

Shaa-naan-dithit, or The Last of The Boëothics,

part II of "Sketches of Savage Life," by an Anonymous Author, *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, Vol. XIII, No LXXV (March 1836): 316-323 (Rpt. Canadiana House, Toronto, 1969)

Introductory Information

"Sketches of Savage Life" tells the stories of three native people: "Kondiaronk, Chief of the Huron," "Shaa-naan-dithit, or the Last of the Boëothics," and "Tecumseh, Chief warrior of the Shawanees."⁽¹⁾ *Although the article was published anonymously, a footnote in the section on "Tecumseh" states: "I have given a brief account of this mythological idea...in British America."*⁽²⁾ *This reference identifies the author as John McGregor.*

Because the article has only recently been rediscovered and because some of the information on Beothuk history and culture in the section "Shaa-naan-dithit, or The Last of The Boëothics," (which is reproduced here) is believed to have come from Shanawdithit, it is important to show that John McGregor received this information from William Eppes Cormack, a Newfoundland entrepreneur and philanthropist, who had walked across the island in search of the Beothuk, founded the Boeothick Institution, and had taken Shanawdithit into his house after she was transferred to St. John's, in September 1828.

Most likely, Cormack and McGregor met during their residence in Prince Edward Island. Cormack came to PEI in 1818 to settle emigrant farmers from Scotland in the vicinity of Charlottetown; he moved on to Newfoundland in 1822.⁽³⁾ John McGregor, who had immigrated to PEI as a child, set up a business in Charlottetown in 1819. He also served as high sheriff and later became member of the House of Assembly. McGregor left PEI for Liverpool, England, in 1827.⁽⁴⁾ Both men were interested in the fisheries: McGregor published accounts of the North American fisheries in 1828 and in 1832;⁽⁵⁾ Cormack submitted a paper on the "British, American and French Fisheries" to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1829, and two years later, sent an essay on the fisheries to the Natural History Society in Montreal for which he was awarded a silver medal.⁽⁶⁾ There is some evidence that the two men exchanged ideas on this topic and perhaps also some figures of catches and exports of fish.

When Cormack left Newfoundland for good, in January 1829, he went to stay with John McGregor at Liverpool.⁽⁷⁾ During his visit McGregor seems to have become fascinated by Cormack's stories about the Beothuk and he subsequently devoted an entire chapter in his British America to Newfoundland's aboriginal people.⁽⁸⁾ It contains a brief history of the Beothuk which is followed by the text of Cormack's address to the Boeothick Institution and his report on his search for Beothuk survivors in November 1827.⁽⁹⁾ McGregor, who refers to Cormack as his "friend," repeatedly mentions in the text that Cormack was his source of information and had "kindly furnished" him with the narrative of his expedition into Beothuk country.

In the section "Shaa-naan-dithit, or the Last of the Boëothics," (1836), McGregor largely repeats what he had published in 1832. However, the last two pages under the caption "Shaa-naan-dithit" contain a description of Shanawdithit and her story together with her disclosure of aspects of Beothuk beliefs which have not been published elsewhere. Until recently, Beothuk scholars had not been aware of this material which affords important insights into the culture and history of the Beothuk.

It has been concluded that Cormack, while he was McGregor's guest in Liverpool, in 1829, not only gave him copies of his address to the Boeothick Institution and of the report of his expedition into

Beothuk country, but also left with him original notes with information gleaned from Shanawdithit. Cormack's papers which have since found their way back to St. John's, and - as far as they pertain to the Beothuk - have been published by J.P. Howley in his classic The Beothucks or Red Indians (1915), do not contain this material. McGregor seems to have kept Cormack's notes and may have destroyed them when he left Britain in 1856. At least, up to the present time, an extensive search for McGregor's papers has drawn a blank.

Ingeborg Marshall

SKETCHES OF SAVAGE LIFE.

No. II.

