

The Missing Turtle Effigy



A story about New France by Cameron Beis-Leech

The Effigy



This is the turtle effigy that I based my story off of. If you don't know, an effigy is a sculpture of a person or an animal, and in this case, a turtle. Speaking of turtles, you might be wondering why turtles are significant to this story. Turtle island was a name given to Canada, or just North America in general, before Europeans arrived. The turtle is supposed to support the world, and is a symbol of life. The story of the turtle varies among different indigenous communities, and in some the turtle doesn't mean anything, but for the most part it's about turtles. I can see this fitting into my story because the indigenous people thought of turtle island as a luscious land full of trees and lakes, but because the people of New France didn't know that turtle island was sacred, they didn't care as much about it so they built large buildings and cut down trees, etc.

Once upon a time there was a man named Louise Pierre, who lived in the late 17th century, 1671 to be exact, and he really wanted to move to New France from his home in Marseille. He got a chance to when the French governor said he needed people to move to Quebec, and populate the area. He saw the opportunity and he took it. One month later he was on a ship headed towards New France.

It was a rough journey. There were a lot of storms and a lot of big waves that he had to pass. The ride was filled with sickness and vomiting. Once he got there though, he decided it was worth it. He had his own land that was much bigger than the land he owned in France. He decided as soon as he got there he wanted to become a fermier, or a farmer. He had so much open land on his property that he knew he was going to do well at growing and selling his products. Louise started growing wheat and corn and as he expected, his farm started doing really well. Because there were not many other places to buy food, Louises farm was a good option for many people. He worked hard day and night and made a good amount of money and he was really proud of himself.

After a year, Louise felt as if he was settled in to his house, and his farm. He now had lots of cows and chickens, and a big barn all because of his hard work. Little did he know, his life was about to change drastically.

One day Louise was out in his farm when he saw something shine out of the corner of his eye. He walked over to it. He picked it up, and realized it was a sculpture of something that had the resemblance of a turtle. He brought inside, and didn't think much of it for a while. The other day he was walking out to buy some water, when he overheard a few people talking.

"Have you heard of the turtle sculpture that went missing a few days ago?" Asked one of them.

"Yeah I heard those are important," replied the other, "and they have a big price on their head!"

"How much?"

"I heard 40 thousand,"

"Wow that's a lot of money!"

"What does it look like?" asked Louise

"It's yellow with a long head and what looks like scales on the top," Said one of the men.

Louise gasped inside his head. Did he have the valuable turtle effigy? He was freaking out with excitement, until he heard one of the men say,

"I'd kill for that sculpture."

Louise was now freaking out with nervousness, rather than excitement. Would this guy really kill for a sculpture of a turtle? He thought surely not, but he now knew he had to stay on high alert, and be extra careful.

He decided to talk to some native people that he knew, so he could learn about the sculpture more to figure out why it was so important. He learned that it was called an effigy, which is a model of a person or an animal. He also figured out that before colonists moved to New France, the indigenous people called it turtle island. The turtle was a symbol of life and the earth. They respected the turtle because without earth, life wouldn't exist. Later that night, a few people walk by his house, but stop out front. Louise went out to help them but noticed they were looking at his house and not at him. Confused, he looked back to see what it was they were looking at, and saw the turtle effigy through the window. He realized his mistake. He acted normal, said hello, and like acted like nothing was wrong but he was listening in on their conversation as they walked away.

"That was the effigy!" Exclaimed one.

"How are we going to get it?" Asked another.

By now they were out of earshot, but he knew enough to know what he needed to do. In the year of being in Quebec, he had made a few friends, one of which was Antoine, an innkeeper. Louise was sure that Antoine had room for the night. He took the turtle effigy, and a few clothes, and took off to central Quebec.

When he got there, Antoine welcomed him with joy and told him he could stay as long as he wanted. He told Antoine all about what was going on, and Antoine was amazed.

“You have the effigy?”

“Yeah, it’s in my bag”

“Holy cow!”

Antoine said he had been hearing about the effigy for the last few days nonstop. He also said he knew where he could give it to someone for money. Louise was super happy.

The next morning, Louise woke up and he wanted to visit the man who would give him the reward. Antoine told him where to go, and he was on his way. He got there and the man was delighted to see the effigy. He got his pay, and then he was delighted too! He had tons of money now! He made his way home, happier than ever. When he got there though he didn’t see his house, but the remnants of it. Those people from last night! They must have ransacked his house looking for the effigy!

He was super angry, and sad that his house was destroyed after a year of living in it. He knew that he had to move or else the people from the night before would come back.

In the end, Louise had moved to a bigger house, with the money that he received as a reward. More importantly though, he gained more respect for the land that he lived on, and the indigenous people that lived there before him.

About the author

Cameron Beis-Leech is from Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and has lots of respect for the native people that came before him, and the land that he lives on. He doesn't have any specific connection to the native people in Vancouver but the turtle effigy really interested him, and he wrote this story because he wanted other people to hear the story about turtle Island, and the turtle effigy. He wanted to teach a lesson while also making a fictional story that was somewhat realistic, as well as being intense and a little crazy, and that's exactly what he did in *The Missing Turtle Effigy*.