

**Jens Haven School
Nain
presents**

“THE SILENCE IS SO LOUD”

Cast of Characters

Jessica Dawe..... Mrs. Wide, Child 2, Story #5, etc.
Brendon Dicker..... Levi, Paulus, Amos, Story #1, etc.
George Mogridge..... Adam, reverend, Story #6, etc.
Crystal Webb..... Drum Dancer, Old Johanna, Story #4, etc.
Melissa Webb..... Individual, Pauline, Child 1, Story #2, etc.
Shannon Webb..... Mary, Johanna 2, Story #3, etc.
Marcus Lampe..... Offstage Voice

Written by: The Cast and adapted from a script by Tim Borlase and Linda Ford and the students of Jens Haven memorial, 1978.

Teacher Advisor: Ray Budgell

The play consists of six actors who will assume various roles in the play. The focus is on Okak and the Spanish Flu that marked the end of this northern community. The play is not so much about Okak as it is about change and its impact on people.

There will be no curtain. Scene changes will be done through music, movement, etc.. The set will be very simple with blocks for sitting, blocking, etc..

The auditorium is darkened and the stage dimly lit. The wind can be heard, faintly at first, then increasing in intensity and again fading. A drum beating accompanies the sound of the wind. During this, actors move across the stage as though struggling against the wind. The wind stops , the lights change, and the actors take positions on stage.

ENSEMBLE: We are the spirit of Okak
We are Inuit
We came here a long, long, time ago
We trudged over a frozen land

Leaving our footprints everywhere.
We suffered hardship to reach this great land we call ours.

INDIVIDUAL: It was our land for a very long time
We struggled
And the struggle made us stronger
We took the good with the bad
And lived in harmony with all living things.
We loved, gave birth, hunted, sang and danced

ENSEMBLE: Some died and some survived
But we enjoyed life just the same.
And, in Okak, the circle of life was good.

(Individual moves forward during the following lines and removes mask. His face is white to represent a white European.)

INDIVIDUAL: But then
The winds of change could be heard
First as a whisper *(Soft sound of wind as the chorus whispers words such as: John Cabot, England, King Henry, etc.)*
Then growing stronger
Urgent
Frightening *(Sound of the wind rising as the chorus speaks words such as: Fernandes, Lavrador, Bristol, Jacques Cartier, North West Passage, etc.)*
Now a raging storm
Tearing
Whipping
Stripping *(Wind reaches crazy heights as the chorus shouts words like: Hudson's Bay Company, King Charles, , French, Moravians, Heathens, Christians, King George. During this the chorus reacts with extreme fear and confusion and retreats UPSTAGE. Wind and voices stop abruptly)*

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|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| INDIVIDUAL | ENSEMBLE |
| We fade----- | (into the shadows of our own lives) |
| Small ----- | (as one drop in the great ocean) |
| With time----- | (we slowly step forward) |
| Cautiously | |
| Silently | |
| What choice do we have? | |
| We fall victim to white man's disease | |
| To white man's ways, | |
| We pay dearly with our identity, our lives | |
| As once again we try to live in peace and harmony | |

*(The chorus whispers the word, **HARMONY**, repeatedly as they leave the stage. It is replaced by cannon blasts and band music. Levi rushes on stage shouting IT'S THE HARMONY, etc..)*

LEVI: Adam, come on boy, it's the Harmony.

ADAM: Whoo,hoo! Now I'll be able to go to Nain.

LEVI: Nain, wha' ya wanna go there for?

ADAM: Girls, boy. It's been a year and all the girls are getting' pretty lonely.

LEVI: Girls?? I didn't know all the girls in Nain are blind!

ADAM: Wha' ya mean? At least I don't have a face like an ol' boot.

LEVI: Ol' boot! Ol' boot! I'll give ya an old boot. (Grabs him , kicks him in the rear, mock fight)

(Old Johanna with the aid of a walking stick makes her way to the wharf. Mrs. Wide attempts to rush past her)

MRS. WIDE: Good, my food is here at last. *(Mrs. Wide goes to break-up the boys. As she returns, she trips and falls. Two young girls, Pauline and Mary, are just coming on stage. They rush to help her up but she brushes them off. The girls leave her and make their way to front stage.)*

PAULINE: Can't even help some people.

