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The Quilt of Belonging - Beaver

Copied from: <http://www.invitationproject.ca/listing.php?Listing=1020>



Beaver block-maker, Ida Kazonay Kushneryk, has created a vibrant Arctic Rose with buds, beaded on a thick, tanned moose-hide background. The moose is significant to the Beaver people, having provided them with sustenance for centuries, and the Arctic Rose is a common pattern used in Beaver artistic expression. The inspiration for the image is drawn from nature. Using techniques learned from her mother, Ida beaded the large Arctic Rose, with its delicate buds, in bright pink and lime *rocaille* (or *rochelli*) beads, which give the flower texture and depth.

The Beaver Nation, also known as *Dunne-za* (“the real people”) or the *Tsattine* (“dwellers among the beavers”), belongs to the Athapascan language group. They originally inhabited the area along what is now the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. Here they lived in small family groups for most of the year, but came together each summer to live with relatives, to sing and to dance.

Beavers had a strong belief in the supernatural and travelled with medicine men and women, with healers, and with prophets. One prophet, named *Makenunatane* (Swan Chief), predicted the coming of white men to the Peace River valley area at the end of the 18th century. In 1650, the original Beaver Nation, who are also related to the Slavey and Chipewyan, separated into three groups: Beaver, Strongbow (now extinct), and Sarcee (Tsuu Tina). Many Beaver Indian bands today have mixed Cree or Sekani heritages.

Known as exceptional hunters, the Beaver used moose as a dietary staple. Today the two northern Alberta reservations continue a 200-year tradition chiefly as farming communities. In the 20th century, lumber, coal, petroleum, and natural gas have added to the economy. At the time of contact, four Beaver bands numbered 1,000 people; in September 2003, census records counted 725 registered Beavers.



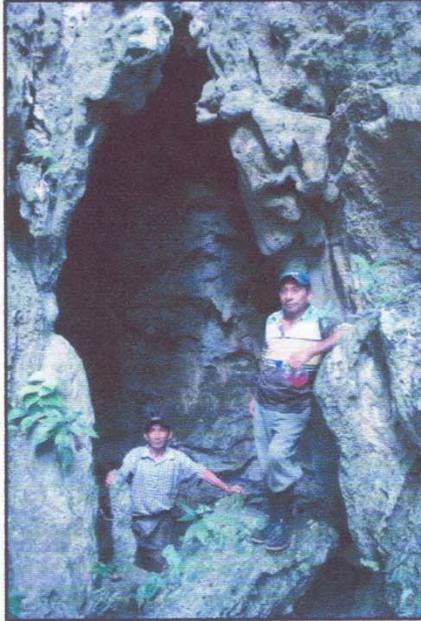
Reprinted from the Toledo Howler
Jonathan Ferrier is one of our members.

Botanical Research in Bladen Reserve

The Howler has written before about the Itzama garden at BITI on the banks of Golden Stream. During December and January Graduate student researchers Sophia Colantonio and Jonathan Ferrier were in Belize to finalize research on plant medicines used by the K'ekchi' Maya. Jonathan emphasizes the way in which the outside researchers and the local healers complement each other. When in the forest the healers are able to identify rare plants while the visitors can help to identify them. Jonathan writes about their work below.

“With Belize Indigenous Training Institute (BITI) and K'ekchi' Maya healers, University of Ottawa students are guided by their Belize partners and their professor Dr. Thor Arnason. Arnason's mandate is to help protect the Ke'kchi' way of traditional healing by working

aply named, *Itzama*, after the Maya goddess of medicine.



Mayan healers in the Bladen Nature Reserve

Itzama garden, is located along the Golden Stream in Indian Creek, ten minutes from Big Falls. Under the constant care of Maya healers, the garden is growing in diversity, and is home to many of Belize's featured birds and insects, with a troop of resident howler monkeys. The important feature of *Itzama* however is that the garden thrives as a living mosaic of vines and lianas flowering to the canopy of the tree tops which support orchids and other epiphytes, all creating the deadfall for the garden's fungi. *Itzama* is a living piece of Maya antiquity by serving as the pharmacy for *Itzama's* Maya healers.

