

The Bajan Reporter



Barbadian of Guyanese Arawak descent now the most influential Indigenous rights activist in CARICOM

Well known Worldwide Indigenous Rights Activist Damon Gerard Corrie (*himself of maternal Guyanese Lokono-Arawak descent*), is now the Caribbean representative on the Planning Committee of the 4th Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas; it is a three-year mandate.

With the majority of votes of support coming in from every Caribbean country that harbors an Indigenous population – Corrie joins 2 Representatives from Mesoamerica, and 3 from South America on this important body; North America will decide imminently on its representatives – bringing the Planning Committee to a final membership of eight. Damon has been a firm believer and staunch advocate of the Inter-American system embodied by the Organization of American States (OAS) since he first became involved with it in the year 2000, and of the United Nations since he became involved in it in 2008.



Damon Corrie founded and leads the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations

Corrie prides himself on being “*just as the late great Barbadian Prime-Minister Errol Barrow described - a friend to all but satellite of none*“, and he describes his supporters around the world as being “Indigenous people who know that they can count on me to fight for their rights no matter how dire the circumstances they find themselves constrained by may be, I have a reputation for defending them to extremes that no normal Indigenous Rights Organization or individual activist in the Caribbean would dare even to consider, as they prefer to write diplomatic letters and hold futile marches with placards, I personally have no fear for authority whatsoever and I prefer to let the powers that be in 3rd world countries know in no uncertain terms that their illegal & hostile actions against Indigenous

Peoples within their borders will have consequences for them if I deem it necessary to redress the justified grievances of any Indigenous people who turn to me for help.

Corrie has the sympathetic ear of some very powerful people in world affairs, and was able to secure the release of an Indigenous Rights leader from illegal arrest and detention from no less of a rising world power than the Republic of India itself! Damon considers this his greatest victory to date, not only because the foe was his most formidable thus far, but because the man he helped to free was a close friend and colleague he had met at the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, it was only because Damon’s alert was delivered right to the Secretary General of the United Nations himself (thanks to important allies therein) – who in turn contacted the President of India – that this feat was accomplished....”it was then I truly realized that the pen could be mightier than the sword” Damon added.

Corrie describes the handful of ‘**organizational critics**‘ of himself in the region as being “*mediocre and money-hungry individuals suffering from petty jealousies who do not want to accept the fact that I have eclipsed them – merely because my words and actions in defense of Indigenous Peoples are simply stronger than theirs; and more and more Indigenous Peoples are realizing that half-hearted measures delivered in*

diplomatic overtures by aging cadres with no real stomach for an all-out fight no longer succeeds in this life, it would be in my critics own best interest to accept the open hand I offer them and work WITH me instead. The youth are angry.. and they want a young strong leader to push forward the wheel of history on their behalf, so that OUR children will grow up in a better world than the one we have inherited; and I have committed my very life to achieving just that for all indigenous peoples wherever the Creator grants me victory in this life.”

Corrie founded and leads the Pan-Tribal Confederacy of Indigenous Tribal Nations – which by no coincidence is the ONLY multi-racial worldwide Indigenous Confederacy in existence, and he has fought the good fight with several African and Asian governments AND several governments in the Americas – to protect Indigenous human rights and even secure the release of Indigenous peoples who were illegally arrested by security forces all over the globe; and it has truly been amazing to review Damon’s accomplishments and see what one young man with an unconquerable sense of destiny has been able to achieve for such a broad spectrum of Indigenous peoples in such a short space of time – in comparison to the regional organizations that all existed long before Damon came along.

Another thing that sets Damon and his Confederacy apart from his critics – is the fact that Damon has no ties to any government or non-Governmental funding/donor agency, Damon has refused money from third parties (*who tend to want influence in return*) and funds the website and his activities entirely from his own pocket, not even asking member tribal nations he represents for contributions.

Additionally, whilst’ Damon’s few rabid critics are fond of attacking him for ‘not being a real Amerindian because he is of mixed race descent’ it is humorous to note that almost all of these critics are also of mixed race descent themselves! Also worth noting is the established fact that Damon (who’s Guyana born 97 year-old maternal grandmother is still alive to attest to) is the great-grandson of Hereditary Lokono-Arawak Chief Amorotahe Haubariria in Guyana and was anointed in 1992 as ceremonial hereditary Chief of his Eagle Clan by his late maternal Great-Uncle David (who himself returned to Guyana in the 1960’s and fought in the law courts to preserve his peoples land rights); Damon was a single boy of 18 when this responsibility was placed on his shoulders by his grandmother’s elder brother who was visiting him in Barbados at that critical time in his life.

