These are translations of Canadian Swampy Cree personal name origins. They were told by Samuel Makidemewabe during a long apprenticeship period in which I also learned the specifics of the naming process as related to both these "earned" names and clan-affiliate names. I began the actual process of translation about 1968

-Howard Norman

Born Tying Knots / Samuel Makidemewabe

When he came out, into the world, the umbilical cord was around his toes. This didn't trouble us, that he was tying knots THAT EARLY. We untied it.

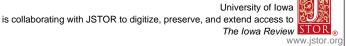
Later, he heard his birth story. It caused him to begin tying knots *again*. He tied things up near his home, TIGHT, as if everything might float away in a river.

This river came from a dream he had.

House things were tied up at night. Shirts, other clothes too, and a kettle. All those things were tied to his feet so they would not float away in the river he dreamed. You could walk in and see this.

Maybe the dream stopped because it was no longer comfortable to sleep with shirts tied to him. Or a kettle.

After the dream no longer came, he stopped tying things EXCEPT for the one night he tied up



a small fire. Tied up a small-stick fire! The fire got loose its own way.

Sat in the Center / Samuel Makidemewabe

This boy went out in a snow blizzard to catch fish. He went out on the swamp ice and brought his ice chisel with him to dig a hole through it. He went singing. In summer we could hear that swamp sing all its birds and frogs together, BUT THIS WAS IN WINTER. He was the only one singing.

We heard him dig the ice hole in the distance, but we could not see this. It was a chewing sound his work made. After a while we got worried he fell in. Or that the snow snakes curled him away.

Worried we would never again see him bob up among the wood duck decoys, LAUGHING! In summer.

He stayed out on the ice until night. Then we saw his torch-stick fire moving toward us, in the dark, and he came BACK HOME to put the fish he caught on the fire. Our worrying did not stop there. He sat with us and watched the fish thaw and cook on the fire.

He sat with us in the center, shivering. THEN we heard his laughing thaw out too. That's when our worrying stopped.