



In This Issue:

- ❖ Quilt of Belonging (Beothuk)
- ❖ Mishipeshu
- ❖ Election Promises
- ❖ Attention Craft People!
- ❖ Aboriginal Travels Costa Rica
- ❖ Ledger Drawings
- ❖ Matheiu de Costa
- ❖ A Lesson from Prison
- ❖ The Museum of Northern BC in Rupert
- ❖ Proud



The Quilt of Belonging – The Beothuk

Copied from: www.invitationproject.ca/listing.php?Listing=1025



Black felt is used to show that this block has been created in memoriam of the Beothuk. The block is the design work of Studio Inspirations and was stitched by Cynthia Jackson. Beads, cedar bark, and rabbit fur, on caribou hide are used to create a map of the archaeological site at Boyd's Cove. The "Dancing Woman" is from a drawing done by Nancy Shanawdithit, the last known living Beothuk. The image was re-created using red paint, a colour that symbolized life and health in Beothuk culture.

The Beothuk, once the Aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland, are now extinct. They were hunters and fishers who depended upon coastal resources during the summer and moved inland in fall to hunt caribou and smaller fur bearers. The Beothuk were likely the first North American natives to encounter European explorers. Their practice of covering their bodies and belongings with red ochre became a marker of tribal identity and caused Europeans to call them "Red Indians."

In 1497, when John Cabot discovered Newfoundland, the Beothuk numbered about 500. By the winter of 1822-23 disease and starvation had so ravaged their communities only 27 were left. Over time, the encroachment on Beothuk territory by European settlers and Mi'gmaq from Cape Breton Island severely diminished their access to vital resources. This led to a vicious cycle of retaliatory conflicts. Armed only with bows and arrows, the Beothuk suffered heavy losses. Belated reconciliation attempts by Newfoundland governors were unsuccessful.

The last known Beothuk, Nancy Shanawdithit, was captured in April 1823 and later placed under the care of William Eppes Cormack (founder of the Beothuk Institution) in St John's. Aided by sketches and broken English she communicated to him much of what is now known about Beothuk history and culture. Shanawdithit died of tuberculosis in June 1829 and was buried in St John's.



Mishipeshu

From

<http://www.monstropedia.org/index.php?title=Mishipeshu>

The name can be literally translated into "Great Lynx". It is also known as '*Gichi-anami'e-bizhiw* which means *fabulous night panther*. Mishipeshu has been variously described as a horned serpent or an aquatic feline. Most legends hold that the creature possessed a combination of both reptilian and feline features as is indicated both by its name and its depiction in the ancient pictographs of Agawa Bay. He reportedly resembles a feline sporting a pair of horns. Although he possesses paws that enable him to swim swiftly through the water, scales cover both his back and tail.

Mishipeshu is featured in the mythology of the Ojibway, a branch of the Algonquin people. These people held the belief that Mishipeshu controlled the various lakes and rivers that could be found within the Ojibway tribal domains located north of the Great Lakes region. More than one Mishipeshu might have existed, although most accounts speak only of a single entity. This however, may stem from the possibility that the legends of a specific locale would probably deal solely with its own resident Mishipeshu and may have neglected to mention the existence of others.

Mishipeshu was capable of being either a malevolent or benevolent force depending on the circumstances. Greatly feared and respected due to his control over the lakes and rivers, he was regarded as a "Manito" or a powerful being worthy of worship.

Travellers who wished to cross safely across the surface of a lake or river located within the domain of this being were required to make a small offering of tobacco to appease Mishipeshu. If this precaution was neglected, Mishipeshu would create destructive whirlwinds on the surface of lakes and churn rivers into dangerous rapids in order to punish those who had angered him.

In winter, he was equally dangerous, since he possessed the ability to cause the ice coating the surfaces of lakes to melt. In this manner, disrespectful intruders would drown in the icy waters of Mishipeshu's dominion. Further adding to its sinister reputation was the claim of the Canadian writer Peter Unwin

who during his visit to the great Lakes region, claimed that the creature was especially fond of drowning children.