SHAA-NAAN-DITHIT, OR THE LAST OF THE BOËOTHICS

The aborigines of the vast rugged region of Newfoundland were a nation of savages, known to the other Indians by the name of Boëothics, and by Europeans generally called Red Indians. Of all the American tribes, they alone have never had any reciprocal, or, at least, no understood intercourse with Europeans. We know little of their history : they have passed away from the face of the earth, ignorant of the evil or good of civilization; and yet their name will be recorded in the annals of the western world as that of a nation who existed in the simplest state of society, and hunted alike by Christians and heathens.

They were always clad in furs - the hairy side within, and the outer painted with red ochre. Hence the name given them by the English traders. They believed they were created from arrows stuck in the ground by the good spirit - that the dead went to a far country, to be merry with their departed friends. If they were vindictive and revengeful, it must not be forgotten that they were shot by the English and French fishermen and traders, with as little scruple as if the Boëothics were red foxes.

About the end of the seventeenth century, they were numerous and powerful as their Mik-mak neighbours, with whom they were at that period in habits of friendly intercourse. A solitary tradition⁽¹⁰⁾ tells us that they had incurred the displeasure of the French fur-traders, whose nation then held sway in those regions. A reward was offered for the scalps, heads, or bodies, of the Boëothics. The Mik-maks, tempted by the premium, slew two Boëothics, and carried off their heads. These were by accident discovered by some Red Indians who were passing at the same time, and saw the heads of two of their tribe within the prow of the Mik-mak canoe that was about to [317] convey them to the quarters of the French commandment at Marasheen.⁽¹¹⁾ A scheme of revenge was secretly planned. They invited the Mik-maks to a feast. The guests were arranged each beside a Boëothic; and the latter, on the preconcerted signal being made, slew each the Mik-mak beside him. The Boëothics retired to the remote districts of the interior. War ensued; and the intercourse of the Mik-maks with Europeans, which taught them the use of fire-arms, gave them murderous ascendancy over the primitive Boëothics, who had no arms but bows, arrows, and wooden spears.

From that day the weapons of Europeans, whether wielded by the red man or the white, have been directed, for the deadly purpose of extermination, against the Boëothics - often towards their open breasts and unstrung bows; and even more fiercely than ever during the beginning of the present century. They have been wantonly destroyed, when hunger compelled them to leave the recesses of the interior. Ruthless barbarity on the part of the Europeans inculcated distrust and abhorrence of any sign of, any contact with, civilisation, in the breast of the Red man.

The government of Newfoundland finally endeavoured to establish an intercourse with them. But the uninterrupted injury they had experienced, and the inexorable, unforgiving spirit of savages, were not

easily to be removed or conquered; while, at the same time, notwithstanding the governor's proclamations, the furriers and fishermen continued the destruction of the Red Indians, boasting of their affording more delightful sport than fox-trapping and beaver-hunting; and alleging as a palliative, that the Boëothics came in the night from their lurking places, to rob the fishingnets and traps - at which time the fishermen lay in ambush and shot them.

In 1803, Admiral Gambier, at that time governor, offered a reward to any one who would bring him a *live* Boëothic - it required little price to bring him a dead one. In consequence, a female was captured by a fisherman, who surprised her while she was paddling in a canoe towards an islet in quest of bird's eggs. She was carried to the governor's quarters, kindly treated and gaily clad; yet nothing would induce her to let her fur dress go out of her hands. She was loaded with presents and sent back, in charge of the man who captured her, to be delivered in safety to her people.⁽¹²⁾ What became of her is not known. Another attempt was made in 1809 to establish an intercourse with the Boëothics, but without meeting any of the tribe.

In 1816,⁽¹³⁾ Captain Buchan, after a most fatiguing journey of one hundred and twenty-five miles, discovered traces of them, and surprised three families in as many wigwams. They were paralysed with the utmost consternation; but he finally succeeded in establishing amicable intercourse with them. A fire was kindled; and they presented him with venison steaks, and deer fat, run into small cakes, which they ate with lean meat.

He gave them knives, handkerchiefs and various articles. In return, they offered him furs. He left two voluntary hostages with them, for the faithful restoration of four Indians, who accompanied him back to where he had left his presents and heavy baggage, about twelve miles below. Before reaching the baggage, three of the Indians ran off. On the following day Captain Buchan returned towards the wigwams. He arrived on the third morning, - the remaining Indian escaped; and Captain Buchan immediately after found the men he had left as hostages lying stretched on the snow, dead and headless. The Boëothics had all disappeared, and he consequently returned without success.

