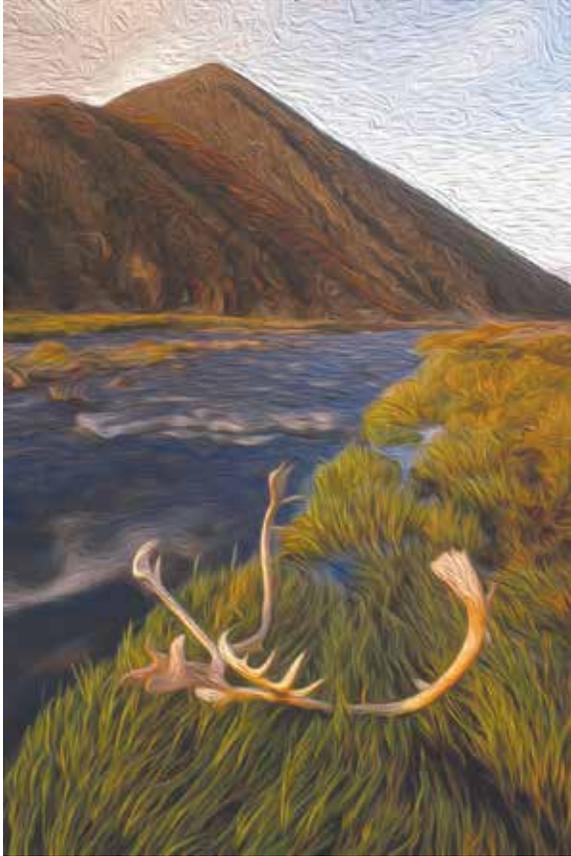


Gwaandak Theatre and
Vuntut Gwitchin Government

Tl'oo That Grass Pants

Ndoo Tr'eedyaa Gogwaandak (Forward Together)
Vuntut Gwitchin Stories

Ndoo Tr'eedyaa Gogwaandak (Forward Together)
Vuntut Gwitchin Stories



Tl'oo That
Grass Pants

2019

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- vuntutstories.ca
- gwaandaktheatre.ca
- www.vgfn.ca





Van Tat/Crow Flats. Photo: VGG

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Language is a living, breathing entity and the translation process is complex. In a few cases the recorded Gwich'in dialogue differs slightly from the script. Translators reviewed the final scripts after the radio plays were produced and corrected some Gwich'in words.

Introduction to the series

First of all, I would like to shed some light on the fact that Ndoo Tr'eedyaa Gogwaandak started out so modestly. It began as just a twinkle in the eyes of a few people who have a love of stories. I think it was about three or four years ago when Patti Flather and Leonard Linklater of Gwaandak Theatre came up to Old Crow to do a storytelling workshop.

It was simple: we bring the people of the community together, *k'eejit kat* (youth), *ch'anjoo kat* (elders), and *dinji hah tr'iinjoo kat* (adult men and women), and we sit in a big circle and tell stories, just like they did in the old days. I dug into our oral history data base as well, and managed to find some gems that I could read to the people. It was months later at the second storytelling workshop that magic happened. It's funny how magic can come from the simplest and most benign situations. This time around we brought the students from Chief Zzeh Gittlit School here in Old Crow together with the elders. Our plan was to put together a folder of Gwich'in tales. We picked a few stories from this folder and wrote scripts for Gwich'in plays that would one day be performed by a full Gwich'in cast. As we were writing a script Tanner Coyne spoke up and said, "You know what would be cool? If we could like, write all these scripts into the Gwich'in language."

I'll never forget the look in Patti's eyes, so full of enthusiasm and hope. She looked at my mentor Joel Peter and me with eyes gleaming and a funny little half-smile and asked, "Can we do that?"

Joel and I did the most Gwich'in thing we could possibly do; we looked at each other, didn't say a word or give any indication there was any type of communication between us whatsoever. Then we looked back at Patti and nodded, wordlessly giving her the go-ahead to give it a try. It's also funny that Gwich'in people are naturally such great orators yet we usually try to communicate using as few words as possible. A few years after that fateful day we had three finished scripts (well, almost finished, I suppose) written in Gwich'in and translated from Gwich'in to English, and other scripts that were just a little further behind in the process.

We also had a production team and a full Gwich'in cast for these radio plays. We did four shows in three days at The Old Fire Hall in Whitehorse (joined by Paul Kennedy, host of "Ideas" on CBC Radio) and had an absolute blast. Paul did a one-hour episode on us that he called "Language, Land and Laughter: The Power of Gwich'in Storytelling."

Fittingly enough, our entire weekend was filled with laughter, stories of the land, and the spoken Gwich'in language. Before the first show, the message we received from our director Patti was to just be ourselves. Being who we are is what makes us beautiful and unique. So on the first night we stepped

on to the stage nervously, we took deep breaths like Leonard and Patti told us to, we shook off the nerves and we put bits of ourselves into every character. We had the whole place laughing and cheering almost the entire time and then we jiggled off the stage to a standing ovation after the final scene. It was exhilarating, to say the least. Most of all, it was empowering and healing. I felt the pain of my past and the pain of my loved ones flutter from my soul during that experience. One thing my mind keeps coming back to is that phrase from Myra “Choo” Kaye (Kyikavichik):

Ndoo Tr’eedyaa — We Move Forward... We Continue On... We Persevere.

Gogwaandak — They Tell Stories Of.

Ndoo Tr’eedyaa Gogwaandak — They Tell Stories Of Moving Forward Together.

But it’s that one term in the beginning of that sentence that gets me every time...

Ndoo tr’eedyaa — We move forward.

The single most powerful and significant idea in that phrase is “we.” “We” move forward. The very core of our belief system as Gwich’in people is rooted in togetherness. We have overcome every major obstacle we have ever faced, “together.” Now we have a new major obstacle to face: preventing the extinction of our ancient and beautiful language. The only way we will overcome this obstacle is “together.”

Gogoontrii tr’igwich’ii. K’eejit kat tthak tr’igwidii giinlii, dinjii hah tr’iinjoo kat chan, ts’at nakhwach’anjoo kat chan, tr’igwidii hah gałts’ik. Diikhwan tthak, tr’igiwidii tr’iinlii. Gwitr’it t’agwahaa’yaa t’igweedi’yaa, gwiheezyaa ts’o’ gwini’ee. Ndoo tr’iheedaa, gogoontrii gaa, ndoo tr’iheedaa. Shiginjik gihiikhyaa ji’, gwiheezyaa ts’o’ gwini’ee hihshyaa goodlit.

We live in difficult times. The youth, they are in mourning, adult men and women also, and our elders, they are also sick with sadness. All of us, we are in mourning. The work we have yet to do will lead us on the path to betterment. We will move forward; even if it’s difficult, we will move forward. If I speak my language, I will begin on the path to betterment.

Brandon Kyikavichik

Acknowledgement

Gwaandak Theatre and Vuntut Gwitchin Government wish to acknowledge that they have created and shared these Vuntut Gwitchin radio stories on the traditional territory of Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation (Old Crow, Yukon), Kwanlin Dün First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council (Whitehorse, Yukon).

We acknowledge the Tagish Kwan as the original people who live and occupy the lands within the Traditional Territory, which lie at the headwaters of the Yukon River. To these Nations, their leadership and their citizens hosting us on their lands: Mahsi' choo. Shăw níthän. Kwänáschis. Gunalchîsh. Thank you from the depths of our hearts.

Ndoo Tr'edyaa Gogwaandak (Forward Together) / Vuntut Gwitchin Stories

“To honour our Elders, we have to try.”

Joseph Linklater, former chief, Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, in the Introduction to *People of the Lakes: Stories of Our Van Tat Gwich'in Elders/Googwandak Nakhwach'anjòò Van Tat Gwich'in* (University of Alberta Press)

These radio plays and script booklets are part of an innovative multi-year project that honours millennia-old storytelling traditions and Indigenous language revitalization.

