



# Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

The Only Multi-Racial Worldwide Indigenous Confederacy In Existence

## A series of fortunate events in the early life of urban born indigenous Rights Activist Damon Gerard Corrie

*Sunday, April 18, 2010*

My parents and older brother Craig told me that just prior to my birth my parents were watching him as he walked from our house up the road to Granny's house - when suddenly Craig looked up into the sky in terror and ran back to my parents screaming and crying. My brother told them (and he still remembers this) that he "Saw a huge Harpy Eagle swooping down from the sky towards him with a naked man in one set of talons and a naked woman in the other".

I was born on 12th of November 1973 at 1.30pm and that same day there was a full moon. I was the fourth born of the fourth generation maternally descended from my Great-great grandfather Hereditary Chief Amorotahe Haubariria (Flying Harpy Eagle - in English) - who was the last in an unbroken line of Chiefs of our particular Arawak Clan (Eagle) in Guyana. Oral tradition says that because his sole surviving child was a daughter (my grandmothers mother) - and because the authority must pass to a male heir only - great-grandfather had told his daughter that If one of her sons, or the son of her son (etc) - would marry back into the tribe, his authority would be conferred to that male descendant. I would later be told this after the fact, but I had a destiny to fulfill whether I knew of it or not.

I also later learned that the numbers 4 and 9 were significant in Lokono-Arawak spirituality as you will have noted by time you complete this article.

As a toddler my mother tells the story of me climbing over the garden gate and disappearing, an event that threw the entire middle-class Barbados neighborhood of Maxwell Terrace (where we were then living) into a state of panic with fears that I had been kidnapped, I was later found sitting in a cave that overlooked the area.

Once enrolled into the private Catholic School of St. Angela's the head nun in the junior department Sister Mary Ignatius informed my mother that I was not like other children, and if all the classes were conducted outside under the trees I would be the top student; alas that was not to be so I sailed through the system as an average student - academically speaking.

I always knew that my maternal Great-grandmother was a Lokono-Arawak 'Princess' (for lack of better term to describe a daughter of hereditary rulers - since in the Arawak language there exists no special noun for the children of the Hereditary Chief) from Guyana, and that we descended from a long line of Hereditary Chiefs of the tribe stretching back over several centuries, but I never knew that these basic facts would become the core elements in the destiny that life had in store for me.

I also recall telling my maternal Grandmother (who turned 96 in March 2010) very matter-of-fact when I was but a lad of 16 "Gran, by the time I am 20 I will be married back into the tribe and I will be a father!"

My many adventures in Guyana all began when I was 18 years old in August of 1992, it was then that I accompanied my older brother Craig's best friend Steve Campbell to the country known as 'the land of many waters'.

Most of this trip was spent 'investigating' the night life in Georgetown (as you would expect from 2 young single heterosexual guys), but I was most fortunate when a gentleman friend of one of the girls we had met (his name was 'Russ' and he was one of the diplomats from the United States Embassy in Georgetown) offered to give us a day tour of an Arawak reservation that he said was closest to Georgetown "just 3 hours drive to get there" he said; as though it was just around the corner.

We left the next day in his Red 4x4 enclosed jeep, half of the drive was on paved highways that led from Georgetown to Linden (the Bauxite mining town), and the other half was on a winding, water-filled, white sand trail across seemingly never-ending savannas that ultimately terminated in the center of Pakuri Village, on the 240 square mile Pakuri Arawak Territory (population today of 2,000).

Just before we reached I painted black stripes on my face and upper body, and once in the village I felt a sudden and overwhelming sense of belonging that I had never felt anywhere else in the world in my life up to that point (I had traveled every August to various countries since I was 11 years old).

Russ introduced us to the then elected village Chief - a burly ex-Soldier of the Guyana Defense Force by the name of Leyland Clenkian who had seen combat against Surinamese Soldiers in Guyana years before when the Surinam government had attempted to seize a border region.

I purchased a fine looking 5 foot long Arawak bow and 3 arrows from the only other adult Arawak gentleman who was present with the Chief, his name was Vincent Simon - and he later brought some beautiful craft out to our accommodation in Georgetown for me.

From meeting the two gentlemen, Steve, myself and the 2 sisters we brought with us from Georgetown - Lisa and Karen Busby (and their now deceased brother Dionne) - walked for what seemed like about a mile in the direction the Chief had told us the river where we could swim lay, a small crowd of children had congregated around us and followed us to the riverside. I would later learn that several of these children were my wife's younger siblings, nieces and nephews.

The children were following us because apart from the body pain I was wearing - both Steve and I were wearing Vietnam era American military Tiger-stripe camouflage with hunting knives on belts on our waists, and because both Steve and I had brown complexions and straight black hair like members of the tribe; they kept asking us which tribe and what Army we belonged to.

I told my family history hundreds of times that day to receptive ears, and I promised to return to Pakuri as soon as I could afford it.

My chance to travel again to Pakuri came on November 28th 1992 after I had just returned from a 14 day stay (my first) with a Carib family on their Territory in the island of Dominica, both of these trips had received the blessing of my Great uncle David Arnold DeWeever (last surviving brother of my maternal grandmother and the only Grandpa I knew in my teen years) who was making his life's last visit to his sisters and their families in Barbados at this time.

Grandpa David was a decorated WWII veteran and had travelled to Guyana from his adopted home (since 1926) in England in the 1960's prior to the Amerindian rebellion of December 31st 1969 against the then Marxist dictator Forbes L. Burnham - and had tried valiently through the law Courts to save the tribal territories that comprised our former Chieftdom for the few people who were still living in the area. Unfortunately the case was lost in the biased judicial system of the oppressors and the historic lands on the Upper Demerara River were annexed by the State.