Maya medicine grows about a collection of habitats that can be found throughout Belize: limestone slopes and clay forest floors, inland swales and swamps, rivers, epiphytic and scandent across trees, and cultivated on the *Milpa*. Because the It-

zama garden is naturally composed of these habitats, it is an excellent location to find an extremely diverse plant collection from Maya pharmacopoeia. In fact, many of the rare plants within *Itzama* have been rescued from slash and burn sites, a contributor to Belizean deforestation and cultural habitat loss.

For researchers the Maya garden is a fantastic location to base studies of ethnobotany and ethnopharmacology. Focusing on contemporary health care items like pain and inflammation, neurologic and dermatologic conditions and symptoms of diabetes can, not only treat pandemic diseases and conditions, but also demonstrate the incredible importance of traditional knowledge in modern medicine. When medical plant extracts used for millennia by healers are demonstrated safe and effective within the chemical and biological research lab, they are quite often more effective with less side effects than regularly prescribed pharmaceuticals. But the message is not that one treatment is better than the other; the message is that they belong together, integrated respectfully in national healthcare systems. When this happens the forests' safety will be secured, and mankind will be healthier for it.

Recently we conducted a research expedition with Mayan healers into the nearby Bladen Nature Preserve. The goal was to exercise the minds of healers with plants that have been destroyed by deforestation elsewhere. Here they were able to photograph and discover rare plants that were not in flower elsewhere preventing their scientific identification. “ This is an long established and continuing relationship and future visits are planned.



Jolom chakmut and flower shot for scientific identification

with the healers and helping them develop their collaborative garden,



Legends of the Northern Lights

From

<http://www.ewebtribe.com/NACulture/articles/aurora.html>

Folklore is from *Legends of the Northern Lights*, by Dorothy Jean Ray, *The ALASKA SPORTSMAN*, April 1958, reprinted in *AURORA BOREALIS The Amazing Northern Lights*, by S.I. Akasofu, Alaska Geographic, Volume 6, Number 2, 1979

One story is reported by the explorer Ernest W. Hawkes in his book, *The Labrador Eskimo*:

The ends of the land and sea are bounded by an immense abyss, over which a narrow and dangerous pathway leads to the heavenly regions. The sky is a great dome of hard material arched over the Earth. There is a hole in it through which the

spirits pass to the true heavens. Only the spirits of those who have died a voluntary or violent death, and the Raven, have been over this pathway. The spirits who live there light torches to guide the feet of new arrivals. This is the light of the aurora. They can be seen there feasting and playing football with a walrus skull.

The whistling crackling noise which sometimes accompanies the aurora is the voices of these spirits trying to communicate with the people of the Earth. They should always be answered in a whispering voice. Youths dance to the aurora. The heavenly spirits are called selamiut, "sky-dwellers," those who live in the sky.

The Point Barrow Eskimos were the only Eskimo group who considered the aurora an evil thing. In the past they carried knives to keep it away from them.

The Fox Indians, who lived in Wisconsin, regarded the light as an omen of war and pestilence. To them

the lights were the ghosts of their slain enemies who, restless for revenge, tried to rise up again.

The Salteaus Indians of eastern Canada and the Kwakiutl and Tlingit of Southeastern Alaska interpreted the northern lights as the dancing of human spirits. The Eskimos who lived on the lower Yukon River believed that the aurora was the dance of animal spirits, especially those of deer, seals, salmon and beluga.

Most Eskimo groups have a myth of the northern lights as the spirits of the dead playing ball with a walrus head or skull. The Eskimos of Nunivak Island had the opposite idea, of walrus spirits playing with a human skull.

