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# Contemporary Meskwaki Social Dance Songs: The One I Live with; One at a Time; Micah's Rider Song; The Person Who Partakes of This Medicine

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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  
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.