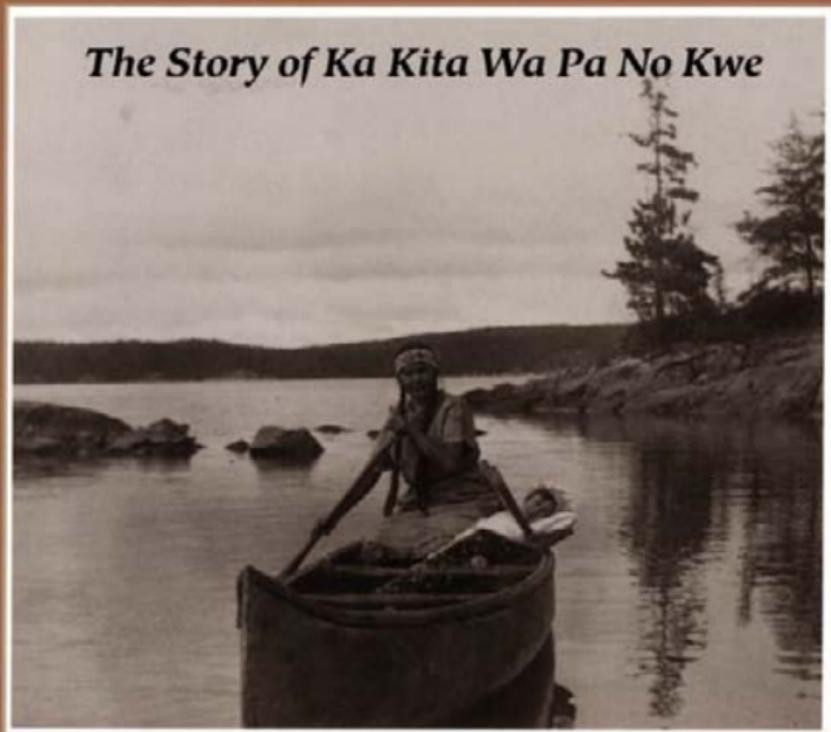


Moose to Moccasins

The Story of Ka Kita Wa Pa No Kwe



Madeline Katt Theriault





Donald Patrent y.

Patrent y.

Moose to Moccasins

The Story of Ka Kita Wa Pa No Kwe



FRONT INSIDE COVER

Donald Petrant (my brother) at age 22, his friend Rose Albany and Dorothy, age 5, at Pete Albany's house by the Montreal River. Photo taken May 18, 1935.

BACK INSIDE COVER

My beloved Great-grandmother Angele Katt at Diamond Lake, circa 1925.

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Second Edition

Madeline Katt Theriault



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For Bear Island, Lake Temagami, my home



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 **Foreword**

MY FIRST MEMORY OF WATCHEGOU (the name given to Madeline by her Grandmother because she peeked into the room before entering it) begins about 1960 when I was fifteen years old. She was my landlady for two years when I attended High School in North Bay, Ontario. At that time her dignity, humour and strength were comforting and stabilizing to four young men away from their homes and the two grandchildren she raised.

It was about ten years later when I became aware of the depth of this woman's knowledge and the story behind her eyes. She came into this world shortly after the time when the fire toboggan (trains) came to n'Daki-Menan (our homelands) in 1906, cutting through the Whitebear Family territories. While her family's lands are about thirty-nine miles by water from the railroad line, it affected all the Teme-Augama Anishnabai. After thousands of years of self-sufficiency and certainty, the white man's expansionism hit our people directly.

The values and certainty of her grandparents and great-grandparent's life on the land were under attack. The strength and beliefs imparted by her family when Watchegou was a child, coupled with her own strong spirit carry her with dignity today as they have throughout her life, a time during which n'Daki-

Menan was plundered by successive administration, drunk with power and blinded by ignorance of us as human beings entitled to the lands we have occupied for thousands of years.

Watchegou's capability to survive the season of the white man and still be willing to share with us a story of her life is testimony to the deep humanness and the principle of sharing and co-existence which in our people are culturally thousands of years old.

Read this and touch the life of a woman, wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother and the motherland of the Teme-Augama Anishnabai.

Meegwetch Watchegou

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary Potts". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned centrally on the page.

Gary Potts, OGIMA OF THE
TEME-AUGAMA ANISHNABAI, 1992

This is my story...

I REMEMBER THE PINES, the great big white pines, the cedars by the shore. The pine cones on the forest floor, the little clearing for our summer tents. There were no docks, only the canoes drawn up on the shores, no kickers, only the calm of the water, occasionally broken by the steamboat. Everyone paddled then, even the tourists. For some of the Bear Island people of today this may not seem true but it is, I know. I was there - Bear Island, my home, as I remember.

