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OHSWEKEN — Some people do not like Halloween because of its emphasis on things they would rather not think about.

Demons, ghosts, witches and other such things suggest to us that we are not in control of our environment as much as we would like to believe we are. The fact is that we are not in control of such natural killers as tornadoes, earthquakes, tidal waves and volcanoes, either, but we like to believe we are.

Some things we classify as unnatural are just too scary to believe in.

With this in mind, I would like to repeat a story told by the Rev. Peter Jones in his book, History of the Ojibway Indians.

Jones or Kahkewaquonaby as he was known in Ojibway was one of the leaders who brought the Mississauga Ojibways to New Credit after they were forced from their land near Toronto.

In 1804, a respectable white gentleman of Jones' acquaintance was spending the winter with some Winnebago people on the Rock River. One day, he sent three of his men down the river to fetch some flour from another wintering house where he had left it in the fall. It was a journey of only a day and a half so he expected them to return in about three days.

Six days later, a group of Indians arrived from down the river. They had not seen the missing men. As there were numerous paths on the plains and drifting snow soon covered all tracks, it was useless to go searching for them.

On the 14th night, as the Indians sat around smoking and telling stories, old Wahwun, a native conjuror, came in. As he had done several times already, Felix the interpreter again asked the white gentleman to request the old sorcerer to use his powers to find out what had happened to the lost men.

The white man had resisted doing so, for fear of being laughed at but now he believed the men were dead anyway. What harm could it do?



George Beaver

our town

He gave Wahwun a quarter pound of tobacco and two yards of ribbon for his trouble. He also promised him a bottle of rum if his fortune telling proved to be correct.

Wahwun went out and the other Indians went to their lodges. In a few minutes they heard him begin to sing. The trees began to knock against each other. Then there was a strange silence before the old man began to scream and yell as if in great distress.

The white man felt his hair stand on end and a chill seized him.

At last Wahwun began to sing in a natural voice and the woods became quiet.

The next day, he said he had gone and smoked the pipe with the missing men. He had found them cooking elk meat that they got from an Ottawa Indian. He had found them in a shelter by the side of a large fallen oak tree.

He said that they had taken the wrong road at the top of a nearby hill and had travelled hard for two days before they realized they were lost.

After seven days, they met the Ottawa who was hunting. He gave them food and put them on the right road.

Wahwun said they would return for the flour and be back in three days. On the third day, after everyone again had given up hope and retired to bed, the lost men returned carrying the flour.

The men confirmed that everything had happened to them as Wahwun had said and he got his bottle of rum.

Our Town is an Expositor feature which provides a forum for news and views from some of the smaller centres in the region. George Beaver is a freelance writer who lives on the Six Nations reserve.

Rev. Peter Jones

knew the power

of native magic