

Mushuau Innu Natuashish School

Natuashish

presents

Manteu Becomes a Man

Cast

Grandmother	-	-	Candace Toma
Grandfather	-	-	Paul Rich
Mother	-	-	Julie Tshakapesh
Manteu	-	-	David Nui
Lilly	-	-	Skye Poker
Caribou Spirit One-			Elijah Nui
Caribou Spirit Two	-		Gregory Rich

In the religion of the Mushuau Innu, every individual animal, fish, and plant, as well as each rock, and the wind, rain, and snow has a spirit. If a hunter is to be successful, he must personally maintain good relationships with the animal spirits, principally by singing the songs dedicated to the spirits and to the hunt. He never goes hunting without his animal spirits.

When faced with the question of saving someone you love by taking another's life you are left with little choice. When conflicted with life and death decisions humans may find it difficult to know which path to take. This path becomes even more difficult when it involves a boy the age of twelve, who is placed in the situation of becoming the man of the house. The weight of his sister's life and his family's future rests solely on his shoulders. However, with the help of wise spirits that are there to guide him through this difficult time Manteu is able to become a man.

The play opens inside of Manteu's family Kapminaute (Tent). There is a pile of fur boughs upstage left, upstage center and a pile downstage right on which Lilly is sleeping. Manteu is sitting beside her. The grandfather, grandmother and the mother are sitting together upstage left talking in a quiet whisper with concern on their face. They keep glancing back towards stage right as they talk.

Scene 1

Grandmother: She is getting so small – poor little thing.

Grandfather: Her cheeks are losing colour.

Mother: Her cough it is getting worse.

Grandfather: I know. She might not make it through the winter.

Grandmother: Don't say such a thing.

Mother: We need to keep her warm and we have to get her to eat something. I wish Mishe was here.

Grandfather: Manteu is the man of the house now. He must carry out the hunt this year.

Grandmother: It is a lot to ask of him.

Mother: Do you think he is ready?

Grandfather: He has to be.

The grandfather, grandmother and the mother continue to talk in a quiet whisper.

Manteu: (*quiet whisper*) Lilly, you know that I am going to do my best to make you better. It won't be long now. You'll see, everything will be fine.

Mother: (*crosses to stage left and places her arm over Manteu*) Manteu, your grandfather needs to speak with you. Your grandmother and I will sit beside Lilly.

(The grandmother joins the mother.)

Manteu: Okay. (*crosses to stage right*) You wanted to see me?

Grandmother: Now that your father has died it is your job to look after your mom and Lilly.

Manteu: I know.

Grandfather: It is your job to hunt the caribou this year. We are running out of dried meat from the last hunt and it is going to be a cold winter.

Manteu: I know. I will do my best.

Grandfather: Go now, you need your rest.

Manteu walks over to the pile of boughs upstage center and attempts to fall asleep. The stage lights dim and there is a spotlight on Manteu as he tosses and turns in his sleep.

Scene 2

Caribou Spirit 1: *(soft voice)* Welcome my child, I have been expecting you.

Manteu: Who said that?

Caribou Spirit 1: *(steps into the light)* Fear not my child, for I am the Spirit of the Caribou, and I am here to help you. *[beat]* You are scared, that I can see. So much depends on you. Tell me my child, why are you afraid?

Manteu: I don't know what to do.

Caribou Spirit 1: Not knowing is a heavy burden. The unknown has always troubled mankind. Tell me, what is it that you are uncertain of?

Manteu: I am just a boy, what difference can I make?

Caribou Spirit 1: The difference between life and death! Child, have you any idea of the importance of your actions? If you succeed, then your family will have food, clothes and tools.

Manteu: Food, clothes *and* tools?

Caribou Spirit 1: Yes my child, come closer and I will show you. *(extends hand)*

Manteu steps forward and places his hand into the Spirit's open palm. There is a flash of light and the stage goes black. Manteu sees his family and himself eating and laughing.

Manteu: That's me and my mom and grandfather and grandmother and Lilly

Caribou Spirit 1: *(Interrupting)* Indeed, this is the future if you succeed.

Manteu: Lilly is awake. She – she looks healthy. But how? She was so sick, she was dying!

Caribou Spirit 1: Lilly has gained strength from the caribou meat. She has been kept warm from the caribou skins. She has been given a chance to live.

There is a flash of light and the stage goes black. Manteu is back but he is alone.

Manteu: A chance to live, Lilly has a chance to live! I have to tell grandfather!

Scene 3

When stage lights come up Manteu is quickly retelling his strange dream to his grandfather and grandmother. His arms move in an exaggerated fashion and he is running out of breath from the excitement.

Grandfather: Manteu, slow down. I cannot understand what you are saying.

Manteu: It – I – I am not sure what I saw, but I know that Lilly was healthy and it was the meat and the caribou skin that made her healthy.

Grandmother: Manteu, what are you talking about?

Manteu: The Caribou Spirit came to me in my dreams! He held my hand, and then I saw Lilly, and mom and grandmother, and you!

Grandfather: Manteu, you are very lucky! The Caribou Spirit is communicating with you! You must listen to what the spirit says, and what you see will come true. Go, go to the shaking tent and await for the spirit there.

