

Indigenous Practice" explicitly addresses a global context and synthesizes the issues facing these communities as they fight to protect their cultural and intellectual property. His contribution draws attention not only to the wide-ranging implications of Indigenous oral traditions but also to the urgency of supportive scholarship that embraces theory, practice and ethics. As Kimberly Blaeser states: "Through speaking, hearing, and retelling, we reaffirm our relationship with our nations, our tribal communities, our family networks. We begin to understand our position in the long history of our people" (1999: 54). We hope that this book will encourage future endeavours, both oral and written, which will help to strengthen and reaffirm such relationships.

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# The Assault on Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Past and Present

Andrea Bear Nicholas

Let me begin with a story told by Dr. Peter Paul of Woodstock, the well-known Maliseet linguist and storyteller who died in 1989 at the age of eighty-seven (See Teeter 1993). His story was about a Louis Paul of Kingsclear who had been arrested and charged about the year 1914 for fishing with a traditional salmon spear, a *nikahtkol*. It was a direct assault on the Maliseet form of life. Peter, who was born in 1902, had heard this story as a boy, and what he remembered most was how shocked our people were with the arrest. This was an important story, one that I cited in a 1986 article on Maliseet aboriginal rights (Bear Nicholas 1986). Yet it was one of many stories Dr. Paul was, in effect, prevented from passing on effectively, for in spite of his honorary doctorate from the University of New Brunswick, he was never considered qualified to teach in the schools of New Brunswick. It is thus that our elders have been excluded from the education of First Nation children, and thus one of many ways that our traditions have been silenced. What I would like to do here is to consider the many other ways in which these traditions have been silenced by drawing some parallels between the assaults on our oral traditions and the assaults on our way of life. But first I would like to begin by examining some examples drawn from published Maliseet stories.

In what is probably the earliest recording of Maliseet oral traditions, a collection published by J. Barratt in 1851, we have the following discussion:

"The Indian relates that the aged people of his tribe have many curious traditions and wild fables, as may be expected among a pagan people. The beginning of these narratives he is unable to give. There is much, however, relating to Kullosk-ahp, (this name may be translated the lying man,) and to Che-ku-nuks, or the Turtle. We purpose [sic.] to make a few selections only, from what the Indian has related to us. This being intended to exhibit the Indian as he is. It may serve, also, to show the darkness of the human mind that has never been illuminated by the word of God." (Barratt 1851: 6-11).

Here we see not only an attack on Maliseet stories, but in that attack also an excuse for denigrating the people who told them. Barely half a century

later, in 1895, we find the tenor of such double denigration to have risen to almost hysterical proportions in such comments as "their barbarous names," "their filthy wigwams" and the bald assertion that "[Indians] were slaves of superstition." That such malice found its way into a text published specifically for use in schools makes it all the more disturbing (Archer 1895:2-3, 22).

The common characterization of Glooskap as a liar, as in Barratt's 1851 publication, is another serious form of denigration, which has continued virtually into the present as evidenced in the 1966 publication of *Glooskap the Liar and Other Indian Tales* (Beck). This negative characterization of Glooskap, which was also advanced by Leland in his *Algonquin Legends* (1884), a characterisation that was seriously disputed as early as 1893 by the Penobscot author Joseph Nicolai (1893: 12), was possibly based on the partial knowledge that there is a similarity between the word Glooskap and the Maliseet word for "liar." However, Dr. Peter Paul has demonstrated that the more likely meaning of the word Glooskap is to be found in the Maliseet word "Kəlowəḍskap, meaning "good man" (oral communication with Dr. Peter Paul), quite the opposite of a liar. This perversion of the character of Glooskap by folklorists places it directly in the tradition of other, generally Christian sources, which have characterized the Wabanaki Great Spirit (Kci-məndəto) as "the Devil", and the Wabanaki shaman or person endowed with spiritual powers as "witch." Indeed, the matter of Christian influences on Wabanaki oral traditions as a whole has yet to be explored in depth.

A second form of assault on Maliseet stories, that of altering or fabricating the traditions, can be seen in Charles Leland's tampering with the story of the birth of Glooskap, who is the most important personage in the oral traditions of Maliseets, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy and Penobscots, collectively known as Wabanakis (Leland 1884: 15-16, 106-109). From the painstaking research of Professor Thomas Parkhill we learn that Leland mixed and matched elements from several different sources (Jack 1883, Rand 1894: 339, Sweetser 1883), one of which was a tourist brochure advertising the Province of New Brunswick (Sweetser 1883). In fact, Leland seems not only to have collapsed the various versions of the story into one, but also to have fabricated important elements, including the naming of Glooskap's brother as Malsum, the wolf (Parkhill 1992, and 1997: 48-52, 149-157).

Since Parkhill's work on the matter, the source of Sweetser's version has now been found to have been Gabe Acquin, as retold by Arthur Hamilton Gordon in his *Wilderness Journeys in New Brunswick* (1864). In that version Gordon gave Glooskap's brother the name Malsunis, and in a footnote he mistakenly translated the name as "little wolf" (1864: 56), no

doubt because of its similarity to "Malsum," the Maliseet word for "wolf." But in the same footnote Gordon also declared he could not remember the brother's real name, thereby admitting that he had made it up! Had Leland read Gordon's work he would have known that the name had been fabricated. Having possibly read only Sweetser's tourist brochure, Leland was still guilty of transforming Glooskap's brother from Malsunis into Malsum, the wolf. Either way, there is serious duplicity involved in turning the wolf, who traditionally figured as one of Glooskap's dogs (Jack 1883, 1891-2: 203; 1895: 195), into an icon of evil and a central figure in the Glooskap cycle of stories.

