This essay is NOT FINISHED!

We will continue to add to it and create an actual reference page.

It is meant to be an example of the writing process.

This version is your example for the first two sections (excluding the Introduction).

What is Meant by Authentic First Peoples’ Voice and Why it Matters

A Case Study of Grey Owl Becky Miller

Porter Creek Secondary School

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**Introduction**

**Grey Owl**

Grey Owl was a renowned Indigenous Canadian author and conservationist who captivated people with his stories of conservation and the great Canadian wilderness. Grey Owl was the son of a Scotsman and an Apache mother from New Mexico who served for Canada during the First World War (Marshall, 2015). Upon his return to Canada after the war, Grey Owl was "rescued from snow blindness by an Ojibway chief called Ne-Ganikabo, or The One Who Stands First” (Onyanga-Omara, 2013, p. 1). He spent four years living with Ne-Ganikabo and learning skills that would allow him to live off the land (Onyanga-Omara, 2013).

Onyanga-Omara (2013) reports that in 1925 Grey Owl married a woman by the name of Anahareo and together they lived in a cabin while Grey Owl maintained a trapline. After two years of marriage and a long winter of trapping, Grey Owl trapped a mother beaver and subsequently found two orphaned beaver kits in the lodge (Onyanga-Omara, 2013). Anahareo convinced Grey Owl to bring the two kits home and raise them in their cabin (Onyanga-Omara, 2013). Onyanga-Omara (2013) suggests that the experience of raising the beaver kits caused Grey Owl to stop trapping and instead focus on the conservation of the Canadian beaver.

In 1931 Grey Owl published a book titled, *The Men of the Last Frontier*, which was about the threats facing the Canadian wilderness (Lupton, 2021). The book was a huge international success, leading to a lecture tour in Europe and across the United States (Lupton, 2021). As a result of his impressive conservation work, Grey Owl was awarded jobs in both Riding Mountain National Park and Prince Albert National Park (Marshall, 2015). During his time spent in the national parks, Grey Owl wrote three more celebrated books and embarked on a second tour of Europe (Marshall, 2015).

Onyanga-Omara (2013) reports that this second tour included a “visit with the Royal Family at

Buckingham Palace” (p. 1). It was shortly after this tour that Grey Owl fell ill and died of pneumonia on April 13, 1938 (Onyanga-Omara, 2013).

**The Controversy**

Immediately after his death, the *North Bay Nugget* published a story that claimed that the famous Grey Owl was in fact Archibald Belaney, an Englishman born in Hastings, and not of Indigenous heritage as he claimed. (Marshall, 2015). More newspapers picked up the story and began to unravel the secret identity of the famous author and conservationist. It turns out that Archibald Belaney grew up captivated by stories of First Nations in Canada and moved to Canada at the age of 17 (Onyanga- Omara, 2013). After meeting Ne-Ganikabo and spending time with the Ojibway people, Archibald adopted the name Grey Owl and invented the story about his mixed heritage (Onyanga-Omara, 2013). He went to great lengths to assume his new identity, including dying his hair black and tinting his skin with henna (Lupten, 2021). It was after this point in time that he married Anahareo and the legend of Grey Owl, the author and conservationist, was born.

In the aftermath of the truth being exposed, many of his books were pulled, or his real name replaced his alias, which did not have the same selling power (Onyanga-Omara, 2013). His conservation work and championing of the Canadian wilderness was quickly forgotten, as the story simply became one about his false identity and lies of Indigenous heritage (Marshall, 2015). “The meteoric decline of Belaney's career implies that had he written as an Englishman, his books would have been received as mediocre offerings. But writing as a native gave these works more flavour, more credibility, simply more appeal” (Shortt, 1980, p. 117). His literary works now carried the same label as the man, "fraud" (Shortt, 1980). Lupten (2021) reports that even today, Indigenous Canadians feel betrayed by the “ultimate

example of cultural appropriation” (p. 1), by a man who championed himself as an Indigenous author and conservationist.

**First Peoples’ Voice**

**Conclusion**

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