance.

Then later on, as the story goes, this other little boy was picked up and was taken way up on the high ledges of these mountains, and when these birds brought him up there (he didn't know what they were at the time), but when the birds took him up on this high cliff (they had a nest there), well, as

they landed he seen these little birds kind of fluttering around, going through all different motions, and one of the young birds was kind of squawking away and making it into a song like. Well, the little boy stayed there maybe ten or twelve days with these birds, and he kept feeding them; and one night, one evening where you can still see late in the afternoon, the older birds got together and they were doing this Eagle Dance, and they were singing these songs, and that's how he happened to learn the Eagle Dance songs. Up till today, the way they dance is the imitation of the Eagle going after a piece of meat on the ground: that's why you can see them go down something like a bird pecking at a piece of meat. And that's how the Eagle Dance come to be.

But that way of getting songs and dances, I guess that's way past our stage. I guess we're too civilized nowadays, cause at that time, see, they practically lived right with the animals and out in the woods all the time. They didn't have no automobiles or airplanes flying around or anything of that sort, and they were so close to nature, I guess that's how they probably got to get some of these songs together. A lot of stories, different stories, has been told of how these songs originated, and all of it starts with them coming from the different animals that were roaming the big forest at that time. And in the mountains and places like that, along the rivers, you can hear all these different kind of songs that was made up. Then as it came along, these persons that had heard these songs had started handing them down to the younger generation, up till today. Like me learning these songs: I learnt that from me going to all these different dances when I was a young lad, just a young kid at that time, just a little boy. Well, I started dancing the Eagle Dance when I was just about eight or nine years old. So now you can see how we carry our religion and traditions and all that. Most of us that had lived right along where the longhouse is, still believe in this religion, and we try to keep up the traditions as our older folks had done years before, and I think that's just the way it's been handed down all down through the years, from generation to generation, as far as I know of.