With the source of the Sweetser version now known to have been Gabe Acquin, we can also say with certainty that at least three of the four versions available to Leland had been obtained from the single Maliseet storyteller, Gabe. In spite of the clear authorship of the story, Leland inexplicably attributed it to "the narrative of a Micmac Indian, taken down by Mr. Edward Jock [sic.]" (Leland 1884: ix and 17). Interestingly enough, only two of the story versions told by Gabe, that of Rand (1894: 339) and that of Jack (1883), contained the actual account of the birth of Glooskap and his brother (including their intra-uterine discussion, the death of their mother on the birth of the brother, and Glooskap's subsequent murder of his brother), yet neither of those versions referred to the twin brother as either Malsunis or Malsum, the wolf.

In a footnote to his version of the story Rand doubted that it had anything to do with Glooskap at all (1894: 339). More recently the anthropologist Gordon Day also seriously doubted its authenticity when he wrote: "There is reason to question whether this episode really belongs in Wabanaki mythology [at all]" (1976). He cited a number of important pieces of evidence, including the fact that no tradition even remotely similar had been collected among the other Wabanaki peoples (Day 1976: 77-79). In fact, all other known stories of the origin of Glooskap from Wabanaki peoples assert that he was either created out of the earth (Nicolai 1893: 7; Alger 1894: 195-196; Speck 1915: 59-60), or that he came to the people from elsewhere (Hood in Rand 1894: 232; Gabe Paul in Speck 1917: 480). So it is only the two versions provided by Acquin that feature the story of Glooskap's birth at all.

Even the most complete rendering of the Glooskap story cycle by a Maliseet, that told by Jim Paul (Mechling 1914: 1), says nothing of Glooskap's birth, but rather that he first came to the people with his grandmother in a stone canoe. Indeed, Day, Parkhill, and even the anthropologist Frank Speck have suggested that Gabe Acquin's version of the story is so anomalous in Wabanaki traditions that it was probably a borrowing from other traditions, most likely Iroquois (Day 1976: 78,

Parkhill 1997: 63, and Speck 1935: 9 note 2). Considering Gabe's facility with English and his wide-spread travels (Bear Nicholas 1994), this source for his version of the tradition is more than a little likely.

In the two years after the publication of *Algonquin Legends* Leland published his concocted version of the story twice (1884b: 222-234 and 1886: 71-73), and once again in 1902 in *Kuloskap the Master and Other Algonkin Poems*, which he co-authored with John Dyneley Prince (1902: 45-49). In this last collection the anomalous story of Glooskap's birth was attributed to the Passamaquoddies!

From these published collections the story seems to have passed into popular culture. Considering that Leland was a well-respected scholar in his day, it was just a matter of time before others would reproduce his version of the stories. Parkhill (1997: 17-31) has detailed its passage through Lewis Spence's *Myth of the North American Indians* (1914) to Cyrus Macmillan's *Wonder Tales* (1918: 62-64) and his *Glooskap's Country and Other Indian Tales* (1918; 1962: 2-5), to Kay Hill's *Glooskap and His Magic* (1963), and her *More Glooskap Stories*, to Horace Beck's rendering of the story in his *Glooskap the Liar* (1966: 59), and finally to Joseph Campbell's reproduction of it in his *Historical Atlas of World Mythology* (1989: 186-187).

For an example of what appears to be a wholly invented tradition there is also Charles Leland's story in which Glooskap supposedly created the first humans out of an ash tree. The problem with this story is similar to that of Glooskap's birth. There is simply not a single corroborating story affirming that the first Indians were created from an ash tree. It is not even in the Alger collection (1894) published a decade after Leland's *Algonquin Legends*. As for the source of this story, Leland is suspiciously evasive in attributing it vaguely to "an old woman who was quite unintelligible at this point" (Leland 1884: 18-19).

Leland's reason for including this story, and other inventions, in his *Algonquin Legends* is fairly evident. It supports his pet theory that Norse legends were the primary source of most Wabanaki traditions, a thesis which, incidentally, carries the serious implication that Wabanaki peoples were incapable of coming up with such stories themselves. As he states in his introduction:

...[T]his American mythology of the north... is so nearly like the Edda itself that, as this work [his *Algonquin Legends*] fully proves, there is hardly a song in the Norse collection which does not contain an incident found in the Indian poem-legends....(Leland [1884] 1992: 5-6)

Having manufactured the story of the ash tree origin of humans, Leland then attributes it directly to the Norse legend in which the first man and woman were fashioned from elm and ash trees. The only problem is that the similarity between Algonquin and Norse legends in this case has been wholly fabricated.

Just as Parkhill has traced the path that Leland's story of Glooskap's birth subsequently followed into popular culture, we can also trace how the concocted story of Glooskap as Creator made its own way into the popular imagination. In 1903, a year after Kuloskap the Master was published, a New Brunswick ornithologist G. U. Hay included the suspect story of the ash tree origin of humans in a school textbook. This text also raises the lie of Glooskap's supposed divinity to another level by declaring baldly that "Glooskap was a sort of deity among the Micmacs and Maliseets, and object of their worship" (Hay, G.U., 1903: 13-17). Subsequently the story of the ash tree origin, together with the representation of Glooskap as Creator, is included with the anomalous story of Glooskap's birth in nearly all the publications cited above, beginning with Spence's *Myth of the North American Indians* in 1914. Much more recently Leland's construction of Glooskap's creation of human beings out of an ash tree has even reappeared in both artistic and literary forms, including the 1980 Maine school textbook, Maine Dirigo "I Lead" (Bennett 1980: 31). So this invented tradition, too, has had a life of its own.

The overt racism in the examples of denigration above all but leaps off the page and strikes one in the face. It is so blatant that we have no difficulty recognizing it today. The problem with Leland's tampering with our stories is that it is a far more subtle form of racism, for he has not simply engaged in the cultural appropriation of voice that occurs when one pretends to speak as an Indian (Silko 2001: 166-171, Ziff and Rao 1997). Much worse, what Leland has done amounts to double duplicity, double racism, if you will, for he has not only pretended to know how Wabanakis think and feel. He has passed off his concoctions as ours so successfully that "his" stories are now believed to be "our" stories by generations of our people.

