

## **AJ (Allan Joe) Felix, Nêhiyawak Elder, Sturgeon Lake First Nation**

### **What is your name?**

AJ Felix, Allan Joe Felix, from Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan

### **Can you tell me how Chiefs were selected in the past before the treaties?**

I do remember and did see the Chiefs who were hereditary. They were real Chiefs, not make believe. They were truly Chiefs. I remember seeing them as a child, the hereditary Chief - when he died of old age. People didn't change the Chief often, until the person was old - if the person was healthy and doing a good job. That was their their job.

I did see a Chief who was very old. How he became Chief - his dad was a Chief.

The people encouraged the son of the old Chief to replace his dad due to old age.

Historically, this practice of hereditary Chiefs was followed by the people.

The people supported it up until about the year 1951 when the last hereditary Chief died.

It's about then that the first election was held in Sturgeon Lake, 1951.

### **How did the selection of a hereditary Chief happen?**

I have heard stories. I didn't witness it, but I heard stories. To be selected as Chief,

he had to earn the position. He needed understanding. He lived a healthy life

because life in the past was hard. Nothing was there to help a person out.

There was nothing there to support the person. So this individual who was going to be Chief -

the person needed a healthy life. Spiritually he must be gifted,

because the individual was going to meet a lot of demands. If he was not spiritually gifted,

if he didn't lead a clean and healthy life, he could possibly starve his people.

People were very selective on who the individual was to be Chief. They had to be sure.

It was hard to identify the person, because he wasn't the only one living a healthy life.

There were many others who lived a healthy lifestyle. This was on the reserve.

There were many Elders. They became very aware of the individual who was going to be selected.

The Elders were spiritually told. Things weren't done without understanding.

Even to the point our forefathers had foresight and saw the coming of the Whiteman.

We always had understanding. We knew what kind of people were going to arrive.

How was the Chief selected? I can't definitely say, but from what I have heard,

the person was from prophecies. It was known that he would be Chief.

### **What was the role of the Women's Society in the past?**

It's like the man I talk about who was destined to be Chief in the women's circle, too.

There were women who played a major role in decision-making and for ceremonial purposes.

The women were encouraged to help if a thing of urgency concerning the people needed support.

When something of urgency happened, the women were expected to help. The women were gifted,

spiritually gifted, and were medicine people. They had foresight. Everything in our culture, in every ceremony - anything that has to do with our ways, the man and woman conduct the ceremonies, half and half. The woman who conducts half the ceremony must be gifted and knowledgeable. It's her responsibility because something takes pity upon the woman. Soon she becomes very healthy because she's blessed. As the man holds strength in the men's circle, the woman holds the same strength in the women's circle. Together they live a clean and healthy life. Not all women possess the gift; it's a selected few who lived the healthy life, I will say. The women were well known, the select few. Even their grandmothers were of the Society. That's who their teachers were. So as the grandmothers passed on, the women fill the roles.

### **How did the Aboriginal people sustain themselves like hunting, raising children?**

#### **What did the people do to survive before and after treaties?**

It was told life was not easy. The life of the people was difficult. But they were a praying people. From a long time ago, the people were centered on prayer. He never disrespected anything. Why did he not disrespect anything? Because the people were related to everything. The people were taught, because of the connection to all creation, to be totally respectful. Never to take more than was needed. Never to over harvest because he was related to all. Because he was respectful, prosperity came to him. Nothing ran or hid from him when he became hungry. Something was always available to him to take or harvest. Anything he took from nature, he was related to it. He knew he was related to everything. When he truly and only needed something, it came to him because he spoke to everything. I will say Aboriginal peoples in history always were related to all. Even the trees are his older brothers; the animals are his older brothers. The water is his medicine, and the earth is his mother. Everything created he was related to it; he was blessed that way. As he hunted, as he traveled, as he raised his children, he respected and was related to everything. He knew how to utilize everything - the food, the plants, the water, the medicines. It was all related to him. He lived with nature; he wasn't really troubled by anything. He never ran out of anything. When he hunted, he prayed when he killed anything. He gave everything away. Nobody went hungry. If a single person went hungry in the village, everyone went hungry. If hunting was successful, everyone had an abundance of meat. It wasn't everyone for themselves. If I was successful in a hunt, I gave to everyone. There would come a time when a person will struggle in hunting - a relative will give back. If he is prosperous, I am prosperous. If I have good fortune, he has good fortune. That is life, that is how it was for a long time. Everyone was related to everyone, kinship. Everyone was kind to each other. With this kindness, helpfulness, and sharing - with all this, it walked people through life. Nbody really saw hard times. The question you asked about hunting, how did a person provide for himself?