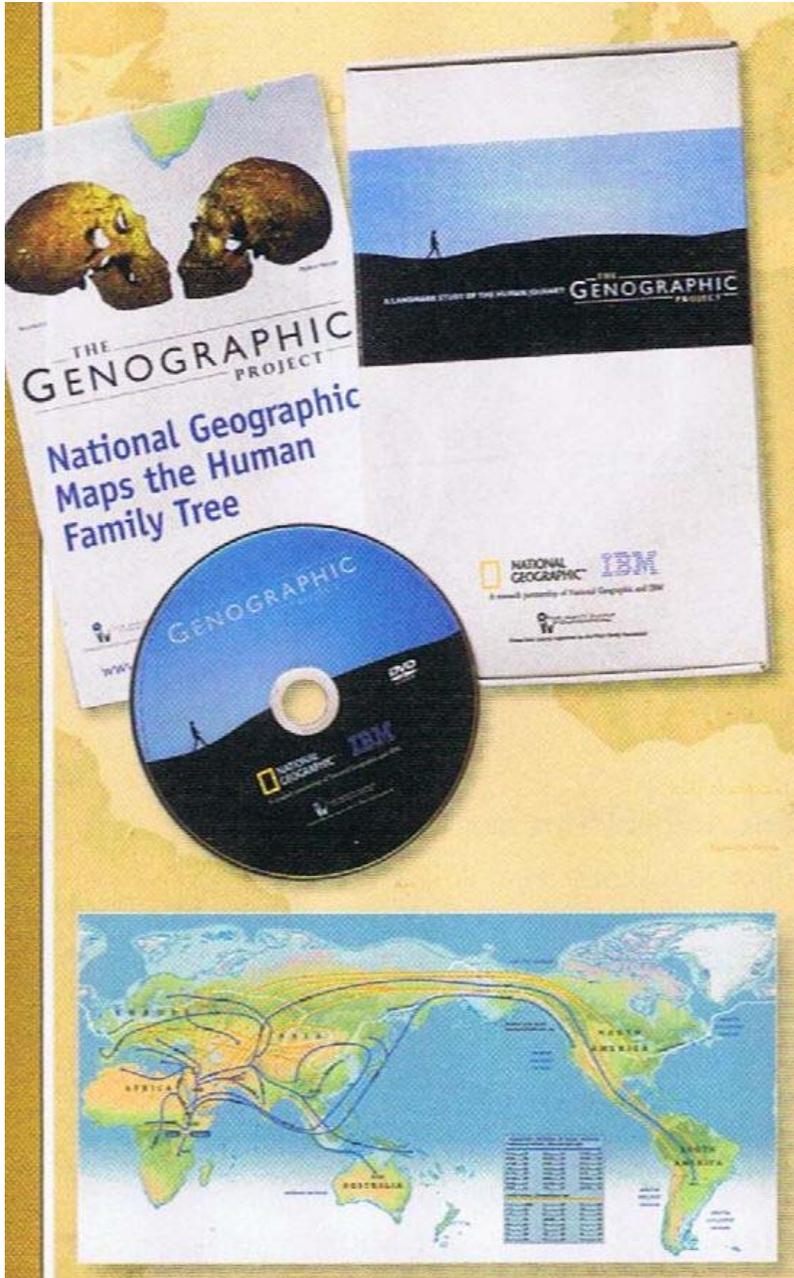
The east Greenland Eskimos thought that the northern lights were the spirits of children who died at birth. The dancing of the children round and round caused the continually moving streamers and draperies of the aurora.

The Makah Indians of Washington State thought the lights were fires in the Far North, over which a tribe of dwarfs, half the length of a canoe paddle and so strong they caught whales with their hands, boiled blubber.

The Mandan of North Dakota explained the northern lights as fires over which the great medicine men and warriors of northern nations simmered their dead enemies in enormous pots. The Menominee Indians of Wisconsin regarded the lights as torches used by great, friendly giants in the north, to spear fish at night.

An Algonquin myth tells of when Nanahbozho, creator of the Earth, had finished his task of the creation, he traveled to the north, where he remained. He built large fires, of which the northern lights are the reflections, to remind his people that he still thinks of them.