The *Van Tat Gwich'in* — “People of the Lakes,” referring to the Crow Flats area — are renowned storytellers, and do they ever have stories to tell. After all, they have survived for thousands of years in one of the toughest northern climates around. Their traditional territory in the north Yukon is vast, beautiful and unforgiving.

They have faced famine and navigated blizzard-swept mountain ranges and surging rivers they know like the back of their hand. They built and used monumental, hairpin-shaped log fences, some up to one kilometre long, to drive and communally harvest large numbers of caribou. Today, they govern themselves with pride while living with the ongoing effects of colonization, adapting to rapid societal changes, resisting threats to the caribou from oil development, and facing an environmental climate change crisis.

Now based in the fly-in community of Old Crow, population 300, people continue to rely on the Porcupine Caribou herd, and on other fish and game. They're deeply connected to and interrelated with other Gwich'in communities in Alaska and the Mackenzie Delta in the Northwest Territories.

Van Tat elders have passed down a rich variety of stories for untold centuries: creation; the epic adventures of *Ch'ataiyuukaih*, or the Man Who Paddled a Different Route, and *Ko' Edhanh* or Man Without Fire; assorted escapades of clever girls and old women; tales of first contact with European settlers and more modern times; and many others.

As is the way with stories, tellers have their own style. Versions are known across Gwich'in territory and in other Indigenous communities too. After all, both people and great stories travel. Leonard Linklater, co-founder of Gwaandak Theatre, recalls as a boy hearing his Uncle Abe Thomas, who moved from Rampart House on the Yukon-Alaska border to the Mackenzie Delta for marriage, telling Van Tat *Ch'ataiyuukaih* stories into the night at fish camp at the mouth of the Peel River.

Nowadays, it's not as easy to hear stories like these. Many incredible elders, their stories held like encyclopedias in their heads and hearts, have passed on. As elsewhere, television, the internet, video games and other popular forms of entertainment have taken root.

It's even more rare to hear these stories in the Gwich'in language, and that's no accident. In the residential school system, the Canadian state and churches perpetrated what the Truth and Reconciliation Commission terms "cultural genocide."

Among other things, these entities deliberately suppressed the mother tongues of the Gwich'in and other Indigenous peoples, the First Peoples of this land we now call Canada. Students forced into residential schools were forbidden to speak these languages. Many more lost their language; others did not feel proud or safe enough to pass it on to next generations. The last Yukon/northern B.C. residential school for Yukon First Nation students closed in 1975. Indigenous language programs have sprung up since the 1970s, but have been severely underfunded.

The United Nations declared 2019 the International Year of Indigenous Languages to increase awareness and spur action to promote and protect Indigenous languages around the world. According to the UN, 40 per cent of the world's estimated 6,700 languages are in danger of disappearing. The majority are spoken by Indigenous peoples.

Gwich'in is in the large Athabaskan or Dené language family. Today there are about 400 speakers in Canada, and a few hundred more in Alaska. UNESCO identifies Gwich'in, the other Yukon Indigenous languages (Hän, Kaska, Northern Tutchone, Southern Tutchone, Tagish, Tlingit, Upper Tanana) and the majority of Canadian Indigenous languages as endangered.

In one initiative to address this situation Vuntut Gwitchin Government and Gwaandak Theatre partnered on this series of radio plays — Ndoos Tr'eedyaa Gogwaandak (Forward Together): Vuntut Gwitchin Stories.

Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation proclaims on its website: "We are the Vuntut Gwitchin of the North Yukon, with boundless pride in our ancient cultural heritage and ancestral homelands. We exercise our inherent right to self government, to take the responsibility for the general welfare of our citizens, and to provide for the good government of our communities, lands and resources." Vuntut Gwitchin Government is a leader and innovator in preserving and promoting Van Tat culture, heritage and language, while also embracing new media.

Gwaandak Theatre’s vision is to empower Indigenous and Northern voices around the world. Gwaandak means “storyteller” or “telling a story” in Gwich’in. Since 2000 Gwaandak Theatre has supported the development, production and touring of numerous plays showcasing Indigenous voices and artists, for both youth and adult audiences.

Dana Tizya-Tramm, Chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation, says the radio plays are an opportunity to share community stories with a wider audience through traditional oral storytelling.

“Vuntut Gwitchin storytellers breathe life into our culture and perform the vital task of passing our oral history to many generations to come,” says Chief Tizya-Tramm. “The partnership between Gwaandak Theatre and community storytellers has brought to life stories that can be performed live or played on the radio in both Gwich’in and English, enabling our rich wealth of stories to continue to entertain, enrich and educate.”

Leonard Linklater, a Vuntut Gwitchin citizen and one of the creative team members on Ndooy Tr’eedyaa Gogwaandak, believes that theatre is an important tool for healing. “These Gwich’in stories hold the rhythm of the land in them and are a source of strength in a challenging environment. Language grows out of the land. The stories reflect our relationship to that land. The more you are tied to the land, through strong roots, the more confident you are to grow as a person,” he says. For him, these stories teach non-Gwich’in people the importance of the caribou, land and water to the people of the northern Yukon.

How we began

Language and stories have been intertwined for the project partners since this initiative started. We wanted to honour and build on the oral tradition, with full community involvement and consultation. We wanted to find new ways to share and celebrate these stories with the younger Gwich’in generation and with others. Who doesn’t love a great story? And we wanted to use as much Gwich’in as we possibly could, even though most of us were not fluent!

Starting in February 2016, with the VGG Heritage Department, we held several storytelling workshops and evening community events in Old Crow. We played theatre games and traditional stick-pull games using a greased stick. We shared what we knew of our favourite Van Tat stories and voted on which ones to tackle first. We feasted. And always, elders came and told stories and guided us.

We knew the power of theatre and stories. We knew the community had to be on board every step of the way. We knew the journey had to be more important than any end goals. Our beginnings in the community hall were both exhilarating and terrifying. None of us knew exactly how this project would go. We had never done anything like this before. People in Old Crow knew oral storytelling but understandably were less familiar with theatre. There were many moments of fear and uncertainty about how to move forward together. We had to work it out, in the community and long distance between Old Crow and Whitehorse. We had to try.

We chose stories of resilience, resourcefulness and humour, qualities that Vuntut Gwitchin have in spades. Gwaandak artists worked with Gwich'in storytellers and with elders, scriptwriters, translators, language specialists and community members to develop and shape the radio plays. Between workshops, we'd go off and work on the scripts, then bring them to the elders for feedback. Our theatre team included some artists of settler descent — including Gwaandak's Artistic Director (anglo-settler), of mixed descent, and from other nations, such as playwright-director Yvette Nolan, who is Algonquin/Irish.

Fluent speakers and translators were an integral part of the process from the start. As the scripts came together, language specialists told us they preferred to work in teams, not in isolation, so VGG Heritage organized translation workshops.

In February 2019, exactly three years after our first workshop, we recorded most of the plays on location in Old Crow's tiny CROW FM radio studio over seven intense days. The outstanding team included elders, language specialists, youth, award-winning theatre artists, and of course, the amazing cooks. We had a public reading and feast at the Community Hall. People laughed so hard.

In March 2019 we shared excerpts of the plays at The Old Fire Hall in Whitehorse in school and community shows filled with laughter from performers and audiences alike. We had 11 people on stage, 10 of them Gwich'in, telling stories in both Gwich'in and English to a mainly English-speaking audience. And people understood just fine. The CBC show *Ideas* later aired a one-hour broadcast featuring highlights from the Whitehorse readings and interviews with language and culture champions, reaching tens of thousands more Canadians.