The way he conducted himself, his personality, his spirituality and his kindness -  
This is how a person survived in the past.

### **How did this lifestyle change after the treaties?**

I will say everyone knew each other - they were kind and respected kinship.

The arrival of the Whiteman brought different teachings, totally different.

The Whiteman's nature and character changed our people's ways, too.

Our people say we honour our kinship to everything. The Whiteman doesn't follow kinship.

He doesn't follow kinship. Our people are related to everything. Whiteman came from

a different part of the world. He is not related to anything; he feels no connection

because he doesn't know to be related to anything. With no sense of connection to anything,

the Whiteman brought with him the sense of not caring for anything.

In the other world, he always did things alone and for himself. If you do things only for yourself,

a person is going to have many struggles. Only think about yourself.

If you're going to get ahead in life, you have to be crooked -that is the Whiteman's behaviour.

Any way possible to cheat another person is the only way to survive - is one of his sayings.

The people that arrived here - because he is for himself, gain is for himself.

Aboriginal belief is if I give something, blessings will come back to me. If I am kind to a person,

the person will be kind back to me. If I care for the Elders, I will one day see white hair.

This is the thought of an Aboriginal person. The people who arrived, the one who brought treaty -

the Whiteman came with a different mindset. He didn't have the behaviours of the Aboriginal person.

So what did he bring to our forefathers? Selflessness, harmfulness, and deception.

This is what the Whiteman brought to this land. Pretty soon our people wanted the same.

Our people were aware of the change. Our people started to depend on the Whiteman,

the education and schools, their language, their religion. Our people started to be different.

The Whiteman's language was imposed on our people. In our heart, our people were changing.

Back to the original question you asked about treaties. The treaties are good.

I have never said the treaties were bad. The way I understood the Elders,

the intent was to portray our people's lifestyle. A job was done in defining the treaties.

The negotiations were detailed, very precise on how treaties were to be beneficial to us.

The Whiteman who is very deceiving, with whom the treaties were signed, made changes.

I will say because he was very deceptive, this land that he came to borrow, he only wanted

a small piece of land, enough to grow crops and to feed his family. The bush is yours.

Maybe he would need some timber to build his house. Your lakes and waters I don't need.

He said he would dig a hole in the ground to draw water, to water his animals and for his children.

I will dig a hole, I don't want your waters or any of your animals. That is what was said.

All our people's hunting territory and land - the Whiteman said he didn't want.

It's all yours, he said. Where all your sacred lands are, those are all yours. I don't need it.

