

February 2009 Issue

Feathers In The Wind



Articles provided by members and friends of
The Ontario Métis Family Records Center

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"To be ignorant of what occurred before you were born is to remain always a child. For what is the worth of human life, unless it is woven into the life of our ancestors by the records of history?" This quote by Marcus Tullius Cicero (106 BC to 43 BC) encompasses a core belief of our organization.

Submissions to Our Newsletter

Articles for the newsletter are greatly appreciated from both members and non-members.

- Send articles to info@omfrc.org
- Articles should not be offensive or in bad taste.
- Articles should be of direct interest to First Nations and/or Métis.
- Articles should contain the author's name.
- Depending on volume, we may not be able to include all submissions.
- Your article could also be used on one of our websites.

Disclaimer:

Articles in the newsletter express the opinions of the authors, not necessarily those of the MFRC / OMFRC. Our newsletter is meant to be a voice for the aboriginal community and their opinions are as varied as the community itself. Some of the articles will be controversial, we ask you to read them with an open mind. By listening to people we may not agree with, we learn, and our perspective on an issue may change.



Moccasins

Pictured here is an early pair of Sioux Moccasins from the Lawrence Frost Collection 1880's. When I first came upon them they were being auctioned off at a starting bid of \$4,000.

The following is an Iroquois pattern of a popular style recognized by everyone. Other than being made of leather, the sewing materials are left entirely to the maker – the pleasure of the creation is the goal.

I use whatever needle I can most easily work through the leather, a thimble is a necessity and sometimes a pair of pliers. Upholstery thread is very strong and wears well. Pattern on tongue is optional but anything but paint should be done before assembling.

To make your pattern: Trace one foot on paper (reverse for the other foot).

-Fold pattern so toe section is 1 inch longer than the heel section.

Allowances:

-Add ½ inch to each side of the toe section.

-Add ½ to ¾ inch around the entire foot pattern.

Cut pieces with allowances and with suede to bottom of soles for traction. Cut 2 inch strip to reach from tongue around back to tongue on the other side.

To assemble: Gather toe of sole to fit tongue. Place tongue on sole, with right sides out, seams are all on the outside. Use a blanket stitch 1/8 inch deep (more if leather is so soft it tears). Stitch 2 inch strip around remainder of heel section. Turn ½ inch to outside and stitch in place. A lace is optional but is required to "snug-up" a loose cuff – it can be drawn through the ½ inch turnover and tied by lacing through the hole in the tongue.

Hope you enjoy many years of comfort from your moccasins and just think someday perhaps 120 years from now they too may be found on someone's auction block going for a starting bid of \$4,000.

Kathleen Ockenden, artist and woodcarver





The Genocide of the Native North American

The story of early European contact with the Aboriginal people of North America has many faces, few if any of them are pleasant. In fact it marked the beginning of "The Genocide of the Native North American" and continues to be what is probably the longest genocide of a people in history. Genocide by definition is, "Any act committed with the intention of destroying in whole or in part a national, ethnic, cultural, racial or religious group. This includes, killing members of a group, causing serious bodily or mental harm to a group, deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to physically destroy the group in whole or in part and forcefully transferring children of a group to another group".

Let's begin in the year 1492 when Columbus who was lost, came sailing in out of the ocean blue. Instead of finding an uninhabited land his ships were greeted by the Arawaks, who inhabited most of the Caribbean Islands. On October 13th, 1492 Columbus wrote in his journal: "At daybreak great multitudes of men came to shore, all young and of fine shapes, and very handsome". Later on Columbus states: "I was very attentive to them, and strove to learn if they had any gold". At dawn the next day, he sailed to the other side of the island and saw a few more villages of Native people and ended his description of them with these words which show his true intent: "I could conquer the whole of them with fifty men and govern them as I please".

On his first voyage, Columbus captured up to twenty-five Indians and returned to Spain with them. Only about seven of them survived the trip, but along with the exotic birds and gold trinkets, they caused quite a commotion. This proved enough for Columbus to be provided with seventeen ships, about 1200 men, cannons, crossbows, guns and attack dogs for a second voyage.