In the winter of 1819 a party of furriers, on proceeding up the interior to the Red Indian lake, met two men and a woman of the tribe.⁽¹⁴⁾ They captured the female; and her husband, a noble-looking man above six feet in height, who seemed determined to rescue his wife, was barbarously shot, as was also the other man.

This woman was carried to the governor's, and named Mary March, from the month in which she was captured. [318] She also was sent back with presents, during the following year, in charge of Captain Buchan; but she died on board his vessel at the mouth of the river Exploits, and he carried her body up the lake to where he thought her tribe would most likely find it.

The final appearance of the Red Indians was during the winter of 1823, on the ice at an arm of Notre Dame Bay. They came, as it appeared, in a starving condition, from the wooded and rocky fastnesses of the interior, and three of their women gave themselves up to the furriers.⁽¹⁵⁾ Near the same place, on the day before, a Boëothic man and woman approached two English furriers, making signs for food. Can it be credited in Europe? the man was shot in mere sport; and the woman, who in despair remained steadfast over the body of her husband, was shot through the back and chest: both instantly expired; and, to this day, those who murdered them are said to boast of the horrid deed!⁽¹⁶⁾ Such was the melancholy fate of this primitive, fierce, and proud tribe. What remains to be told of them, the writer of this sketch owes to the enterprise and philanthropy of his adventurous friend Cormack, the only European who ever succeeded in crossing the stubborn, rugged territory of Newfoundland; and who afterwards, from purely philanthropic views, underwent the fatigue and privations of a hazardous expedition, in the disinterested feeling expressed in his own words:⁽¹⁷⁾ " The situation of the unfortunate Boëothics kindles my warmest sympathy, and loudly calls on us all to do something efficiently good, were it only for the common cause of humanity. But we have more to account for,

both before the judgment-seat of God and the moral tribunal of public opinion. An awful debt of justice is due to the Boëothics, ere their whole race perish. For my own satisfaction, I have for a time relieved myself from all other avocations, and I am now on my way to that part of the country which the surviving remnant of that tribe have of late years frequented, to endeavour to gain friendly interview with some of them before they are entirely annihilated; but it will most probably require many such interviews and some years to reconcile them to the approaches of civilised man." He proceeded to Twillingate, a wild island on the northern coast, and from thence sailed to the river Exploits, where he arrived on the 30th of October, 1827, and on the following day commenced his daring and difficult journey into the interior, accompanied by an active Abenaiqui, an experienced mountaineer Indian from Labrador, and an adventurous, spirited young Mik-mak.⁽¹⁸⁾ On the fourth day's travel over the inland wilds, they discovered traces of where the Boëothics had been, probably not later than a year before. Among other remains were canoe-rests, a spear-shaft eight feet long, parts of old canoes, and fragments of their skin dresses, &c.

" Besides these," says Mr. C., " we were elated by other encouraging signs. The traces left by the Red Indians are so peculiar that they cannot be mistaken. This spot has been a favourite place of settlement with these people. Here are the remains of one of their villages, where the vestiges of eight or ten mamateeks, or winter wigwams, each intended to lodge six to eighteen or twenty persons, are close to each other; there are also the remains of several summer wigwams. Close to each mamateek, there is a square or oblong pit dug in the earth, about four feet deep, for the purpose of preserving stores. Some of these were lined with birch-bark. There was also the remains of a vapour-bath." From this "deserted village," Mr. Cormack proceeded across the country to a branch of Hall's Bay, where he, with his Indians, slept one night at the house of some furriers, from whom he could get no information. " Indeed, we could hardly have expected any ; for these and such people," says he, "have been the unchecked and ruthless destroyers of the tribe, the remnant of which we were in search of." From this place they re-entered the country, and, after a weary journey over a rugged and broken country, they ascended the mountain summits south of White Bay, and in view of the heights east of the Bay of Islands, on the coast of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. South and west of this position lay the famed Red Indian Lake.