It, therefore, comes as no surprise that such racism in textbooks, especially those used in the early or middle grades, can wield enormous negative influence on public perceptions of First Nations peoples and their traditions. For people who do not go on to high school or university, elementary school textbooks may provide their only exposure to First Nations peoples. Since most Canadians living today studied from textbooks published in the middle of the last century or later, it is instructive to consider at least one example here. Lawson and Sweet's *Our New Brunswick Story* was published in 1948, but was still on the

shelves of Frederick classrooms in multiple copies in the 1990s. It is a case study in denigration, distortion, invention and omission relative to First Nations. For example, it presents a number of questionable and unattributed stories and makes derogatory comments such as "Their singing was not pleasant..." and "the queer way the people talk..." It also baldly declares, that "[Indians in New Brunswick] died from accidents and sickness because they did not know how to care for them." In questions to the students this text has now indoctrinated, it asks "Do you think the Indians were clever or stupid? Give reasons" (1948: 29). It is bad enough that such racist opinions and leading questions would have found their way into print at all (Preiswerk 1981), and bad enough that they would inevitably have the power to influence the opinions of New Brunswickers today. But just imagine being an Aboriginal child in a classroom reading this book!

Even students who went on to higher education in the past few decades could not escape the barrage of denigration relative to First Nations people and their traditions. Only eleven years after the publication of *Our New Brunswick Story*, Edgar McInnes published a university level history text titled *Canada, A Political and Social History* (1959: 11-16). In the six pages devoted to "The Aborigines" almost every paragraph begins with a negative or patently false assertion, such as "The Aborigines made no major contribution to the culture that developed in the settled communities of Canada" or "...the Indians of Canada were almost totally ignorant of the art of agriculture," or "...the Indians of Canada were almost totally devoid of effective political organization" (1959: 11-16). Unfortunately, this book was used extensively in universities in the Maritimes well into the 1980s, if not beyond, thus ensuring that the misinformation it espoused would be reproduced by parents and teachers into the present day. In this case the strategy of omission would have been far more preferable.

First Nations stories are only one aspect of a more inclusive meaning of oral tradition. Other aspects are language, ceremony, song, oratory and communal forms of decision-making. For the purposes of this discussion it is useful to consider briefly now the more well-known situation of Indigenous languages, the destruction of which has been going on worldwide for many centuries. According to the best estimates, this assault has been quite successful for it is estimated that over 90% of the world's languages, mostly Indigenous ones, will have been eradicated by the end of this century, unless drastic action is taken soon (Krauss 1992). The litany of strategies employed in this assault worldwide has also been well-studied (Chavez 1990, Phillipson 1992). In Canada those strategies have included the outlawing of Indigenous languages, the privileging of colonial languages and the overt strategies of shame, punishment and

abuse employed in the education of First Nations children. This project of linguistic genocide has also been aptly termed "linguicide" by Wallace Lambert (1975). Just how this matter relates to the assault on oral traditions will be considered later in this essay.

### New Brunswick and the Larger Colonial Context

There is no way to understand the longstanding attack on Indigenous oral traditions without exploring the material reasons for the attack. Most of the explanations for the phenomenon speak only to presumed internal and individual characteristics of either the advocates of racist views, or the people they target, i.e., the supposed natural superiority of English (Bailey and Gorlach 1982, Philipson 1992), or the supposed backwardness of Indigenous Peoples (Dickason 1984). In fact, these explanations were really rationalizations for a much larger reality — the colonial theft of Indigenous lives, lands and resources around the world. The reality is that Indigenous Peoples stood squarely in the way of the colonizing project and needed to be removed either by war or other, usually draconian means (Neu and Therrien 2003: 8-11).

When these methods failed, or became unacceptable, the next available strategy was the strategy of breaking the Indigenous inhabitants of their connection to the land. Here is where the civilizing, Christianizing and Anglicizing work of the residential schools became necessary. And herein lies the true reason for the all-out assault on oral traditions. For Indigenous Peoples, language is not just a form of communication, but also a priceless archive in which the knowledge necessary for survival is embedded. It is oral traditions that connect Indigenous Peoples to their lands, and it is oral traditions that, therefore, need to be destroyed if Indigenous people are to be effectively disconnected from their lands. This correlation between the destruction of oral traditions and the colonial project of dispossession is now also seen in the direct correlation that has been demonstrated between the destruction of Indigenous languages around the world and the destruction of the environment and its biodiversity (Maffi 2001, Shiva 1993).

As an essential component of oral traditions, the stories of First Nations peoples also needed to be denigrated and suppressed, for they not only connected people to their lands, but they also tended to tell disturbingly "different" stories about the colonial experience, stories which generally contradicted the histories told by the colonizers to glorify and justify the colonial project (see Vansina 1985, Cruikshank 1994).

For the most part, the ultimate purpose of the omissions, distortions and denigrations, has been to make both the oral traditions and the people who told them appear ridiculous, incapable, inhuman or savage, thereby

serving as convincing rationalizations for the massive theft of Indigenous lands, resources and lives across the Americas (Vincent and Arcand 1983). As Franz Fanon has said "the first thing a colonizer does is, with a perverted sense, turn to the past of a colonized people and distort, disfigure, and destroy it." (Fanon 1963: 210) As we have seen, the language of colonial literature, itself, furnishes abundant examples of this mission to distort, disfigure and destroy Indigenous oral traditions.

