

**The historical ethnography of the Micmac of th
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries:
Part 8**

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CHAPTER VIII - FEASTS AND DIVERSIONS

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VIII. FEASTS AND DIVERSIONS

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Feasts

Of all the descriptions of Micmac feasts, none can compare with that presented to us by Father Maillard in his An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets... (1758). We can, therefore, do no better than to begin our consideration of this aspect of Micmac culture with this classic account.

It is neither gaming nor debauchery that disables them from the payment of their debts, but their vanity, which is excessive, in the presents of peltry they make to other savages, who come either in quality of envoys from one country to another, or as friends or relations upon a visit to one another. Then it is, that a village is sure to exhaust itself in presents; it being a standing rule with them, on the arrival of such persons, to bring out everything that they have acquired, during the winter and spring-season, in order to give the best and most advantageous idea of themselves. Then it is chiefly they make feasts, which sometimes last several days; of the manner of which I should perhaps spare you the description, if the ceremony that attends them did

not include the strongest attestation of the great stress they lay on hunting; the excelling wherein they commonly take for their text in their panegyrics on these occasions, and consequently enters, for a great deal, into the idea you are to conceive of the life and manners of the savages in these parts.

The first thing I am to observe to you is, that one of the greatest dainties, and with which they crown their entertainments, is the flesh of dogs. For it is not till the envoys, friends, or relations, are on the point of departure, that, on the eve of that day, they make a considerable slaughter of dogs, which they flea, draw, and with no other dressing, put whole into the kettle; from which they take them half boiled, and carve out into as many pieces as there are guests to eat of them in the cabin of him who gives the treat. But every one, before entering the cabin, takes care to bring with him his Ocrakin, or bowl, made of bark of birch-tree, either polygone shaped, or quite round; and this is practised at all their entertainments. These pieces of dogs flesh are accompanied with a small Ocrakin full of the oil or fat of seal, or of elk's grease, if this feast is given at the melting-time of the snow. Every one has his own dish before him, in which he sops his flesh before he eats it. If the fat be hard, he cuts a small piece of it to every piece of flesh he puts into

his mouth, which serves as bread with us. At the end of this fine regale, they drink as much of the oil as they can, and wipe their hands on their hair. Then come in the wives of the master and persons invited, who carry off their husbands plates, and retire together to a separate place, where they dispatch the remains.

After grace being said by the oldest of the company, who also never fails of pronouncing it before the meal, the master of the treat appears as if buried in a profound contemplation, without speaking a word, for a full quarter of an hour; after which, waking as it were out of a deep sleep, he orders in the Calumets, or Indian pipes, with tobacco. First he fills his own, lights it, and , after sucking in two or three whiffs, he presents it to the most considerable man in the company: after which, every one fills his pipe and smokes.

The calumets lighted, and the tobacco burning with a clear fire, are scarce half smoked out, before the man of note before mentioned (for the greatest honors being paid him) gets up, places himself in the midst of the cabin, and pronounces a speech of thanksgiving. He praises the master of the feast, who has so well regaled him and all the company. He compares him to a tree, whose large and strong roots afford nourishment to a number of small shrubs;

or to a salutary medicinal herb, found accidentally by such as frequent the lakes in their canoes. Some I have heard, who, in their winter-feasts, compared him to the turpentine-tree, that never fails of yielding its sap and gummy distillation in all seasons: other to those temperate and mild days, which are sometimes seen in the midst of the severest winter. They employ a thousand similies of this sort, which I omit. After this introduction, they proceed to make honorable mention of the lineage from which the master of the feast is descended.

"How great (will the oldest of them say) art thou,
"through thy great, great, great, grandfather, whose
"memory is still recent, by tradition, amongst us, for
"the plentiful huntings he used to make! There was
"something of the miraculous about him, when he assisted
"at the beating of the woods for elks, or other beasts
"of the fur. His dexterity at catching this game was
"not superior to our's; but there was some unaccountable
"secret he particularly possessed in his manner of seizing
"those creatures, by springing upon them, laying hold of
"their heads, and transfixing them at the same time with
"his hunting-spear, though thrice as strong and as nimble
"again as he was, and much more capable with their legs
"only, than he with our rackets, to make their way over
"mountains of snow: he would nevertheless follow them,