MARY: What a contrary ol' bat.

ADAM: What are you girls doing here?

LEVI: Yeah, nothing for you here. Go home to your girls' work.

JOHANNA: *(pointing her stick)* You watch your tongue , ya young devil. Who do you think made dem boots ya got on? Youngsters des days, got no respect.

PAULINE: The wharf is as much ours as yours, so mind your own business.

MARY: Besides, there might be some good-looking boys on the Harmony.

PAULINE: And anything is better than the likes of them. *(nods towards the boys)*

MRS. WIDE : Goodness Gracious, are they ever going to get here? *(To Emelia)* They're as slow as cold molasses.

EMELIA: They have to be careful, Mam. The water is not very deep.

MRS, WIDE: Umph, they have been in here a thousand times. They should be able to do it with their eyes closed.

EMELIA: No hurry, Mamm. We've got all winter before we see her again.

CAPTAIN: *(with megaphone)* Alright mate, lower anchor. *(Big splash)* Shoal water is shallow--stern to leeward---good, good. *(to people in boat)* Well, boys, it's good to be in Okak again.

ADAM: Captain, we want to come aboard.

CAPTAIN: I'm sorry, but there's a sick man on board.

ADAM: *(to Levi)* I just ga go on board. I put a piece of seal skin on the Harmony last year and I ga see if it is still there.

JOHANNA: *(to no one in particular)* I remember that game well. "Going Across" we called it. What we used to do was put a little piece of wood, or anything, inside the Harmony maybe push it in a crack or something, and then it would leave on the Harmony. The next season we would check to see if it was still there. Old Tobias Kuru used to tell me how he put a small piece of his shit on the Harmony, just for fun cause he was a child. When the ship came back the next year, sure enough, there it was, Tobias's little shit, still stuck on. We never knew where it went, but it was good fun. It was like a piece of us went to far-away places we could only dream about.

MRS. WIDE: *(impatient for Johanna to finish her story)* Captain, captain!

CAPTAIN: Yes, mamm.

MRS. WIDE: Did you bring fresh food?

CAPTAIN: Yes, Mam, a little.

MRS. WIDE: *(to others)* I'd love to taste an orange-----it's been two months. *(looks around)* The poor Harmony is looking worse for wear. What will happen if she's not repaired this winter? We may have no supply ship next year, and then Anthony and I will not be able to leave this place. I just know I'll be stuck here forever! *(the girls silently mimic her)*

JOHANNA: I hope not, miss.

LEVI: Who cares about a little ol' flu, let's go aboard. Captain, lower the ropes and a chair and we'll climb aboard.

CAPTAIN: I'll let you up, but you'll have to take your chances. People in St. John's are sick already, and a few old folk have died.

ADAM: Everyone is always sick in St. John's. *(everyone laughs, lights fade as they leave the stage, still laughing)*

(Laughter is replaced by sad throat singing and the light changes to red. Johanna and Paulus are walking home at night. The sky is red and moving. Johanna stops to rest on a log, coughing as she speaks)

PAULUS: There, my dear, take a rest. It must be the night air.

JOHANNA: Paulus, it will be hard to leave Okak and go sealing. It's getting harder each time I leave you.

PAULUS: We are too old to be apart now, Johanna. We should spend our last few years together.

JOHANNA: But, Paulus, when my family goes, I must go too. You know I have to look after my grandchildren while my daughter and her husband go to the ice for seals. *(LONG PAUSE)* Look at the sky, Paulus. The atsaniks are red, so red that the snow is pink from the reflection. It is so beautiful! But we know, don't we Paulus, not to trust nature. We know she can be full of trickery. We know that when the atsaniks are like this, it is a sign that something will happen---- and it won't be something good. I feel it in these old bones tonight.

PAULUS: The last time I saw them that colour, I ah, ah---ah

JOHANNA: Yes, Paulus, what is it?

PAULUS: Ah, nothing. I forgets what I was gon' say.

JOHANNA: *(struggling to rise)* Take me home, Paulus, take me home. I have a strange feeling that I am not well.