So it is no coincidence that deeply offensive views of both Maliseet traditions and Maliseet people began to appear around the middle of the nineteenth century. They served a very useful purpose in justifying a new wave of dispossession in New Brunswick, which occurred at the hands of railway promoters and other wealthy industrialists beginning in the second half of the 1800s (Naylor 1987: 302-5, Parenteau and Kenny, 2002: 49-72). Indeed, this denigration was part of a larger phenomenon of racism and racist literature proliferating on both sides of the Canadian-American border, precisely as both countries undertook to expand their empires to the Pacific Ocean, across lands inhabited by countless Indigenous nations. This was the very period that saw a new phase of exterminatory wars and dispossession in North America (Myers 1914, Drinnon 1980, Svaldi 1989, Stannard 1992, Churchill 1998), begun originally as colonial expansion by England, France and Spain, but now carried out by Canada and the United States. It was a period guided, conveniently enough, by the ideology of Manifest Destiny (Horsman 1981), which held that Anglo-Americans, as a presumed superior race had a pre-ordained right to appropriate the lands and resources of the "inferior" Indigenous Peoples of the Americas. This was racism in its purest form, and it is evident today in Barrett's characterization of Maliseet people and their oral traditions written in 1851.

It was out of the need to justify the ideology of Manifest Destiny that government authorities turned to the fledgling professions of anthropology, ethnology and archaeology and gave them both purpose and legitimacy during the latter half of the 1800s. The most important work of these "sciences" soon became the collecting of all manner of specimens from skulls to oral traditions, not only to "prove" the racist doctrines of the times, but ultimately, to justify the ongoing appropriation of Native lands resources, and intellectual traditions. When Aboriginal populations in the nineteenth century began plummeting towards extinction it was interpreted by the new "sciences" as just another piece of empirical evidence "proving" the inferiority of Aboriginal peoples, and the legitimacy of the ideology of Manifest Destiny. From the vantage point of the twentieth century this institutionalized form of racism has been appropriately called "scientific racism" (Horsman 1975).

With the publication of Darwin's *Origin of the Species* (1859) which advocated the idea of the survival of the fittest, the theory of race that linked physical differences to presumed innate characteristics, grew into an elaborate theory of social evolutionism, also called "Social Darwinism" (Lewontin, Rose and Kamin 1984: 49). It posited that the various so-called races were naturally at different stages in a hierarchy from the most primitive (and generally darker "races") to the presumably most civilized or advanced race, the Caucasians. At the height of the Indian wars on the Plains, this theory found expression in school text books such as one which described Indians of the Plains as "proud, selfish and cruel", in stark contrast to "civilized white men" (Harper's 1887: 32-33).

Social evolutionism, in turn, gave new justification and impetus to the idea that the so-called advanced "races" had a duty to lift the lower "races" to civilization and advancement. This theory, which Rudyard Kipling once described as "the white man's burden," formed the foundational ideology of Indian Departments in both Canada and the United States. As such it became the excuse for the assimilation of Aboriginal Peoples, who were judged to be among the lowest in the presumed hierarchy of races. Indeed, the passage of the coercive Indian Act in 1876 literally mandated the forced assimilation of "Indians" (New and Therrien 2003: 84-85; Cole and Chaikin 1990, Petitpas 1994). Under the new law residential schools became the chief vehicle and testing ground where the tactics of denigration, shaming and harsh physical, sexual and psychological abuse became the tools of choice. It was here that language, stories and all manner of "Indianness" were to be eradicated under the euphemisms of "civilization," "christianization" and "citizenship." This system of education, aimed at assimilating First Nations Peoples "into the body politic of Canada," would be perfected in the early decades of the twentieth century by Duncan Campbell Scott just as the eugenics movement came into full stride (Titley 1986, Black 2003). Though the definition of genocide had not yet been articulated, the genocidal objective of these policies was undeniable (Adams 1995, Chrisjohn, Young and Maraun 1997: 149-153, Churchill 1998).

Ironically, even resistance to those same forces of dispossession may have been yet another reason for tampering with oral traditions, as in the case of the anthropologist, Frank Speck who began his work in the early years of the twentieth century. At that time a common rationale for the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples was the perceived socialist character of Indigenous societies. To counter this rationale Speck set out to prove the erroneous (and later seriously discredited) theory that pre-Columbian Algonquian Peoples had a well developed European-like sense of private property and land ownership based in a patriarchal hunting territory

system (Speck 1915b, Cooper 1929, Leacock 1954). But according to the anthropologist Harvey Feit, who has studied Speck's work among the Algonquins of Temagami, Speck seems to have gone so far as to feed his paid Algonquin informants with precisely the information he sought, and ultimately recorded, to support his theory of the pre-Columbian family hunting-territory system (Feit 1991: 10114).

There is now little reason to believe that Speck would not have used the same questionable strategies in the context of his research on Penobscots and Maliseets. Indeed, he seems to have done so in his 1917 rendering of what he calls the "Malecite Version of the Water-Famine and Human Transformation Myth" (Speck 1917: 480-81). Before he recorded this version of the story, it had been published several times (Leland 1884: 114-119, Leland & Prince 1902: 140-151, Mechling, 1914: 6-9) with the same story line about the great frog, who held back the water causing the people to die of thirst until Glooskap arrived on the scene and dispatched him. In all of the early versions this story explained the origin of various creatures, but Speck's 1917 rendering of the story presents a small but very significant difference. His new version of the story, attributed to Gabe Paul, now detailed how humans had been turned into various creatures which supposedly became the totems (animal relations) of different Maliseet families. Considering how consistent the story had been until Speck recorded it, the new and anomalous twist made the story seem more than a little contrived, especially since it now had all the elements Speck needed to demonstrate the existence of a Maliseet clan system that in his theory formed the basis of a family hunting territory system.