"dart them, without ever missing his aim, tire them out
"with his chase, bring them down, and mortally wound them.
"Then he would regale us with their blood, skin them, and
"deliver up the carcass to us to cut to pieces. But if
"thy great, great, great grandfather made such a figure in
"the chase, what has not thy great, great grandfather done
"with respect to the beavers, those animals almost men?
"whose industry he surpassed by his frequent watchings
"round their cabbins, by the repeated alarms he would give
"them several times in one evening, and oblige them there-
"by to return home, so that he might be sure of the number
"of those animals he had seen dispersed during the day,
"having a particular foresight of the spot to which they
"would come to load their tails with earth, cut down with
"their teeth such and such trees for the construction of
"their huts. He had a particular gift of knowing the favorite
"places of those animals for building them. But now let us
"rather speak of your great grandfather, who was so expert
"at making of snares for moose-deer, martins, and elks.
"He had particular secrets, absolutely unknown to any but
"himself, to compel these sorts of creatures to run sooner
"into his snares than those of others; and he was accordingly
"always so well provided with furs, that he was never at a
"loss to oblige his friends. Now let us come to your grand-
"father, who has a thousand and a thousand times regaled
"the youth of his time with seals. How often in our young

"days have we greased our hair in his cabin? How often
"have we been invited, and even compelled by his friendly
"violence, to go home with him, whenever we returned with
"our canoes empty, to be treated with seal, to drink the
"oil, and anoint ourselves with it? He even pushed his
"generosity so far, as to give us of the oil to take home
"with us. But now we are come to your father: there was
"a man for you! He used to signalize himself in every
"branch of chase; but especially in the art of shooting
"the game whether flying or sitting. He never missed his
"aim. He was particularly admirable for decoying of
"bustards by his artificial imitations. We are all of us
"tolerably expert at counterfeiting the cry of those birds;
"but as to him, he surpassed us in certain inflexions of
"his voice, that made it impossible to distinguish his cry
"from that of the birds themselves. He had, besides, a
"particular way of motion with his body, that at a distance
"might be taken for the clapping of their wings, inasmuch
"that he has often deceived ourselves, and put us to confusion
"as he started out of his hiding-place.

"As for myself, I say nothing, I am too full of the
"good things thou hast feasted me with, to treat on that
"subject; but I thank thee, and take thee by the hand,
"leaving to my fellow-guests the care of acquitting themselves
"of that duty."

After this, he sits down, and some other younger, and of course of less note, for they pay great respect to age, gets up, and makes a summary recapitulation of what the first speaker has said; commending his manner of singing the praises of the master of the feast's ancestors: to which he observes, there is nothing to be added; but that he has, however, left him one part of the talk to be accomplished, which is, not to pass over in silence the feast to which he and the rest of his brethren are invited; neither to omit the merit and praises of him who has given the entertainment. Then quitting his place, and advancing in cadence, he takes the master of the treat by the hand, saying, "All the praises my tongue is about to utter, have thee for their object. All the steps I am going to take, as I dance lengthwise and breadthwise in thy cabin, are to prove to thee the gaiety of my heart, and my gratitude. Courage! my friends, keep time with motions and voice, to my song and dance."

With this he begins, and proceeds in his Netchkawet, that is, advancing with his body strait erect, in measured steps, with his arms a-kimbo. Then he delivers his words, singing and trembling with his whole body, looking before and on each side of him with a steady countenance, sometimes moving with a slow grave pace, then again with a quick and brisk one.

The syllables he articulates the most distinctly are, Ywhannah, Owanna, Haywanna, yo! ha! yo! ha! and when he makes a pause he looks full at the company, as much as to demand their chorus to the word Heh! which he pronounces with great emphasis. As he is singing and dancing they often repeat the word Heh! fetched up from the depth of their throat; and when he makes his pause, they cry aloud in chorus, Heh!

After this prelude, the person who had sung and danced recovers his breadth and spirits a little, and begins his harangue in praise of the maker of the feast. He flatters him greatly, in attributing to him a thousand good qualities he never had, and appeals to all the company for the truth of what he says, who are sure not to contradict him, being in the same circumstance as himself of being treated, and answer him by the word Heh!, which is as much as to say, Yes, or Surely. Then he takes them all by the hand, and begins his dance again: and sometimes this first dance is carried to a pitch of madness. At the end of it he kisses his hand, by way of salute to all the company; after which he goes quietly to his place again. Then another gets up to acquit himself of the same duty, and so do successively all the others in the cabin, to the very last man inclusively.

This ceremony of thanksgiving being over by the men, the girls and women come in, with the oldest at the head

of them, who carries in her left hand a great piece of birch-bark of the hardest, upon which she strikes as it were a drum; and to that dull sound which the bark returns, they all dance, spinning round on their heels, quivering, with one hand lifted, the other down: other notes they have none, but a guttural loud aspiration of the word Heh! Heh! Heh! as often as the old female savage strikes her bark-drum. As soon as she ceases striking, they set up a general cry, expressed by Yah! Then, if their dance is approved, they begin it again; and when weariness obliges the old woman to withdraw, she pronounces her thanksgiving in the name of all the girls and women there. The introduction of which is too curious to omit, as it so strongly characterises the sentiments of the savages of that sex, and confirms the general observation, that where their bosom once harbours cruelty, they carry it greater lengths than even the men, whom frequently they instigate to it.