Columbus returned to Haiti in 1493, demanding whatever the Indians had that they wanted, food, gold, cotton and their women. Those who didn't comply, had their ears, or nose cut off to set an example to the others. At first Native resistance to the Spanish was mostly passive. They would no longer plant food for the Spanish and also abandoned towns near the Spanish settlements. In desperation the Arawaks fought back, but their weapons were no match for the rifles of the Spanish. The resistance

gave Columbus an excuse for all out war against the Arawaks. On March 24, 1495, with 200 foot soldiers, 20 cavalry, cannons, lances, swords and attack dogs he subdued the Native people of the entire island. To quote Ferdinand Columbus's biography of his father: "The soldiers mowed down dozens with point blank volleys, loosed the dogs to rip open limbs and bellies, chased fleeing Indians into the bush to skewer them on sword and pike,

and with God's aid soon gained complete victory, killing many Indians and capturing others who were also killed".

Having not found any large quantities of gold Columbus had to return to Spain with something, so he captured 1500 Arawaks. He selected 500 specimens to ship to Spain of whom 200 died en route, 500 hundred were chosen as slaves for the Spaniards remaining on the island. The remaining were released and they fled into the countryside, some dropping young children as they ran, too afraid to stop for the children, they left them at the mercy of the Spaniards, of which they were shown none.

I could go on and on exposing Columbus, not for the courageous explorer that I was taught about in school, but for the murderous barbarian he truly was. Haiti's Native population before Christopher Columbus arrived has been estimated to be as high as 8,000,000 people. Thanks to what Columbus began, by 1516 only 12,000 remained, by 1542 fewer than 200 were living and by 1555 they were all gone. What was done to the Native people of Haiti should be viewed as a bloody massacre that left a legacy of genocide.

The Spanish are not the only ones to murder and enslave the Native North American. The Portuguese, Dutch, British and French did the same. Worse yet were the diseases the Europeans brought with them to North America. Having no immunity to foreign diseases, the Native population of North America was greatly diminished by them. The most deadly to the Aboriginal people was smallpox.

William Bradford, Governor of Massachusetts wrote these words describing the devastation smallpox raged on the Native population: "A sorer disease cannot befall the Indian, they fear it more than the plague. For usually they that have this disease have them in abundance, and for want of bedding and linen and other helps they fall into a lamentable condition as they lay on their hard mats, the pox breaking and mattering and running one into the other, their skin cleaving by reason thereof to the mats they lie on. When they turn them, a whole side will flay off at once as it were, and they will be all of a gore blood, most fearful to behold. And then being very sore, what with cold and other distempers, they die like rotten sheep". The U.S. military and European settlers soon realized that smallpox was devastating to the Native population and wasted no time in using the virus against them, amounting to what is probably the first use of biological warfare in the history of mankind.

In 1763 Pontiac and his warriors had surrounded

Fort Pitt. On June 24, 1763, a local trader, William Trent, stated in his journal that two Indian Chiefs visited the fort urging the British to give up the fight. When they left Trent wrote: "Out of our regard for them, we gave them, two blankets and a handkerchief out of the smallpox hospital. I hope it will have the desired effect".

Commander of the British forces in America, Sir Jeffery Amherst wrote on July 7, 1763: "Could it not be contrived to send the smallpox among those disaffected tribes of Indians? We must, on this occasion, use every stratagem in our power to reduce them". About a week after this he wrote to Colonel Henry Bouquet in Philadelphia: "You will do well to try to inoculate the Indians by means of blankets as well as to try every other method that can serve to extirpate this execrable race".

Professor Ward Churchill, an author, who's works focus on the historical treatment of the American Indians claims that on "June 20, 1837, the U.S. Army began to dispense trade blankets to the Mandans and other Indians gathered at Fort Clark on the Missouri River in present day North Dakota. Far from being trade goods, the blankets had been taken from a military hospital in St. Louis quarantined for smallpox, and brought up river aboard the steamboat St. Peter's. When the first Indians showed symptoms of the disease on July 14th, the post surgeon advised those camped near the post to scatter and seek sanctuary in the villages of healthy relatives". In doing this the disease was spread and the Mandans were nearly exterminated. Smallpox deaths among Natives associated with this incident have been estimated to be over 100,000 people.