The support of language specialists was incredible and essential. We found that many people know far more of the language than they give themselves credit for. Performers stepped out of their comfort zones and rose to the

occasion, offering moving and powerful performances both in the recording studio and on stage. We are inspired by younger people learning and teaching the language.

We didn't set out to produce radio plays but this is the perfect medium. Although we embrace the immediacy and community-building inherent in live theatre storytelling, northerners love radio and still rely on it for important information. Radio is intimate. And the process allowed us to record most readers in their home community of Old Crow on a flexible schedule, in between work and family commitments.

These radio plays and booklets can be shared far and wide. The beautiful voices of the readers, from children to Elders, each with their distinctive way of speaking, are captured and preserved, at this moment in time. These plays also can be read out loud, together, in a classroom or library, community hall or around the campfire.

About the scripts and translations

There is limited fluency — even in Gwich'in communities — and limited resources for both youth and adult language learners, although thankfully this is changing. Vuntut Gwitchin Government has taken extraordinary steps to develop and offer an adult language learner program, incorporating Van Tat stories. Other Gwich'in communities are making efforts, including immersion camps.

Many people want to reclaim or learn their language, but it's not easy. Learners may struggle with a lack of confidence and with shame, along with time constraints. Learning opportunities such as adult classes exist but have been limited. School children in Old Crow receive about one hour daily of language class in curriculum developed through the Yukon Native Language Centre and its dedicated teachers.

We chose to record and publish these radio plays in both Gwich'in and English to promote language acquisition in an enjoyable, accessible way. Readers and listeners can easily follow along with the script in both languages. They should feel free to stop and start, re-listen and try words and phrases out loud at their own pace. We invite them to share our joy in playing with the language in these adaptations, breathing contemporary energy and creativity into it as an organic living entity.

We also advocate and promote greater appreciation of and support for revitalization of Gwich'in and other endangered Indigenous languages among all peoples. These languages hold traditional knowledge and perspectives and are treasures that we all must fight for. We call on the

federal government to act on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action 13 through 17 on Language and Culture.

Writing and spelling Gwich'in

Gwich'in is traditionally an oral language. The first writing system was developed by Church of England missionary Robert McDonald from Manitoba, who began working with the Gwich'in in the 1860s. He called the people and the language Takudh and translated the Bible, the Book of Common Prayer and a hymnal with the help of Gwich'in people. These are still used today, mainly by older people. Most younger people have a hard time reading them.

In the 1960s, linguist and Bible translator Richard Mueller developed the modern orthography (writing and spelling system) for Alaskan Gwich'in. The Yukon Native Language Centre adapted this in the mid-1970s for writing Canadian dialects. The scripts in these booklets are in this writing system. We have included a guide to Gwich'in pronunciation in the booklets (see page xviii).

The translations

We approached these scripts in several different ways. The late storyteller Sarah Abel Chitze told her stories — *Vah Srigwehdi'* / The One Who Survived, *Shanaghan Kat Nanaa'in Hah* / Two Old Women and the Bushman, and *Tl'oo Thał* / Grass Pants — in Gwich'in. VGG Heritage staff members transcribed and translated the recordings over the years. We worked from a combination of English translations and the original Gwich'in. Then translators brought the scripts back into Gwich'in. In other cases we began with a story directly told in English, such as Stephen Frost Sr.'s story of his first snow machine, a story he shared with his godson Leonard Linklater.

As you explore these radio plays, you may notice that the English text is not always a literal translation of the Gwich'in. The two languages are very different. Language structure is one example — Gwich'in speakers like to say that English is backwards! The general meaning, however, is very close.

We wanted to let each language breathe and be natural and did not want to impose a word-by-word translation.

As well, people have their own unique way of speaking, in all languages. Notice how different readers say the Gwich'in word *shijyaa* (meaning friend or partner); some people say *sitjah* or simply *'jah*. We wanted to reflect that.

In *Tl'oo That / Grass Pants*, we chose to record the traders' dialogue only in English, even in the Gwich'in version. This was to illustrate the language barrier between the Gwich'in person and the newcomers. We also chose not to translate the radio announcer in *Ch'iitsii Khał Dat'oo / The Blue Cruiser*.

We also had to prioritize which scripts and sections to translate into Gwich'in, being mindful of the few experienced translators, who are older and juggling multiple responsibilities. Some sections are more challenging and unfamiliar, such as traders' words like "crikey" and "galoot." You'll also notice variations in spellings of the people and territory. The language, along with references to most Gwich'in communities, is spelled "Gwich'in." The Vuntut Gwitchin choose to spell their own name differently. Using the modern Gwich'in orthography, Vuntut is spelled Van Tat (People of the Lakes, or lake people, referring to the many lakes in the Crow Flats area).

Gather 'round the campfire

As we know, Indigenous stories were not celebrated, nurtured or shared in the Canadian mainstream for most of the country's history. We believe this is a loss not only for Indigenous people, but for all of us.

The survival of these stories — and the Gwich'in language — is testament to the strength and resilience of the Van Tat people and their knowledge that these are cultural treasures. These stories deserve to be heard and appreciated more widely. We hope you'll enjoy our interpretations. Maybe you'll be inspired to tell more of your stories.

Grab a cup of tea and bannock, or, if you're really lucky, *niliį gai* – dried caribou meat.

Anaii – Come

Ch'oodhadhohch'eii – Listen

About Vuntut Gwitchin Government

We are the Vuntut Gwitchin of the North Yukon, with boundless pride in our ancient cultural heritage and ancestral homelands. We exercise our inherent right to self government, to take responsibility for the general welfare of our citizens, and to provide for the good government of our communities, lands and resources.

We invite you to learn more about us at our website: www.vgfn.ca.

About Gwaandak Theatre

Gwaandak Theatre has been empowering Indigenous and Northern voices since 2000. As the only Indigenous-centred theatre company in the Yukon, we are committed to presenting artistic programming that promotes meaningful reconciliation and deeper understanding between Yukoners, both Indigenous and settlers. We tell stories that explore themes of decolonization, cultural identity, social justice, and human rights. One meaning of the word *gwaandak* in the Gwich'in language is "storyteller."

Find us at gwaandaktheatre.ca and facebook.com/gwaandaktheatre.

A guide to Gwich'in pronunciation

There are 45 consonant sounds in Gwich'in, not all of which are represented by a single letter in the modern orthography (e.g., ch, ddh, dz, dzh, gh, ghw, kh, khw, nj, tl., tth).

Vowels can be long or short (represented by double or single letters, e.g., a, aa, e, ee, etc.) and can have a high or low tone.

High tone is generally unmarked, with a few exceptions indicated by a circumflex (e.g., â).

Low tone has a grave accent (e.g., a or à). Only the first vowel of a long vowel is marked to indicate a low tone (e.g., àa)..

Additionally, an apostrophe indicates a glottal stop (the sound is stopped at the back of the throat) (e.g., aat'oo, birch) and a hook under a vowel indicates it is nasalized (e.g., gjìnhè, he spoke).

The vowel sounds are pronounced in this way:

- a** short **a** as in English “around”
- aa** long **a** as in English “father”
- e** short **e** as in English “set”
- ee** long **e** as in English “make,” except the sound changes less from start to finish
- i** short **i** as in English “fit”
- ii** long **i** as in English “see”
- o** short **o** as in English “vote”
- oo** long **o** as in English “vote,” but held for a longer duration
- u** short **u** as in English “duke”
- uu** long **u** as in English “duke,” but held for a longer duration
- aih** sound varies depending on whether it's written aih, ai', or with nothing at the end; all are similar to the ie in English “pie”
- ai'** similar to **ie** in English “pie,” with a glottal stop at the end
- eii** similar to **ay** in English “say”
- ao** similar to **ow** in English “now”

Elder profile

Sarah (Joseph) Abel Chitze

Sarah Abel was born April 10, 1896, on the Chandalar River near Fort Yukon, Alaska to Joseph and Catherine. Times were hard and the family followed the caribou, moving wherever there was food. One of those places was New Rampart House. When Sarah was around three years old, while they were visiting at New Rampart, her mother died. Unable to care for his child, Sarah's father gave her to Peter and Myra Moses, who adopted her. It was around the time of the drawing up of the boundary between Alaska and Yukon.