Within 4 months Damon had turned 19 and had returned to Guyana and married back into his tribe still living there on tribal lands, and thereby self-fulfilled a prophecy he had made to his grandmother 4 years before when he told her “Gran, by my 20th birthday I will be married back into the tribe and I will be a father”.

Damon’s wife Shirling Simon from Pakuri Arawak Territory in Guyana was a 17 year-old virgin when Damon married her when he himself was the age of 19, even more remarkable was the fact that Damon and Shirling married in less than 9 days of meeting each other for the very first time; and are still happily married 19 years (and 5 children) later! The couple fondly recalls that Shirling had a self-fulfilling prophecy of her own as she had told her family upon seeing Damon from afar before they ever met in person “**you see that man there, he is going to be my husband!**”

(Sadly, their second child & first daughter Aderi died at 3 days old and is buried on Pakuri territory).

Damon & Shirling were also the first parents on Pakuri Arawak Territory in modern times to give their children tribal names (previously the Church and a mis-education system had fostered a self-contempt in the tribe and only Biblical names were considered ‘good’), Damon’s four surviving children are son Hatuey, son Tecumseh Shawandase, daughter Sabantho Aderi, and daughter Laliwa Hadali. Several young parents in the tribe have followed Damon’s example and have also restored Lokono-Arawak names to their Lokno-Arawak children.

Damon often asks his ‘Amerindian’ critics to say what their children’s names are & where THEIR children

were born? (*for Damon's children have Amerindian names & were born in an Amerindian village*), to state what religion they follow? (Damon follows the ancestral tribal religion of his Clan), what games they play? (*Damon revived the ancient traditional Arawak game called Makwari on Pakuri*), and state whether their spouse is Amerindian or not (*Damon's spouse IS, but the spouses of most of his critics are NOT*); Damon then invites them to reflect on their answers, compare themselves to him, and THEN ask themselves 'who is the real Amerindian' in lieu of the facts that all can see...

When you point your finger at another – remember three fingers point back at you...a word to the wise should be good enough!

Damon's father Geddes was born in Trinidad, and Geddes's father's family traces back to a long line of Scottish nobles – one of whom (**Sir Walter Corrie**) fought alongside the famous Scottish hero William Wallace (*made famous in the movie 'Braveheart'*); it was Walter Corrie who with 12 other men re-captured Edinburgh Castle from the invading English forces in 1341, on father Geddes's mother's side Spaniard and native Venezuelan Amerindian blood exists in equal measure.

It is no insignificant reflection to note that the motto on the Corrie Family Coat of Arms is 'Vigilant and audacious', Damon certainly lives up to that.

When Damon discovered in his family tree (*through his grandmother's husband George **Cecil Corbin***) that he also had Kalinago ancestors from Dominica in the 17th century (*being a descendant of a sibling who emigrated to Barbados of their most famous Chief 'Carib Warner'*) it propelled him to create a symbolic Peace Treaty which he flew to Dominica in 1996 and signed with the then Kalinago Chief Hillary Frederick (**now deceased**), "*it was just to officially end a sad chapter in the history of the two tribes that co-exist in my own DNA, for just as Syria and Israel never concluded a formal peace thereby making them 'technically' still in a state of war with each other, I likewise wanted to put the final full-stop and close the book on Lokono-Arawak and Kalinago-Carib animosity*" Corrie explained.

In 1998 Damon and the late Kalinago Chief Fredericks signed in Holetown Barbados the '**Ishirouganaim Declaration**' (*witnessed by the Curator of the Barbados Museum & Historical Society*) in which they dedicated themselves to the creation of a de-militarized United Nations Protectorate Indigenous Autonomous State in South America by 2013, which incidentally will be Damon's 40th year.

Damon is already securing powerful support and cementing strategic alliances throughout the world for his bid to run for the elected leadership of this yet to exist theoretical entity...and with this committed young leader determined to make it become a reality, few should doubt his ability to do so.

Today, already among Damon's '*credentials*' are that he is a registered participant in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), is a member of the Indigenous Caucus of the Americas working group on the Draft Declaration of the Americas, and is also the sole Caribbean Representative on the planning committee of the 4th Indigenous Leaders Summit of the Americas (ILSA) – both at the Organisation of American States (OAS). Damon is also the CARICOM Commissioner on the Indigenous Commission for Communications Technologies in the Americas (ICCTA).