Meanings of Micmac Words

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I have chosen five Micmac words that I want to present to you at this conference. Five words and their meaning. These are not too many, considering a language like Micmac and all the words that go with it. But most of you here have been involved and have learned some of the Native languages. I really don't know how deep you are studying, or if you can feel the language.

To be very honest with you, I sometimes feel very uncomfortable or very out of place, and I wonder why I come. Perhaps it is the Indianness in me, that would make me feel at times in certain situations. So you might ask, "Why is she here if she feels this about it?" and I'm the only one that can answer that question. I feel that I always learn something about my history concerning my ancestors. But then when it comes to learning culture, I already live with my culture everyday. I gave you a short view of how I feel which has no bearing with the title of this talk. Getting back to the five words I have chosen to use, they are: MOSGOLGOMAI; SEMI; IGNEMOI; SENÔPI; EGPITJÔGAATO. The first word, MOSGOLGOMAI, I always find to be very expressive and unique in it's own sense. It means "I feel something in my shoe," that is, while walking. It is such a simple word, and means so much, for it expresses the feeling of being uncomfortable, where and by what.

The second word SEMI is also very expressive and a beautiful word. It means "Give me something to eat," that is, something that can be consumed. It describes that you feel a craving or hunger for this certain food. For an Indian, you are honored when a person asks to share his food with you, or visa versa. It is a natural and very normal thing to do, and it is nothing to be ashamed of or offensive.

The word IGNEMOI which means "Give me," is asking for something other than anything that can be consumed, and this word could be interpreted as being used for begging only in certain cases, for example, when this person is actually lazy and won't do anything for himself. But in all cases it describes that a person is in need.

I believe that the word SEMI and its interpretation has been misinterpreted by non-Indians in the past, by naming Indians as beggars; and in French they had a name too. You people here might not be aware of it, but I have been aware of it from childhood. I have wondered so many times why my people were called by that word, and it was only after reading some of the literature of past writers, I realized why, and this was why this word SEMI and ways of the people were misjudged and misunderstood.

The fourth word SENÔPI is a new word for me, and I thought it might be appropriate to use this word at this time. I might have heard of this word when I was a child, but it is only last summer, that I had an opportunity to
research that word through my elders. It means "paddle," not an ordinary paddle - an ordinary paddle is OOGTAAGEN, used for rowing. SENÔPI is short and wide and is the only one that is used when paddling from the stern of the boat. It defines what and purpose of this paddle.

The fifth and last word, EGPITOGAATO, is a word that is most confusing for Indian people when speaking the English language. It means "to close it, to shut, to turn it off," and it is the only word for that meaning in Micmac. When we want to say "close the door," we say EGPITOGAATO; if we want to say "turn the T.V. off," we say EPPITJÕEGEGEE; if we want to say "Put the cover on the pot," we say EPPITJÔGAAL. For a child in school it is really difficult to express this meaning in English. The following example will show this difficulty. A grade four student enters a classroom with her hat on. As she enters she realizes that she forgot to take her hat off. She looks at the teacher with a big smile and says, "Oh, I forgot my hat to take off." Saying her sentence exactly the way it is structured in her native language.