Grandmother: Your grandfather is right. When I was a young girl a spirit came to me in a dream. It was the night before my mother, your great grandmother, passed into the next world. The spirit told me that everything would be fine and somehow I knew that the spirit was right. It is hard to explain, but the spirit's voice was very comforting.

Manteu: But what if the spirit doesn't come?

Grandfather: Have faith Manteu. He will come.

Lights fade out.

Scene 4

When the stage lights brighten, we see Manteu pacing inside the shaking tent.

Manteu: Great Caribou Spirit, are you here? *[beat]*

Caribou Spirit 2: *(offstage)* Yes child, I am here.

Manteu: Your voice it is different.

Caribou Spirit 2: That is true. I am not the same spirit. It is now my turn to help you.

Manteu: I am not sure anyone can help me. I don't think that I can take the life of another. I want to save Lilly. She means the world to me. It is just that I have never taken a life before. I am not sure that I can.

Caribou Spirit 2: Ah yes, life is a precious gift; it must not be taken lightly. Yet, life must always come to an end, and if you take only what you need then you will cause no harm.

Manteu: I could never take more than what I need. It is just that I don't think I can take the life even if I *do* need it.

Caribou Spirit 2: Let me show you how your actions will help not only Lilly, but the caribou themselves. Close your eyes.

Manteu closes his eyes. The lights go to black and then come up again a beat later.

Caribou Spirit 2: Open your eyes.

Manteu: Where are we?

Caribou Spirit 2: *(points off stage)* Manteu, do you see the caribou herd in the distance?

Manteu: Yes, but I don't understand why we are here. I have to kill the caribou in order to save Lilly. How can killing be a good thing?

Caribou Spirit 2: Which animal out of that herd would you choose to kill?

Manteu: That one, the one that is limping.

Caribou Spirit 2: Why?

Manteu: It would be easier to catch than the others.

Caribou Spirit 2: That's right Manteu! That caribou has a tumour on its left leg.

Manteu: A tumour?

Caribou Spirit 2: Yes Manteu, a tumour that he received because it was passed to him from his father. Now this caribou will again pass the tumour on to his children and his children's children. In time many of the caribou you see in this herd will have tumours.

Manteu: That is terrible. Is there anything we can do to keep them healthy?

Caribou Spirit 2: If you kill the caribou with the tumour, then the illness will not be passed on to the next generation of caribou. You see, by taking his life you will prevent the spread of the tumour.

Manteu: So I would be keeping the herd healthy, *and* the caribou's meat and skin will keep Lilly healthy.

Caribou Spirit 2: Yes child, by selecting the weaker of the caribou you will ensure that only the strong survive.

Lights flash and Manteu is back in the Shaking Tent.

Scene 5

Manteu: Spirit! Please do not go! I want to thank-you for your help!

Caribou Spirits 1 &2: (*offstage*) We are still here, and you are most welcome.

Manteu: Can I ask you a question?

Caribou Spirits: You may.

Manteu: Will you stay with me?

Caribou Spirits: We will always be with you when you need us. For now your path is clear and we will be there to ensure that your hunt is successful, but you must do something for us in return.

Manteu: I will do anything you ask.

Caribou Spirit 2: You and your family must honour the life you are about to take. Lilly will become healthy and the herd will stay healthy, but the life that is taken must still be honoured.

Manteu: You are right. What must I do?

Caribou Spirit 1: You must have a Mukushan: a community feast and celebration which includes drumming and dancing. Ask your grandfather; he will know what to do.

Manteu: I will, I promise.

Scene 6

Grandfather: Ah Manteu, you are back! Tell me, what did you see?

Manteu: You were right Grandfather! A different Caribou Spirit came to me, and now I am ready. I will help Lilly get better and I will also help the caribou!

Grandfather: That is good news! Lilly seems to be getting worse, you must hurry!

Manteu: I know. I need your help. The spirits told me that we must have a Mukushan when I get back. They told me that you would know what to do.

Grandfather: The spirits are right, I will help you with the Mukushan when you get back. I will have everything ready for your return. Go now, Lilly does not have much time.

Manteu: Lilly, can I see her before I go?

Grandfather nods his head and places his hand on Manteu's shoulders. Manteu approaches Lilly's bedside and takes her hand.

Manteu: Lilly, are you awake? (*Lilly remains silent*). You are going to be fine, Lilly. I am going to bring a caribou that will keep us all healthy. I told you that I would look after you. Just hold on a little longer. (*Manteu gives her hand a final squeeze and he exits stage left*)

Scene 7

Manteu returns and he enters the Kapminaute stage left and his grandfather meets him downstage left. His mother and grandmother are still beside Lilly stage right.

Grandfather: You're back! Tell me, were you successful?

Manteu: I – I did it! I found the caribou herd by the river and there was one with a limp and I – I did it!

Grandfather: You did well! I will go prepare the caribou; we have a Mukushan to get ready for!

Grandfather exits stage left. Manteu crosses to stage right where his mother and grandmother give him a hug.

Grandmother: I knew that the spirits would help you, Manteu!

Mother: Your father would be proud! Why don't you tell Lilly the good news. Your grandmother and I will help your grandfather prepare for the Mukushan. *They exit stage left.*

Manteu kneels beside his sister.

Manteu: Lilly, I did it. You're going to be fine. You're going to be fine.