VGG Archives, Dicquemare Collection, VG1999-01-15

In 1913, at the age of seventeen, Sarah married Abel Chitze. They lived at Whitefish Lake, 30 miles up the Porcupine River from Old Crow. Sarah had seventeen children. In 1944, her husband passed away, but Sarah remained in the area for six more years, raising her family by trapping and hunting.

In 1950, Sarah moved to Old Crow. She became actively involved in the community and church. She was the first woman Council Member for the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation and for a time was president of the Women's Auxiliary. As a well-respected spokeswoman, she endeavoured to set an example for the younger generation. Her last recorded speech was on the occasion of her 100th birthday, on April 10, 1996.

As an esteemed elder and the matriarch of the community, Sarah, with wisdom gleaned from the past, provided a source of strength and guidance, teaching the many traditions and stories of her people to native and non-native alike. She was Shitsuu (Grandma) Sarah to all who came to know her. She watched as the young country took its first steps, struggled to overcome its growing pains and the many changes to her lifestyle as it came into its own. She watched as canvas boats and dog teams gave way to Skidoos, motorboats and the airplane, from man walking on snowshoes to walking on the moon. Then in later years she watched as her nation came of age and began the struggle to overcome the past and forge a new future.

On August 14, 1998, Sarah Abel Chitze passed away at her home in Old Crow, Yukon, at the age of 102 years.

Source: www.oldcrow.ca/sarahen.htm

Elder profile

Richard Martin

Richard Martin was born at the head of the Peel River in either 1879 or 1882 to Martin Sha-un-Nakhya (Old Martin) and Jane Chiljulthoo. Martin's family were Tukudh, a Gwich'in speaking people who lived and traveled in the upper Porcupine River region, down into the headwaters of the Ogilvie River and through the western portions of the upper Peel River basin.

Martin was a respected hunter, trapper and guide. He was among the first group of Gwich'in hunters and trappers to travel from Tetlit Zheh (Fort McPherson) to Dawson City in 1901 on what became annual winter trips to sell caribou meat to residents, staying down the Yukon River in Moosehide with the Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in, and returning home with trade goods. Martin also guided North-West Mounted Police patrols between Dawson and Fort McPherson and to Herschel Island, drawing on his skills and his knowledge of traditional routes and camps.

Martin was a devout Christian who ministered to Gwich'in in remote regions throughout the Peel watershed and later to Tr'ondëk Hwëch'in. He lost the sight in both eyes in two separate accidents. The second incident, when his rifle backfired and exploded during a hunting trip, happened just months after he was ordained in 1926 as a deacon in the Anglican Church. Unable to regain his sight, he settled in Moosehide and continued to serve in the church there. Many decades after losing his vision, Martin could still vividly describe landmarks of his homeland in the Blackstone River country.

Martin married four times and had several children. Richard and his last wife Mary were among the last people to leave Moosehide, in 1962, for Dawson City. Richard Martin died in 1975. The Gwich'in people of Tetlit Zheh chartered a plane to attend his funeral. The chapel behind St. Paul's Anglican Church in Dawson City is dedicated in his name.

Sources: Dawson Museum website: www.dawsonmuseum.ca/archives/fonds-descriptions/?id=2; and <http://trondekeritage.com/our-places/black-city/what-makes-black-city-special/people-and-families/reverend-richard-martin>.



Reverend Richard Martin.
Yukon Archives, Anglican Church,
Diocese of Yukon fonds, 89/41 #1490

Introduction to the story

Tl'oo Thał / Grass Pants is a comical and well known and well loved Gwich'in story of first contact. It exemplifies both the generosity and sense of humour Gwich'in people are well known for.

It's also remarkably sympathetic in its perspective on contact. Colonization has been devastating in many ways for Gwich'in and other Indigenous peoples. This story highlights some realities of contact. These have led to rapid change and ongoing interconnections between Gwich'in and newcomers.

A group of us wrote this adaptation — inspired both by Sarah Abel Chitze's versions (told originally in Gwich'in) and by the late Richard Martin's version, as shared in his book *K'aiiroondak: Behind the Willows* (Center for Cross-Cultural Studies, University of Alaska, 1993).

We noticed both strong similarities and significant differences between these versions. Along the way we enjoyed some vigorous discussions with Van Tat elders about which version was accurate.

One obvious question was where this story takes place. Was it in the Mackenzie Delta region? Along the Yukon River? We try to address that doubt in this story. Maybe it doesn't matter. After all, moments of contact happened all over Gwich'in territory.

Another key point of contention was whether the central character, Tl'oo Thał, begins the story wearing actual "grass pants" or ends up with them after meeting the European traders. Sarah Abel Chitze tells us he wore hide clothes to begin with; Richard Martin and some Van Tat elders say he began with clothes made of grass. It makes sense to us that he begins with the typical — and practical — hide clothing of that time period, and changes into European garb only after he meets the traders.

As well, Chitze's Tl'oo Thał is adept at living off the land; Martin's is bumbling and inept compared with the traders. While his version is brimming with humour, it's often at the expense of the Gwich'in man. Knowing that Gwich'in had to be highly skilled to survive, and that many negative stereotypes of Indigenous people have existed since contact and colonization, we drew from Chitze's more capable Tl'oo Thał.

We had enormous fun creating this adaptation and trying out portions of it in the Community Hall in Old Crow! We hope you'll enjoy listening to this play as much as we did creating it. And keep your ears open: you'll likely encounter other variations of this story from Gwich'in and other Indigenous storytellers.

Credits

This radio play was recorded on location in Old Crow, Yukon in February 2019, at the CROW FM studio on the second floor of the Youth Centre. Additional recording took place at Stackwall Sound in Whitehorse, Yukon in spring 2019.

Cast in order of appearance: Gwich'in version

Tr'iinin kat/Grandchildren	Sophia Flather, Desmond Kyikavichik, Johnathon Frost
Shitsuu/Elder	Marion Schafer
Tl'oo Thał	Tammy Josie
Vijùu/Younger Sister	Briana Tetlich
Sheek'aai/Aunty (Mother's sister)	Donna Marie Frost
Dinjii Khehkai'/Leader	Randel Kendi
George (leader of the trading party)	Tanner Coyne
Alex Flett (George's right-hand man)	Stanley Grafton Njootli
Archibald "Archie" Thomson (trader)	Leonard Linklater

Cast in order of appearance: English version

Tr'iinin kat/Grandchildren	Desmond Kyikavichik, Johnathon Frost
Shitsuu/Elder	Jane Montgomery
Tl'oo Thał	Tammy Josie
Vijùu/Younger Sister	Ciara Kakfwi-Frost
Shitii/Uncle (Father's brother)	Randel Kendi
Dinjii Khehkai'/Leader	Vicky Josie
George (leader of the trading party)	Tanner Coyne
Alex Flett (George's right-hand man)	Stanley Grafton Njootli
Archibald "Archie" Thomson (trader)	Leonard Linklater

Creative and production team: radio play production

Writing team	Patti Flather, Brandon Kyikavichik, Leonard Linklater, Yvette Nolan
Elder advisors	Robert Bruce Jr., Stephen Frost Sr., Joel Peter
Director, English version	Reneltta Arluk
Director, Gwich'in version	Patti Flather
Audio Producer, Sound Designer, Composer	Jordy Walker
Translators	Jane Montgomery, Joel Peter, Marion Schafer, Brandon Kyikavichik
Musicians *	Alana Martinson (violin), Darcy McCord (cello), Wade Kaye (fiddle)
Production Stage Manager	Léa Roy Bernatchez
Production Assistant	Leonard Linklater
Sound Assistants	Tanner Coyne, Stanley Grafton Njootli
Youth Production Assistant	Ciara Kakfwi-Frost
Booklet editing, design, layout	Patricia Halladay

Gwaandak Theatre staff

Artistic Directors	Patti Flather and Colin Wolf
Artistic Producers	Siku Allooloo, Léa Roy Bernatchez
General Manager	Jenna Winter
Managing Director	Paige Galette

Vuntut Gwitchin Government staff

Heritage Manager	Megan Williams
Language Coordinator	Sophia Flather
Heritage Interpreter	Brandon Kyikavichik

* See website for full music credits.