"You men! who look on me as of an infirm and weak
"sex, and consequently of all necessity subordinate to
"you, know that in what I am, the Creator has given to
"my share, talents and properties at least of as much
"worth as your's. I have had the faculty of bringing into
"the world warriors, great hunters, and admirable managers
"of canoes. This hand, withered as you see it now, whose

"veins represent the root of a tree, has more than once
"struck a knife into the hearts of the prisoners, who
"were given up to me for my sport. Let the river-sides,
"I say, for I call them to witness for me, as well as the
"woods of such a country, attest their having seen me more
"than once tear out the heart, entrails, and tongue, of
"those delivered up to me, without changing color, roast
"pieces of their flesh, yet palpitating and warm with
"life, and cram them down the throats of others, whom
"the like fate awaited. With how many scalps have I not
"seen my head adorned, as well as those of my daughters!
"With that pathetic exhortations have not I, upon occasion,
"rouzed up the spirit of our young men, to go in quest of
"the like trophies, that they might achieve the rewards,
"honor, and renown annexed to the acquisition of them: but
"it is not in these points alone that I have signalized
"myself. I have often brought about alliances, which
"there was no room to think could ever be made; and I have
"been so fortunate, that all the couples whose marriages
"I have procured, have been prolific, and furnished our
"nation with supports, defenders, and subjects, to eternize
"our race, and to protect us from the insults of our enemies.
"These old firs, these antient spruce-trees, full of knots
"from the top to the root, whose bark is falling off with
"age, and who yet preserve their gum and powers of life,
"do not amiss resemble me. I am no longer what I was; all

"my skin is wrinkled and furrowed, my bones are almost
"every where starting through it. As to my outward form,
"I may well be reckoned amongst the things, fit for
"nothing but to be totally neglected and thrown aside;
"but I have still within me wherewithal to attract the
"attention of those who know me."

After this introduction follow the thanksgiving and
encomiums, much in the same taste as the first haranguer's
amongst the guests. This is what is practised in all the
more solemn entertainments, both on the men and women's
side. Nor can you imagine, how great an influence such
praises have over them, derived as they are from the merit
of hunting, and how greatly they contribute to inflame
their passion for it. Nor is it surprising, considering
how much almost the whole of their livelihood depends upon
the game of all sorts that is the object of their chase.

They have also a kind of feast, which may be termed
war-feast, since they are never held but in time of war,
declared, commenced, or resolved. The forms of these are
far different from those of pacific and friendly entertain-
ments. There is a mixture of devotion and ferocity in
them, which at the same time that it surprises, proves that
they consider war in a very solemn light, and as not to be
begun without the greatest reason and justice; which motives,

once established, or, which is the same thing, appearing to them established, there is nothing they do not think themselves permitted against their enemy, from whom they, on the other hand, expect no better quarter than they themselves give... (Maillard, 1758, pp. 4-10).

Maillard's description of the Micmac war feast has been given in the previous section, and needs no further comment.

Our other authors are in substantial agreement with Maillard's picture of the Micmac feast or tabagie. Our earliest source, Lescarbot, tells us relatively little. He does state that he saw a feast being given at the town of Ouligoudi on the St. John, where,

...we saw in a great thicket eighty savages stark naked, save for a girdle, making a tabagie with meal they had had of us, of which they had made a soup of which their kettles were full. Everyone had a dish of bark, and a spoon the size of the palm of one's hand, or larger, and with this they had also vension. And here it is to be noted that the host does not dine, but waits on the guests...The women were in another place apart, and did not eat with the men... (Lescarbot, 1914, p. 169).

To this he adds a passage describing the importance of smoking during the course of a feast, to the effect that,

...they have no other greater delicacy in their banquets, and can make no greater cheer to a visitor than with this... in such sort that if one refuse to take the tobacco-pipe when they present it, it is a sign that he is not adesquidés, i.e., a friend... (Lescarbot, 1914, p. 253).

Denys' comments upon the Micmac feasting customs have already been presented in the course of our discussion of the Micmac wedding ceremony, and substantiate Maillard's statements completely. A page further on Denys adds a most interesting item, telling us that,

...they have thus developed into a custom the recital of their genealogies, both in the speeches they make at marriages, and also at funerals. This is in order to keep alive the memory, and to preserve by tradition from father to son, the history of their ancestors, and the example of their fine actions and of their greatest qualities, something which would otherwise be lost to them, and would deprive them of a knowledge of their relationships, which they preserve by this means; and it serves to transmit their [family] alliances to posterity. On these matters they are very inquisitive, especially those descended from the ancient chiefs; this they sometimes claim for more than twenty generations, something which makes them more honoured by all the others... (Denys, 1908, p. 410).

