A Battle in the War of 1812
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(7) Mii dash wi ji-maajitaayaan ji-dibaajimag Niibaakhom. (8) Zhimaaganishii-ogimaa gii-izhinkazo Niibaakhom, miinawaa zhaaganashii-gegii-ogimaa, zhimaaganishii-ogimaa. (9) Gichi-mookomaanan ogii-bi-odisigoon, mii dash gaa-igod:

(10) “Niin giwi gidanishinaabemag niwi-ganawenimaag,” ogii-igoon.

(11) “Gaawiin! Niin go niwi-ganawenimaag.”

(1) This is an interpretation of what it must have been like, the first time we were involved in a great war. (2) [Narrator points to a picture] According to the story, the soldiers then wore red. (3) It is this (story) that I will now tell you about, my friends, those of you who are listening. (4) This is an account of what it was like. (5) It probably occurred in the year 1812. (6) That is the date on which it must have happened.

(7) I will now begin to tell the story of Nibakom. (8) The leader of the soldiers was called Nibakom, but there was also an English officer in charge of the soldiers. (9) He (the Englishman) was approached by an American and addressed as follows:

(10) “I am going to take charge of those Indians of yours,” he said to him.

(11) “Oh no! I will look after them myself.”
(12) But (afterwards) this white Canadian officer did not tell Nibakom the truth. (13) He concealed a little in telling him that, since they were Indians, they would be seized according to what the American had said.

(14) “Our land will be taken away from us, and I am appealing to you to help us all, for we will no longer have a country if you don’t help.” (15) That’s what the white officer said.

(16) So Nibakom gave this serious thought and (then) he told his young followers:

(17) “Okay! We are going to help. Our land will be taken from us, unless we help these friends of ours.”

(19) So, the American leader said to that English leader:

(20) “We will have a clash, unless you give me those Indians of yours.”

(21) “No, I won’t! We will have a clash,” the English officer said to the American.

(25) “Mii go waabang go ji-maajaayang.”


(35) Mii sa gii-gnoonaad Niibaakhom wdooshkniigiiman:

(36) “Gjibhiweg! (37) Bskaabiidad ge giinwi! (38) Gaawii geyaabi wiya gwiijklwenynaanin.”

(22) So they declared war (i.e., they promised each other to fight.) (23) Niibakom placed his men in position. (24) When he had positioned them, they were ready to help.

(25) “We will leave at dawn.”

(26) But they had not gone very far, when they encountered the American soldiers. (27) So they engaged in battle (i.e., met each other). (28) They (the Indians) really fought hard and were really doing quite well. (29) They pushed back the soldiers they were fighting against. (30) While Niibakom (and his men) were fighting hard, they realized something. (31) They were now being pushed back, and could not beat back the soldiers any longer. (32) This is how he (Niibakom) came to look back. (33) None of their allies were there; they had all run off, apparently. (34) Only they, the Indians, were left to fight.

(35) So Niibakom addressed his young followers:

(36) “Run away! (37) Let us retreat too! (38) None of our friends are here any longer.”
(39) Mii sa gii-bskaabbawewaad, mii dash
naa nwanj gchi-bapaashkondwaad. (40)
Mii Niibaakhom gii-mzhikoozod,
zhmaagnishii-gimaa, mii ge go naa zhiwi
gii-webnind. (41) Aanii-sh naa gii-
mzhikoozo sa, beskaa bmosed-sh wii go.
(42) Mii dash gii-ni-nkwehdoood miikaans,
gii-bngishin-sh shawekna. (43) Gii-ni-
gwetaa maaba; gii-mzhwaagniwi. (44)
(‘Gii-mzhwaagniwi,’ gii-zhinkaajgewag
wii pii; nango wii go naa gnimaa ‘gii-
mzhikoozo,’ gdaa-kidom.)

(45) Mii dash wi Niibaakhom zhngishing,
mii gii-noonoodaawezhgoogzhiin
biidwewebtoonid— dog! dog! dog! dog!

(46) “Woo! Bek!,” kido zhmaagnishii-
gimaa. (47) Gii-ngaajigaazo bezhgoogzhii,
mii ge waabmigod.

(48) “Aa, Otaayaa! Niibaakhom, ggiig-
mzhikooz.”

(49) “Enh! Ngii-mzhikooz.”

(50) Nahii dash giiwenh giwi wgi-
biwdoonaawaa zhmaagnishii-gimaa
gchi-gozhewin giiwenh; wgiigi-
nakaaznaawaa bem’bahgojig. (51) Mii-sh
giiwenh maaba zhmaagnishii-gimaa
maanda gii-giichgobdood, mii dash
Niibaakhomoon gii-gonebahwaad
shawekna. (52) Mii go gii-maajiibtood
bezhgoogznii; maajaa.

