



The harmfulness of stereotyping

by Serena Francis

Hello. My name is Serena Francis. I am a Micmac. I work on campus as Native Student Advisor.

Before I say anything else, I must first make it clear that when I speak it is only my voice that you hear. I have not earned the right to speak for all of my Micmac sisters. To pretend to do so will only serve to silence their own voices.

Because of the time restriction, it makes sense to limit my talk to one theme, but I had difficulty deciding what to call this presentation for I had come with so little that seemed to fit. Rather than waste any more of my time, I decided to use both the images that bind us and the images that blind you.

A presentation, I am often told, starts with a good joke to help break the tension. I apologize because I don't have a good joke, but I have a bad one. This one was told to me last summer by a non-native teacher who once taught for a while in my community. This is the joke: "What did Jesus say to the Indian people just before he went back to heaven?"

"Okay," I said, "I don't know. What did he say?"

"Listen, don't do anything until I get back."

After a few seconds of uncomfortable silence, she added, "You know, Indians are lazy; they haven't done anything in the last five hundred years."

This brings me back to what I wanted to talk about with you, and that is the harmfulness of stereotyping: The images you hold about who you believe native people are, how we, as native people, have taken them on and how this image affects how we are with each other. I will

argue that it doesn't matter whether these images are negative or that they are positive. They are both harmful.

I will guess that you are all quite familiar with some of the negative stereotype, therefore I will make this list a short one. All Indians are lazy, dirty, and drunks. They are dumb. And as for the squaws, well, everyone knows that they are an easy lay.

How does that translate in terms of Indian and white relations? Here are two examples: In terms of work, not many white employers will hire an Indian. And native children are encouraged to enrol in special programs because the teacher tells them that they can't do the work in regular programs. The list is much longer, but too long to share.

What happens then when these images are taken on? It is easy to see how damaging they can be. We all know how harmful these negative images are, not only with native and non-native relationships, but in native relationships within their own communities as well. How should my son sense his "Micmac-Ness"?

Within the past ten years, there has been an emergence of positive stereotyping; "The positive image." So now you may hear that all Indians have a close relationship with nature. The Indian is a natural ecologist. They hold old and ancient knowledge about the universe and about the human relationship with other human beings.

You may be wondering what is so bad about that because after almost 500 years of exploitation, it's about time for a positive image.

In real life, how can we deal with our humanness if we both buy into this positive image. I will be constantly unable to measure up to my own expectations, as well as your expectations of who I ought to be and how I should be in this world. Must I be silenced if I don't fit into either of the two images you have created?

These have been just a brief example of both the negative and positive stereotyping that is harmful to relationships, not just between natives and non-natives, but between all human beings.

Native Arts study at the N.B. Craft School

by Gwen Orechia

Not everyone is inclined to be academic. For students of all races, colors, and creeds, there is the necessity for alternative education. The NB Craft School recognizes and meets that need for potential artists and craftspeople. It also recognizes the need for a bicultural foundation course for Natives who wish to attend the school.

The Certificate of Native Arts

Study is a one year program which includes both Native and non-Native components. Business, design, drawing, and a studio choices are courses required of all students. Those in the Certificate program are also required to take courses in Native arts Studies. Five courses are included in this component: Spirituality, Research, Native Art and Craft, Micmac or Maliseet language, and Native Education. The Craft School employs Natives to teach

Native subjects and the curriculum was developed by a Native.

In its pilot year (89-90) seven Micmac and Maliseet students attended the program. Three continued on to 2nd year studies at the Craft School, three enrolled at university, and one became a mother. Presently (90-91) another seven students are in the program, and interviews for 91-92 will begin in April.

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