We have already noted that the recitation of genealogies seems to have been practised at most kinds of feasts, except those for war.

Le Clercq's statements concerning Micmac feasts are somewhat more extensive, and present us with much additional and welcome information.

...Although these barbarians are content with a little in their feasts, they do not fail to display sometimes a great profusion of viands, especially in the feasts which they make in spring in order to rejoice together over the happy success of the hunting which they have carried on during the winter. They observe no sort of economy in these kinds of feasts, in order to testify in this way to their friends the joy that they have in their company. The women, the children, the young boys who have not yet killed any moose, and all of those who are in condition to go to war against the enemy, do not, as a rule, enter into the wigwams where there is feasting. They must await the signal which an Indian gives, by means of two or three different cries; by these the women know that it is time to come for the remains of the portions left by their husbands, upon which they regale themselves with their families and friends.

The manner of giving invitations to the feast is without compliment or ceremony, and nobody is invited until everything which the host wishes to give them is all ready cooked. He who is giving the treat then gives from the door of his wigwam the cry for the feast, speaking these words: Chiguidah, ouikbarlno. "Come ye here into my wigwam, for I wish to entertain you." Those to whom these words are addressed answer him by three or four cries of "ho, ho, ho, ho"; they issue promptly from their own homes with the ouragan, enter into the wigwam of the feast, take the first place which presents itself, smoke some tobacco from the pipe of the chief, and receive without ceremony the portion which he who is dividing and distributing the meat tosses them, or gives them at the end of a stick.

The Gaspesians never make a feast of two kinds of meat at once. They do not mix, for example, the beaver with moose, nor that with bear, or any other animal. They even make feasts in which grease and oil are drunk quite pure. There are feasts of health, of farewell, of hunting, of peace, or war, of thanks. There are eat-all feasts, which are made expressly for good hunting; these are feasts in which it is necessary that everything be eaten before anybody goes out from the wigwam, and in which it is forbidden to give anything, howsoever little,

to the dogs under penalty of being exposed to great ills. It is, however, permissible for those who cannot finish their portions to present them to their companions, each one of whom takes whatever he desires thereof. The remainder is thrown upon the fire, whilst eulogies are made of him who at this juncture has captured the glory and the reputation of having eaten more than the others.

All the feasts begin with speeches, which the host makes to those assembled for the purpose of declaring to them the subject on account of which he has wished to entertain the company; and they are finished with dances and songs which are the usual compliments of our Indians. The master of the feast does not as a rule eat with the others, because, says he, he has not invited them in order to diminish the portion of that which he presents to them, the whole being solely for them... (Le Clercq, 1910, pp. 290-292).

A type of feast not mentioned by other authors took place upon the occasion of the killing of the first moose of the winter season, Le Clercq informing us that,

...those who kill the first moose at the beginning of January or February, a time at which those people suffer greatly, since they have consumed all their provisions, make it a pleasure to carry some of it themselves very

promptly to those who have none, even if these are distant fifteen to twenty leagues. And, not content with this liberality, they invite these latter also, with all possible tenderness, to join their company and to remove closer to their wigwams, in order that they may be able to aid these people more conveniently in their necessity...

and that when the hunter returned to the camp with his moose,

...there is then the greatest rejoicing in all the neighbouring wigwams, because of the expectation and hope that each one has of eating delectably some fat of moose. But they redouble their joy, with cries and songs of gladness, when the hunter, all victorious from the chase, enters into the wigwam, and throws upon the ground, with a gravity and pride as though he had triumphed over a redoubtable enemy, the load he had carried upon his shoulders, in which are enwrapped the heart, the kidney, the tongue, the entrails, and the most delicate fat. On these parts his friends and all his family begin forthwith to regale themselves, whilst the girls and the women, with a thousand demonstrations of joy, and always singing and dancing, go to fetch upon their sledges the remainder of the meat of the moose, which this proud hunter has left very neatly buried in the snow... (Le Clercq, 1910, pp. 117, 119).

Dièreville's remarks lend still further support to the already familiar picture, and give us some special information only upon the manner in which the women used such an occasion to call upon the men to seek redress for a wrong or a death still unavenged (Dièreville, 1933, pp. 154-155).