The region in which our traveller now arrived lies within the parallels of latitude in North America, where the magnitude of the forest trees, and the stern ruggedness of the north, seem to contend with each other as to which will advance furthest on the domains [319] of the other. In summer, the sylvan empire assumes and maintains a luxuriant glorious ascendancy. In winter, the storms and frosts of the icy regions reign paramount, and, withstood only by the funereal, indomitable firs, denude earth and tree of all verdure. During each season I have sojourned amidst those desolate, yet sublime solitudes. But I will not digress, and must take up Cormack's interesting manuscript, and let him speak for himself.

" It was near the middle of November, and the winter had commenced pretty severely in the interior. The country was every where covered with snow, and for some days past we had walked over the small ponds on the ice. The summits of the hills on which we stood had snow on them, in some places many feet deep. The deer were migrating from the rugged and dreary mountains of the north, to the low and mossy ravines, and more woody parts of the south; and we inferred, that if any of the Red Indians had been at White Bay during the past summer, they might at that time be stationed about the borders of the low tract of country before us, at the deer-passes, or employed somewhere else in the interior, killing deer for winter provisions. At these passes - which are particular places in the migration lines of path, such as the extreme ends of, and straits in, many of the large lakes, the bottom of valleys, between high and rugged mountains, fords in the large rivers, and the lake - the Indians kill great numbers of deer, with very little trouble, during their migrations. We looked out for two days from the summits of the hills adjacent, trying to discover the smoke from the camps of the Red Indians, but in vain. These hills command a very extensive view of the country in every direction.

" We now determined to proceed towards the Red Indian Lake, sanguine that at that known

rendezvous we would find the objects of our search.

" Travelling over such a country, except when winter has fairly set in, is truly laborious.

" In about ten days we got a glimpse of this beautifully majestic and splendid sheet of water. The ravages of fire, which we saw in the woods for the last two days indicated that man had been near. We looked down upon the lake, from the hills at the northern extremity, with feelings of anxiety and admiration. No canoe could be discovered moving on its placid surface. We were the first Europeans who had seen it in an unfrozen state, for the three parties who had visited it before were here in the winter, when its waters were frozen and covered with snow: they had reached it from below, by way of the river Exploits, on the ice. We approached the lake with hope and caution; but found, to our mortification, that the Red Indians had deserted it for some years past. My party had been so excited, so sanguine, and so determined to obtain an interview of some kind with these people, that on discovering, from appearances every where around us, that the Red Indians, the terror of the Europeans, as well as the other Indian inhabitants of Newfoundland, no longer existed, the spirits of one and all of us were very deeply affected. The old mountaineer was particularly overcome. There were every where indications that this had long been the central and undisturbed rendezvous of the tribe, when they had enjoyed peace and security. But these primitive people had abandoned it, after having been tormented by parties of Europeans during the last eighteen years. Fatal rencontres had on these occasions unfortunately taken place.

" We spent several melancholy days wandering on the borders of the east end of the lake, surveying the various remains of what we now contemplated to have been an unoffending and cruelly extirpated people. At several places, by the margin of the lake, are small clusters of summer and winter wigwams in ruins. One difference, among others, between the Boëothic wigwams and those of other Indians is, that in most of the former there are small hollows, like nests, dug in the earth, around the fire-place, and in the sides of the wigwam, so that I think it probable these people have been accustomed to sleep in a sitting position. There was one wooden building, constructed for drying and smoking venison, still perfect; also a small log-house, in a dilapidated condition, which we took to have been a store house. The wreck of a large handsome birch-rind canoe, about twenty-two feet in length, comparatively new, and certainly very little used, lay thrown up among the bushes at the beach. We supposed that the violence of a storm had rent it in the way it was found, and that the people [320] who were in it had perished, for the iron nails, of which there was no want, all remained in it. Had there been any survivors, nails being very much prized by these people, they never having held trading intercourse with Europeans, such an article would most likely have been taken out for use again. All the birch-trees in the vicinity of the lake had been rinded, and many of those of the spruce fir, or var (*pinus balsamifera*, Canadian balsam-tree), had the bark taken off, to use the inner part for food, as noticed before.