However, Mishipeshu could also be a helpful deity if treated with the respect that he merited. The myths of the Ojibway claim that if invoked by a shaman, Mishipeshu would emerge from the surface of the lake and allow the shamans to remove fragments of his horns which were believed to be of copper. These fragments were believed to contain great power and shamans were eager to ensure that their talismans or "medicine bundles" contained small shards of Mishipeshu's horns. Unfortunately, if the shaman who made this request, in any way abused this privilege, his punishment would be dire.

A more violent method of obtaining the copper produced by Mishipeshu's body was to engage him in combat. An Ojibway boy who was attacked by Mishipeshu while rowing his canoe across a lake describes how he drove the creature by striking its tail with an oar. A part of its tail was damaged by this strike and became detached from the body of the Mishipeshu as it made its retreat. When the boy recovered this fragment, it proved to be made of copper. He subsequently used this trophy to bring him great success during fishing and hunting trips.

In addition to providing copper to his supplicants, Mishipeshu was also revered as the deity responsible for controlling the supply of both lake fish and terrestrial game. In order for fishing or hunting expeditions to be successful, offerings had to be made to him by the native Indians.

Mishipeshu was believed to reside in the Lake Superior region located in Canada. His domain was supposed to exist within caverns and tunnels found beneath lakes, a fact which allowed him to move with relative ease within the region. Lakes inhabited by this being are said to have one of the three following features: they are suddenly beat by powerful winds or fogs, contain deep cavities and lastly, have waters that are a specific shade of colour.

Mishipeshu was closely associated with the deposits of copper ore that existed within the vicinity of the Lake Superior region. Believed to be the guardian of these copper deposits, he would inflict terrible punishment on those who sought to mine them without first obtaining his permission to do so. When a missionary by the name of Father Claude Dabon visited this region, he was told a certain legend by the local Indians which involved Mishipeshu punishing four men that had attempted to carry off valuable copper deposits. As the tale goes, these





thieves had made their way to Michipicoten Island and begun to remove numerous copper nuggets once they had arrived there. However, while they were engaged in this crime a great voice confronted them and accused them of stealing from it what were rightfully the possessions of its offspring. The tale goes on to say that all four paid for this theft with their lives, although the exact circumstances of their deaths are left vague and unexplained. The Indians who Father Dabon spoke to, attributed this hostile presence to Mishipeshu.

Another famous legend relates how Mishipeshu earned his title *The Prince Of Snakes*. The Ojibway of the Lake Temagmi region relates how Mishipeshu was struck by a lightning bolt while sojourning on the surface of a lake. He was instantly reduced to shattered fragments. Each of these tiny remnants subsequently transformed into living serpents, the first serpents to inhabit the world. Hence, the people of the Lake Temagmi region hold that Mishipeshu was the ancestor of all snakes.

Another story relates how a particular shaman had a dream which involved him striking the surface of a lake with a stick and chanting a special incantation in order to attain the blessings of the resident spirit. Inspired by this vision, the shaman did exactly that. The moment his stick struck the surface of the water, Mishipeshu emerged amidst a violent whirlwind. Unafraid, the shamans requested that Mishpeshu shower great wealth and good health upon him. Upon hearing his demand, Mishipeshu ordered him to scrape away some of the copper deposits located between its horns with the aid of a piece of birch. The shaman was then further instructed in the use of the substance that he had just obtained. Initially, it appeared as if the shaman's wish was fulfilled. After obtaining this gift from Mishipeshu, he soon became a prosperous man. However, in exchange for this boon, his wife and son had to perish. Following their deaths, the shaman eventually died a poverty stricken and lonely man.



Election Promises

It was election time and the politician decided to go out to the local reserve and try to get the First Nation vote. They were all assembled in the Council

Hall to hear the speech. The politician had worked up to his finale, and the crowd was getting more and more excited.

"I promise better education opportunities for First Nations!" The crowd went wild, shouting "Hoya! Hoya!". The politician was a bit puzzled by the word, but was encouraged by their enthusiasm.

"I promise gambling reforms to allow a Casino on the Reserve!" "Hoya! Hoya!" cried the crowd, stomping their feet. "I promise more social reforms and job opportunities for First Nations!"