The use of smallpox as a weapon of mass destruction was not limited to the United States. Between 1850 and 1860, blankets infected with the smallpox virus were traded to the Native people in a deliberate attempt to wipe them out. This was sanctioned by the British Crown, repeating what Amherst had done one hundred years earlier. In 1862, 80% of the Haida of British Columbia died of the smallpox. Father Morice, a missionary in British Columbia wrote the following: "I myself saw the graves of perhaps 500 Aboriginals, two White men, went and stealthily gathered up the blankets of the dead which had been thrown away in the bush and were therefore infested with the smallpox, which they sold out again to the Aboriginal people without revealing their

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The Genocide of the Native North American (Continued)

origin, thus causing a second visitation of the plague, which carried off a second third of the Aboriginal population”.

Thus far I have dealt with the deliberate physical destruction of the Native population of North America, but the definition of genocide also includes the religious, cultural and traditional destruction of a people, in whole or in part. Throughout the course of history, the U.S. and Canadian governments have imposed many regulations and prohibitions on the spiritual, cultural expressions and traditions of the Native North American.

In Canada the Indian Act was created in 1857 with the distinct purpose of assimilating the Aboriginal people into White society. The Act defines Indian Status and gives the Superintendent General administrative powers over almost every aspect of Indian life. By 1876, sections of the Indian Act were in place that prohibited celebrations and gatherings at which Native dancing was central. In 1884 the Potlatch ceremony of the Pacific Northwest people could not legally be performed. In Northern B.C. Father Morice and Bishop Dentenwill burned Potlatch regalia in Tse-kya, in an effort to suppress Native beliefs. In 1885 the Act was extended to ban the Sundance ceremony of the Plains Nations. In 1890 the U.S. Army killed hundreds of Natives at Wounded Knee, a situation which basically arose over the Natives performing the Ghost Dance. In 1922 the Canadian RCMP seized over 600 objects in a Potlatch raid at Alert Bay on Vancouver Island; some of the participants in the ceremony are jailed. The items taken during the raid are divided between the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto and the National Museum in Ottawa.

Another way in which the Canadian government attempted to destroy Aboriginal culture and traditions was through Residential Schools. In forcing Native children to attend these schools, they committed another aspect of genocide, that of, forcefully transferring children of one group to another in part or in whole. The year 1870 to 1910 was the period of assimilation where the precise objective of the government was to assimilate Aboriginal children into the lower levels of mainstream White society. In short they were trying to kill the Indian within the child. By 1920 it was compulsory for all Native children ages 7 to 15 to attend. These children were forcibly removed from their homes by priest, Indian agents and police. By 1931 there were 80 residential schools operating in Canada. In 1948 there were 72 residential schools with 9,368 students. During the 1980's, former residential school students began disclosing physical and sexual abuse at residential schools.

In preparing for a presentation titled “The Forgotten

Warriors”, I interviewed individuals who had attended residential schools. One of them told me that by the time he was allowed to leave and return home “*I was ashamed to be an Indian*”. Finally in 1996 the last federally run residential school, the Gordon Residential School, closes its doors in Saskatchewan.

The federal government, Indian and Northern Affairs, still determine who is Indian by blood quantum. Some reservation bands have their own blood quantum percentages which determine who can be a member of the band and who cannot. By doing so they are playing into the hands of a government which is perpetuating a system designed to divide and conquer us until extinction. To quote Art Haines, the Director of The Ontario Metis Family Records Centre: *“The policies on the reserves that define who is an acceptable Native to them, based on blood quantum, force Natives to leave their culture and join the White world. That is cultural genocide. People who leave their roots soon lose their identity and become just another part of the melting pot the world is becoming. If they can't kill them they will absorb them”.*

Blood quantum, as defined by the federal government and tribal bands as a standard of what makes an Indian, is in fact racism, which imposes institutional discrimination by force of law. In 1982 the Canadian Constitution defined the Aboriginal people of Canada as the Indian, Inuit and Metis. But as long as some have more rights than others, then all rights are subject to interpretation and revocation. Traditionally, being Native was a way of belief and practice, not a matter of blood quantum.

Despite all that has been done to them the Native North American survives. The Indian, Inuit and Metis of Canada and the Aboriginals of the United States are proud of who they are. They have held on to their traditions and beliefs and once again, like their ancestors before them, they have the freedom to express themselves through their culture.