Tl'oo That / Grass Pants

Characters

Shitsuu/Elder

Tl'oo That (Grass Pants)

Vijùu/Younger Sister

Sheek'aii/Aunty (Mother's sister)

Dinjii Khehkai'/Leader

George — the English leader of the trading party

Alex Flett — his Scottish right-hand man

Archibald "Archie" Thomson — Orkney Islands Scottish trader

Language is a living, breathing entity and the translation process is complex. In a few cases the recorded Gwich'in dialogue differs slightly from the script. Translators reviewed the final scripts after the radio plays were produced and corrected some Gwich'in words.

PROLOGUE

Around the campfire, children approach an elder.

Child #1	Shitsuu duuleh diiyah gwaandak?	Grandma, can you tell us a story?
Children	Gwandak! Gwandak!	Story! Story!
Elder	Shicheii kat. Anaii! Ch'oodhadhohch'eii!	Grandchildren, listen!

The elder, with a cup of tea, hushes them.

Elder	Nich'it ch'ok ihtii dai'.	When I was a young girl, you know.
	Shik ch'anjoo kat goovah tr'ijilch'eii, oonoodai' gogogwandak eenjit.	We always go to visit these old people because they tell stories about long time ago.
	Googwandak shinich'uu eenjit.	Their stories are very interesting.
	Jii gwandak, ch'anjoo kat shah gogwaandak.	This story was told to me by the elders.
	Shitsii shah gwaandak tr'oochit diik'ee ts'ik agwanahthat dai'.	My grandfather told me about the age of the first muzzle loaders.
	Vahnoodlit tr'ohchit diik'ee ts'ik hadhadlii dai', dinjii zhuh ihtee ezhik.	When the first white people brought muzzle loaders into the country, there was an Indian there.
	Sreendit gweedhaa gwizhik, ezhik gwa'an ch'atthaii kwaa, aii ts'o' tsèe kagidi'in, aa gogoonrii.	It was springtime. There was no caribou around, so people were hunting beaver. They were having much difficulty.
	Ezhik ihtii k'it zhuu gagwahaldak.	I'll tell it just like I was there.

SCENE 1

We hear wind and other sounds of the outdoors.

Vijùu/Sister	Shee'kaii yeedee taih gwats'o', ts'alvit trèe jihth'ak.	[Uncle*], I hear loon noises coming from up that hill.
Sheek'aii/Aunty	Yeedee łoo ts'alvit t'inuu kwaa gwich'in.	It can't be a loon way up there.
Vijùu/Sister	Shoondèe juk niizhuk haljii.	My older brother's been gone long time.
	Duuleh needyaa gwich'in.	Maybe it's him coming.
Sheek'aii/Aunty	Aaha' shuu adanh gwich'in.	You're right, my niece, it's got to be.
Vijùu/Sister	Shoondèe.	Brother, over here!

The women sound surprised.

Sheek'aii/Aunty	Nits'oo zhuu nagwadaazhii?	What kind of clothes is he wearing?
Vijùu/Sister	Sheek'aii. Aachin nilii. Dinjii kat gookanahee.	Aunty! It's a stranger! Go get the men.
Sheek'aii/Aunty	Aaha'.	Yeah.

Sheek'aii hurries off to get the leader and the men.

Tl'oo Thał	(laughing) Shijùu shii t'ihch'uu.	(laughing) Sister, it's me.
Vijùu/Sister	Duuweh.	No way.

The leader comes with the young men of the community.

Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Aih nik'i' tr'iilee dhaatin.	Get your arrows ready.
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* Please note that the Gwich'in version features Sheek'aii / Aunty and the English version features Shitii / Uncle.

They draw their arrows.

Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Zhat daiindi'in?	What are you doing here?
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Nakhwak'i' gehteehohtii.	Put away your arrows!
Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Juu dèe nahgwich'in?	Who are your people?
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Shah gwich'in ohtii.	You are my people.

His sister goes to the leader.

Vijùu/Sister	Shoondèe nilii nuu.	He says he's my brother.
Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Jii nich'it voondee lèe iinlii?	Are you the older brother of this girl?
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Aaha'.	<i>Aaha'.</i>
Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Dinjii kat. Nakhwak'itai' gehteehohtii.	Men, put your bows away.
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Ch'oodhadhohch'eii! Tsingwihach'uu gwiinleii gwanat'yu'.	Listen! I've seen a lot of strange things.
Vijùu/Sister	Shoondèe videezhuh k'it t'inuu. Łoo adanh nilii kwaa k'it t'iinch'uu.	He sounds like my brother, but he sure doesn't look like him.
Sheekai/Aunty	Jidii najaanzhii?	What are you wearing?
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Aa, ti' hah gashandaii kwaa.	I really don't know.

Vijùu touches his clothes.

Vijùu/Sister	Jii jidii?	What is this?
Tl'oo Thaʔ	Tl'oo hah altsaii, giyahnuu.	They say it's made of grass.
Vijùu/Sister	Tl'oo?!	Grass?!

Sheekai/Aunty	Juu tr'iinjoo nahshii, t'oo hah neenjit k'e'jiikai'? Tr'iinjoo lèe vat'iiniidhan gwich'in?	[You're in love with a woman?] What crazy woman sewed grass pants for you?
Vijùu/Sister	Gohch'it dee tr'iinjoo vat'iiniidhan agwinyah'aii.	Gee, you finally found a woman you like?
Tl'oo That	Akwa', nagwinal'ii kwaa.	<i>Akwa'</i> [No], I never sneak around.
Tl'oo That	Dinjii goonin daagaii kat han di' na'yu'.	I met people with white faces down river.
Sister	Dinjii kat goonin daagaii lèe?	People with white faces?
Tl'oo That	Aaha'. Aat'oo neech'uu k'it t'igiinch'uu.	Just like birchbark.
Dinji khekai'/Leader	Duuleh gałts'ik gwich'in.	They must have been sick.
Tl'oo That	Gałts'ik kwaa gwich'in, gaa ch'ijuk ganah'in. Han di' ihkaa. Łuu huujik t'ee tsèe eenjit nalzrii. Gohch'it dee tsèe dhadhałkhaii. Vanathohdhałt'uu, vadhoh nan kak gałchuu. Łi' hah shizhigwałts'ik ts'at ko' nuu tsèe dhałch'uu.	I don't think they were sick, but did they ever look different. I was just paddling down the river. I went hunting beaver right after the ice went out. Finally, I killed a beaver. I skinned it and then spread the skin on the ground to dry. I'm hungry, so I roast that beaver to a fire.

Tsèè khaiinjii dhich'uu.	That beaver was just about prit' near cooked.
Ts'at han ji' gwanaf'in.	And I look upriver.
Dinjii kat tr'ih choo zhit gijilch'ii ts'at taa'aih gidichik gwanaf'in.	I could see these people paddling in big boats.
Aa taa'aih nichii gidi'ii.	They had big paddles.