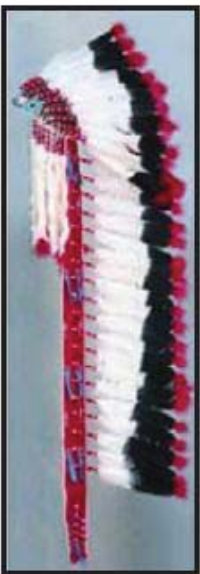
The crowd reached a frenzied pitch shouting "Hoya! Hoya! Hoya!"

After the speech, the Politician was touring the Reserve, and saw a tremendous herd of cattle. Since he was raised on a ranch, and knew a bit about cattle, he asked the Chief if he could get closer to take a look at the cattle.

"Sure," the Chief said, "but be careful not to step in the hoyo."



The OMFRC doesn't endorse any particular political party but we do recommend that you judge them on what they have done, not on what they promise to do. We were approached by a representative of one of the major political parties. We had enough hoyo dumped on us to fertilize every garden in a small city. I passed up this opportunity for fame and fortune. Promises are cheap. Art Haines, Director



Attention Crafts People!

Check Out:

<http://www.halfordhide.com/catalogue/leather-craft-supplies.pdf>

A huge selection of products including animal hides, furs and related supplies as well as beads and feathers, jingles, porcupine quills, animal skulls, herbs and botanicals, native greeting cards, moccasins, mukluks, native slippers, craft supplies and tools, hats, war bonnets and how-to books.



Mathieu de Costa

Our friend Paul Allaire sent us this link from from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia



Mathieu de Costa (sometimes **d'Acosta** or **da Costa**) was born in Africa and died 1698. He is the first recorded black person in Canada. He was a member of the exploring party of Pierre Dugua, the Sieur de Monts and Samuel de Champlain in the early 17th century.

Not much is documented on de Costa, but he is known to have been a freeman favoured by explorers for his multilingual talents. His portfolio of languages - thought to include Dutch, English, French, Portuguese and pidgin Basque, the dialect many Aborigines used for trading purposes - led him into the employ of Champlain in the role of interpreter.^[2]

This job came to be known as *un grumete*. He not only worked with Pierre Du Gua de Monts, but other nations, like France and Holland. There were even disputes over which country would benefit from his services. His talents helped him bridge the gap between the Europeans and the Mi'kmaq people.

It is thought that he came to Canada at some time before 1603, using his visit to learn the Mi'kmaq dialect. One source has him coming to Acadie in a Portuguese ship where he learned the Micmac language. A Rouen merchant then kidnapped him in Portugal or in the East Indies and sold or lent him to De Monts as an interpreter. French papers record him working for government of Port Royal in 1608. He likely travelled the St. Lawrence River and worked at various locations along the Canadian Atlantic Coast. There is controversy as to how he had learned to communicate with the Aborigines, with one answer being that the North American context was very similar to the African one.

Mathieu Da Costa was a shopkeeper and translator from an African background who likely traveled throughout the Atlantic world in the late 16th and early 17th centuries. As a translator, he was wanted by the French and the Dutch to help in their trade with the Aboriginal people.

The tradition of Europeans depending on Black translators was more than a century old by Da Costa's time. It began by exploring off the African coast and continued as Europeans and Africans came across to the Americas. Mathieu Da Costa sailed on many voyages, traveling up the St. Lawrence River and all

along the coast of what is now Atlantic Canada. He worked with Pierre Du Gua de Monts, a leader in the group of French settlements in Eastern Canada, and with Samuel de Champlain in the 17th century. It is said that he obviously spoke Mi'kmaq. That shows that he was here before Champlain. His translating skills helped link the cultural gap between early French explorers and the Mi'kmaq people. His work in Canada is honored at the Port Royal Habitation National Historic Site of Canada in Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia.

A Lesson From Prison

Paul Allaire sent us this from the Wawatay News.

'Power comes from spirit within'

To the Editor:

I hope this finds everyone from the Canadian Tribes in the very best of health and spirit. I am writing to find spiritual people, Native brothers and sisters who walk the Red Road, and anyone who has knowledge period.