At the Timehri International airport (the only one) in Guyana I met a respectful and friendly Muslim taxi driver called Mubarak Kazan, who took me to Creations craft shop in Georgetown. I knew (very, very well) an Amerindian and Portuguese mixed-race young lady that worked there called 'Vanessa' from my first trip with Steve - and I had remembered that 'Vincent' on Pakuri had told me they sold their crafts to 'Creations'. Luckily for me a middle-aged Arawak lady called 'Elvira Simon' was still in the shop when I arrived - having just concluded a sale of Ite Palm Straw carpets to the owner 'Dennis'. I told Mrs. Simon that I wanted to return to Pakuri, and she told me she was on her way back there herself that very moment; so I offered to pay the taxi driver Mubarak to take us as close to the trail to Pakuri as he could get us. He took us to the same half-way point where the asphalt ends and the sand track begins - his 2-wheel drive car could not go any further.

It was now 2pm and we set off on the 14 mile (as the crow flies) hike, she carried only a handbag and I an old British Army canvas back-pack - full to the brim with my belongings. The walk was long and tiring, the soft sand underfoot made it feel akin to a 28 mile hike on asphalt - in terms of the physical exertion; secondly - my back-pack was clearly over it's designed carry limit and the shoulder straps soon cut into my skin and made me very uncomfortable - to put it mildly.

It was sunset, around 6pm, when we reached the western edge of the 3mile long by 1 mile wide Pakuri village, I had no-where to stay so Mrs. Simon kindly invited me to stay in her home; which I gladly accepted.

Once settled in it was not long before I revealed to everyone in the household that I had come seeking a virgin wife (as my mother, grandmother etc. had been - I am proud to say) in keeping with the tradition of my hereditary Chief ancestors; the mother of the heirs to the lineage must be of high moral standing. On my fourth day (December 2nd 1992) on Pakuri this second time around I was introduced to a 17 year-old petite full-blood Lokono-Arawak beauty called Shirling Simon, as it turned out - the husband of my hostess was this young lady's uncle (Edward Simon) and he was taking me to his older brother Joseph Simon's house as he had 4 daughters still un-wed (2 of them were too young in any case), I saw Shirling coming our way with her long flowing black hair and my interest was peaked -so to speak, we were introduced and I shook her hand - then I hastily gave her uncle Edward my camera and in one fluid move handed it to him saying "Please take a photo of us together" as I quickly put my arm around Shirling's shoulders and we both smiled for the camera. (I still have that photo taken in the exact first minute we met framed on the wall in our bedroom).

I courted her favor for the next few days, everywhere we went her siblings had to accompany us - lest anything ignoble should occur, once I felt confident and Shirling had assured me that she would indeed have me as her husband - I asked her parents for permission to marry her; they set me before the Sanhedrin - which is what I call the intense interrogation that her uncle Lloyd Andrews put me through (I was expecting to be sent to Pontius Pilate at any minute) before he gave his verdict to her parents that the marriage should be allowed, his wife Bibi Andrews (sadly now deceased) had remarked as I left "I wish we had a daughter of our own for you to marry" - which I found very flattering. Exactly 9 days after we met for the very first time Shirling and I were married on 11th December 1992.

My wife later told me that before we ever met in person she had seen me walking around the reservation and had remarked to her friends "You see that man there - he is my husband!" .....What is to be WILL be.

I also later learned that Shirling is a descendant of 3 Arawak brothers who were the children of the Semechi (Holy man) of my own Great-great grandfather Chief Flying Harpy Eagle, when our original Eagle Clan Chieftom on the Upper Demerara River had ended after two waves of Measles and smallpox Epidemics in the 1800's

the few survivors were Christianised by Anglican Missionary Priest Rev. Austin (who was trained at the Codrington Seminary School in Barbados when he came out to the colonies from England) and they scattered, our Holy Man Koyaha Maka (Macaw Spirit) had 3 surviving sons who were given the surname 'Simon' and they migrated to Pakuri where they took wives and became one of the 4 principal founding families.

Our first child (a son) Hatuey - was conceived on our wedding night (continuing my 'waste no time' trend apparently) - I know this because apart from obvious reasons the morning after we had become Mr & Mrs Corrie my deceased maternal grandfather Cecil Corbin appeared to me and asked me two questions which I could not answer (and so I cried for not being able to do so and for the sheer joy of seeing him again for the first time in my life since he had died of cancer weeks before my 6th birthday); one question was about "the Children"...Children? what was Grandad talking about? At this point I did not have even one child - yet he spoke about 'children'....it baffled me. A few days later after some hugs and tears my ticket expired and I returned to Barbados - where I told my parents "By the way, when I was in Guyana - I got married.

On the 13th of September 1993 my wife Shirling celebrated her 18th birthday, on the 17th of September our first child Hatuey was born, the circle that had been broken with the death without an heir on tribal lands by my ancestor in the late 1800's - had seen the birth of an heir on tribal lands by his descendant in the late 1900's - and the circle has been restored.

On November 12th 1993 I celebrated my 20th birthday...indeed I had married back into the tribe and HAD become a father - all before my 20th birthday.

4 children later (daughter Aderi - September 26th 1994 - who sadly died at 3 days old, son Tecumseh - April 18th 1996, daughter Sabantho - January 18th 1999, and daughter Laliwa - January 28th 2007), on 11th of December 2009, Shirling and I celebrated 17 years of marriage.

*Damon Gerard Corrie*

*Written on 18 April 2010 on a day of introspection on the 14th birthday of his son Tecumseh, prior to the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; which he is attending for the 3rd consecutive year.*