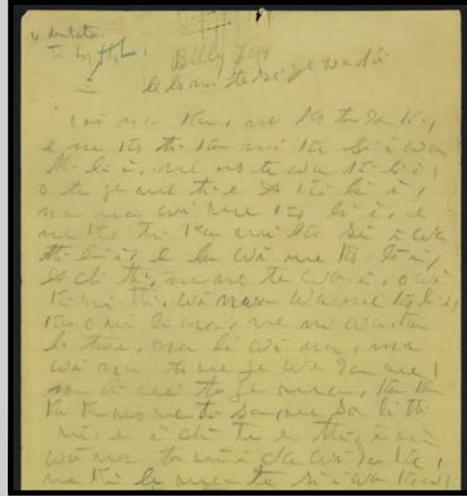


# RECOVERING VOICES

Seminar Series in Endangered Languages and Indigenous Knowledge



Dr. Ives Goddard, Senior Linguist Emeritus  
Department of Anthropology, NMNH

The Ice Maidens: a Meskwaki winter story by Sâkihtanohkwêha from the NAA

Wednesday January 25, 2017 12:00-1:00pm, Rose Room (Rm 337) NMNH

**Abstract:** Appropriate to the winter season is the telling of a Meskwaki winter story from the Nation Anthropological Archives. This traditional folktale about the world before it was the way it is today was written by Sâkihtanohkwêha (b. 1875, d. 1957) in the Meskwaki language for Truman Michelson of the Bureau of American Ethnology, probably in 1914. The Meskwakis, living in Tama, Iowa, had been literate for a number of years, and the simple alphabetic syllabary they employed was easy to write fluently and ideal for writing in the natural narrative style used in telling stories aloud. The nearly 27,000 pages of Meskwaki obtained by Michelson capture an oral literature on paper the way the Meskwaki writers told it. The unnamed hero of this story, on a quest to find a wife, encounters the Ice Maidens, who have come from the ice world where they live. (Their English name is that of comparable characters in a tale of Hans Christian Andersen; in Meskwaki they are "Winter-Spirit Women.") As is typical for the genre, this tale has plot elements that recur in others and conventional motifs, including scenes of violence and sexuality, but the writer tells her story with a practiced and distinctive style that includes emphatic and iconic repetition and her own unique brand of verbal playfulness. After the presentation of the tale in full, aspects of its content and of the process of translation will be discussed. **Images:** Left: Sâkihtanohkwêha (Mrs. Bill Leaf) holding daughter Pearl (1916). Right: Page 1 of the Meskwaki manuscript, NAA 2665, with annotations by Truman Michelson and a title added by Bill Leaf.

For more information or to request a visitor badge contact [RecoveringVoices@si.edu](mailto:RecoveringVoices@si.edu) or call 202-633-5039



An initiative by the National Museum of Natural History,  
in collaboration with the National Museum of the American Indian  
and the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

Recovering Voices  
Department of Anthropology  
National Museum of Natural History  
Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC  
[www.RecoveringVoices.si.edu](http://www.RecoveringVoices.si.edu)