That Speck obtained this story from his regularly paid informant, Gabe Paul, is significant. Paul was originally a Maliseet from Kingsclear who had married a Penobscot, was adopted as a Penobscot, and ultimately elected as their chief. He also collaborated with Speck to collect Maliseet and Penobscot artefacts which they sold to various museums in Canada and the United States. That Speck could plant what he wanted to hear in the mind of his paid Algonquin informant suggests that he may have done the same with Gabe, and provides a plausible explanation for the suddenly different version of the water famine story.

The unfortunate consequence of this very likely case of tampering is that this suspect version is the one that has been uncritically showcased as the origin story of the Maliseets in a recent poster published by the New Brunswick Government. Like the stories of Glooskap's birth, his divinity and his characterization as a liar, this story, too, has taken on a life of its own in the popular imagination. It is a nice story, but it has all the marks of an invented one.

### The Assaults Continue

What explains these ongoing processes of denigration, distortion and invention today? The answer lies in the reality that Indigenous Peoples in North America are still massively dispossessed, not only of their lands, but also of their forms of life and traditions, including their right to make critical decisions for their lives and their futures. We know now that this dispossession, upon which the modern social order of North America has been built, could not have occurred without the enormous lie of racism to condone and justify it. By the same token, this dispossession could not be maintained today without the continuing existence of racism, and the official stories (histories) that support it. To paraphrase Michael Parenti, the writing of history is a political act designed to control the past for the purpose of controlling the present and maintaining the social order (1999). It is the reason that First Nations' stories are denigrated, distorted and replaced by invented ones. And it is the reason, by the way, that Canada remains resolute in its refusal to acknowledge the genocide that was central to the residential schools, the last of which closed only twenty-two years ago (Chrisjohn et al 2001).

Another important explanation as to why oral traditions are still under assault today lies in the nature of capitalism, which invites exploitation of Indigenous stories, in the same way that land, human life and natural resources have been and continue to be considered exploitable. Indigenous Peoples are still, for the most part, intimately connected to their lands primarily through their oral traditions. Once those traditions are wrested from them, it becomes an excuse for both the oral traditions and the lands to be seen as public property, free to be mined for whatever profit can be wrung from them.

Even promising policies developed and promoted by First Nations, themselves, have been quickly appropriated and exploited by government and various educational institutions, as in the case of the 1972 policy known as Indian Control of Indian Education (hereafter ICIE). At first it sounded hopeful. First Nations people were going to be trained to teach their own children in the place of the non-Aboriginals who had always done the teaching in their communities. The problem was that both governments and universities quickly found a way to use this policy to their own ends. Universities would profit by expanding their teacher education programs to take in cohorts of Aboriginal students to be trained as teachers, while governments, often working closely with corporations, would continue to benefit since the new teachers would be subtly trained to reproduce Euro-Canadian ideologies, rather than their own (Bear Nicholas 2001). Indeed, these teachers were trained effectively only to teach in the medium of a dominant colonial language using alien methods and

"standard" textbooks, without the slightest suggestion that they could or should teach in the medium of their own language, or that their children might have a collective right to learn in that medium (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000). Consequently, Indigenous languages were rarely given a place at all in the curriculum of the schools, much less used as the medium of instruction. And even where such languages were to be taught as part of a core program, it was only as an add-on to the curriculum, more a case of window-dressing.

Now, after thirty some years since ICIE, it is apparent that these core language programs have been entirely ineffective in maintaining or achieving even basic fluency among First Nations students. It could also be said that the teaching of Indigenous languages in Anglo or French medium schools has served far more effectively the goals of linguicide than those of language survival, not only for failing to maintain or promote fluency, but also because such programs have effectively co-opted dwindling numbers of fluent speakers as teachers into the ineffective project that it has proven to be (Mulhauser 1994). It is no surprise, as one Saskatchewan Native educator pointed out over a decade ago, that in the two and a half decades after the implementation of ICIE, First Nations in Saskatchewan had experienced some of the most rapid declines of all time in Native language fluency (King 1995: 8).

The very fact that Native teachers, who knew their languages and traditions, taught only in the medium of English, using solely an English curriculum, has possibly had a greater negative impact on the languages and traditions than the impact of non-Native teachers teaching the same material in the same colonial languages (Ogulnick 2006: 155). One cannot, however, fault the First Nations individuals who were thus made into teachers. It was the colonial system that normalized these practices and represented them as benign, which must be faulted. In the end, what was presented as an opportunity to stem the assault on our traditions and forms of life (the ICIE policy) turned into yet another opportunity for the forces of assimilation to intensify the assault by using Indigenous people to carry on this work. It is indeed as my colleague, Dr. Roland Chrisjohn, has said: "The residential schools may have been closed down, but rather than ceasing their work, those who ran them [and the agencies responsible for them] simply went home, changed their clothes, and carried on" (Chrisjohn 1998).

Just how that work continues in education has been incisively analyzed by Dr. Skutnabb-Kangas. She has, in fact, identified a whole array of subtle and covert methods used with the same old objective of linguistic genocide (Skutnabb-Kangas 1988 and 2000: 352-378). Where residential schools employed overt and easily recognizable strategies

of linguicide, schools now generally resort to the more covert (and less obvious) strategies of invisibilisation and stigmatisation of Indigenous languages, while at the same time employing positive reinforcement of the colonial languages. Skutnabb-Kangas has also defined the resulting form of education as "submersion" wherein "linguistic minority children of a low-status mother-tongue are forced to accept instruction through the medium of a foreign majority or official language with high status" (2000: 582). In such a situation minority language children are forced to sink or swim. Either way, they lose. Most sink and fall behind, while those who manage to swim, tend to learn the dominant language at the cost of their own mother-tongue, and they tend to identify more closely with the dominant language and culture, than with their own (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: xxii, xxxiii, 574-578, 582-587).