(Paulus and Johanna slowly exit and the northern lights fade .we hear Church music as chairs are brought in for the Church service. When the congregation is seated, the lights fade in. Johanna is the last to come in, coughing)

REVEREND: Seek ye the Lord while he may be found. Call upon Him while he is near.

ALL: The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon Him, that call upon Him in truth.

REVEREND: The sun goeth away; the shadows of the evening are stretched out.

ALL: And it shall come to pass that at evening time, there shall be light.

REVEREND: Let us join together in hymn.

ALL: *(SING)* Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices
Who wondrous things hath done
In whom the world rejoices
Who from our mother's arms
Hath blessed us in our way
With countless gifts of love
And still is ours today.

REVEREND: We should all praise God for the Harmony's safe return to Okak. It has brought us much to be thankful for-----enough food and supplies to carry us through the cold winter. We should also offer our prayers for the sick man on board the boat and for those who have died of the flu in St. Johns. We are grateful for our good health here in Okak. Grant us, O Christ, thy peace this night and watch over us until morning comes. Then may we be endowed with vigor of body, alertness of mind and strength of spirit to give thee loyal obedience for thy name's sake. Amen.

ALL: God be in my head
And in my understanding
God be in my eyes
And in my looking
God be in my mouth
And in my speaking
God be in my heart
And in my thinking
God be at my end
And at my departing

(Lights fade-out as congregation leaves. Light up on Johanna)

JOHANNA: Little did we know that it was to be our last Church service in Okak. Right after the service, I left for Cutthroat to take care of my grandchildren not knowing the suffering and death facing my people. At Cutthroat, my cough grew worse and I grew weaker, yet I stayed waiting for my daughter and her husband to return. But they did not return-----no one returned. I waited and waited, and hoped and prayed, and when our food was gone, I hoped and prayed no more, and I gathered the children around me *(Light fades a little on Johanna and rises on the following scene)*

JOHANNA 2: Come here, children, I will tell you a story. Last night, I seen a big ol' star, after you was in bed.

CHILD 1: What was it, Anansiak?

CHILD 2: Grandmother, you look sick.

JOHANNA 2: Maybe it is only that I am old. But last night I saw a wonderful strange star. First star I seen since your mummy died. And now I feel that I am just about done. There is nobody else left on the island but us. All died. We have no food or wood left. I'm going to leave you and walk and take Jefta's boat to Okak.

CHILD 1: But Grandmother, it's ugly old weather.

JOHANNA 2: I must go now while I have some strength.

CHILD 2: But there's lots of wood yet.

JOHANNA 2 : Listen, children, I am going to die (*children go to her*) It's okay, children, ssshhhuu, its okay. I am an old woman, I have lived my life and it's been a good life. Now, I have to go and get some help for you, now its your turn to live to carry on what I've taught you.

CHILD 1: I'll go for you.

JOHANNA 2 : No. Stay here and take care of your little sister. There's a little seal meat left for you. Don't eat too much and don't go outside. Too much dogs. Get snow from the window for water. Save what you have----goodbye, my children (*She kisses them, and turns to go. As she opens the door, we hear dogs snarling and howling. She speaks.*) Nanook, I know you don't understand, but look after the children. But first, take me to the boat. I can hardly see. (*As lights and sound of dogs fade out, the light fades in on Johanna.*)

JOHANNA: To leave those little children was the hardest thing I ever done. I don't know how I rowed that boat to Okak. I was sick and weak and as the cold crept in to these old bones, I would feel my mind slipping. I was tired, so tired. My mind went numb like I was in a dream. And in that dream, the snow floated softly around me like a warm blanket, and up ahead shining through the snow and with open arms was the spirit of my dead father . I struggled to reach that light and my father, I felt the oars slip from grasp, yet I am still moving toward that light. Then I feel hands lifting me, lifting me into the light. (*Light dims on Johanna and fades in on Johanna 2 being brought on stage by the Reverend and Uncle Amos*)

JOHANNA 2: The children.....are still.....out....there.....nobody else.

UNCLE AMOS: Out where? Please, wake up---wake up, you must tell me.