This is my story. This is my story as I remember from my early days, my story for my people and for all those interested in the Indian way of life.

Madeline Katt Theriault
1992

An Ojibway beginning...

DURING THE FIRST HALF OF MY LIFE I lived the Indian way of life, the other half I lived in a city. So, I would say I have lived in both cultures; Indian and white-man's way of life.

I was born at Bear Island in a tent, delivered by a mid-wife, Angele Whitebear, on September 8th, 1908. My mother and myself lived with her grandparents, Angele and Michel Katt. Two years later my mother, Elizabeth, wanted to get married. My great-grandmother suggested that if she wanted to get married, she should leave me with them, the great-grandparents. If not, then she should stay home with me. This was because Great-grandma was afraid the stepfather might be mean to me, as so often happens. So said my great-grandma.



Anyway, my mother decided to marry and she left me with the great-grandparents. I was very happy with them. They were very kind to me and I was well raised in a good home with them.

My great-grandfather died when I was only six or seven years old. But, I do remember him well from several different times and different places. This one particular

*Age 3 at Great-grandfather's
place, Bear Island.*



Great-grandfather Michel Katt Sr. and my mother, Elizabeth, at Bear Island. That's me in the tikinagun or cradleboard.

time that I remember him so well, was at the sugar season. Great-grandma would be busy making birch bark cups for containers to tap maple trees. My great-grandfather would be making trails through the maple bush to tap trees.

First he would load up his toboggan with those birch bark cups, put me in the toboggan too and pull the toboggan. I was happy because I was getting a ride. Great-grandpa would be tapping maple trees as he went along the trail and placing the birch bark cups for the sugar water to drip into. Every day he made his rounds to those maple trees to empty the cups into a large birch bark basket sitting on the toboggan and drawn from tree to tree. When full, he took the sweet water to the camp and boiled it all day long. By evening the sap had boiled down into syrup, maple sugar and brown sugar.

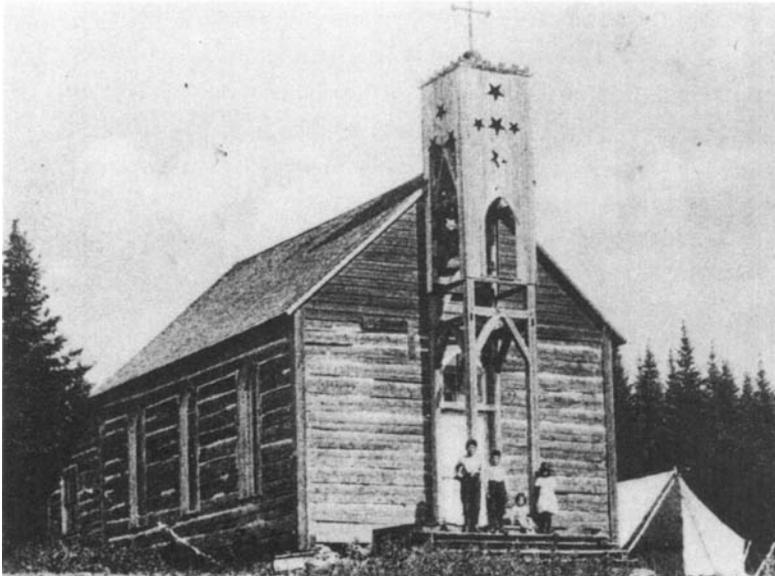
I used to be happy when sugar season came. I guess it was because I would get the wooden spoon to lick and it was delicious! It was the only sweets we had in those days. They always made

enough to last us until the next season. But we had to be careful how we used our sugar or we'd go short before the next spring.

When my great-grandfather made a birch bark canoe, I used to watch him. No doubt most times I was in his way, but I did learn just how a birch bark canoe is made, what material was used, how it was gathered and so forth.

For a canoe frame, cedar laths are used to make the framework with cedar strips for the ribs and birch bark to cover the canoe frame. To piece the birch bark or to join the birch bark together, you sew them with spruce tree roots. This root is very strong. Before you use the root, you boil it and peel off the bark, then split it in half. The roots are long like a string and strong to sew with. After you have covered the canoe frame with birch bark, you waterproof the seams with spruce gum. You chip off spruce gum from a spruce tree, melt the gum and paste it into those seams or paste it over the seams. It is very interesting to see a birch bark canoe being made. One can be made fifteen to eighteen feet long, and still be a very light canoe. The idea is to use cedar wood because it is light.

Old Indian Church, Bear Island, Temagami





Mother, Elizabeth Petrant, on a Sunday walk on the ball field at Bear Island. Circa 1918.

We would travel with our canoes over many portages. Paddles, made out of maple wood, are cut down to the size wanted. After being smoothly finished, it is left to dry by hanging on a tree branch. There it swirls day after day until bone dry. This swirling helps it to dry straight.