" Their wooden repositories for the dead are in the most perfect state of preservation. These are of different constructions, it would appear, according to the rank of the persons entombed. In one of them, which resembled a hut, ten feet high, and in length and breadth nine to ten. In the centre, at the height of five feet, it was floored with square poles, -the roof was covered with the rinds of trees, and in every way it was well secured against the weather and the intrusion of wild beasts. The bodies of two full-grown persons were laid out at length on the floor, and wrapped round with deerskins. One of these bodies appeared to have been entombed not longer than five or six years. We thought there were children also laid in here. On first opening this building, by removing the posts which formed the ends, our curiosity was raised to the highest pitch; but what added to our surprise was the discovery of a white deal coffin, containing a skeleton neatly shrouded in white muslin. After a long pause of conjecture how such could have been here entombed, the idea of Mary March occurred to one of the party, and the whole mystery was at once explained.

" In this cemetery were deposited a variety of articles, in some instances the property, in others the representations of the property and utensils, and of the achievements of the deceased. There were two small wooden images of a man and woman, no doubt meant to represent husband and wife; a small

doll, which we supposed to represent a child (for Mary March had to leave her only child behind, which died after she was taken); several small models of their canoes, two small models of boats, an iron axe, a bow, and quiver of arrows, were placed by the side of Mary March's husband, and two firestones (radiated iron pyrites, from which they produce fire, by striking them together) lay at his head; there were also various kinds of culinary utensils, neatly made of birch rind, and ornamented; and many other things, of some of which we did not know the use or meaning.

" Another mode of sepulture which we saw here was, when the body of the deceased had been wrapped in birch rind, it was, with his property, placed on a sort of scaffold about four feet and a half from the ground. The scaffold was formed of four posts, about seven feet high, fixed perpendicularly in the ground to sustain a kind of crib, five feet and a half in length by four in breadth, with a floor made of small squared beams laid close together horizontally, and on which the body and property rested.

" A third mode was, when the body, bent together, and wrapped in birch rind, was enclosed in a kind of box on the ground. The box was made of small square posts, laid on each other horizontally, and notched at the corners to make them meet close. It was about four feet by three, and two and a half feet deep, and well lined with birch rind, to exclude the weather from the inside. The body lay on its right side.

" A fourth, and the most common mode of burying among these people, has been to wrap the body in birch rind, and cover it over with a heap of stones, on the surface of the earth, in some retired spot. Sometimes the body, thus wrapped up, is put a foot or two under the surface, and the spot covered with stones. In one place, where the ground was sandy and soft, they appeared to have been buried deeper, and no stones placed over the graves.

" These people appear to have always shewn great respect for their dead, and the most remarkable remains of them, commonly observed by Europeans at the sea-coast, are their burying places. These are at particular chosen spots; and it is well known that they have been in the habit of bringing their dead from a distance to them. With their women they brought only their clothes.

" On the north side of the lake, opposite the river Exploits, are the extremities of two deer-fences, about half a mile apart, where they lead to the water. It is understood that they diverge many miles in a north-westerly direction. The Red Indians make these [321] to lead the deer to the lake, during the periodical migration of those animals. The Indians stationing themselves near where the deer get into the water to swim across, the lake being narrow at this end, pursue the animals in their canoes, and kill them with spears. In this way they secure their winter provisions before the severity of the winter sets in.

" There were other remains of different kinds, peculiar to these people, met with about this lake.

" One night we encamped on the foundation of an old Indian wigwam, on the extremity of a point of land which juts out into the lake, and exposed to the view of the whole country around. A large fire at night is the life and soul of such a party as ours; and, when it blazed up at times, I could not help observing that two of my Indians evinced uneasiness and want of confidence in things around, as if they thought themselves usurpers on the Red Indian territory. From time immemorial, none of the Indians of the other tribes had ever encamped near this lake, fearlessly, and as we had now done, in the very centre of such a country; the lake and territory adjacent having been always considered to belong exclusively to the Red Indians, and to have been occupied by them. It had been our invariable practice hitherto to encamp near hills, and be on their summits by the dawn of day, to try and discover the morning smoke ascending from the Red Indians' camps; and, to prevent the discovery of ourselves, we extinguished our own fire always some length of time before daylight.