Those lands will always be yours to utilize; I am not here to change your lifestyle.  
I am not asking you to change how you live or how you believe. That will always be yours.  
What I am offering your people, said the Whiteman, is over and above what you have now.  
The day didn't end on the day of treaty signing.  
Documents were already prepared for signing the same day the document was written.  
The reserves were already identified in the documents. Surveys were done for how much land  
our people were going to give up. Two years earlier, these surveys were already being conducted.  
When the surveys were done, the Whiteman knew how much land was to be in the treaties.  
The officials desperately needed to sign treaties. You have heard our people wanted treaties.  
Why the urgency by our people? Because our forefathers heard that many Whitemen were coming.  
The white peoples were disturbing everything and everyone. There were many, too many.  
The Whiteman brought with him the police. He brought alcohol in the form of whiskey.  
Alcohol was being used to cheat Aboriginal people, and it started to make the people ill.  
Aboriginal people were harming and killing each other from the result of alcohol.  
This was happening already before treaties. That's why treaties were of great urgency.  
Alcohol pushed the need to sign. Like I was saying, the reserves were identified before signing.  
One of the clauses in the treaties states to relinquish, give up and sell everything upon this land.  
The Chiefs clearly were not informed that this was written in the treaties.  
But the Chiefs were told it was borrowed land for the purpose of cohabiting.  
The Chiefs weren't told the true intentions. Forefathers told the first Whiteman -  
This land you are asking for is not mine for the giving. I don't own this land.  
This land you're asking for, I can't even give you a piece of it. This is my Mother Earth.  
We can't sell you our mother. The Great Spirit who owns everything, made her our mother.  
The Great Spirit never charged us anything. She was free, so we can raise our children off her breasts.  
So we can't sell our mother, we have no say over her. I can't sell her; I don't own her.  
But why was I told this? This is my mother, it is the law that I take care of her.  
To take care of her, not to own - but for my grandchildren and my children,  
and their children and their children's children. I am a steward to the land, I own nothing.  
This was when the treaties were made - nothing existed at that time for our Forefathers.  
I have asked everywhere to tell me that Aboriginal people sold the land.  
I have never found anyone say we sold the land, because it wasn't our Forefathers to sell.  
From the time I am talking about, have we changed as a people? Yes we have changed.  
More so because we have been raised through Whiteman's education systems.  
Because our parents were also taught through the church's education systems.  
Our parents were taught a different religion, to lose the language, to lose their thoughts,  
their love, and their kinship. To lose it - this was intentional teachings.  
Even to the point my late mother and I talked about what the nun said to both of us  
about my grandfather only knowing bad medicines. Your grandfather is the devil.

That was said to my mother, and the same to me. My grandfather was a praying person, a pipe carrier. He sang. He was the devil, I was told. Be careful of him. Exactly what was told to my mother was told to me 40-50 years later. We were told the same thing. So when I was told this, I didn't practice my ceremonies for a long time. I was scared because my grandfather was the devil, I was afraid. It took me awhile to grow up. I was a different person. It's like when treaties were signed, we all came to a point of being different. When treaties were made, the Whiteman didn't use truth. It wasn't even a year after treaties the people were hungry. The people were sick, the land became barren. When the settlers arrived, they spared nothing. Pretty soon there was nothing, no animals to hunt. The push was to have the Indian Agent feed the people. He fed the people just enough to survive - to the point he fed them rotten pork. Our people got sick from the meat, some died from food poisoning. That is as far as our Forefathers had come for signing treaties. On top of this, our people were going to be changed to speak English, to become assimilated so nobody had to take care of our people anymore. Because we will become a Whiteman. That was the thought. Plus our people were purposely introduced to sicknesses, intentionally tortured, so the people's numbers would decline. So the cost at treaty payments would be less. The Whiteman was close to exterminating our people. The way I look and see things of this nature, it's sin, a huge sin. I think a lot about these actions. In my 35 years of treaty work, in my heart I know, whatever goes around comes around. I know that for sure. It's an old Indian law - Wesakechak [trickster] dropped his scab on the ground. He came full circle and ate his own scab. That's what the proverb is - what goes around comes around. The birds laughed at him, not knowing he ate his own scab. We were taught this proverb through our legends. Be careful what we say to people. Be careful not to belittle people. You're going to meet your own fate, if you do wrong. If you do wrong to anyone, purposely hurt people, if you stress them, it will come back. If not to you, your children, your grandchildren - it's an old Indian law, a Cree law. Be careful what you say to people, it will be hurtful to you. But it might not stop at you. It will come back home to you, you might kill someone for the things you say. That is a Wesakechak story. So all those years of working around treaties, I still co-chair Treaty 6, I co-chair the Medicine Chest; I am a technician for treaties 1-11, still. I strongly believe somewhere in the future things will work out. I believe. I can't give up hope, I can't give up on my children and grandchildren. As much as we go through hard times, things said to us, I can't give up. Because I love my children too much. If I give up, if I say to forget it, then I am telling my grandchildren to give up. The people who have been here year after year aren't here anymore - the people who had the same conviction and dedication in this process.

**What are young people supposed to do who are going to become leaders?**

**How are they to survive in the future, as they become leaders?**

It's difficult today, it's very difficult today for young people, it's hard.

Young people are not prepared.