My great-grandfather has made many things for me from a wee paddle to a little sleigh to play outdoors with. He also made me a little doll papoose cradle. The papoose cradle board was shaped out of cedar wood with the bar across the front made out of maple wood.

My great-grandmother made me a rag doll stuffed with moose hair with wooden buttons for the eyes. She put it in papoose cradle and laced it up. This was a wonderful treat for me to have a papoose doll. I kept it for the longest time.

When I had my own children, I brought them up in a pa-

poose board too. My grandfather made this board for me. He also made a doll papoose cradle for my oldest daughter. For the part that is laced up, I made a beadwork spray of flowers in many colours on it. It was beautiful and everyone liked it.

Anyhow, one day my great-grandfather went to cut wood outside. I decided to go out too. My great-grandmother bundled me up and out I went. I took my little sleigh with me and went up to the top of the little hill and slid down. Here, if I didn't run into great-grandpa's leg! I knew I hurt him and I dashed into the house, crawled under the bed and stayed there quietly. Later Great-grandpa came in. He asked his wife, "Where is the little girl?" Great-grandma replied, "Under the bed. Has something happened?" she asked. "Not really. Just a little accident," said Great-grandpa. Then Great-grandpa called me. "Come on out from that bed, little girl." I never budged, I was so afraid. I was so sure I was going to get a spanking for what I did. I was called a second time. "Come on out. I will not hurt you. I wouldn't hurt my little girl," said Great-grandpa.

Finally I decided to come out. Great-grandpa said, "Sit on my knee, little girl." I did and I knew he loved me. Everything was alright after that.

My great-grandparents used to set fish nets and pick berries during summer. In the fall they used to trap just around the lake, as they both were old. They would take me everywhere. I used to paddle too. I don't know how much help I was, but I did it anyway. They were really my "parents" giving me a loving home with them.

I was around six or seven years old when my great-grandfather died. After that, my grandfather, Michel Jr., took over looking after us, his mother and myself. He was an attractive man with a heavy mass of black curly hair. Great-grandma was a widow for eleven years. I lived with her until I got married, and three years later she died.

For many years, the three of us used to go to our trapping grounds from September to May. Grandpa's headquarters was at Diamond Lake. From there, he covered Maple Mountain, Florence Lake and McPherson Lake. Most times he was at Diamond Lake. My great-grandmother and myself, we trapped just around the lake until the water was frozen. We trapped mink, fox and muskrat. Muskrat is good eating. I used to boil it up and add dumplings. Was it good!! At Diamond Lake we also set fish nets. In October, we would catch a lot of lake trout when spawning and would salt them for our winter use.

Making rabbit skin blankets...

I USED TO SET RABBIT SNARES and save the skins for rabbit-skin blankets. Great-grandma showed me how. A blanket size of 72 inches x 60 inches takes ninety rabbit skins. That is a lot of rabbit to eat, but we ate more than that because we used to make two or three blankets a year. Everyone had one. They were most comfortable with such a warm and soft fur.

You must follow certain steps to make these blankets:

Dry the rabbit skins until you gather about eighty or ninety skins. Then you dampen them all and you cut rabbit skin using a straight edge razor into strips in circle from leg to head, about one inch wide. This gives you a strip from 3 to 4 yards long. Next you would fasten each end in a little stick and you twist or roll it until only the fur side of the strip is showing. It winds up like a string, all you can see is fur around it. You make a wooden frame of the size of the blanket you want and you place one rabbit strip across the frame. Starting from that strip, you loop

the next rabbit strip across the frame and keep moving back and forth making interlocking loops. Nothing is tied but the fur fills in the loops. Because of the twisted strips both sides have fur to keep you warm.

My 'parents' showed me how to make a living in the wilderness. I learned to prepare food and how to tan moose hide, how to make strips from rawhide to make the webbing to fill in snow shoes, how to make fish nets, moccasins, mitts, leather jackets and how to prepare bear fat. We did so many things together. They also taught me how to preserve food such as fish, moose, berries of different kinds, and how to make containers out of birch bark – our all purpose containers.

As well, Great-grandma also showed me how to skin the furs off all kinds of animals. By the time I was ten years old I could do everything to make a living off the land and from nature.

My elders as teachers...

THERE IS MUCH STUDYING TO DO about the Indian way of life and their ability to live off land and nature. You have to know how to do things, when to do them and where to do them. Animals are suitable only at a particular time of the year for their furs or for eating. Not all animals are edible either. Some such as fisher, otter, marten, mink, owl, wolves, lynx, weasel and groundhog are not considered edible.

Most of my learning about the Indian way of life came from the daily teaching of my Great-grandma. Some came from the stories and sharings of other elders. When I was around six or seven years old, I remember this particular time. There was an