From these references in the historical literature, both the nature and the importance of feasting in Micmac social life becomes obvious. The sources indicate seasonal feasts of a social and religious nature, attended by large sections of the Micmac nation (e.g., the September festival at Pictou, and the July festival at Merigomish); family and village feasts at rites of passage (pregnancy, birth, naming, first game, first moose, marriage, death); purely social feasts in times of plenty, or upon the occasion of visits by friends or relatives; civic feasts upon the occasion of visits by envoys, or the meeting of councils to deliberate matters concerning hunting territories, war, peace, etc.; and religious feasts concerned with hunting (i.e., the "eat-all" feast). All of our sources emphasize the importance of these events for the Micmac people, the formality called up for the occasion, the deference rendered rank and age. This point is reinforced by Maillard's description of the "noble speech" employed during the ritual;

They have two distinctions of style; the one noble, or elevated, for grave and important subjects, the other ignoble, or trivial, for familiar or vulgar ones. But

this distinction is not so much with them, as with us, marked by a difference of words, but of terminations. Thus, when they are treating of solemn, or weighty matters, they terminate the verb and the noun by another inflexion, than what is used for trivial or common conversations... (Maillard, 1758, p. 35).

The position of feasts in Micmac culture can perhaps be best summarized by the statement that it was the greatest honor possible for a Micmac man, and the goal of all his achievements, for him to receive honor and recognition in the solemn feasts of his nation.

Dancing, Singing, Games, and Other Amusements

Material concerning Micmac dancing has already been presented in some of the previous sections, especially those dealing with the wedding ceremony, the war ceremony, and civic feasts. It remains for us only to add some general comments.

Le Clercq found Micmac singing and dancing,

...alike unpleasant, because they do not observe any regularity or measure except such as their caprice may inspire. They have, nevertheless, rather good voices as a rule, and especially the women, who chant very pleasingly the spiritual canticles which are taught them,

and in which they make a large part of their devotions consist. These women do not give the same pleasure when they sing in the manner of the Indians, who force from the bottom of their stomachs certain tones of ho, ho, ho, ha, ha, hé, hé, hé, ho, ho, ha, he, he, which pass for airs alike charming and melodious among our Gaspeians.

They dance as a rule in a ring, in time to the noise which they make by striking with a stick upon a bark plate or upon a kettle. They do not hold one another by the hands, but all keep their fists closed. The girls cross their over one another, a little out from the stomach. The men raise theirs in the air, and make sundry movements with different postures as if they were at war, representing fighting, winning victory, and removing the scalps from their enemies. They do not jump, but in lieu thereof, they strike the ground, sometimes with one foot, sometimes with both together.

The special dances of the women and the girls are very different from those of the men, for they make some horrible contortions in dancing. They draw back and push out the arms, the hands, and the whole body, in a manner altogether hideous, looking intently on the earth as if they draw out something therefrom by the very strength and force of their contortions. This

they continue until they are all of a perspiration. They do not force from the bottoms of their stomachs, as do the men, those hues and cries of ho, ho, of ha, ha, of hé, hé; but their only sound is made with their lips, and is a certain hissing like a sound. This is the usual tune of their dance, which can properly be designated an innocent Indian racket... (Le Clercq, 1910, pp. 292-294).

Lescarbot presents a somewhat more tolerant picture of Miomac dancing, informing us that,

...our savages, and generally all the tribes of the West Indies, have time out of mind the use of dances. But lascivious pleasure has not yet so far prevailed upon them as to make them dance at its bidding, a thing which should serve as a lesson to Christians. The end then of their dances is fourfold, either to please their gods (let who will call them devils, it is all one to me), as we have already stated in two places, or to cheer up somebody, or to rejoice at some victory, or to prevent sicknesses. In all these dances they sing...

Our Souriquois also dance and sing in honour of the devil who guides them to the deer, and who they think helps them; whereat one need not marvel... Also when they wish to entertain anybody, in many places they think that they can do nothing more seemly than to dance before him;

as in like manner, if anyone makes them a feast, for all thanksgiving they will begin to dance... (Lescarbot, 1914, pp. 181-182).

Dièreville's description of Micmac dancing is somewhat more matter of fact, and agrees with Le Clercq's account.

...These ridiculous Dancers follow one another around in a circle, clinging together & moving forward very slowly, by leaping with joined feet, excuting contortions & making faces, each more hideous than the last. A certain vocal note like this: Hoüen, hoüen, hoüen, if one can so express it, marks the cadence, & they pause from time to time to give utterance to the terrifying yells with which the dances always end. The instrument which provides the accompaniment is perfectly suited to all this; it is a little stick about a foot long, which an Indian who is not dancing, strikes against a tree, or some other object, according to the place in which they happen to be singing through his nose at the same time... (Dièreville, 1933, pp. 173-174).

One of the earliest ethnographers to deal with the Micmac-Stansbury Hagar-gives us some information of an entierly different nature, dealing with a dance of a religious nature.

The choogichoo yajik, or serpent dance, is well worthy of mention. Newell Glode assured me that very

few of his tribe knew anything about it now, and not even he remembered the song of the dance, for he had not heard it since his childhood. It appears to have been suppressed by the missionaries.