Young people were not raised with the laws and teachings.

Young people were not given direction.

So now that he/she is trying to be a leader, the person has many obstacles.

His/Her way of thinking is of a Whiteman.

So when the person uses Whiteman's thoughts, he/she has many barriers.

It's not his way of thinking; it's a borrowed way of thinking.

And what I will say, as a young person a long time ago,

I have seen part of the teachings. Usually a young person is being taught.

I was taught these teachings when I was a child.

I was taught how to be humble.

I was told not to get up and run around inside a house

when Elders were talking, or when old ladies were visiting each other.

I wasn't allowed to yell and run around inside. I was told to sit still.

I wasn't allowed to speak anytime if Elders were speaking, even with my parents.

I wasn't allowed to speak, even if it was just them or if other people were present.

I wasn't allowed to play outside after it got dark. I had to be inside the house.

I wasn't allowed to go to wakes when I was a child. I was not allowed.

Why? I was told by my grandmother, when it's dark outside, you can't see what's there.

It's possible, and it is for real. Something that is not visible during the day can be present at night.

This being can hurt you. It could do something to your mind; it could kill you.

That's what I was told. I was scared when told; I believe it. Even to this day I believe it.

The unseen can be encountered at night. The evil entities are present at night, because they're evil.

If something is powerful, good, pure - maybe a spirit - you're not afraid to be there

because it's something good. If you encounter it, it's going to make you feel good because it's good.

These teachings, along with child-rearing teachings, these were taught. I recall my grandmother saying

she was amazed with happenings, because she had seen them.

When she was a young lady, compared to young ladies today.

It wasn't too long ago my grandmother left us.

A young girl, she said, already knew how to sew. She wasn't grown yet.

She was already cooking; she wasn't very big. She was taught how to cut meat; she was not very big.

That little girl was taught how to make hides; she wasn't very big.

She was taught all of this - also to be respectful -

to be respectful of menfolk; moreso her father and grandfather, to be respectful.

That was as a little girl; she wasn't very big. She was already taught all of this.

She was taught the teachings of life to be a woman, up to the point she was about to be a lady.

She was already advised what it was to be a woman.

She was taught all the laws; she was taught the laws of motherhood.

Because she is related to Mother Earth - to be a mother, she is raising life.

She, too, is being taught about what she is going to do - to grow the earth.

She is going to be a mother, one day.

This little girl, when she came of age, she was truly a lady.

Also, a little boy - he was taught when not very big. He was a successful hunter already.

It was a special occasion when a young boy made his first kill. There was a feast.

The Elders lifted the Sacred Pipe to give thanks for their grandchild's success.

Offerings were made in the fire. The child was named after a Spirit, so it would walk with the child,

so that the young boy will grow into a young man. He was taught to be respectful,

how to be respectful to his siblings, to women. He was shown how, and told why, he should respect women.

How to be kind - He had many female cousins, his parents' brothers and sisters - their siblings' children

were told to be his siblings. They were all his siblings. That's how I was taught.

Your parents' siblings were your aunts and uncles. Your mother-in-law and your father-in-law -

respect; moreover your mother-in-law and father-in-law.

We were taught - if you hold something of utmost respect, is respectful or sacred -

that's how you treat your mother-in-law and father-in-law.

You don't even speak to your mother-in-law, that's how highly regarded she is.

If you want to speak to your mother-in-law, if you want to tell her something,

your wife is the one who speaks to her. Whatever it is you want to say, your wife says it.

That's how highly kinship was. Respect is one of those laws.

Going back to the youth, they were young men and young women.

When they got married, they knew what their jobs were.

The young lady knew what her role was, the young man knew what his role was.

They knew; they were taught and told how to respect each other.

They knew the significance to have a wife and to have a husband. They were taught.

They definitely were told if they did not follow the laws of kindness, of taking care of the home fire,

if they didn't take care of the home fire, they were breaking one of the laws. That's what they were told.

They were told of things to be afraid of and be fearful of.

So when they were finally married, when they went to take a home,

a complete man and woman walked together to make a home, because they were told and prepared.

Cree teachings and Cree laws were used to raise them. They knew how to be kind amongst other people.