SCENE 2

Sounds of the river, a campfire and paddling.

TI'oo Thał	Ajii! Aachin geedaa. Łi'hah shah gwich'in giinlii kwaa.	What the... strangers coming. Definitely not my people.
	Nakhwats'at gwał'aai duuleh? Ch'ineekaii googwich'in kwaa.	Enemies, maybe? They don't look <i>Ch'ineekaii</i> [Inuvialuit].

A large canoe pulls up on the shore. Three white men get out and secure the boat. Raven flies over and caws. The men have a dog that barks a lot. They walk up to TI'oo Thał.

George		Ahoy, my good man! We come in peace.
TI'oo Thał	Gwichih goonał'yu' kwaa. Łaii ihtak zrih gidi'ii.	They're like no one I've ever seen before. And they have only one dog.

Raven caws. Their dog barks.

Alex		George, your dog is yipping as if a grizzly bear were around the bend.
Archie		Or a red man.
George		Archie, don't insult the chap.

Archie

Aye, sir.

George

(to Tl'oo That) We are strangers in your lovely land.

Tl'oo That Jii ginjih danuu jihthh'ak
kwaa. Shidzii kak
gwidini'.

I don't recognize this language. It's hard on the ears.

George holds out his hand to shake.

George

Let's shake, shall we?
Hello.

Their dog barks.

George

(to the dog) Shut up!

Tl'oo That Jii duuleh goochit nilii.
Jaghaa dèe dinli' shits'o'
oota'.

This one must be their leader. Why does he hold his hand out to me?

Tl'oo That just looks at George's hand.

Alex

I don't think this fella knows a simple handshake.

George

We'll show him then.
Go on, Alex.

Alex

(to Tl'oo That) Hello.

Their dog barks.

Alex

(to the dog) Shut up!
(to Tl'oo That) Shake our hands, man.

Alex holds out his hand to shake. No response. Archie sticks out his hand to shake.

Archie

Let me have a go. Hello.

Their dog barks.

Archie

(to the dog) Shut up!

Tl'oo Thaŋ Tsingwiahch'uu k'it
t'idi'in. Goonli' oohihdal
gwiizuu kwaa dahlii.

Must be some weird
custom. Can't hurt to
touch their hand, I guess.

Tl'oo Thaŋ

Hel-lo. Shut up! Hel-lo.
Shut up! Hel-lo. Shut up!

Archie

Not a friendly laddie, is he?

Tl'oo Thaŋ Dageedi'yaa?

Now what are they going
to do?

Alex

(speaking slowly and
loudly) WE — ARE —
EXPLORERS.

Tl'oo Thaŋ Jaghaa dèe vanoodlit
videezhuh niint'aih?

Why is this white man
speaking so loud?

Nijyaa ch'ijuk nilii

(to George) Your friend is
different.

George

It doesn't matter one whit
how slowly you speak,
Alex, he's not acquainted
with the Queen's English.

Tl'oo Thaŋ Nijyàa lèe vik'ii goonlii?

Is your friend angry?

George

Yes! Yes!

Alex

What do you mean, yes,
yes? What in God's name
is he saying?

George

I have no idea whatsoever. It's different than the other queer tongues we've heard on our travels. Awfully guttural, I must say. But he is trying to communicate with us.

Archie

Looks like he's trying to blether too.

George

(to Archie) Hush.

Alex

(to Archie) You galoot.

Tl'oo That Jii dinjii kat gook'ii
goonlii gwich'in. Duuleh
gook'ii gwadhahtsaii?

These men are all worked up. Maybe I made them mad?

Duuweh drin tthak zhat
gwa'an nihthat.

Can't stand around here talking all day.

Tl'oo That turns to get on with his day.

George

No, wait! My good man. Let us break bread together. Mmm.

George makes an eating motion.

Tl'oo That Lèe nizhigwahts'ik?
Tsèe ałch'uu.

You're hungry? I have a beaver roasting.

Archie

Ach! Look at that. He's giving you up his beaver, then.

George

No, no!

Tl'oo That Tsèe lèe at'iinohtan
kwaa? Łyaa lèe?
Łi'hah nohshii.

You don't like beaver? Seriously? You're crazy.

George

We will feed you. We insist.

TI'oo Thał	Jidii dèe ga'aa li'. Jii gwahanał'yaa gwizrih.	Wonder what they eat. This I have to see.
George		Alex, get the frying pan. Archie, a pot!
Archie		Aye! Bannock, bannock, bannock, bannock.
Alex		Shut up, you numpty.

The men rush and grab cooking gear. TI'oo Thał watches. We hear the men put together some bannock fixings.

TI'oo Thał	Jidii eenjit chikluu adah nahoozhik?	Why do you carry ashes with you?
Alex		What's he saying, George?
George		I don't think this fellow has seen flour before. Poor chap.
Alex		Crikey.

George reaches into the flour and holds some up on his fingers to TI'oo Thał, who sniffs it. He sneezes.

TI'oo Thał	Gwiintl'oh vagwaatsan kwaa. Gwajat k'it t'iinch'uu.	Not much smell to it. Sort of dusty.
George		Flour. It is called flour.
TI'oo Thał		(The "f" is unfamiliar for him to say) Lour.
George		Fff-lour. With an F. And we mix it like this with some lard and plop into our frying pan. Mmm-mmm!
TI'oo Thał	Aii jidii dèe? Chii vihtr'ih k'it t'iinch'uu.	What's that thing? It looks like <i>chii vihtr'ih k'it</i> — black flint.

George		Chatter away. You don't mind us using your fire, my good man?
Tl'oo That	<i>Kò'</i>	<i>Kò'.</i>
George		Fire. Koe?
Tl'oo That	<i>Kò'. Aye...Aye-ahr.</i>	<i>Kò'. Aye...Aye-ahr.</i>
George		Yes! Excellent. Progress. Now, my friend, let us make a little rice.

Archie pours rice into a pot.

Tl'oo That	<i>Daatsoo trin k'it t'iinch'uu.</i>	That looks like mouse poo.
Alex		Blimey, what's he saying now?
George		The poor chap's clearly never seen rice either. Archie! Throw a few raisins in for good measure.
Archie		Aye! We likes raisins.

Archie throws a handful of raisins into the cast iron frying pan.

Tl'oo Thal	<i>Jak gaii k'it t'iinch'uu.</i>	Looks like dried berries.
George		I've no idea what you're saying. Now, my friend, while our repast is cooking, let's get you into some new clothes. Archie, fetch this fellow a decent shirt and a proper pair of trousers.
Archie		Aye! Shirt and breeks!

Archie, huffing, brings the clothes. George, Alex and Archie go to undress Tl'oo That.

Alex		Off with your old tunic, laddie.
Tl'oo That	Ajii dakhwa'in?	What you're doing?
George		Easy does it, my friend.

They take off his shirt and put a linen shirt on him.

Tl'oo That	Ajii!	Ajii! [Hey!]
George		Isn't that fine shirt better?

Tl'oo That scratches at the cloth.

Tl'oo That	Jii gwich'yaa łoo nin ts'at t'iinch'uu kwaa.	These clothes are not from any animal.
George		Now his breeches, Archie, lad.
Archie		Right! Off we go!

The men grab his pants and pull them down.

Tl'oo That	Ajii! Akoo dinjii t'ihch'uu kwaa. Vah t'agwii'ee kwaa. Gaa...	Ajii! Akoo dinjii t'ihch'uu kwaa. I'm not that kind of guy. Not saying there's anything wrong with it, but...
	Ajii! Hello. Shut up.	Ajii! Hello. Shut up.
George		We're not trying to harm you.
Tl'oo That	Anaa, anaa!	Anaa! Don't! Stop it.
Alex		Put your leg in there, you silly sod.