In performing the serpent dance the male and female participants, in no fixed number, formed a circle, at the center of which stood the head man, who did the singing. The circle of dancers moved first to the right three times around the head man. The dancers then turned their backs to the head man and repeated the revolution three times; next the two sets turned their backs to one another and again moved thrice around the circle; finally, in the same position, they reversed the direction of the motion and moved backward around the circle three times. This figure was completed in four positions and twelve revolutions, and, according to Newell Glode, signifies the rattlesnake waking from his winter sleep.

The head man now left the circle through the space made for him, simulating a serpent coming from its hole; he led the dancers around the field, making many snake-like twistings and turnings. In one hand he held a horn filled with shot or small pebbles; with this he rattled the time for the step and the song of the other dancers. After they had advanced some distance the last dancer

remained stationary and the others moved around the leader in a constantly narrowing circle until all were closely coiled around him. The head man then reversed the direction of the motion and the dancers came out of the circle in line as before. This represented the coiling and coiling of the rattlesnake.

Again, the line twisted and turned around the field until at length the head man remained stationary and the last dancer led the line around him as a center, coiling and uncoiling as in the preceding figure. Then the head man resumed the leadership, there were more twistings and turnings, and a third time the line coiled and uncoiled again around the last dancer. Three times, they say, the rattlesnake must coil before it can shed its skin; therefore, after the line came forth from its third coil the head man led it back toward the point whence it started, and as soon as he moved in that direction the dancers dropped out of line one after another at regular intervals, beginning with the last dancer, until the head man only remained; then the music ceased and the dance was ended.

The authorities seem to be agreed that there are no rattlesnakes in eastern Maine, the Maritime provinces, or any part of eastern Canada, nor is there any evidence that there ever have been any in those localities. It seems a fair inference, therefore, judging from this dance, that

one of the most important features of Micmac ritual has come into Nova Scotia from the southwest. The word choogloh is indeed but a general name for reptile, according to Dr. Rand, but several Micmac have assured me that it designates the rattlesnake. The Micmacs assert that the traditional object of the dance was to obtain the poison of the serpent for medicinal use, and that at one time long ago their ancestors used to dance it so much that nearly all of them were turned to serpents. The symbolism of the dance evidently coincides with the time of exuviation. In modern times I cannot find that the performance of the choogichoo yajik has been limited to any particular time of the year, further that that it was never danced in the winter; but this might have been due to other than ritualistic causes. It is, however, considered a proper feature at the election of a chief, and the connection of its symbolism with ritual and time relations of some sort is self-evident. ... (Hagar, 1895, pp. 36-37).

Hagar also informs us that the "dance of thanks" by which guests expressed their gratitude for the feast provided by their host was known as the NESKOVADIJIK, and another sacred dance was performed only at night, and was associated with the "rattling plant" and with the Pleiades (Hagar, 1896a, p. 177; 1896b, p. 258).

Micmac singing has largely been dealt with in previous sections. We must, however, still note Lescarbot's observations on the singing done by the Souriquois during a religious rite, the nature of which Lescarbot unfortunately did not learn. He tells us that after divining with a staff buried in the ground, the shaman,

...begins to sing something to the praise (as I think) of the devil, who has shown them some game, and the other savages who are there make answer in a rough sort of harmony. Then they dance after their manner, of which we shall speak later, with songs which I do not understand, nor do those of our men who understood their speech best. But one day going for a walk in our meadows along the river, I drew near to Membertou's cabin, and wrote in my tables part of what I heard, which is written there yet, in these terms: haloet ho ho hé hé ha ha haloet ho ho hé, which they repeated divers times. The tune is also in my said tables in these notes: re fa sol sol re sol fa fa re re sol sol fa fa. One song being ended, they all made a great exclamation, saying, Hé-é-é-é! Then they began another song, saying: egrigna hau egrigna ne ne hu hu ho ho egrigna hau hau hau; the tune of this was: fa fa fa sol sol fa fa re re sol sol fa fa re fa fa sol sol fa. Having made the usual exclamation, they began yet another in these words: Tameja alleluyah tameja douveni hau hau hé hé. The tune

whereof was: sol sol sol fa fa re re re ra ra sol fa sol
fa fa re re... But I must also say that whilst our savages
sing thus, others do nothing else but say hé or het (like
a man cutting wood) with a motion of the arms; and dance in
round, not holding one another, nor moving out of place,
striking their feet against the ground...After these things,
our savages make a fire and leap over it...Besides all this,
they put half a pole out of the top of the cabin where they
are, at the end of which is some matachias, or something else
tied, which the devil carries away. Thus have I heard tell
of their customs in this matter... (Lescarbot, 1914, pp. 105-
109).

Lescarbot adds the information that singing was done to give
praise to hosts, to give homage to their gods (or devils), and to
praise the deeds of their "brave captains and Sagamores who have
killed many of their enemies" (Lescarbot, 1914, pp. 181-183).
According to Hagar, the Micmac also had the curious custom of
"the kumiatijik, or song of need, which formed a poetic substitute
for barter and sale." No details are giving, however (Hagar, 1896b).