The fact that most schools with children from linguistic minorities generally do not offer the alternative of mother-tongue medium education, especially where numbers would justify it, constitutes a clear violation of at least three of the five definitions of genocide under Article II of the United Nations Convention on Genocide (Chrisjohn & Young 1997: 149-153), as follows:

**Article IIb:** "Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group." As Skutnabb-Kangas (2005) has pointed out, there is now a growing body of research indicating that submersion education of linguistic minorities actually stunts intellectual development in children.

**Article IIc:** "Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part." Submersion education is now recognized as a significant factor in creating and maintaining the adverse physical, economic, and psychological conditions that subjugated Indigenous Peoples still experience today.

**Article IIe:** "Forcibly transferring the children of the group to another group." The residential schools constituted an indisputable case of genocide since Indigenous children were forced to leave their communities to attend these Euro-Canadian institutions, which carried out a deliberate and overt policy of eradicating Indigenous languages and forms of life. The fact that precious few Indigenous children in Canada are offered the choice of mother-tongue medium education, even in band-operated schools or where numbers would warrant it, is what constitutes the forcible transference of children from one group to another today. It also occurs where there are no bilingual teachers authorized to use the mother-tongue of the children as the main medium of communication (Skutnabb-Kangas 2000: 353).

Dr. Skutnabb-Kangas also describes how the rhetoric of "language loss," "language death," or "language suicide," is not only seriously

the children of the storytellers, and it may yet end up in court.

As has already been demonstrated, writers of children's literature, too, have long been engaged in appropriating First Nations oral traditions with impunity. In most such cases they have also manipulated or distorted the stories according to the requirements of Euro-Canadian storytelling, or according to personal whims, and of course, always for personal profit (Hill 1963, 1965, 1970, Toye 1968, Crompton 1975, Norman 1989). For the most part, such writers have freely drawn their material from the story collections of academics, and rarely, if ever, consulted or collaborated with the people from whom the stories were originally obtained, much less credited them as owners of the stories, or shared royalties with them.

In a project sponsored by the New Brunswick government the project managers have been the latest to claim authorship in Maliseet oral traditions recently collected and published (Perley and Blair 2003). Considering that this collection was initiated out of an even greater appropriation (the desecration of a 3000 year old site, itself) illustrates as perfectly as possible, the connection between the appropriation of Indigenous stories and the appropriation of Indigenous lands. In fact, this particular project began with the discovery of an ancient Maliseet village or campsite on lands that had long since been expropriated from Maliseet people. Intent on building a road over the site, the government forged ahead with plans to excavate it (actually to strip it of its artefacts) before building the road. When Maliseets learned of the plan they voiced opposition to the project, asking only that the road go around the site so that it would not have to be destroyed. Not to be deterred, the government quickly devised a scheme to drown out the opposition by offering the communities employment on the project in return for their cooperation. Once such "opportunities" had been promised, all possibility for a reasonable debate in the communities evaporated, and the project of destroying the site went ahead. Out of the acrimony that resulted, the government marshalled further resources to put toward the collection of oral traditions, ostensibly about the site, but which proved to be a rather transparent attempt to justify the government's stratagem for silencing opposition voices and open debate (Zimmerman 2001).

Ironically, the stories collected by the project now seem to have justified the disrespect that government had shown for community decision-making processes, which are, in fact, oral traditions. Only a tiny percentage of the stories collected had anything to say about the site in question, largely owing to the fact that the land had been expropriated without lawful process and granted away to English settlers more than two centuries earlier. Indeed, the dearth of oral information obtained about the site seems now to justify the original expropriation and appears to have

thrown a question raised by J. Edward Chamberlin back onto us: *If This is Your Land, Where are Your Stories?* (2004) Just as the drastic decline in Aboriginal populations served to justify dispossession in the 1800s, so, too, may the apparent "insufficient linguistic evidence of ownership" be used against us in the future (Edwards and Newcombe 2006: 139).

The same disturbing strategies and issues have surfaced in another more recent provincial government project that oversaw the collecting of more Maliseet stories, this time concerning places and place-names in the St. John River watershed, the homeland of the Maliseets. In the current adversarial state of affairs where Maliseets are regularly arrested for accessing resources on land they never surrendered or sold, and where the province has no valid proof of title to these lands, it is utterly foolish that any Maliseets could allow such an adversarial party as the New Brunswick government to collect from under their noses what may well be used against them.

Another recent development concerning Maliseet oral traditions has seen the on-line publication of Maliseet stories, most of which were originally collected and published only in English about a century ago (Mechling 1914). Though an effort was made on the part of the institution concerned to involve Maliseet people, the process of decision-making effectively ensured that the people with the most interest were not involved in the decisions that were ultimately made. Predictably, the published on-line collection also includes Leland's now thoroughly discredited version of the story of Glooskap's birth, which, as of this project, has now been translated into Maliseet, and fed back to us as if it had always been ours!

It is instructive at this point to outline the steps by which this project was carried out. It was initiated by a provincial museum working with a committee of seven individuals, each appointed by the chief in their respective (Maliseet) community. The problem with this arrangement is that there is no basis, either in the Indian Act or in any First Nations traditions of government, where a chief has the authority to make decisions alone, much less grant powers that even chiefs do not have to a committee of appointees. Only councils as a whole have authority to make decisions (Perley v. Higgins and Nicholas et al. 1986). Once endowed with unwarranted decision-making powers this committee managed to access government funds intended exclusively for First Nations communities, then put the money towards enhancing the website of the museum involved, entirely without seeking the input or consent of their communities--a disturbing enough set of facts, in itself.