In recent times White society has become fascinated with Aboriginal culture and they come to experience these traditions at Native gatherings and Pow Wows. However I feel the need to point out that we are not to be looked at as actors at a theme park of the past, where you come to experience exotic cultures, for it is far from that. It is the original culture of the North American continent and those who experience it should feel honoured to have been a part of it. The Native North American is experiencing a spiritual rejuvenation and rebirth. We will continue to practice our culture and traditions as we have done in the past and as we will continue

to practice our culture and traditions as we have done in the past and as we will continue to do so until the sun grows cold.

I remain unceded,
Spencer Alexander
Métis

Spencer Alexander

Spencer Alexander is a sixth generation Underground Railroad Descendent and a member of the Ontario Metis Family Records Center.

He is:

The Assistant Curator of The Buxton National Historic Site & Museum.

Past Chairman of, The North Buxton Community Church, Cemetery Committee.

Past Vice Chairman of The North Buxton Community Church Board Of Directors.
Current School Advisory Council Chairman of Merlin Area Public School.

Spencer has done presentations at many schools and universities in Canada and the U.S. as well as for Canada Customs as part of their cultural diversity training and has spoken twice at the University of Western Ontario for the “United Nations International Convention For The Elimination Of Racial Discrimination.” He also has been doing historic dramatic portrayals for over twenty years and has appeared in several film documentaries pertaining to the Underground Railroad and Canadian Black History aired in Canada the United States and abroad.



Buxton Bell located at the Buxton National Historic Site and Museum



Jean Verdon

I was born in Ottawa, Ontario and I am very proud to say that I am aboriginal. My aboriginal roots come from Maniwaki, Quebec on my mother's side. My passion for woodworking really started when my kids got older and I could concentrate more on my work. My culture and the wildlife around me have always been of great interest to me, so I decided to show my interests on wood.

I love to go to the wooded trails of my area and listen to the wildlife speak to me in their own language. I once sat down and watched an Ivory bellied woodpecker work on a tree and decided to make one of these birds. My spiritual animal is the eagle with many more which are included on my totem. One Christmas I noticed that on the Christmas tree there was nothing of my culture hanging from it so I decided to create some decorations of my own patterns and to make them available for sale at my shows.

My work is made of white pine and my animals on plaques are three dimensional. Most of my coloured stain is water based and I try to use as much as I can recycled wood material such as used skids. It is a great pleasure to be part of the OMFRC family and I wish them success.

Megwetch
Jean Verdon



Works By Jean



The Trials and Tribulations of DNA Testing

The first DNA test that I had was a DNA Sibship Analysis by Genetrack Biolabs, a Canadian company from Vancouver. It costs \$495 Canadian to test two siblings. I think I paid \$250 four years ago. The test was testing 15 STR's (which are a class of polymorphisms). The average person has no idea what the actual DNA test is measuring and cannot, therefore, understand where the results come from. The STR's vary from population to population, but all populations have them. Again, the average person has no idea what the range is for different populations. The results of the test are based on statistical analysis. The test lists the statistical probability that two people are half and full siblings. That was the only part of the test that made clear sense to me. Furthermore, sibship tests are not 100% accurate, unlike paternity tests.

The second test that I had was Ancestry 2.5 by Genetree which costs \$240 U.S. The test also tested 15 STR's. The results tell you what percentage of four groups your genetic make up is from. The four groups are African, Asian, European, and Native American. There is no information about a particular tribe or country etc. The test is

supposed to be designed to resolve the inter-continental origins of people. The average person does not understand how the DNA is analyzed to get the results. The method of analysis is not explained. The test simply lists the percentage of four groups that a person has DNA for.

The third test that I had was the Euro 1 by Genetree. It costs \$230 U.S. The test tells you where your DNA originates from four European areas including: South Asian, Southeastern European (Mediterranean), Northern European and Middle Eastern. The test measures 320 SNP's (single nucleotide polymorphisms) and the method of analysis is not explained, but the results are given for a person's European DNA. There is a second European test called the Euro 2 and it costs between \$650 and \$950 U.S. It divides the European DNA into further sub-groups. I did not do this one: due to the cost.