The men struggle to get Tl'oo That into the pants. Tl'oo That strokes the strange material.

Archie

Look, George, he's petting his trousers.

Tl'oo That Jii vakak natr'aandak
ch'ijuk t'iinch'uu.

This really feels strange.

[K'aai neech'uu k'it
k'at'oojishinuu.]
Shahghoo ts'at
sroodaldhan kwaa.

Feels rough like thick willow bark. It makes me itchy.

George

Throw his old clothes in the boat.

Alex quickly rolls Tl'oo That's caribou clothes into a bundle and throws them in the boat.

Alex

Pah! They stink. Why do we want some whiffy hide trousers anyway?

George

You never know, Alex. An authentic Indian outfit? Some collector may pay a pretty penny for it.

Tl'oo That Jii gwich'yaa vizhit
hihdlyaa.

I'm going to freeze in these clothes.

Jii zhuu vinju' ch'ii
sheedindee.

Mosquitoes are going to bite through this

Shagwich'yaa
shintl'eenohhii.

Give me back my clothes.

Alex

George, what's he saying?

George

I think he's marvelling at the craftsmanship. Look, fellow. These are made from wool, and this shirt is made from linen, from flax.

Tl'oo That *Lax?*

George

Not lax! Flax! With an F.
Yes! It's a plant. It's like —
like — like this grass here
on the shore.

Tl'oo ThaÆ Jii gwich'yaa tl'oo hah lèe
altsaii?

These clothes are made of
grass?

Juk hihdlyaa gashandaii.

Now I know I'm going to
freeze.

Tl'oo ThaÆ tries to take off the clothes.

George

No, no, keep your clothes
on, my friend. Let me
show you something else.
Archie! Gun!

Archie

Aye! Gun!

Archie gets a gun and hands it to George.

George

Ammunition?

Archie

Aye! Shot!

Archie runs back to the boat.

George

(to Tl'oo ThaÆ) Bit balmy
on the crumpet. It's hard
to find good help these
days.

Tl'oo ThaÆ Tthak ch'ijuk t'ohch'uu.

You people are strange.

Archie returns, still huffing, with ammunition. George proceeds to show Tl'oo ThaÆ how to load the gun.

George

Now, good sir. This is called a gun. And here is how you load it. First, you take this gun powder and pour some down the barrel. Just a bit, like this. Then this cotton wad. Take this rod and tamp it down. Then this lead ball goes in. Tamp that down. Point and — shoot!

George then points the gun at something and shoots. Tl'oo That is scared by the sound.

Tl'oo That Aji! Tl'it nichii jhth'ak.

It farts.

George

See? Gun.

Tl'oo That

Gun?

Archie

I don't think he knows what it does, sir.

Alex

Gotta show him. Shoot something.

George

Well — set up a target, then.

Alex

Right.

Alex runs off. George loads the gun again, showing Tl'oo That what he is doing.

George

This is the trigger.

Alex

Aim for this piece of wood.

George takes aim, click, fires. Tl'oo That is again scared by the sound, but then goes to look at the target, which is destroyed. Tl'oo That is surprised at the destroyed piece of wood.

Tl'oo That Jii vidhiizhin hah vadzaih hadhahkhaa. Dinjik gaa.

You could easily kill a caribou with this weapon. Even moose.

George		I'm sorry, dear fellow, I don't understand your language. Archie, take his bow and arrow. Another collector's item. Load it in the boat.
Archie		Aye!
Tl'oo That	Ajii! Aii vadadatch'uu.	I need that.
George		<i>(handing him the gun)</i> Have a crack at it, then.
Tl'oo That	Jii nits'oo dahaŋ'jaa?	How the heck am I supposed to work this?
Alex		Duck!
Archie		Where's a duck?
Alex		No! He's going to kill one of us with that gun!
George		Keep your hair on. Let's point it the other way, shall we? Shoot!

Tl'oo That fires and nearly knocks himself out.

Tl'oo That	Ajii! Jii gaŋ choo khainjii shinuut'oo.	This big stick attacked me!
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The other men laugh.

Tl'oo That	Jidii dèe tsingwajahch'uu?	What's so funny?
	Vahnoodlit kat ganahshii.	These white people are crazy.
Archie		Tea!
Alex		Chow time.
George		Ah, victuals, excellent. Come, my young friend.

Archie serves up food.

Tl'oo That	Jii daatsoo trin gwich'in duuweh ih'aa.	I would never eat food that looks like mouse poo.
George		It's called rice. You will like it. Much better than a greasy beaver.

The men all eat hungrily, except Tl'oo That.

Archie	Here, try this then. Bannock.
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Tl'oo That smells it, then tastes it warily.

Tl'oo That	Jii jidii khaii tsoo? Łyaa vagwaandaii.	What's this yellow grease? It's delicious.
Archie		It's butter, laddie.

Tl'oo That devours the whole piece.

Alex		Ah, brilliant, he likes that, then.
Tl'oo That	Tth'an ghai' agwahchii vagwaandaii kwaa. Tth'an ghai' shi'ii kwaa.	Not as good as bone grease, but I'm all out anyways.
George		Alex, show him what your knife can do. Slice him off a chunk of his meat.
Tloo Thal	Aa, aii chii srii nizii gwich'in nidi'ii.	Looks like a nice stone knife you have.
Alex		He likes my knife, George. (to Tl'oo That) Here, have a look.

Tl'oo That examines the knife.

Tl'oo That	Jii ʔoo chii hah altsaii kwa. Jii srii chii, tth'an hah altsaii ndoo jiinin.	This isn't made of stone. This knife is a lot sharper than bone or stone.
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George reaches for Tl'oo That's bag.

George	What have you got in your bag, friend?
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George pulls out a tl'yah vah tr'ichyaa (flint) from Tl'oo That's bag.

Tl'oo That	Aii shach'ohchuh vasroojaanjaal!	Be careful, that's my bag!
George		Is this for <i>koe</i> ? Show me how it works.
Tl'oo That	Aaha'. Kò' vah haʔtsyaa.	(shows him) To make fire.
George		Aha! A flint for fire. That's an excellent device.

George grabs the tl'yah vah tr'ichyaa.

George		You won't be needing this anymore.
Tl'oo That	Akwa', akwa', tl'yah vah tr'ichyaa oohiindal kwa.	Don't take my flint.
George		Farewell. Into the river we go.

George throws the flint in the river. Tl'oo That is devastated.

Tl'oo That	Vehdanh hihdlyaa. Juk ʔi' hah shandoogwinaa'aii.	I'll freeze without it. I'm finished now.
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Tl'oo That	Shah gwich'in kat duuweh nagoonal'in.	I'll never see my people again.
Archie		George, you made him cry like a wee babe.
George		Cheer up, my friend. I'll show you something even better for <i>koe</i> . Archie!
Archie		Aye!
George		The matches.
Archie		Aye!

Archie hands the "frozen matches" to George. They're the old kind that come in a little block; you have to break off one match at a time.

George		Just break off one little stick of match at a time. See? Strike it and <i>koe</i> !
Tl'oo That	<i>Ugh!</i> Vahnoodlit kat tr'agaatsan. Tl'it gwich'in.	UGH! WHITE PEOPLE STINK! LIKE FARTS!
George		That's the smell of sulphur, chappie.

George strikes the match again. Tl'oo That is impressed.

Tl'oo That	Jii ko' vagwaatsan nizii. Jii gał chan ahtal. Jii gwich'yaa iizuu kat vat'iinithan kwaa. Shagwich'yaa shint'eenohii.	This smelly fire is good! (shaking the gun) This loud stick, too. But I don't like these useless clothes. Give me my own clothes back.
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George

Time for our little lesson.
Put that pelt of his before
him, Archie. You know the
drill.