I am a Native brother who is on the path. I have been locked up since I was 20, for the last seven years of my life. I'm thankful enough to be getting out soon. This time has shaped and polished me. I went from a wild youngster who dealt drugs, got shot, got stabbed multiple times (once in the heart), hit by a car, got in fights with everyone, overdosed, died legally twice; to a person who when I wiped out drugs and alcohol for six months was a completely different person. I went through a lot of trial and error of finding the things I love to do. I now write movie scripts, I am a mixed martial arts artist, I am an entrepreneur (from prison!), I am a singer, I am a writer and can write anything. I love to learn, love knowledge and love my Native culture. But if I can do this from here, you can surely do it out there.

Whoever, wherever we are, in or out of prison, we are all doing hard time until we find the freedom inside of ourselves.

We may seem an unlikely bunch, filled with doubts, fears and many forms of self-hatred. We also happen to be keepers of the precious flame of Truth, it survives solely because we keep it flickering in our hearts.

We're loaded with spiritual power. We just have to unblock access to it. And it takes a lot of

self-honesty and hard work, no matter where we live or how we spend our days or what we've done in the past.

Everyone has a starring role in this movie of life. We're all heroes, adventurers, who have a lot of ups and downs. We may stumble and fall a million times, but we can all become strong, wise, and free by the end.

About the highest compliment in prison is, "He knows how to do his own time." How many of us do? How many of us use every moment of our lives to get a little bit stronger, a little bit freer, no matter what's going on around us, no matter how crazy or violent it all seems to be?

This is a constant opportunity we all share. It takes us awhile to cop to it, but people with wisdom have known this forever.

With kindness, humour, patience, courage and self-honesty, we can find that inner peace deep within ourselves.

We're loaded with spiritual power, we may live, breathe, walk and talk, but most of the time we don't use but a fraction of our spiritual power that would make life feel infinitely more natural and worth living. Wisdom and joy come only from learning how to see a wider more wondrous world, and power comes only from the spirit within.

Bless all of your family hoops. Be well. Be safe. Be happy. Be yourself and take care. We are all related.

Gordon Night
Washington State Penitentiary
Walla Walla, Wash.



The Museum of Northern BC in Prince Rupert



Part of the museum collection



Proud

Proud!!! 30 years old and excited to be a Métis!!! I now know the real truth behind my Métis bloodline. We as Métis owe it to our ancestors, for fighting for our rights!!! It's not the material benefit that they fought for, it was acceptance! Our Métis ancestors gave us the opportunity to hold our heads up high as Métis should. It's our job to show the world who we are "strong loving people" who love the earth and of course our beloved Canada! We as Métis in my opinion are obligated to further our knowledge about our race, not just to reap benefits. We need to come together as much as possible and give more knowledge to our fellow Métis and Canadians. We owe that to our ancestors. I am proud to be a part of our beautiful Tribe and intend to further my knowledge to teach the truth too others!!! Sal Calleri

Correction

In our special issue I stated that D'Arcy Rheault teaches aboriginal studies at Trent University. I should have said that he teaches Aboriginal History and Culture at Fleming College. Sorry D'Arcy.

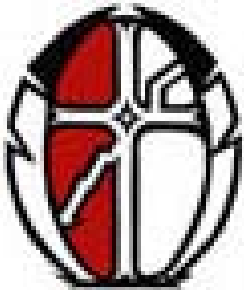


OMFRC
1314 Hybla Road RR 5
Bancroft, ON
K0L 1C0

Phone: 1-613-332-4789
or toll free 1-877-737-0770

E-MAIL:

info@omfrc.org



We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.omfrc.org

www.aboriginalstatus.org

New Submissions!

We are always looking for new interesting submissions to add to upcoming issues of the OMFRC Newsletter. If you have something you would like to add to the newsletter please call or email us! We'd be happy to consider it for an upcoming issue.

Is Your Membership Coming Up for Renewal?



If it is, call 1-613-332-4789 and you can do it right over the phone in just a couple of minutes.