Of the Micmac games, two seem to have been of outstanding
importance: the dice game known variously as Leldestaganne or
ALTESTAKUN; and the football-like game called TOOADIJIK. About
the former Hagar tells us the following.

A game much in use within the wigwams of the Micmacs in former times is that called by some writers altestakum or wöltēs takūn. By good native authority it is said that the proper name for it is wöltēstomkwōn. It is a kind of dice game of unknown antiquity, undoubtedly of pre-Columbian origin. It is played upon a circular wooden dish, properly rook maple, almost exactly a foot in diameter, hollowed to a depth of about three-fourths of an inch at its center. This dish plays an important role in the older legends of the Micmacs. Filled with water and left over night, its appearance next morning serves to reveal hidden knowledge of past, present, and future. It is also said to have been used as a vessel upon an arkite trip. The dice of caribou bone are six in number, having flat faces and rounded sides. One face is plain, the other bears a dotted cross. When all the marked or all the unmarked faces are turned up there is a count of five points; if five marked faces and one unmarked face or five unmarked faces and one marked face are turned up one point results; if a die [sic] falls off the dish there is no count.

There are fifty-five counting sticks—fifty-one plain rounded ones about seven and a half inches long, a king pin shaped like the forward half of an arrow, and three notched sticks, each presenting half of the rear end of an arrow. These last four are about eight inches long. Three of the

plain sticks form a count of one point; the notched sticks have a value of five points, while the king pin varies in value, being used as a fifty-second plain stick, except when it stands alone in the general pile. Then it has, like the notched sticks, a value of five points. Thus the possible points of the count are seventeen (one-third of fifty-one) on the plain sticks and fifteen (five times three) on the three notched sticks, a total of thirty-two; but by a complex system the count may be extended indefinitely.

In playing the game two players sit opposite each other, their legs crossed in a characteristic manner, and the dish or woltes between them usually placed on a thick piece of leather or cloth. A squaw keeps the score on the counting sticks, which at first lie together. The six dice are placed on a dish with their marked faces down; one of the players takes the dish in both hands, raises it an inch or two from the ground, and brings it down again with considerable force, thus turning the dice. If all or all but one of the upturned faces are marked or unmarked, he repeats the toss, and continues to do so as long as one of these combinations results. When he fails to score, the amount of his winnings is withdrawn from the general pile and forms the nucleus of his private pile. His opponent repeats the dice throwing until he also fails to score. Two successive throws of either a single point or of five

points counts thrice the amount of one throw—that is, three points or fifteen points respectively. Three successive throws count five times as much as a single throw, etc. After the pile of counting sticks has been exhausted a new feature is introduced in the count. The player who scores first takes a single plain stick from his pile and places it by itself, with one of its sides facing him to represent one point; and perpendicular to this, either horizontally or vertically, to represent five points. He continues to add sticks thus as he continues to score. This use of the sticks as counters to indicate unpaid winnings is a device for deferring further settlement until the game seems near its end, and also serves to increase the count indefinitely to meet the indefinite duration of the game, as after one player secures a token his opponent when he scores merely reduces the former's token pile by the value of his score. The reduction is effected by returning from the token pile to the private pile the amount of the opponent's scores; hence at any time the token pile represents the amount of advantage which its owner has obtained since the last settlement. These settlements are made whenever either party may desire it; this, however, is supposed to be whenever one player's token pile seems to represent a value approaching the limit of his opponent's ability to pay. If his opponent

should permit the settlement to be deferred until he were no longer able to pay his debts, then he would lose the game to the first player; whereas if one player after the settlement retains five plain sticks, but not more, a new feature is introduced which favors him. If while retaining his five sticks he can score five points before his opponent scores at all, he wins the game in spite of the much greater amount of his opponent's winnings up to that point. If his opponent scores one point only before he obtains his five points he still has a chance, though a less promising one. After paying over the three plain sticks that represent a single point, two plain sticks still remain to him; he is then compelled to win seven points before his opponent wins one, or he forfeits the game; but if he succeeds in winning his seven points the game is still his. However, in these last chances he is further handicapped by the rule that he can at no time score more points than are represented in his private pile; consequently, if with only five plain sticks in his possession he could score only a single point, even if his toss should call for five; but with six plain sticks he could score two points; with nine sticks, three, etc. The last chances are: with only five plain sticks, five points are necessary to win; with four plain sticks, five points are necessary to win; with three sticks, six points; with two sticks, seven points; with one stick, seven points.