Archie takes Tl'oo That's beaver skin and puts it in front of him.

Archie

Ach, that's a bonnie
beaver.

Tl'oo That *Shitsèe hah nagwiniï'aii
kwaa.*

Hello. Shut up. Don't
bother my beaver.

Alex

Look here. The pelt for a
blanket.

They go back and forth in a comic dance with various items (such as a pelt, a blanket, a pot), trying to show Tl'oo That how they want to trade.

Archie

Or a pelt for a pot?

Alex

How's about a knife, then?

Tl'oo That *Jii shagwadal kat noh'ii
kwaa.*

Stop stealing my things.

George

Touchy, touchy. Hand our
friend the gun.

Archie

Aye!

George

A gun for a pile of beaver
pelts. You see?

That *Vit'ih gwadal shats'an
ohtsii [gik'anohjii].*

You should learn how to
trade.

George

Come back and trade with
us next summer.

Tl'oo That *Aaha'?*

Alex

I don't think he
understands, George.

The white men try to show him with physical gestures.

George

You — YOU go baaaack to your people now (finger snap). Then, after the snow falls... brrr.

Tl'oo That Gwinii'ee shats'o' giniikhii.

Talk straight with me.

Archie does a "cold and snowflake" dance.

Archie

Snowflakes. Winter. Brrrr. See?

Tl'oo That Jii vanoodlit kat ch'adzoh nahshii gidi'ii. Duuweh gook'it ch'aldzoo.

These white men have some crazy dances. I will never dance like that.

George

Then spring comes again. Drip, drip, drip.

Alex does an "ice melting" dance.

Alex

(sing-songy) Ice. Melting. Water. Sun.

Tl'oo That Gashandaii, juk ako' ne'hoodzoo kwaa.

Okay, I understand, stop dancing now.

Sheih kak ohtsii shits'o' gogwidohcheii. Aii ji' gi'gwiheedhan.

Why don't you just show me in the sand? Be a lot easier.

George

Will you look at that. This chap knows calendars. We will bring our boat to this exact spot in one year.

You bring more furs like this one... Lots more. A mountain of pelts.

<p>Tl'oo Thał Jii vahnoodlit kat ti' hah tsèe dhoh giiniidhan.</p> <p>Tl'oo gwich'yaa nagadaazhii goovah gwiniik'oo gwich'in.</p>	<p>Jeez. These white people really want beaver pelts.</p> <p>They must be cold with their grass clothes.</p>
<p>George</p>	<p>It's time to take our leave, gentlemen.</p>
<p>Archie</p>	<p>We're giving him the gun?</p>
<p>Alex</p>	<p>And the knife? For one beaver pelt?</p>
<p>George</p>	<p>That's how we make him hungry for more.</p>

The men pack up everything and get ready to leave. George hands Tl'oo Thał a bag with ammunition in it.

<p>George</p>	<p>You'll need this, my friend. Shot. Ammunition. You remember how I showed you to load the gun?</p>
<p>Tl'oo Thał Jii gał ahtal vah vadzaih hihghan.</p> <p>Dagoovałnuu shik'iinji'gizhit kwaa.</p>	<p>I'm going to kill caribou with this loud stick.</p> <p>No one will believe what I tell them, though.</p>

The men return to their canoe. George pushes them off and hops in.

<p>George</p>	<p>See you next spring, my friend. At this very spot. Toodle-oo!</p>
<p>Tl'oo Thał Nagêedadaa łoo nihthan kwaa, gohch'it dee nagiithijil.</p>	<p>Finally. I thought they'd never leave.</p>

SCENE 3

We are back in the camp with Tl'oo That's people.

Tl'oo That	Vanoodlit kat daatsoo trin ga'aa ts'o' t'l'it k'it gogwaatsan.	These white people eat mouse poo and smell like farts.
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Vijuu and Sheek'aii laugh.

Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Duuleh ti' dagwidlii.	It can't be true.
Tl'oo That	Tsèe dhoh leii giiniidhan.	They want lots of beaver pelts.

Vijuu touches his pants.

Vijuu/Sister	Nehli' t'l'oo ts'at altsaii? Gook'iinjishit kwaa.	Your pants are made from grass? I can't believe it!
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Tl'oo That	Geenjit gashahgwaandak. Akoo dinuu.	Tell me about it. That's what he said.
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Sheek'aii/Aunty	Tthak ts'o', shuu an huuzhii t'l'oo that hah k'anadik.	Hey everyone, my nephew went out hunting and came back with grass pants!
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All	Tl'oo That! Tl'oo That! Tl'oo That!	Grass Pants! Grass Pants! Grass Pants!
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Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Aa srii nizii. Shantl'anichii.	That's a good knife. Give it to me.
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Dinjii khehkai' takes it.

Sheek'aii/Aunty	Ts'at niidhaa k'it t'iinch'uu, neek'aii vantl'ayahchuu.	That blanket looks pretty warm to sleep under. Give it to [Uncle].
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She/he takes the blanket.

Dinjii khehkai'/Leader	Shuu, noo'ii gał choo vantl'anichii.	Nephew, give your uncle that big stick.
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He takes the gun.

Tl'oo That	Tl'it choo k'it t'inuu khataaijniiindizhit kwaa. Vah natr'ahaazrii diits'o' heenjyaa.	It sounds like a big fart, but don't worry. It's going to help us to hunt.
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Tl'oo That slaps mosquitoes away.

Tl'oo That	Jii thał ndoo nizii.	It's a lot better than these useless pants.
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SCENE 4

Laughter, as children gather around an elder at a campfire.

Children	Shitsuu, aii tsingwijahch'uu!	Grandma, that was funny!
Elder	Ihtsal dai', ko' analdaii. Ko' tanh vatr'ahnuu. Nichii vanaldaii. Cadzow vich'ookat zheh zhit iinli'. Jii gwandak gashatr'agwaandak ts'o' juk ganagwaldak. Jii tr'oochit vahnoodlit dinjii zhùh k'adagoojil.	I remember those matches when I was little. We called them "ko' tanh," meaning frozen matches. I remember it was big. It was in Cadzow's store. This story was told to me and I am retelling it. This is the first time the white people met the Natives.

Elder	Tl'oo That vidiik'ee k'iighe' khaii ndoo giniinjil.	With the gun of Tl'oo That people lived good that winter.
	Goolat Roosha gwats'at vahnoodlit ginuu.	Some people say these white people were Russian.
	Goolat Ingliss gwats'at vahnoodlit ginuu.	Some people say they were English.
	Goolat Nagwachoonjik gwa'an gwich'in ginuu.	Some people say it was around the Mackenzie River.
	Goolat Yuukwanh gwa'an gwich'in ginuu.	Some people say it was around the Yukon River.
	Aii tl'ee vahnoodlit leii k'agadadal.	And then more white people came.
	Gwik'iighe' gwadal k'eejit vahnoodlit zhii k'it tl'atr'adaadhat.	Because of this we got new things like white man's food.
	Tr'oochit, gwideedhaa diindoo gahgadandaii giiniidhan.	At first, they thought we were savages.
	Jii nanh kak gwigwiheen- daii gahgadandaii kwaa.	But they didn't know how to survive on this land.
	Nihlah tr'agwandaii gik'itr'aanjik ts'at nihts'o' tr'ihiidandal.	We learned to live together and help each other out.
	Dinjii kat tthak khehtok k'it t'igiinch'uu	All people were like one.
Children	Shitsuu, gwandak nizii!	Grandma, that's a good story!
Elder	Aaha', shicheii. Lidadlaa gwiinzii.	[Yes, my grandchild.] It's good to laugh.
Children	Aaha'! Gwiinzii.	Yeah!



Tl'oo That Grass Pants

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