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Lightning

Lightning has frightened and mystified people since the days of our ancestors. Native American cultures spoke of a "thunderbird" responsible for thunder and lightning. It was said that, as the thunderbird winked its eyes, flashes of lightning would burst from them. When lightning peeled bark off of a tree, it was taken as a sign of the bird's razor sharp claws.





Sainte-Marie Among the Hurons



Follow in the footsteps of Ontario's first Europeans at Sainte-Marie among the Hurons, near Midland, Ontario. Explore this recreated, 17th century French Jesuit mission

headquarters and experience the interaction of the French and native Wendat Huron nation. This Ontario tourism destination in the Georgian Bay region features a unique time in Canadian history when French missionaries and their workers lived and worked among the Wendat. A rare chance to see the earliest in Canadian pioneer life through guided or self-guided visits, school group tours, "hands-on" education programs, special events and corporate functions. Sainte-Marie among the Hurons will shed light on one of the earliest examples of the introduction of Christianity into Aboriginal culture.

Musée des Abénakis, Odanak, Quebec

The Wobanaki, People of the Rising Sun



Discover the spiritual and cultural universe of the Abenaki people. Immerse yourself in a multimedia spectacular as the oral tradition of this age-old people brings you back to the dawn of the world. History, images and objects reflects the rich traditions that have been passed down

from generation to generation.

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Visit their website at

<http://www.museedesabenakis.ca/en/activites>

Metis Food Supplements

http://www.albertasource.ca/metis/eng/culture_life_ways/lifestyles_food.htm



Métis treats were made from berries that were gathered in the summer. Favorite berries were raspberries, chokecherries and Saskatoon's. Raspberries could be pressed into cakes and dried. Chokecherries were mashed, with the pits left in and smashed. The resulting mixture

was added to other dishes.

The Métis women also used herbs in their cooking. They knew where to find sage and mint growing wild, as well as wild onions, wild turnip and other edible roots. Burdock, arrowhead and cattails all have edible roots. For greens, one could use lamb's quarters (also known as pigweed), chickweed and dandelion, for example.

Have You Ever Thought of Buying a Cigar Store Indian?



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<http://www.cigarstoreindians.tatue.com/CigarStoreIndians.html>

and

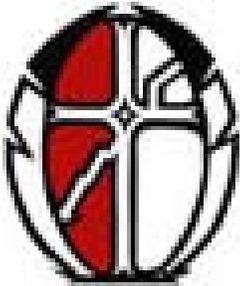
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New Submissions!

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.

Aboriginal Travels - Venezuela

Copied from <http://www.invitationproject.ca/listing.php?Listing=9060>



Venezuela ('Little Venice') was named by a Spanish explorer who, upon seeing houses built on stilts (*palefitos*) along the region's shoreline, was reminded of Venice, Italy. A country of striking beauty, Venezuela is home to the world's highest waterfall (Angel Falls), the longest snake (the anaconda), and numerous table mountains or *tepuys* (some of the oldest rock formations on earth). Historically, the economy

depended largely on cocoa and coffee but now, as the world's fourth largest oil exporter, the economy is built upon the country's rich petroleum and mineral resources.

The majority of Venezuelans are *mestizo* (mixed race), while indigenous people, some of whom maintain their traditional way of life, make up only two percent of the population. The official language is Spanish although over 30 Amerindian languages still survive.

Venezuelans, famous for their easy-going nature and fun-loving spirit, often speak less formally than people in other Spanish-speaking countries and use affectionate nicknames for people they do not know well. These names are often given based on appearance and can sometimes seem rude to those not familiar with the custom. Friends are very important to Venezuelans but family, with whom they spend a great deal of their time, is at the centre of their lives. The elderly are respected and *abuelitos* (grandparents) are often very involved in the care of children.

The country is known for its spinning, weaving, clay pottery, jewelry, and gold and silver decorated glassware, but its most distinctive cultural outlet is music, a blend of European, African and indigenous rhythms. *Carnaval*, one of the nation's liveliest holidays, is celebrated with parades and street parties in which people in intricate costumes dance to lively *calypso* music, often performing the *zoropo* (national dance).

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