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Waltes, an Ancient Micmac Game Waltes is a beautiful, vigorous, ancient Micmac game. It has remained with the Micmacs despite the many other changes in their lives. It is now linked primarily with Christian pre-Lenten activities. It is played especially on Pancake Night, Shrove Tuesday, the night before Ash Wednesday, Years ago the old people would play Monday through Tuesday midnight, non-stop • simply changing partners as they played. OldiP'A'), KvclcjO ' ce' t6ALTe-srA??- an FAcE-OP • Waltes sets are rare. They include one Old Man, three Old Women and 3 times 17 Sticks. They say 3 times 17 instead of 51, because it takes 3 sticks to make 1 point. There is a bowl (or plate, waltestan-i), a hardwood bowl with a flat bottom and gently up-curving sides. It is made from a burl, a queer lump that forms on the trunk or branch of a tree. A burl does not seem to have a regular grain and can thus take a terrific pounding without cracking • and that is exactly the right property for the bowl used in Waltes. There is a hole about 3/8 inch diameter in the bottom center, said to be an air hole to help the dice jump, and said also to be found only in the bowls in Nova Scotia. The dice are known as Indian Dice, waitesta-an. Traditionally they were made from the flat side of caribou shinbone but in later years it was the moose, then the cow. From the shinbone squares about 1 1/2 inch were cut. Then with a file they were rounded to about 1 1/4 inch, flat on the face and softly rounded at the sides, A design was scratched into the face. A soft blanket is folded to about 2 1/2 feet square and placed on the floor. The blanket takes up a lot of the noise of slamming the bowl down, as well as protects the players fingers. The bowl with the dice in it is set in the center of the blanket, and two players sit or kneel on the floor across from one another. Two people can play, or four people as partners (two play the first part, dividir' sticks till one gets the Old Man; the other two play to the end). Even when only two play, it is good to have one or two others there to manage the sticks for counting, because the game often moves very fast and having to stop to move a stick or take it back destroys the rhythm of play. In the beginning no one has wood. The Old Man, the Old Women and all the sticks are in one general pile off to the side (perhaps in the hands of an observer). The opponents face one another. They simply agree as to who will go first. The game we saw began with all 6 dice face-down in the bowl. We watched, among others, Tillie and Charley Herney play a game. We'll use their names here in describing an example game. Tillie takes the bowl in the fingers of both hands, holding near the edge. Cape Breton's Magazine/