(39) So they retreated, and came under even
heavier fire. (40) And so it was that
Nibakom, the leader of the soldiers, was
wounded, and he was left behind there. (41)
He was wounded, but still able to walk
slowly. (42) So he came to a path and fell
down at the side of the roadway. (43) He
just lay there; he was a wounded man. (44)
(‘Gii-mzhwaagniwi,’ that’s the term they
used then; nowadays perhaps you should
say, ‘gii-mzhikoozo.’)

(45) So it was that Nibakom was lying
there; he heard the sound of a horse
approaching— clip! clop! clip! clop!

(46) “Whoa! Back!” said the officer. (47)
The horse was brought to a stop as he (the
officer) saw him (Nibakom).

(48) “Oh! Nibakom! So you were
wounded!”

(49) “Yes, I am wounded!”

(50) Officers used to carry large blankets
with them; those who were riding used
them. (51) So this officer pulled his off and
put it over Nibakom (as he lay there) at the
side of the road. (52) Then the horse started
out, at a canter; he was gone.
Mii-sh wadi wiikiwennyaan kogewaad. (54) Mii wadi gi-wa-dgoshing zhmaagnishii-gimaa, mii-sh gi-dbajmod.

“Niibaakhom ngii-mkawaa. Gii-mzhikoozo.”

Mii dash giwenh miinwaa bezhig zhmaagnishii-gimaa gii-giigdod:

“Aapji na go gii-gchi-nkoozwidig?”


(58) “Was he very badly hurt?”

(59) “I don’t really know. I only spoke to him for a short while,” said the other officer, who had seen him (Nipakom).

(60) “Aapji ngii-ngoona wa,” gii-sh giiwenh Niibaakhom.

“Gii-bomose. ‘Nga-ni-moon’haan mshkiki, gdizgewanzh (shagwezgan),” nendam-sh giwenh Niibaakhom.

(61) (Meanwhile) Nibakom was lying there.

(62) “I will try to move on,” thought Nibakom. (63) Okay, he was walking. (64) “I will dig up the medicinal herb ‘gdizgewanzh’ (a purgative — narrator comments),” thought Nibakom.

(65) So he dug out some medicinal herbs as he went along, and so Nibakom induced himself to vomit. (66) He forced up the bullet, the little piece of lead. (67) Okay! He started off again.

(68) “Next I will dig up some ‘gbaskzigan’ (i.e., a medicine to induce clotting).”

“Nahii-sh miinwaa gbaskzigan mii miinwaa ge-ni-moon’hamaan.”

Mii-s sh miinwaa gbaskzigan mii miinwaa ge-ni-moon’hamaan.”
Mii go miinwaa Niibaakhom wmaskkiim gii-ni-mijiid, mii sa giiboon’skogzid; gaawii geyaabi mskwiwisii.


Then one of them, a messenger, hurried off, and reported to the officer in charge:

“Niibaakhom gii-bi-dgoshin.”

“Oonh! Aanii-sh mii sa gii-dgoshing.”

Mii go gii-bi-majaad zhmaagnishii-gimaa, wgii-zhaamaan Niibaakhomoon.”

So the officer in charge set out, and came to Niibaakhoon.

“AA! Otaayaa! Niibaakhom, ggiimzhikooz.”


“Gaawii ngikendziin,” gii-kido Niibaakhom gii-nkwetang.


“Otaayaa! Niibaakhom, gboksenmin wii-naadmawyaang. (97) Gdooshkniigiimag miinwaa maajiwiizh, mii ko-sh nii go maanda wii-mkamgooyang was-waabang, maanda Genada,” gii-kido zhmaagnishii-gimaa.

So Nibakom replied:


But what do you think now? (89) Are you still going to attack again?” (90) Nibakom was asked.

“I don’t know,” Nibakom said in reply.

Once again the American and the English officer challenged each other. (93) They were prepared (to do battle) on the day after the next. (94) Canada would (certainly) be seized, if the English general was beaten. (95) So the officer returned, and came over to Nibakom.

Okay, Nibakom, I am asking you to help us. (97) Take your men out (to fight) again, or this land, this Canada, will be taken from us on the day after tomorrow,” the English officer said.

Okay, I will help you. (100) Each group will be on its own, you and your men over there by yourselves, and me with my men over there by ourselves. (101) We will be in two groups as we attack. (102) Okay! We are all prepared, and we’ll leave on the day after tomorrow. (103) We’ll meet with the others.”
(104) So Nibakom had a conference with his men. (105) That large group of soldiers was standing in position like this [narrator points to the picture]. These are just men; (106) they are not dressed up like soldiers. (107) These are the only soldiers. (108) Then Nibakom lit his pipe.

(109) “Okay! Whoever thinks himself a brave, he is the one who will take this pipe. (110) One he who regards himself a brave will be able to pick up this pipe. (111) This pipe will go around that way, until it gets back here.”