The fourth DNA test that I had was DNA Tribes. I did the Premium 21-Marker Test which costs \$239.99 regularly. I also added the Native American and Central Asian panels for \$25 each. This test gives you a list of Native and global populations and lists your tribe scores and likelihood matches. It also provides a list of world regions where one's ancestors are most likely to be found and provides a tribe score for these as well. The analysis is not explained, but it is done by comparing a person's STR's to a computer bank of between roughly 600 and 900 populations. By reading the results log, I found that some people find their results fairly accurate and others find them more confusing. The test measures autosomal DNA from both the mother and the father, but because the DNA from the mother changes slowly over thousands of years the results can be interesting. If both parents are Ashkenazi Jews from a particular country, the test might show that. It may even list different African countries or peoples. Sometimes the mixture of populations gives some strange results. Some Native Americans find their tribes listed, others have their Native DNA assigned to the nearest group like mestizo or East Asian.

I have now spent \$1,010.00 and I have had a small amount of Native American DNA listed on one test, but not on another. I have had a small amount of sub-saharan African DNA identified on my last test, but not previously. I still have no idea what tribe that the Native American DNA that I do have belongs to. Each DNA test provides another piece of the puzzle, but individually they do not make a lot of sense or provide a lot of information. Furthermore, the information that they do provide includes analysis and interpretation that is not fact. A DNA test is not necessarily an instant solution to a complex puzzle. I have found tracing ancestry to be a long process, and the results are not guaranteed.



A Poem By Terry Mills

I am an aboriginal person and I always knew it in my heart. I spent a lot of years trying to find the piece of paper that would prove it that's how I started doing research for the Ontario Metis Family Records Center. I am a Silversmith Artist and live in the bush with my Guardian, a Pyrenees Mountain Dog whose name is Shadow. As a child I would listen to my grandmother who would talk about Dreams and how they should be paid attention too. She would say that every dream has a message to it. I woke up on the First day of this year to the Dream you will find outlined in the poem written here. This dream stayed with me all day and had great emotion when it came to me.



I had a Dream last night
A Mic-Mac Indian was
walking my land
Him and eight wolves.
It didn't look like my land
but I knew in my heart , it was.
We walked up the cliff
down the other side
we came upon my Pyr
wounded by Wolves
but not by pride.
One wolf was left
the Mic-Mac gone
I took him in
and named him
Vaga-bon.

Terry Mills
01/02/08

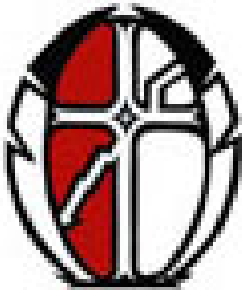


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We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.omfrc.org

www.aboriginalstatus.org

In Response to Accusations about the OMFRC

To whom it may concern:

In response to the accusations that the Ontario Métis Family Records Center provides status cards to all that apply without researching their heritage; I offer my experience in my dealings with Lynn Haines, the Administrator for the Ontario Métis Family Records Center.

It was common knowledge in my family that we were of native descent. However, no one took the time to do any research and make it official. Out of curiosity, I decided to look into my family heritage and do some research. Having never done anything like this before, my research did not go very far. I was unaware of what resources were available. In my research however, I did come across a web site for the Ontario Métis Family Records Center. I sent an email explaining my situation and asked if they would help me research my family history. Shortly thereafter I received a call from Lynn Haines; again I discussed my situation, and she offered to assist me. I completed the necessary paperwork and provided all that I knew of my family history.

After providing Lynn with my family information, I assumed they would be able to find the connection rather quickly. As I mentioned, my family were certain and openly claimed to have native roots. I received a call from Lynn about a week after our initial conversation. Lynn explained that Art, of the Ontario Métis Family Records Center was having difficulty finding the connection and asked why I felt we had native ancestors. I explained that my Father's side of the family believed that my Great Great Grandmother was the daughter of an Indian Chief and had married a French Settler. This assumption turned out not to be true, however after many more hours of research the connection was found many generations previously.

The entire process took over two weeks, and over 60 hours of research. At times Art had thought of giving up. After talking with my last living Aunt from my Father's side I was able to provide the information Art needed to find the link.

In my dealings with the Ontario Métis Family Records Center, I found them very helpful and very professional. I cannot comment on how others view their Organization; I can only comment on my experience. It is my opinion, that the Ontario Métis Family Records Center is a legitimate resource, and in my discussions with both Art and Lynn, I found them to be of great moral character and integrity. I do not feel that they would abuse their positions and make false claims.

If any person would like to further discuss my experience in dealing with the Ontario Métis Family Records Center I can be reached through their office.

Sincerely,
Michael Gelinis