" Our only and frail hope now left of seeing the Red Indians lay on the banks of the river Exploits, on our return to the sea-coast.

" The Red Indian Lake discharges itself about three or four miles from its north-east end; and its waters form the river Exploits. From the lake to the sea-coast is considered about seventy miles; and down this noble river the steady perseverance and intrepidity of my Indians carried me on rafts in four days; to accomplish which, otherwise, would have required probably two weeks. We landed at various places on both banks on our way down, but found no traces of the Red Indians so recent as those seen at the portage at Badger Bay, Great Lake, towards the beginning of our excursion. During our descent, we had to construct new rafts at the different waterfalls. Sometimes we were carried down the rapids at the rate of ten miles an hour, or more, with considerable risk of destruction to the whole party, for we were always together on one raft.

" What arrests the attention most, in gliding down the stream, is the extent of the Indian fences to entrap deer. They extend from the lake downwards, continuous, on the banks of the river, at least thirty miles. There are openings left here and there for the animals to go through, and swim across the river; and at these places the Indians were stationed, and killed them in the water with spears out of their canoes, as at the lake.

" Here, then, connecting these fences with those on the north-west side of the lake, is at least forty miles of country, easterly and westerly, prepared to intercept all the deer that pass that way in their periodical migrations. It was melancholy to contemplate the gigantic, yet rude, efforts of a whole primitive nation, in their anxiety to provide subsistence, forsaken and going to decay.

" There must have been hundreds of Red Indians, and that not many years ago, to have kept up these fences and pounds. As their numbers were lessened, so was their ability to keep them up for the purposes intended, and now the deer pass the whole line unmolested."

Mr. Cormack returned to the mouth of the river Exploits on the 29th November, after a journey of extraordinary fatigue over two hundred and twenty miles of the Red Indian territory. He collected several articles among the deserted encampments and sepulchres; such as several models of canoes, which are made of frame-work covered with birch rinds, and very high, and peculiarly formed at the prows, so as to form a kind of pigeon-breasted shield against arrows; also bows, spears, a complete deer-skin dress; the iron pyrites, by means of which they kindled fires; two skulls, that of an old warrior, which bore the marks of several wounds, one of which had cleaved the lower jaw; it, however, reconnected in healing; another wound was evidently caused by a shot. The other was the skull of a female. In both the teeth were perfect.

On his return to St. John's, an insti- [322] tution was formed for the purpose, if possible, of discovering the Boëothics.⁽¹⁹⁾ The Indians who accompanied Mr. Cormack were retained on the establishment. Since that period they and others have made several unsuccessful journeys. The most hidden and wild places among the ravines and previously unknown solitudes have been penetrated. The furriers have advanced into, and in winter occupy, the most retired parts of the Red Indian country. The tribe has vanished from the face of the earth; and the tale of their extinction forms an infamous stigma, a dark series of crimes, in the historic pages of both French and English colonisation.

Of the three women who were captured at Notre Dame, the youngest was living on the return of Mr. Cormack from his expedition. Soon after he sent to the north, and had her conveyed to St. John's, where he gave her a comfortable asylum in his house. Her name in her own language was pronounced

SHAA-NAAN-DITHIT.⁽²⁰⁾

She was the last of the Boëothics. Her person, in height above the middle stature, possessed classical regularity of form. Her face bore striking similarity to that of Napoleon, and the olive cast of her complexion added to the resemblance. Her hair was jet black; her finely pencilled brows - her long,

darting lashes - her dark, vigilant, and piercing eyes, were all remarkably striking and beautiful. Her teeth were white, even, and perfectly sound. Her hands and feet, small and well formed. She never laughed. Her smile was an exertion to do so, not a feeling. She from the first exhibited a predisposition to pulmonary disease: yet her appetite was sharp, and she ate more food than most European women. Having been four years among the English settlers in the remote part of the northern coast, and being remarkably apt to learn, she could, on arriving at St. John's, make herself tolerably well understood in English. Great hopes were entertained of her becoming the instrument of establishing an intercourse with her tribe. She, however, constantly persisted in refusing to accompany any of the expeditions in search of the Boëothics; saying it was an invariable religious principle laid down by her people to sacrifice to the *munes* of the victims slain by the whites and Mik-maks any Boëothic who had been in contact with them.