The first issue that is troubling in this scenario is that the side-stepping of community decision-making strikingly parallels disturbing processes



used in third world countries where the "democratic participation of the people in the shaping of their own lives or in discussing their own lives in languages that allow for mutual comprehension ... [is feared] as being dangerous to the good government of a country and its institutions." (Nguni wa Thiong'o 1986)

Whether or not the people's involvement in decision-making regarding the website was considered dangerous is irrelevant. The fact that the voice of six such appointees could be taken to be the voice of all demonstrates the ways in which western conceptions of decision-making can still be used to replicate and reinforce colonial hierarchies and power (Parenti 1978, Gledhill 1994).

The second issue arises out of the first: It is the fact that there was no open debate on the matter by the people most concerned which enabled some questionable and uninformed decisions to be made in the end. As a result, the most fundamental question, that of whether or not to publish the stories on the internet at all, appears not to have even been considered. As Renate Eigenbrod has stated in response to the debate over republishing the stories collected by the Baptist minister Silas Rand over a century and a half ago:

Existing print versions of the oral traditions from earlier centuries are a problematic source; their recycling in teaching and research perpetuates the kind of thinking challenged by Aboriginal People today. (2006: 230)

Beyond concern for the possibility of reproducing distorted or invented traditions lie concerns about the potential for further appropriation and exploitation of the traditions, especially after they are published on the internet, given the still prevalent belief that Indigenous traditions may be appropriated with impunity. There is also the concern that by making the stories more generally available in written English we may negate the meaning of oral tradition among our own people, and open the possibility that what is presented as oral tradition in the future will be based not on orally transmitted information in the original language, but rather, on static stories passed on only in written English (Hornberg 2005), which, as we have seen, have been all too easily distorted.

### Options

In spite of the fact that Canada recently voted against the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (September 2006), the Declaration should provide strong support and guidelines as to what First Nations in Canada may reasonably seek in terms of protecting and maintaining their oral traditions. In addition to the right to "practise and

revitalize...maintain, protect, and develop the past, present, and future manifestations of their cultures" and the right to "redress...which may include restitution... of their cultural, intellectual, religious and spiritual property taken without their free, prior and informed consent..." (Article 11), the Declaration also enshrines "the right to revitalize, use, develop, and transmit to future generations their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies, writing systems, and literatures..." (Article 13), and "the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages..." (Article 14). These are powerful statements of minimum world standards that could mean the difference between extinction and survival not only for the oral traditions of Indigenous Peoples, but for Indigenous Peoples, themselves.

While there are many aspects to the survival of all, one to which we must all commit ourselves, and that is to the matter of language survival. To date the most powerful weapon in the destruction of Indigenous languages has been education, but ironically, it is education, especially immersion education, that holds the greatest potential for their survival (Bear Nicholas 2005, McCarty, Romero and Zepeda 2006). Among the important principles to keep in mind are the following:

- 1) No one becomes fluent in a language without being immersed in it.
- 2) When a bilingual community wants both of its languages to survive, school should be taught in the language most endangered and/or least likely to be learned (Skutnabb-Kangas 1996, Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzman 2006).
- 3) Full bilingualism, which is the goal of mother-tongue medium education, has been shown to produce great advantages, both in terms of mental development and socio-economic well-being (Grin 1996, Lindholm 2006, Edwards and Newcombe 2006).
- 4) By placing our dwindling numbers of speakers in direct daily contact with the youngest among us we make the most effective use of surviving fluent speakers and ensure that oral traditions will have the best chances of survival.
- 5) By teaching for fluency we secure the only legitimate means by which oral traditions can be maintained as living traditions into the future (see Grenoble and Whaley 2006).
- 6) By providing the option of mother-tongue medium education to Indigenous children we employ the most essential means (sine qua non) of respecting linguistic human rights and ensuring cultural survival (Lomawaima and McCarty 2007).

In light of these principles, and the fact that most people have been indoctrinated to accept dominant ideologies *vis-à-vis* the superiority of dominant languages and the supposed uselessness of Indigenous languages, a massive campaign will need to be mounted to counter such indoctrination –

- a) about the violence done to Indigenous children and their languages by the ostensibly innocuous imposition of dominant languages as the medium of instruction in school (Garcia, Skutnabb-Kangas and Torres-Guzman 2006); and
- b) about the practical value of Indigenous languages and the practical benefits of bilingualism (Edwards and Newcombe 2006);
- c) about the right of Indigenous Peoples to revitalize, use and pass on their languages into the future.

On the matter of protecting Indigenous intellectual traditions, especially stories, from theft and exploitation, the outlook is not good in Canada that anything substantial will be done in the near future. And with Canada's recent and shameful vote against the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples there appears to be little hope that this country will honour any international standards calling for Indigenous languages and intellectual traditions to be protected and supported in the near future. As long as this situation remains unchanged, a campaign will also be needed to counter the lack of information

- a) about the ways in which Indigenous oral traditions have been suppressed, distorted, perverted, fabricated and exploited;
- b) about the collective right of Indigenous Peoples to their oral traditions and their right to revitalize and use them;
- c) about the need for a moratorium on the collecting of oral traditions and/or a strategy of non-compliance with researchers and collectors, until such time as effective laws or protocols can be implemented to stop legalizing the theft (Chrisjohn 2005).
- d) about the need for Indigenous Peoples to establish their own research ethics protocols and their own ethics protocol committees as the only means available to protect their intellectual traditions (Christie 1998, Battiste and Henderson 2000).