JOHANNA 2: At....Cutthroat. (*She dies*)

REVEREND: (*Kneeling by Amos and helping him up*) She's gone, Amos. (*Kneels to bless Johanna 2*)He shall feed His flock like a shepherd. He shall gather His lambs in His arms and carry them in his bosom. The Lord gives and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.

UNCLE AMOS: (*In awe*) She rowed. All the way here. How she made it through all that ice I'll never know.

REVEREND: She was a brave woman and God works in mysterious ways. Some of us must go up to Ten Mile Bay to Cutthroat. There are still two small children alive. (*They take the body off stage and Johanna leaves.*)

(*Sound effects as the survivors of Okak enter to tell their story*)

INDIVIDUAL # 1: It was a blessing that God took Johanna. The ice moved in fast and a month passed before help reached the children. By then, one child had died, taken by starving dogs when she went outside for water. The other was barely alive and still protected by Nanook, the faithful lead dog.

INDIVIDUAL #2: It was a blessing that Johanna did not live to see Okak ----dying.

ALL: We survived but we will not forget the sights, and sounds, and smells of Okak-----dying.

STORY #1: I was 20 yrs. old in 1918 when the Harmony came to Okak. That ship did not live up to her name as the very next day the Spanish Flu swept through Okak. Whenever November comes, I think about it, my friends and all my own family and how they were killed.

STORY #2: I was just a child. I watched helplessly as my parents died in Okak. All the children whose parents were dying were put in my Grandmother's house to look after them. I remember a woman coming in one morning and saying she was cold. She had a blanket wrapped around her and she asked if she could sit by the stove to warm herself. She lied down by the stove and she died there – just like that.

STORY #3: I remember the bodies, night and day, and the darkness, just lying in the darkness with the dead and the sounds of the dying. After we go to bed we would look at this unusually large star moving westward. As time went on we did not know what time it was or what date. Then we realize through the full moon that it must be near Christmas. After we returned to Okak, there was the job of burying the dead. I remember seeing belongings and clothes lying everywhere outdoors. Even now I don't like to see clothes lying around outdoors or people sleeping on the floor. And, I still look for the unusual star we used to watch and never seen again.

STORY #4: The old dogs were the worse. They were so hungry they used to break in the houses, see---eat the bodies. One feller told me he was trying to haul out a dog, he thought, from under the bed, to drive it out of the house. He hooked at it with a stick or something. All the time, it was his sister's head – he thought it was a dog. No wonder he cried – he couldn't stand it, hardly, when he was tellin' us, you know.

STORY #5: I was just seven at the time. We had gone to the winter hunting grounds and I stayed in a house by myself after my family was all dead and eaten by the dogs. I stayed in that house for three months with just a few biscuits and hard bread for food. There was a little boy who was with me. I may have starved him to death because I didn't know how to feed him. I tried to feed him milk from his dead mother and tea. I remember him getting out of breath. I had him on my lap for awhile, but put him down because it was getting dark. As soon as I did, he was taken by a dog and torn to pieces. He was still alive, I think. This is something that still haunts me to this day. I was only seven.

STORY #6: When we was killin' off the dogs, there was a lot of ravens. I can't forget those old ravens. They did strange things like flyin' before daylight. They was a strange colour, almost gray, not black like now. Sometimes as soon as daylight they'd be flyin' like crazy. Sometimes they would be flyin' all night. I think they were death itself.

ENSEMBLE:

And now, Okak is no more
The silence is so loud

It screams its simple message
Of a people strong and proud

And now, Okak is no more
The graves no longer seen
The only living sign
Is the rhubarb patch so green

And now, Okak is no more
The living are all gone
Maybe it is time for us
To not try and right the wrong

(The people put up hoods to assume the role of the chorus and take positions as at the beginning)

ENSEMBLE: We are the spirit of Okak. We have seen great change since 1918. We have suffered your loss, felt your pain, and understood your anger-----BUT, most of all we have lived your hope.

(As we listen to speeches from the signing of the land agreement, the members of the ensemble slowly make their way to stage centre and lie down as in a mass grave. When the speeches end, the light slowly fades on the mass grave.)