Mr. Cormack provided her with crayons, and teaching her how to use them, in a few months she was able to represent various subjects which he requested her to draw relative to the customs of her tribe. She always preferred red crayons, and with them drew the profiles of various persons of her nation. That they were resemblances seems probable; for if taken from her, and if afterwards asked to draw the same persons, the likenesses exactly resembled those she previously sketched. That of her father was uniformly the same - the features, particularly the nose, were strictly Roman.⁽²¹⁾ She also sketched groups, exhibiting the Boëothics in their camps, villages, and in their canoes; also rude sketches of their mode of hunting and snaring deer.

Mr. Cormack gleaned whatever she recollected relative to her tribe: the traditional account she gave of their rupture with the Mik-maks is that stated in the beginning of this sketch. She related, "that from infancy all her nation were taught to cherish animosity and revenge against all other people; that this was enforced by narrating, during the winter evenings, the innumerable wrongs inflicted on the Boëothics by the white men and by the Mik-maks; that a tradition of old times told that the first white men that came over the great lake were from the good spirit, and that those who came next were sent by the bad spirit; and that if the Boëothics made peace and talked with the white men which belonged to the bad spirit, or with the Mik-maks, who also belonged to the bad spirit, that they would not, after they died, go to the happy island, nor hunt, nor fish, nor feast in the country of the good spirit, which was far away, where the sun went down behind the mountains."

Her tribe believed that the aurora borealis consisted of happy messengers [323] that came from the good spirit to watch over the Boëothics; and that the spirits of the dead came back to watch over the actions of their living friends.

She said " her father and her lover and her mother were with the good spirit, and that she would go there too; but that she would not go back to the Red Indian Lake, because she would be killed there, and not be buried with the things she should want for her journey."

She declared that it was impossible for any of her tribe to exist much longer. Her reasons were satisfactory. At the time when she and the other two females surrendered, the tribe had been reduced to so small a number that they were unable to keep up the deer-fences; and being driven from the shores, and from the fish and the oysters, and the nests of water-fowl, their means of existence were completely cut off. The athletic man shot so barbarously, in the winter of 1819, was the most powerful leader and hunter of the tribe. Her brother, mother, sister, and a young child, were shot the summer before that year, when attempting to reach an island, in a canoe, to collect the eggs of wild fowl. Her father, who had been a chief and a swift hunter, died some moons after; and her lover, at a time when they were perishing for want of food, followed a deer for some days over the country, which was covered with snow, and, lying down to rest, he fell asleep and was frozen to death. Shaa-naan-dithit must at the time have been little more than sixteen years of age; and she and her lover's two sisters were left helpless and destitute of food during one of the most severe winters remembered. All the inland waters and the bays were frozen up; the snow lay several feet deep on the ground. Impelled by hunger, they ventured to the coast, and were, as has been stated, captured.⁽²²⁾ The other women died

soon after. She, although her youth adapted her more readily to a new mode of living, was never after in good health; and, as she grew up, her predisposition to consumption - a disease common, it appears, to her tribe - was apparently sapping her vitals. Her manners were easy and graceful - her temper generally calm; but on occasions, when some of the servants treated her, as she thought, with disrespect, her fierce Indian spirit kindled - the savage eye darted fire and vengeance; and the uniform kindness of Mr. Cormack alone would subdue the tempest which raged in the bosom of Shaa-naan-dithit.

He had occasion to return to England, and during his absence the attorney-general of the colony took her to his house. Consumption now crept rapidly through her frame; she became uneasy in her new dwelling, and was carried to the hospital, where, a few weeks afterwards, on the 6th June, 1829, expired THE LAST OF THE BOËOTHICS.

