

## Indigenous World Reflection Essay



(Campbell 2016)

### Introduction

I have written this essay as a self exploration of why, as a non indigenous person, I have spent so much of my adult life working alongside indigenous groups, both internationally and in Atlantic Canada. In some ways, I feel an outsider in this class, possibly because it is necessarily digital. I recently talked to a friend in St. John's who wanted to buy earrings from a Miawpukek artist but didn't because she felt to wear them would be cultural appropriation. My PhD project is to consult with rural people in western Newfoundland to solve the puzzle of what we can do to revitalize communication, both within and between communities. My supervisor, Calvin White,

and I seem to agree we have to be positive and forward thinking. Yet I recognize that history must be critically analyzed and that class discussion will be personal and at times painful – such as the story of Davis Inlet.

### Growing up in the land of Glooscap

I am not North American Indigenous (although my mother's great, great grandmother was leader of the Scottish gypsies - descendants of nomads who walked from India).

(Moreau, 1995) But I grew up and live in an historic Indigenous environment. Before the Europeans, it was Pigiguit. Across the water is the site of a more than 11,000 year old Mi'Kmaq settlement- the oldest on the eastern shores of North America. When I walk-on the beach - or row in the river - I look straight at Blomindon.

My cottage - facing east - is in the trees on a high bank above the water - eagles fly overhead singing; sturgeons leap and splash while feeding in a mud bar; deer eat apples in the orchard, and birds tap on the windows.

My favourite of the Glooscap legends is when he decides to save all the creatures hunted by humans, putting them in a big bag.

My childhood concept of Mi'Kmaq - not actually knowing any people, was definitely romantic - free people of the land. The school text story I remember was how an English military man had broken his word and refused to negotiate with the Mi'Kmaq. So a small group canoed and portaged their way from Tatamagouche to the South Shore and kidnapped two of the commander's children. To return to Tatamagouche they had to paddle right under the military fort in my hometown. (I remember my father showing me a probable route on a map.) To me as a boy, the daring Mi'Kmaq were the heroes of

the story. The children were returned unharmed, probably having had the summer holiday of their lives.

As a newspaper reporter, I began to gain a more realistic knowledge. I was driven to Indian Brook by Gerald Toney (who I think is an Annapolis Chief now). He told me of the Mi'Kmaq resettlement when his father drove the family to the land designated by the government, took one look and drove back home. As a reporter at a daily newspaper in Truro, I was invited to numerous Millbrook events such as the opening of the Abenaki Hotel and a national meeting of First Nation women discussing the issue of lineage.

However, as a teenager I also read *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* and realized the horrors of North American indigenous experience. I have read about scalping, when the Americans and Cornwallis offered \$100 for a male (Mi'Kmaq or Acadian) and \$50 for a woman or child. I have read how the bounty hunters used to dance waving scalps in the streets of Boston. (Faragher, 2005)

I have read how the Americans went to Canso to steal the fishery, decapitated the population and stuck Mi'Kmaq heads on pikes around the town. (Faragher, 2005)

My cottage is near what I think of as Glooscap's power source - the highest tides in the world. Not surprisingly, visitors describe vivid dreams. I've been told that long ago Mi'Kmaq used to dry fish on the outcrops of white gypsum on the beach. One dream I experienced myself was of hearing laughing and voice of Mi'Kmaq women and children from the beach. As I looked out through the trees at the river, I saw an American privateer sailing ship anchor and bounty hunters row toward the beach. I woke up listening to the screams.



(Campbell 2018)

### The St. John's Native Friendship Centre

In 1989 I left my journalism teaching position in Stephenville and moved to St. John's to work for Memorial University's extension services. Officially I was a program developer but secretly I had been hired to initiate and train community television volunteers.

Also, within the continuing education department, I found myself working with community groups, such as the Native Friendship Centre. Together we worked on communication tools, such as newsletter, and co-sponsored an indigenous film series with the National Film Board.

In 1992, after Extension was eliminated, I was hired by the federal Department of Health to consult (using video) indigenous people on the AIDS epidemic.

The NFC was concerned about a school text book which portrayed Nain as a place of igloos and tents. I was asked to make a "change of attitudes" video which showed

modern Nain with its supermarket, OK Society television/radio and a modern school.

Campbell, F. (February, 1992) . Nain in the 90s. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BgPYBKmlAao>



(Campbell 2019)

### Youth for Social Justice

Throughout the 1990s, I worked as a communicator for Youth for Social Justice (YSJ). YSJ originated in St. John's, as an offshoot from Ploughshares Youth, but evolved to become an international youth network, which was realized each summer with camps in Bonne Bay, NL, and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG).

Innu, Inuit and Mi'Kmaq came to the NL camps, but it was in SVG that the indigenous connection was realized - almost by accident.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines is steeped in indigenous history. Before the Europeans, the island was populated by Garifuna - themselves descended from the union of

Africans who crossed the Atlantic before Columbus and the Arawak.