(112) So the pipe was passed along from one to the other. (113) Quite often someone passed up his turn. (114) Only four of them took the pipe. (115) These were the (only) ones that had smoked, by the time the pipe reached there (the point of starting). (116) Nevertheless only two were braves. (117) These other two were lying; they were not really braves. (118) One of them was called, ‘Mshi-gekek’ (Hawk), another ‘Mshiiknaakoons’ (Turtle), another ‘Miishgondaagan’ (Bearded Throat) and another ‘Miigwaans’ (Little Feather).

(119) “Okay! You will leave this evening, and go over there to count the soldiers’ tents,” said Nibakom.


These (i.e., the two braves) became bats, so that they could fly around over there. (121) They did not appear over there as men; they worked some magic. (122) They both crept under (the fortification), and went around inside there. (123) Wherever there were soldiers, there was probably a bat flying around. (124) That’s what these (men) looked like as they flew around. (125) Only two of them went over there. (126) These other two had lied, for they were not really braves. (127) They sat down somewhere close by, and they did not manage to go over there where the American soldiers were. (128) That’s where these (who had lied) had gone.

There were twelve tents standing in a row like this [narrator demonstrates]. (130) All the guns were there. (131) There were six (soldiers) to each (tent) (i.e., each contained its full complement of six). (132) There were twelve (tents) in a row and there were twelve rows of these. (133) So the bats started back, and arrived during the night. (134) These ones I am telling you about did not sleep.

Somebody came and told Nibakom:

“You men have already returned.”
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(137) Mii sa gii-ndomaad bezhig. (138) So he summoned one of them. (138) One by one those braves were questioned.
Bebezhig-sh gonda wedaaseg gii-zhi-ggwejmaawag. (139) Only two of them told the truth, for they related the same story, although they had not heard each other. (140) They were questioned separately, you see.
Mii dash eta gonda niizh gyak gii-dbaajmowaad, naasaab gii-naajmowag, gaawii gii-noondaadsiiwag.
(140) Bebkaan gonda gii-zhi-ggwejmaawag.

(141) “Those tents are twelve rows wide and twelve rows deep, and are six guns placed upright in a row in each tent,” these (two) said.

(142) Mii-sh miinwaa gonda niizh gii-ndomndwaa bebezhig. (143) Aapji-sh go naa gonda gii-same-ggiinwishkwag. (144) They lied in different ways. (144) They really didn’t know what to say, so they just made up some kind of story to tell Nibakom. (145) They were therefore chased away.
Gaa go gnagen wgii-gkendziinaawaa waa-kidwaad, bjiinag go naa wgii-nanda-naajmotwaawaan Niibaakhomoon. (145) They were therefor chased away.
Mii ge go gii-bskaabnaashkwindwaa.

(146) “Ni-giiweg! (147) Ggagiibaadzim,” gii-naawag. (146) “Go on home! (147) You are no good,” they were told.

(148) “Aahhaaw! Mii sa waabang ji-majaayang.” (148) “Okay, we will set off tomorrow.”

(149) Mii go zhiwi gaa-ndinang Niibaakhom gii-gkenmaad wdooshkniigiiman waa-zhi-debsenid. (150) From what news he had obtained, Nibakom knew that his men would not be adequate to the task. (150) So he said to his fellow chiefs, the (other) officers:
Mii dash gaa-naad niwi wiiji-gimaan, zhmaagnishii-gimaan:
“Nango naawkwe nga-dzhitaa waabang, mii go naawkweg gchi-waakaahgan ji-biingeshkmaan.”

So that evening they set out on a march, and these soldiers went over there where the Americans were. They sneaked up, and nobody was aware of them. When they reached there, Nibakom addressed his men:


Mii-sh go miinwaa gii-giigdod Niibaakhom

Then Nibakom spoke again:
“Waakaahganing wewiib pagzog! Gego gnagen waasa wiya da-njigaabwisii! Jiigsabak!”

Thus they held the very best position. The American soldiers would have to lean over the wall in order to shoot at the Indians. Those Indians that were standing there the very best position from which to shoot at them. So they, alone, killed all those that were inside. After a while, no-one else leaned over the wall.

As soon as Nibakom realized that no-one else would lean over the wall to kill them, he made a breach in the fortification. That was when they realized that there were only a few American soldiers inside. There were not many. I will say (there were) about twenty-five of them. These ran away; they ran from their homes in the fort.
When Nibakom realized that the soldiers were running away, he went into the fort. In fact, they all went in. Then they started to examine everything; all kinds of things, blankets and all kinds of food, were right there; loaves of bread and meat already cooked. And so, after they had examined everything, Nibakom then lowered the American flag.

It was noon. So the English flag was raised again. So it was that the English flag was flapping in the wind on top of the big fort. When they were finished, across the water they (the allies) had also raised the British flag in the distance. Those over there were finished also. They had won their battle (too). So that great battle which took place at that time was over.

Good-day, my friends, those of you who are listening.