

When I was a child

When I was a child
I used to go fishing
along with my paw-pa

He used to say to me
"Listen" Daw-niss-san!
Listen to the sounds of the boat.

Do you hear water splashing
against our boat?
and I'd say,
Oh yes Paw-pa.

He said the wood of the boat
is talking to the water spirit.
Shh! Listen!
They are singing together!

And when I listened
My ears became sharp
to the sounds of the outside world

The sound of the boat
groaned and cried
for she, the Nodin (The Wind),
was getting old.

Nodin creaked, squeal and squeak,
sometimes rusty, her voice sometimes
clear.

Her songs combined with sounds
of water
splashing against her
made beautiful songs.

They sang and sang
about a child
called Shir-o-lee.

Shir-o-lee
I am Nodin, the wind
I will carry you
and your paw-pa, Shawn-zee-mo!

My pa used to say
Always listen!
Always be aware!
for your ears are not
for decorations!

Take a look —
See the beauty of the world
Use your eyes to see the beauty
for when you see something
only you can see it.

Only you can interpret
what you see.
Look how clear the water is.
When I looked
I saw — Beauty! Water
shining and dancing
before my eyes.

To see, to look,
to appreciate beauty of things
is a prayer.
Then, I felt good.

I felt gladness.
I felt joy.
I felt whole.
Beauty!
Life so precious
it's a gift of Master.

My paw-pa used to say
Use everything you have
and always give thanks
for what you see
for some day you may not see.

In the morning always face the sun
for Kiisis gives heat and light.
Be sure to say
Megwetch!

When night comes
wait for the moon.
She provides night light
to us to see
so we won't get lost.

Shir-o-lee, daughter
let us stop to fish
for we are near the rocks.

Look into the bee-ing
until you see three large rocks
for that's our fishing mark.

Shh — hear the rocks speak
for they have spirit, too.
Whenever you are in trouble
speak to a rock
for you have a special asin, too.

The asin we have is the
foundation of us
for we need
a stone to stand on
for when we're weak.

Life is like sharp rocks
full of mountains to climb.
climb hard, my daughter,
and you will be strong.

Always, my child,
look and listen.
Use your eyes to see
the world.
Breathe Nodin, the wind
for you will feel whole he said.

Then, I felt
a bite on my line.
It's a fish, I yelled.

Paw-pa smiled
then laughed so hard
that I lost my line.

Let's go home he said.
Megwetch! Nodin!
then I heard Nodin sing.

We will go home, Shir-o-lee.
I will carry you home.

Ojibway words:

Daw-niss-san — daughter
Paw-pa — father
Nodin — wind
Shir-o-lee — Shirley
Shawn-zee-mo — John Simon
Kiisis — Sun
Megwetch — thank you
bee-ing — water
asin — stone

Shirley Williams

I Lost My Talk

I lost my talk
The talk you took away.
When I was a little girl
At Shubenacadie school.

You snatched it away:
I speak like you
I think like you
I create like you
The scrambled ballad, about my
world.

Two ways I talk
Both ways I say,
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,
Let me find my talk
So I can teach you about me.

Rita Joe