They knew how to be respectful of their surroundings, animals, trees and all medicines.

They knew how to be respectful and show respect, so they don't sin. They knew.

When they had children, the children they have, they knew what to teach and say to them.

They knew how to raise their children. The same way they were raised according to the Cree teachings

is how they raised their children. They followed the Cree laws, pretty soon they have white hair.  
In time, they have grandchildren because they respect the teachings.  
Now you asked about being a Chief. To be Chief, how does one prepare?  
I would say, going back to the teachings and laws,  
if you can follow the teachings and laws, a person would be a good leader.  
You will understand a person when he/she cries. You will understand your children  
when they cry for something from you. A person who is trouble, you will know how to treat them.  
You will never hide from a person who is hurting; you will not run away.  
If a person was raised with traditional teachings, he/she would know what to do in the community.  
If feuding existed, the person will find a solution to get along.  
If nepotism is happening, this will be corrected. If hurtful gossip is happening,  
a person will know when to put a stop to the gossip.  
If things are not going right in the community, a solution must be found to bring things right once again.  
Along with the Cree teachings/laws, another teaching exists - prayer. That is a law.  
Pray. If you don't pray, it is sinful. Pray. When you pray, use humility. That is a teaching/law.  
Anyway, I heard many Elders. One thing that is not talked about is prayer. This law was ruled to us.  
If we put prayer aside, we are doing wrong. We lose our way.  
What's going to make us strong? What's going to hold us together? What's going to give us patience? Prayer!  
If we put prayer aside, if we don't teach our children to pray, we have done wrong,  
If we do wrong, we have sinned because prayer is a teaching/law. We put it aside.  
I hear some people say I don't want to teach my children about ceremonies and prayer.  
They will find it themselves.  
The way I see it, people who think like this feel burdened to teach their children prayer,  
maybe because that person doesn't pray themselves.  
So if a person doesn't pray, he/she cannot pass this on to his/her children.  
So I will say this, there is one teaching that is tough -  
If a man and a woman do not teach their children prayer,  
so they don't teach the child, as he/she grows, right through life he is lost and troubled.  
He/she goes to the extreme. Because the child is not taught prayer, the child hangs him/herself.  
This story wasn't made up; this story is real. Something was done wrong, a slip up - it was a sin.  
The child should have been given at least a chance to remember a higher being.  
When the child is truly lost, he/she has the chance for another door to open -  
so the child doesn't get to the extreme. Prayer is one of our laws/teachings. Prayer.  
The leader I was talking about - that is the kind of leader we need.

**How do you understand the main treaty, education - what the White People call education?**

**How was this promise told to each other? This is one of the treaties.**

At the time the Elders discussed the treaties,



the Whiteman said, "We have come to kill off all the buffalo. We killed them off."

"You must get something in return because we killed them off. The buffalo provided life for your people."

"You had many animals that are now gone because of us. So now you must survive differently."

"The very fact you hunt no more - because there are no buffalo left."

"The buffalo fed, clothed, provided a home, blankets, medicines; you made tools/utensils."

"Your people even have a ceremony where the animal lived with you."

"The buffalo blessed and gave your people a ceremony. The buffalo gave you everything. We killed them off."

So we [Whiteman] killed most of the buffalo. We will teach a new way so you can take care of your children.

We will give you cattle; you will learn to plough, learn agriculture. We will give you seeds to plant.

We [Whiteman] will give you saws to build houses. We will teach you how to build houses.

Where we are going to place you, there will be a school.

There will be a school, so you can get educated. It will exist.

Our people were so destroyed. The old people, they desperately wanted treaties.

Our people were so pitifully poor. The Whiteman belittled and degraded us.

Stories exist that the Whiteman hunted - he hunted down Indigenous people.

In many cases it was told, they [Whiteman] brought alcohol with them for persuasion

and to take advantage of Aboriginal people.

So it was seen that something needed to be negotiated with the newcomers

because ultimately we [Aboriginals] were going to be nothing and poor.

The Elders told the Aboriginal people not to fight. The Elders discouraged conflict.

The Elders saw, foresaw, and told - Don't fight with them [White People]. They will be too many.