The Garifuna were fishers and farmers and seemed to have no problem with the French.

The English were a problem and wanted to take control of the island.

On Garifuna SVG, differences between groups were resolved by hand to hand combat of the leaders. (Williams, C. Personal Communications, SVG, 1995).

The Garifuna leader was a middle aged farmer - Joseph Chatoyer. The British admiral agreed to the duel. But, of course, when it came to the day of combat, the meanest and toughest sailor the navy could find became the admiral's substitute.

Chatoyer was killed in the fight - becoming the national hero of SVG. But French chroniclers of the time claim the British actually shot him in the back.

So the Garifuna moved from SVG to a small island. Claiming the English were poisoning their water supply, they got in their canoes and went to South America - gradually making their way up the Central America coast to Belize.

In 1995 I was asked to accompany teenagers from NL, BC and NS to a National Youth Council work study camp in SVG.

I was also asked to teach communication skills which included video, radio, photography and newsletter. We also brought a grassroots radio station.

Nearby the youth camp, located in a village school, was a Garifuna village - Sandy Bay.

We were invited to Indigenous People's Day (one of my favourite songs was Stigma which has probably been a common experience). I was totally surprised when up on the stage appeared Garifuna I had met in Belize - visiting SVG which, of course, remains their ancestral home.

The story becomes even more convoluted. In 1992 I went to All the Voices - a global community radio conference in Mexico. It was the first global meeting of indigenous radio broadcasters (and feminists). I went - informally representing Belize Garifuna who wanted to set up their own radio station in Dangriga. Attending the meeting were Innu and Cree broadcasters from Labrador and Quebec.

Years later I was told that Innu donated a transmitter to the Dangriga Garifuna who in turn passed it on to the SVG Garifuna and Sandy Bay now has its own radio station.

Campbell, F. (July 1995). Indigenous People' Day. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=awsE39b0aTM>



(Campbell 2015)

### The Garifuna of Belize

In the 1990s the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) was promoting

North South Linkages ( a collaboration of equals but also focusing on the North learning from the South). Friends and I in St. John's were participants in the Belize NL Linkage.

One of the Belizean participants was Dr. Joseph Palacio - a Garifuna who was also resident tutor (director) of the University of the West Indies in Belize.

The Garifuna - descendants of the Arawak and Africans who sailed to the Caribbean before Columbus - are known as the best organized group in Belize (told to me by Creole at the city post office). Belize itself is officially multi-racial - three faces on the flag. I was told the reason the Garifuna were so recognized was because rural Creole wanted and urban life so the Garifuna became the teacher - the educators of Belize.

The Garifuna were interested in retaining their traditional culture while they moved into the future so they invented Cultural Retrieval.

Cultural Retrieval was recognized in a summer gathering at Hopkins Village where traditional crafts were taught to the young. When several crafts people died after the first event, the Garifuna realized they had to archive the teachings. I was sent by the Belize Newfoundland Linkage to Cultural Retrieval project 2 to document the process on video. During the event I was asked to present a workshop on video as a craft and a skill.

In the early 1990s, I returned several times to teach communication skills and shared so many amazing experiences (two Garifuna brothers and I travelled by bus and motorized dugout to the coastal community of Barranco for the Ninth Night of the passing of their aunt. My mother had recently died and I was emotionally impressed how much better the Garifuna were at dealing with grief).

Campbell, F. (July, 1990). Cultural Retrieval 2 Part 1, YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Xuazgv2bQE>



Campbell, F. (July, 1990). Cultural Retrieval 2 Part 2. YouTube.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LfqCO9gAj7M>



(Campbell 2019)

## Conclusion

I have never had any wish to study or research indigenous peoples. I didn't choose Calvin as a supervisor because he is Mi'kmaq but rather I respect his point of view. Maybe it's as the Arabs say - maktoob - it's all been written. Or perhaps it's coincidence. For example, like many people around the world, I was absorbed by what was happening at Standing Rock (my daughter wanted to go) and then, while working in Labrador, I met Marlyce (a Cree/Dakota who works for Innu land claims). I stayed at her BnB so we had many long conversations and her uncle was one of the Standing Rock organizers.

Last year I was invited to Australia to take a course on Open Systems Theory. Dr. Merrelyn Emery grew up among Aborigines and she is adamant that OST is built on 40,000 years of participatory democratic practice.

I am uncertain why my life has so many connections with indigenous experiences.

Somehow it's like how Calvin (or Elizabeth) describes walking out on the land. Perhaps we are all out walking and we simply are meeting on the trail. (in Bahasa people will ask you where are you going - and you respond, " jalan, jalan - walking, walking".)

Campbell, F. (March, 2015) Conversations with Calvin White. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bC2sbrH2kKE>

#### References

Moreau, R. 2005. The Rom: Walking in the Paths of the Gypsies. Toronto: Key Porter Books. 17-19, 123.

Faragher, J. 2005. A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland. London: W. W. Norton. 99, 164.