NOTES

1. Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country, 1836, Vol. XIII, February, No. LXXIV, pp.169-176, March, No. LXXV, pp.316-23, April, No. LXXVI, pp.499-510.
2. McGregor, John. 1833. British America, 2 vol. London: Cadell & Son, 2nd. ed. 1833:II:466.
3. Ibid. Vol.I:499; Howley, James Patrick, The Beothucks or Red Indians. Cambridge: Cambr. Univ. Press, 1915:235.
4. Dictionary of Canadian Biography, 1966-90. George Brown, W. Ramsay Cook, Frances G. Halpenny, and David M. Hayne, eds. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, Vol. VIII:547; Dictionary of National Biography, 1921-22. L. Stephen and S. Lee, eds., London: Oxford Univ. Press. Reprint 1949-50, Vol. XII:540.
5. McGregor, John. Historic and Descriptive Sketches of the Maritime Colonies of British America, London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828:244-257; *ibid.* British America, Edinburgh: William Blackwood, London: T. Cadell, 1832:I:234-251; *ibid.* London: Cadell & Son, 2nd. ed. 1833:I:208-223.
6. Howley 1915:208-9, 235; W.E. Cormack to Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 September 1829, Public Record Office (PRO), CO 194/79 f.186-7; W.E. Cormack "The Political and Commercial value of the Newfoundland and other North American Fisheries," mentioned in Minutes of the Natural History Society in Montreal, 28 November 1831, and in letter on the "State of the Society," read 27 December 1852, Blacker-Wood Library of Zoology and Ornithology, McGill University, Montreal.
7. Howley 1915:210; W.E. Cormack to Bishop John Inglis, 10 January 1829, Cormack Papers 57/84, in private hands.
8. McGregor, British America, 1832:I:252-278, map of Newfoundland with Cormack's track, pg. 141; *ibid.* 2nd. ed. 1833:I:224-255, map, pg. 123.
9. Howley, 1915:182-4; W.E. Cormack, "Report of Mr W.E. Cormack's journey in search of the Red Indians in Newfoundland. Read before the Boeothick Institution at St. John's, Newfoundland. Communicated by Mr. Cormack." 1829. Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal 20, no.6:318-29.

10. [original note]: See Shaa-naan-dithit's disclosures hereafter.
11. This appears to be an error: the French fort was at Placentia; the island with the name Marasheen is in Placentia Bay, but it is not known to have had a French station.
12. [original note]: This man was accused of having murdered her for the sake of the presents she had. This he indignantly denied afterwards to Mr. Cormack; although, at the same time, he felt no scruple in saying that he had shot more Boëothics, with his long "Fogo" duck-gun, than he could remember.
13. Buchan's expedition to Red Indian Lake took place in January 1811 (Howley, 1915:72). It is curious that McGregor cites 1816 while Cormack, in his notes on the "History of the Red Indians of Newfoundland," (Howley, 1915:223) claims that Buchan undertook his expedition in 1815.
14. According to the leader of this party, John Peyton Jr. they came to three "wigwams" that were occupied by 14 or 15 people (Howley, 1915:93-4).
15. This incident occurred in April 1823.
16. The two people, father and daughter, were murdered in January 1823.
17.) Here McGregor quotes sections from Cormack's address to the Boeothick Institution.
18. The following description is taken from Cormack's report on his journey in search of the Red Indians, published in 1829 in the Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal, 20, no.6:318-29.
19. Cormack founded the Boeothick Institution on 2 October 1827 in Twillingate, before he set off on his expedition into Beothuk country.
20. McGregor is the only person to use this spelling. Cormack spelled the name Shawnawdithit, Shannadithit, Shawnadithit, and Shanawdithit. This last one is the most commonly used spelling (Marshall, Ingeborg. A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk. Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 1996:449).
21. [original note]: I have a copy of Suetonius (printed at Amsterdam in 1497), which belonged to Gibbon, and which I purchased among other books last summer, 1834, at the sale of his library, at Lausanne; in it, the medallion profile of Tiberius is nearly an exact resemblance of that which Shaa-naan-dithit sketched of her father.
22.) All other contemporary records maintain that the two women who gave themselves up together with Shanawdithit (see this article pg.318, parag.2) were her (adoptive?) mother and sister (Howley, 1915:229).

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