



# Mi'gmaq History Month



They will make a difference, because they're not going to let history repeat itself."

- Claudia Gray



## FEATURE

# Pre-contact Mi'gmaq Culture at AGS

Twenty-three years ago, decisions were made to revive Mi'gmaq traditions. A program began, titled – “Relearning a Way of Life.”

Twenty-two people came together to learn and share what they knew of traditional practices. Some even came from out west.

Claudia Gray remembers one elder from Gesgapegiag, who was go-

ing blind and deaf. She was teaching how to make baskets.

“If you did it wrong, she’d go up to you and just tear it apart and throw it down,” Gray said. “That’s how we learned. It was fantastic.”

The group wanted as close to a real understanding as possible of aspects of pre-contact culture.

“The only way to really do that,” Gray said. “Was creating the village, from the ground up.”

An entire village was built, with as much traditional knowledge as possible.

“Some of the students still practice the skills [today],” Gray said.

A lot was learned from a book Gray’s aunt – Vivian – had written, but never published.

“She studied this her entire life.”

Her aunt was an anthropologist, and shared what she learned with the family. So for Gray, a lot of practices were just a part of her life.

The program ran for three years, and then she was asked to teach pre-contact Mi'gmaq culture, when AGS opened up. It has been open for 20 years now.

Sharing is a big focus in her class. She encourages students to always

go home and talk with parents and grandparents about what they learn, like her aunt did.

Vivian Gray’s work is now taught to every single kid in Listuguj. It is now just a part of growing up, and going through school.

This is a long way from when Claudia Gray was a kid. She remembers making crafts secretly. She would have history lessons and often wonder why textbooks never mentioned Mi'gmaq people.

Now – even when her students don’t seem interested in the material – Gray is certain the class is having a beneficial impact.

“We notice that our students, when they leave AGS,” she said. “[They] cross over and don’t feel inferior, don’t feel different. They feel equal, and happy with who they are. And if there’s something said that’s not correct, they correct it. They have the ability to do that. That makes us proud.”



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Claudia Gray in her class at AGS. (PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT)

# Derek Barnaby: “Curiosity just turned into a lifestyle.”

Derek Barnaby didn't feel connected with his culture and traditions as a child.

“It wasn't until I was 19 years-old that I realized – this is a part of who I am,” he said.

Growing up in Listuguj in the 70's was a very different time than today.

“If you wore a t-shirt in school that says Mi'gmaq and pride, well back in those days – you were told to go home and change your shirt,” Barnaby said. “People weren't ready to accept the ideas of what happened here in Canada.”

With some Polish ancestry, Barnaby said he often felt caught between two worlds at times growing up.

As a young man, he travelled to Ottawa, where he saw a Pow Wow.

“When I seen the dancing, and everything that was happening – I was really drawn to it.”

Barnaby says that he had always been drawn to dancing, even if it was just Michael Jackson, or Paula Abdul.

For awhile, he struggled to get started, but he met teachers who encouraged him. Now, him a his wife teach kids to dance and sew.

He says his connection with Mi'gmaq traditions have made him a stronger person, in many aspects.

“It's not just about feathers and drums,” he said. “It's about an understanding of a way of life.”

Barnaby is glad to consider himself part of the “rebirth of Mi'gmaq identity.”

“There has to be a sense of pride in being Mi'gmaq, and within that, there has to be a sense of history. And in knowing that, it creates a stronger, healthier nation.”

*Read about how Barnaby's connection with tradition has positively influenced him and others in the on-line story.*



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## Take a Video Tour of the Arts and Culture Center



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Lita Isaac explains some of the items found in the Arts and Culture Center at the Education Directorate Building.

## SSHS Treaty Day

(PHOTOS: Mike Isaac)

Find more on the LMG Facebook page



# Community Listings

### Subsidized Childcare

A document on the changes in subsidized childcare rates that came into force on April 22, 2015 can be found at [www.listuguj.ca](http://www.listuguj.ca)

### Walk A Mile in Her Shoes

A fundraiser to raise awareness and end violence against women. All funds go to Haven House

DATE: Sunday, Oct. 25  
CONTACT: Holly Miller  
PHONE: (506) 987-3499

### CLOSED

The LMG will be closed for Thanksgiving.

DATE: Monday, Oct. 12

### Jobs

“Director of Health,” “Chipping Plant Operator,” and “Casual Teacher Assistant.”

[listuguj.ca/jobs](http://listuguj.ca/jobs)

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

A special promotional video has been made to accompany this issue. It is at the top of our website – [news.listuguj.ca](http://news.listuguj.ca). Extra thanks to Claudia and Derek for agreeing to be filmed, with the lights and all.

This video, as well as the tour video, are all parts of our attempt to join print and digital as seamlessly as possible.

Be sure to get a QR code app, and catch all the extra features on our online stories.

And for next issue – we already have some stories lined up for you, including a conversation with Glenda Wysote-Labillois.



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