### By Way of Closing

I would like to return now to the story of Louis Paul with which I opened this chapter. Another development in that story occurred quite dramatically a few years ago when an officer of the Department of Fisheries

and Oceans in Fredericton returned an exquisite Maliseet salmon spear to us. It was immediately apparent that it was the very same spear which was seized from Louis Paul nearly a century ago, since a journal written by a fisheries officer of the time declared that "Louis Paul, an Indian, did not show up in court today [Sept. 13, 1913]," and since this spear had been disfigured by the initials of that very warden. What struck us was the amazing accuracy of Dr. Peter Paul's recollection of the event. Then many troubling thoughts occurred to us -- that we were at least three generations away from knowing how to use such a spear, that we no longer had unpolluted water or un-dammed rivers, that we have been stripped of most of the language needed for living off the land, and that we are forbidden now from fishing salmon at all. It is wonderful that this spear still exists, but extraordinarily sad that it is no longer of any use to us, except perhaps, as a symbol of the ways in which our oral traditions have been abused. Just as that spear has been rendered useless to us by outlawing, seizing and disfiguring it, so too have our oral traditions been outlawed, stolen and disfigured. It will take great effort to reclaim and revitalize them, not as frozen images from the past, but as living and evolving traditions. And it is something that can only be done with passion and diligence if we are to prevent them from becoming quaint, even mocking, reminders of stolen traditions, like Louis Paul's salmon spear.

### Notes

1. For a critique of the word "witch" see LeSourd 2000:453.
2. Malsunsis actually means "little storekeeper."
3. Sweetser 1883 derived from Gordon 1864; Jack (1883) who obtained parts of the story from Gabe Acquin and Peter Solis (Parkhill 1992:49, 53 citing letter of Jack to Leland, March 18, 1883, in the Pennell-Whistler collection of the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.); and Rand who obtained his story from a Gabe Thomas, who was most certainly Gabe Acquin since there was no other Maliseet by the name of Gabe Thomas at the time of Rand's visit to Fredericton in 1858-59.
4. Early in 1883 Leland obtained a copy of Rand's manuscript which was later published in 1894 (Parkhill 1992:51).
5. Day also points out that no stories of Glooskap at all have ever been collected from the Abenakis of Vermont and Quebec.
6. That Jim Paul did not include Gabe Acquin's anomalous version of Glooskap's birth is significant considering that Gabe was Jim's father-in-law.
7. See also Cusick 1848. Bailey [1937] 1969:160 suggests both Iroquois and Ojibway sources.

8. Edward Jack also published the version he obtained directly from Gabe Acquin twice in the 1890s. This version does not name Glooskap's brother as Malsum. See Jack 1891-92:202 & 1895: 196.
9. Only Viola Solomon's rendering of the story in Maliseet in Ives 1964: 16-17, does not contain Leland's addition of Malsum as the evil brother, which could suggest that she obtained the story in a more direct line from Gabe Acquin, possibly through her husband, Henry Solomon, who had come from Kingsclear and whose parents, Jack and Sarah Solomon were contemporaries of Gabe.
10. This story is also repeated in Leland & Prince (1902:50-55) but identified this time as both Micmac and Passamaquoddy.
11. See also Leland (1884b:224). Parkhill (1997:49-66, 89-103) analyzes Leland's obsession with the Norse origin of the stories, and concludes that in attributing them to the Norse Leland may have been attempting to lend credibility to the Wabanaki stories since anything Norse had to be Aryan and thus acceptable in the racist climate of the late 19th Century.
12. Parkhill 1998:62-63 points out that others, especially Bailey (1947, 1969:157-169) had already "reduced Leland's Norse-Algonkian edifice to rubble."
13. Interestingly, this textbook leaves out altogether the version of Glooskap's birth that had become somewhat standardized by 1903.
14. The term is now commonly employed to describe linguistic genocide. See for example Skutnabb-Kangas 2000.
15. Elsewhere I have spoken of the assault on languages as an assault on alternative versions of history as expressed in Indigenous languages. I have called this process "historicide" (Bear Nicholas 2007). For the purposes of this essay we might logically call the assault on stories "storicide".
16. One example is to be found in the word "barbaric," which has been generally applied to all colonized people as a synonym for "savage or uncivilized." Its origin in the Greek word for "babbler" reveals the now hidden connotation of the word—the idea that an unfamiliar language was considered to be the source and prime element of savagery (Mackenthun, 1997).
17. The United Nations Convention on Genocide authored by Raphael Lemkin was adopted by the UN in 1948. See [www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide](http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide).
18. Speck seems to have done the same with his Penobscot informant Newell Lion who told him a remarkably similar story in Penobscot (Speck 1918: 200-202).
19. On the problems inherent in the ethnographer-informant relationship

- see Parkhill 1997: 52-54 and Phillips 1998:58-9, 67.
20. The only exception being the handful of First Nations communities across Canada that do offer mother-tongue medium education, including some communities of the Mohawk, Blackfoot, Cayuga, Mi'kmaq, Blood, Cree and Secwepemc First Nations.
21. For a critique of this idea and other New Age phenomena see Aldred 2000 and Jenkins 2004.
22. Parkhill actually cites Kehoe 1990:200-201, who in turn cites Castro 1982:155; and Bruchac 1983.
23. Lisa Ornstein (2002) of the University of Maine at Fort Kent has written a paper on what she considers to be another example of invented tradition, "Fakelore: the Malobiannah 'Legend'", (2002) which raises the whole issue of the stories of war between Wabanakis and Iroquois and the extent to which they represent the same processes of invention and distortion. This topic is another whole paper!
24. In another case, Joseph Bruchac, who is an Abenaki from Vermont, has appropriated stories of Glooskap and represented them as Abenaki stories (1985, 1989, 1995), when in fact, the Abenakis have no stories of Glooskap. See endnote #8 above.
25. In the case of a recently published volume of Maliseet stories collected in the 1960s, (LeSourd 2007) the translator/editor, a linguist, did consult with many Maliseet speakers regarding matters of linguistic accuracy, but neither the communities nor the children of the storytellers were acknowledged as having any claim to the stories.
26. A research ethics protocol has now been drafted and placed before the various Maliseet councils for approval. It is designed to authorize the establishment and operation of a Maliseet research ethics committee.
27. Journal of Warden H.E. Harrison for 1913, now in the possession of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Fredericton.

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