They [White People] are going to be some many. They will be like the fog that hangs over a lake along the shoreline. That's how many they will be.

The best thing needed is negotiation. If we negotiated, our children will be saved.

He [Whiteman] doesn't only bring bad things; he also brings many things that are good.

He is going to teach us things that are going to be useful to us in the future.

Once negotiations are done, definitely do it for survival.

Negotiate with them for the survival of the children, too.

He [Whiteman] said, "We have completely destroyed all you hunt for survival."

"We must give you something. We know about how we raise our children."

"This is what we will teach you."

"We [Whiteman] will show you how to raise animals,"

"how to milk cows, to gather eggs, to butcher animals for eating. This is what we will show you."

"We [Whiteman] will give you skills to plant grain, potatoes - and how much, so there is enough for the year."

"Now to education. How we acquire our knowledge - we will teach you how."

"Everything we utilize like tools. We even invented tools, anything for survival."

"Knowledge and how to use it in a good way. That is what we will show you."

"We [Whiteman] will build schools for you. We will give you a teacher"

"who will teach you our language. He/She will teach our language so we can communicate."

"This education, the knowledge, this is truly what you're going to learn in the future."

How is this education interpreted today? It's not only the written education, it's not only numeracy.

It's not only these. How the young will utilize pharmaceuticals, how to understand the anatomy of a body,

how to understand the psychology of a mind - that Aboriginal people are amongst the brilliant people.

This is how education is understood, it isn't a watered down education, too.

The education was thought about in the past, and the way it is understood today.

It's education that will help a person - not in a way to harm anyone.

The good one - because there is education that is not good. The good education,

I will say, the way it is understood by Elders - it is to be good person, but also intelligent.

I will add, to be the best person we can be is

to be able to have enough wisdom to understand when to help our poor people.

We find a way and keep it. When we can do this - helpful knowledge and not use it against each other,

the education that is good, the one that is going to be based on survival, wisdom,

the education that carries a person and doesn't cause him/her to sin,

the wisdom that doesn't cause sin or bring repercussions - the good wisdom, we will have it.

Not only the written knowledge, not only numeracy knowledge,

but the knowledge that allows us to survive and takes us a long way in life, to own it.

The wisdom that a person can get old with, in a good way.

The knowledge that encourages words of wisdom, good child rearing,

to know kinship, promote it correctly, and to take everything in a good way, not bad.

We must have this wisdom, not just formal education.

This is my understanding of providing schools, why we were promised education.

Oral tradition is always our way to teach our child correct ways. This was not in the treaties.

We held on to oral traditions to teach our children.

Where did we start losing oral traditions? When the Whiteman handed over his education system to us,

our oral traditions and practices were not allowed in Whiteman's education.

Oral traditions were put aside. It was understood and recognized later. It was put aside purposely.

Oral tradition was thrown out of education to make Indigenous children Whiteman.

If a child is educated and raised by Whiteman education, the oral traditions, no teachings of kinship,

no teachings of humility, no teachings of kindness - you are taught to be independent and selfish.

You are not taught to maintain your fireplace/home. You are not taught to respect your spouse.

You are not taught to take of your child. You're not taught how to respect your mother and your father.

You're not taught to respect your grandmother or grandfather.

Whiteman education purposely was used to raise children differently, to lose our teachings.

It wasn't by accident Indigenous children were educated to lose traditional teachings. It wasn't.

It was purposely done. In the future, if this is the type of children we are teaching and raising,