There are other minor rules: one, that in counting five points on the plain sticks four bundles of four each are given instead of the five bundles of three each, as one should expect; total, sixteen. The other rule is that to count six points we use a notched stick plus only two plain sticks, instead of three, as might be expected... (Hagar, 1895, pp. 31-34).

Our historical authors have little to add to this description; Le Clercq, however, does inform us that the Indians,

...have as their common amusements the games of Leldestaganne and of the Chagat, which they play with little black and white bones. That person wins the game who makes them turn out all white or all black as many times as they have agreed. They are very faithful in paying whatever they have lost at the game, without quarrelling or expressing the least word of impatience; because, say they, they play only for diversion, and to enjoy themselves with their friends... (Le Clercq, 1910, pp. 294-295).

Lescarbot volunteers the additional information that the Micmac were addicted to the game, and to gambling on it,

...that sometimes they stake all that they have, even to their wives... True it is as to women lost at play

that to hand them over is full hard, for often they make mock of the gambler and point the finger of scorn at him... (Lescarbot, 1914, p. 197).

Further information upon this dice game, including illustrations of Micmac dice-game equipment and comparative material from other tribes, can be found in Culin's "Games of the North American Indians" (1907).

The second important Micmac game was TOOADIJIK. Our accounts of it derive from Rand's legend collections, and from Hagar. The latter author informs us that it was a form of football, and that:

...the goals were of two sticks placed slantingly across each other like the poles of the traditional wigwam. About a score of players, divided into two parties, faced each other at equal distances from the center of the field. The ball was then rolled in by the umpire, and the object of the game was to kick it between the goal posts. In more recent times a player may catch his opponent by the neck and thus hold him back until he can obtain the ball himself, but scalping was anciently employed as a means of disposing of an opponent... (Hagar, 1895, pp. 35-36).

Rand's legend material somewhat modifies and expands this picture.

We are told that:

...A pole is raised at the edge of an empty space some three hundred yards across; the parties arrange themselves four or five on each side; the ball is thrown into the air, and all dart towards it to catch it; he who succeeds in catching it before it strikes the ground darts away to the pole, all on the opposite side pursuing him; if they can catch him before he reaches the pole, his party loses; then the one who seizes him throws up the ball, and another plunge is made after it...The players were stark naked, except for a cloth around their loins, so as to make it a difficult matter to seize and hold them. Generally, this could be done only grasping them by the hair of the head... (Rand, 1894, pp. 181, 200).

A closely similar game, called WÖLCHĀMAADĪJĪK, was played with hurleys, the ball being knocked about on the ground (Rand, 1894, p. 181). According to Culin (1907, pp. 697-698), TOOĀDIJĪK was also played by the Massachusetts, Narraganset, Powhatan, and Wyandot of the Northeastern area.

The remaining important amusement of the Micmac seems to have been story-telling—the recitation of sacred tales, folk tales, legends or "tales of ancient times," historical accounts, and anecdotes. The nature and context of many of these forms has already been considered in many of the earlier sections; we

may here consider, however, the context within which these tales were told, and the social needs and functions which they fulfilled. From the materials already covered, it is apparent that the sacred tales—relating to Glooscap, other supernatural beings, and spiritual worlds—justify and sanctify the sacred and civic rites; we have no clue, however, as to when these were recited. The legends, historical accounts, and anecdotes undoubtedly served to help socialize the young, to acquaint them with the mores of the society, and to educate them as to the behavior expected of them under special circumstances; no evidence is available as to the conditions under which these tales were recounted either. With respect to the folktales, and perhaps some of the anecdotes, which were probably told largely for amusement, Denys gives us the following information.

The Indians were very fond of feats of agility, and of hearing stories. There were some old men who composed them, as one would tell children of the times of the fairies, of the Asses' skin, and the like. But they compose them about the Moose, the Foxes, and other animals, telling that they had seen some powerful enough to have taught others to work, like the Beavers, and had heard of others which could speak. They composed stories which were pleasing and spirited. When they told one of them, it was always as heard from their grandfather. These made it appear that they had knowledge of the Deluge,

and of matters of the Ancient Law. When they made their holiday feasts, after being well filled, there was always somebody who told one so long that it required all the day and evening with intervals for laughing. They were great laughers. If one was telling a story, all listened in deep silence; and if they began to laugh, the laugh became general. During such times they never failed to smoke. They had a certain green tobacco, the leaf of which was not longer than the finger, nor any broader. They dried it, and made it into a loaf, in the form of a cake, four inches thick. The smoke was not strong, the tobacco good and very mild. Those storytellers who seemed more clever than the others, even though their cleverness was nothing more than sportiveness, did not fail to make fun of those who took pleasure in listening to them... (Denys, 1908, pp. 418-419).

Although none of the Micmac tales in the folklore literature would require a day and an evening for the telling, they still give us an adequate idea of the nature of this Indian diversion.