

RAY A. YOUNG BEAR

Contemporary Meskwaki Social Dance Songs

The One I Live With

Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Me ko te we ni
We we ne twi
Ne te no wi tti a
Ne te no wi tti a

Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
Your traditional dance dress
Made of fabric is beautiful
I said to the One I live with
I said to the One I live with

One at a Time

Na ne ko te nwi
Na to me ko—ma a ki
Na ne ko te nwi
Na to me ko—ma a ki
Na ne ko te nwi—hey
Na to me ko—ma a ki
Na ne ko te nwi—hey
Na to me ko—ma a ki
Ni mi tti
Na to me—a yo i
Ni mi tti
Ni mi to ta
Ni mi ta

One at a time
Call these people
One at a time
Call these people
One at a time—hey
Call these people
One at a time—hey
Call these people
The one who's dancing
Call him here
The one who's dancing
The one who's dancing for
The one dancing

Micah's Rider Song

Hi ho Silver
Ne te na wo
Ne ka to ska tte e mo
Hi ho Silver
Ne te na wo
Mi tta tti ba o wa
Mi tta tti ba o wa
Hey're gonna go riding-riding
Ne te kwo
Ni ka na

Hi ho Silver
I said to
My horse
Hi ho Silver
I said to
My horse
A fancy run he does
A fancy run he does
He (we)'re gonna go riding, riding
Said (to me)
My friend

The Person Who Partakes of This Medicine

Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni
Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni
Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni
Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni
Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni
Hey yo ta
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni

Ayo a kwi tti tta
Ki ki wi ta
Me to se ne ni wa
Wi nwa
Ni a no wa tti wa
A no ka ne kwa
Ke tti Ma ne to wa ni

The person who partakes
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator
The person who partakes
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator
The person who partakes

Is being requested
By the Holy Creator
The person who partakes
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator
The person who partakes
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator
The person who partakes
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator

Here above
Is where you'll stay
The people
They are the ones
Who will agree
Is being requested
By the Holy Creator

NOTES:

"The One I Live With" is dedicated to Wa se ke kwa, the One with whom I have had the honor to live for over thirty years. My wife, Stella, and I live on the Meskwaki Tribal Settlement in central Iowa where we are parents to six children whose ages range from five to sixteen. When Wa se ke kwa, who is a master of these arts, is adorned in Woodland-style finery with floral motifs, geometric designs in beads, or embroidery, I not only praise her artwork but imply her physical beauty. The song is sung in a traditional Meskwaki medium-fast drumming speed and is enunciated accordingly.

“One at a Time” was composed in part in the summer of 2003 when the Meskwaki hereditary Chief was asked to resolve a tribal dispute of governance. This was historic because the sacred role of the hereditary Chief who founded the Meskwaki Settlement in 1856 had not been recognized in over a century. Each Chief or O ki ma is therefore summoned, one at a time. When framed in a tribal celebration during which contemporary dancers exhibit their skills individually, the tribute is rooted in ethereality reached through the grace and physicality of dance. The song is vocalized in strong half-pitch and performed as a Northern Plains Crow hop dance.

“Micah’s Rider Song” was made when my son, Micah or Ke tta tti—Ma kwa, Kind Bear, was three years old. While horses are rare today in Meskwaki society, Micah’s interest for them was affirmed through an early TV character I knew, a white horse called “Silver.” The horse would lift its front feet before galloping off with the Lone Ranger. I mixed that western theme with the “riding, riding” lyrics and intonations I once heard on a modern cartoon called “The Backyardigans.” So this is a children’s pow-wow song sung in a Northern Plains Crow hop beat style. At four, Micah starts this song at the drum, with his siblings making the formidable echo.

“The Person Who Partakes of This Medicine” is a peyote song recorded in the summer of 1928 by Martha Champion Huat Randle on the Meskwaki Settlement in Iowa. In 1989, on behalf of my father, who had longhouse-singing interests, I asked for audio copies from Indiana University. So, amazingly, after sixty years, my parents listened to people they once knew and noted that some songs were lost while others remained. That some did remain was reassuring since scholars had projected that only 20 of the 155 Native American languages would survive by 2060. Dr. Ives Goddard, an Algonquin linguist, writes that “Meskwaki organizes meaning into sentences in ways that differ fundamentally from better known languages and directly challenges the assumptions of linguistic theory.” To that extent, I pray I have captured the essential character of the word-song’s message.