if this is how we are raising children to be young ladies and young men,  
they will fight with their parents, and they will have no respect.  
They will be ignorant of their grandmother and grandfather. He/She will disrespect his/her home fire.  
He/She will not raise their children properly. He/She will not treat their spouses right.  
If this is what happens, maybe some of our sayings will become real.  
maybe the youth will kill each other off. So much hatred will consume them, and they will destroy each other.  
Over the years, this is what I am witnessing and seeing happen as I live my life.  
From my parents lifetime until my lifetime today -  
somewhere along the way, I was caught up in all you asked about - the traditional teachings/ceremonies.  
There are traditional teachings /ceremonies. I am at an ag when, I am going back in time, questioning things.  
Questioning things about ourselves. When we do something wrong, we feel it in our heart, why?  
Why, when we do something wrong, we worry ourselves so much? Why is that?  
Because that is how we were made. Us - it's how we grew up.  
We can never be orphaned because here on earth we are related to Mother Earth.  
One can't totally feel lonely like an orphan because he/she is related to everything.  
Once a person finally understands, all the traditional teachings/ceremonies fall into place.  
A person will tell him/herself, I am related to everything. And if I am related to everything,  
I better be careful how I interact with everything. I am related.  
If I see a rock on the ground, I will speak to the rock as Grandfather Rock.  
He was put on this earth first. You will see a tree and address the tree as your older brother.  
This is what is said. It's the animals, the rivers.  
Pretty soon we realize everything around us, we are related to.  
If I make one mistake like torture an animal, there will be repercussions.  
I should not bring harm to an animal because they are my brothers/sisters.  
If I torture my siblings (the animals), I have sinned. If I sin, then I bring harm to my wife and my children.  
I bring harm from sin.  
If I say something to my fellow human being, which brings tears to them -  
because of what I said, I have sinned.  
This is my brother/sister, my relatives, and I bring hurt feelings to him. I can bring sickness to him/her.  
If I say something to him/her, while he/she is enjoying life,  
and shock him/her with my words - if he becomes quiet, I make him/her cry. I have sinned.  
These traditional teachings and laws, the relationship we have with [Mother Earth] and with Creator,  
These laws were used so we (people) could live upon this land; these teachings/laws were here.  
This blessing (life), this gift of being a person, it comes with teachings and laws.  
Being a person has teachings and laws. We don't own it (life). It's loaned to us; we don't own life.  
If you're going to play with life, harm yourself physically, you're going to break a teaching and a law.  
You will commit a sin.  
We hear of people harming themselves; they have broken teachings/laws.

As they make their journey up, the spirit gets stuck short of their destination.  
They come short of (heaven) because they broke a teaching/law.  
If a person breaks a teaching/law of our traditions, there is no way around.  
The kinships we have must be totally respected; kinship is a teaching/law.  
Kinship - it's a teaching/law.  
If you're going to be selfish and stingy, a person breaks a teaching/law.  
People are to help each other. Another teaching/law - if you're selfish,  
don't give to others, a teaching/law is broken. You sin.  
Eventually a person will encounter a situation where a teaching/law is broken.  
You sin, maybe because you are too selfish. Maybe a person will find themselves in a situation -  
Because of selfishness, he/she can't feed their children; you have sinned.  
A person breaks the gift of prosperity. The blessing, answered prayers -  
a person breaks all of this because of selfishness.  
With all the teachings/laws - like honour, to be honourable - to totally honour someone,  
that is a teaching/law, to honour each other.  
Don't ever think of yourself above anyone else.  
Use humility. Honour others more than yourself. This will do you more good, you will feel good .  
If you try be better than others, you will commit a sin. Humility is also a teaching/law.  
Humility is a law.  
Don't ever think yourself better than your fellow human-being. It's a sin. It was told,  
something will humble you.  
A person who develops empathy is blessed. If a person doesn't have empathy, then he/she sinned.  
If you don't have empathy, then you didn't catch the meaning.  
You broke empathy for yourself, one of the utmost teachings/laws.  
If you don't have empathy, if you are doing someone wrong, if you don't feel empathy,  
then you didn't get the emotion. You then broke the teaching/law. You have sinned.  
Those are some of the extreme emotions; those are extreme. If one doesn't feel empathy -  
you sin and still don't feel guilt, the kind spirit within leaves you -  
the kind spirit that reminds a person every time you do someone wrong.  
Tell the person you are regretful. Tell him/her you care, help them.  
You are being told - you know what to do to make things right.  
You know what to do but don't, then you have done wrong.  
It's a message to do right. (points up)  
The teachings/laws are powerful and have a spiritual meaning.  
If something is spiritual, and you fully believe in it, your belief will take you a long way.  
If you follow something spiritual and practice it, a person wakes up feeling good every morning.  
Every morning a person has good wishes, and every evening a person gives thanks.  
This is the Cree teaching/laws. Thank-you!