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Part I:

The *Travels in North America* is a narrative or a memoir of “extraordinary hardships and sufferings on the island of Antiscoto” by M. Crespel. This memoir speaks of Crespel’s time spent on the island of Anacosti in 1739. The document was printed in Soho London in 1797. Long ‘s’ type/script in the document are in the old English form ‘f’, which is a good indication that the document was printed in 18th century England. Miles, and latitudes were also used throughout the documents are units of measurement, and the reference of Indigenous peoples as Indians were standard practice in 18th century New France.

As the document was authored by and about M. Crespel, a priest, his involvement with the church is well documented which would lead me to believe that Crespel as an individual is in fact real. The shipwreck of the *Renommee* has been historically documented, and as there were other individuals onboard, there is no debate that this event took place or not. However, a bias, or exaggeration of the information produced in the document could be possible and somewhat expected. Some details may have been left out or elaborated especially surrounding Crespel’s self-portrayed modest and brave deeds.

The intended audience would have been Crespel’s peers upon observing that the memoir has been referred to as an adventure story by the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, English men. Crespel produced this source for an audience that could perhaps present Crespel with recognition, prestige, and authority of life in New France. This document perhaps could have been produced as a source of historical reference or ethnographic report of sorts but the later seems more plausible.

Part II:

Emmanuel Crespel's memoir, *Travels in North America*, makes it apparent that Crespel and his associates from France had other beliefs, morals, customs, and other habits than that of Indigenous peoples to whom the land belonged. These differences shaped complex relationships between the French and the land, animals, resources, belief systems, languages and ultimately, Indigenous peoples themselves. *The Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (DCB) entry for Crespel describes his memoir as a "simple adventure story."¹ However, *Travels in North America* is much more than just a memoir. Crespel's memoir paints a picture of how the French viewed Indigenous peoples as well as how settlers interpreted Indigenous thoughts of the French. This memoir, on the surface, depicts the adventures of a religious man seeking aid from Indigenous peoples, as he and his men slowly perish, is riddled with arrogance, ego, power, authoritarian pursuits, and a lack of respect for the land and Indigenous peoples. This memoir, or adventure story, should not be glorified or held in any high regard. *Travels in North America* should be used as a tool to understand better the genuine and complex connections made between the French, the land, and Indigenous peoples during the 18th century.

Anticosti Island is situated at the mouth of the St. Lawrence River. Since the 1690s, Anticosti Island has been known for shipwrecks, yet despite its foreseen danger, the island was still viewed as valuable by settlers. A description of the Anticosti Island by Mr. T. Wright, who was ordered by the government to survey the island, identified and documented Anticosti's

¹ http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/crespel_emmanuel_4E.html Accessed November 25th 2019

landscape as containing "1,699,840 acres of very indifferent land."² The vegetation consisted of; "cranberries, gooseberries, strawberries, huckleberries, red Indian-berries, juniper-berries, peas, parsley, onions, lambs quarters, or wild spinach, Indian potatoes, sarsaparilla, maiden-hair, and Indian tea."³ The vegetation was documented to be all naturally grown to the land. Marine and other wildlife, as well as the island's resources of stone and timber such as birch and spruce⁴, were also documented. Wright was able to observe the potential for seal fishery and noted rumours of a silver mine. Wright was able to perceive the connections between the land and the animals. However, these connections and descriptions read as more of an inventory list for future resource extraction rather than a profound connection to the beauty and life that exist on the island.

Emmanuel Crespel was a priest; he born in 1703 in France. By 1724 Crespel embarked on a ten-week voyage to Quebec. Having to return to France in 1736, Crespel boarded the *Renommee* on November 3rd, and on the morning of November 14th, 1736, the *Renommee* shipwrecked-on Anticosti Island. Upon arriving to shore after fighting against the sea and rain, Crespel's stated that "our first care was to return thanks to God for our deliverance from such imminent danger and indeed, without his providential aid, it was not possible we should have escaped death."⁵ Crespel's faith is substantially depicted throughout this memoir. Although his faith may present itself as endowing, through his use of faith and religion, we note a trace of prominence, tyranny, snobbery, and influence. Crespel was a very religious man; he even celebrated mass and performed sacred ceremonies without the presence of a physical church

² Crespel, M. *Travels in North America*. Soho, London: Sampson Low, 1797. XIV

³ Ibid., XXII

⁴ Ibid., XVI

⁵ Ibid., 61

while wrecked on the island. However, Crespel's reasoning for being a man of the Lord appears to be about prestige and power rather than for the word of the Lord itself, Crespel stated; "I was confident our prayers would procure us the effect we wished. Everyone applauded at my proposition."⁶ This was not the first time that Crespel used his position with the church to persuade others or to achieve the desired result. To guarantee his survival, Crespel uses his authority to invoke fear in others and through his relationship with the divine shows egotistical and arrogant characteristics. Crespel believes that through his connection to the divine, as a priest, he is above all others on the island; "you will perhaps be surprised that I should undertake to cut wood, as an employment not proper for me, and to which my strength was inadequate. In one respect, you are right... I am indebted to my preservation."⁷

Crespel's dodgy antics are not only found within his belief system but also with his connection to the land and the animals. The day prior to Crespel's departure, two foxes were killed and to be eaten on the voyage to ration supplies, but nothing more was said about the fox.⁸ It is easy to presume that Crespel did not use the fox in its entirety. Perhaps Crespel did not have any means, or maybe the knowledge, to use all of the foxes. In contrast, Indigenous peoples, being well connected with both land and animals, would not have let furs and other useful resources from the fox go to waste. Crespel cut timber for firewood, which also was spent as it was lost under the snow⁹, something Indigenous people who have an understanding and respectful relationship with the land would not have done. Crespel and his crew do not connect with the resources of the land. Crespel and his men have no relationship with the land, the

⁶ Ibid.,72

⁷ Ibid., 95

⁸ Ibid., 84

⁹ Ibid., 106

animals, or the resources the island has to offer, nor was there any attempt in establishing a relationship.

Crepel's poor relationship with religion, the land, and animals much reflect his relationship with Indigenous peoples. Crepel's knowledge of the Indigenous language and behaviours of Indigenous peoples acknowledges a previous relationship between Crepel and Indigenous peoples. Crepel was aware of exactly when and why the Indigenous peoples would return to the island; "we learned that there were some Indians in the island and that towards the end of March, when they returned to their huts in search of their canoes, they might assist us."¹⁰ Crepel hoped that due to the Indigenous peoples hospitable character, they would be able to help him, and his people return to the mainland. Rather than using his knowledge of Indigenous peoples to form a positive and meaningful relationship with them, he used his knowledge to threaten and extort Indigenous peoples for his gain. Crepel stated, "I told him we should treat him ill, if he did not consent speedily. Fear of death set in him speedily to work to make a sleigh or a sledge."¹¹ Crepel even used an Indigenous child as a hostage knowing that the Indigenous peoples would feel fear and give into Crepel's wishes; "I told them I though the child would be too much fatigued in walking, and would put him into the canoe... Thus, the boy became a hostage to use for the fidelity of his father."¹²

Crepel's relationships were not the only ones that were complex during the 18th century. Although this memoir gives an only brief insight into the complex relationships Indigenous

¹⁰ Ibid., 109

¹¹ Ibid., 157

¹² Ibid.,158-159

peoples hold with the French and others, they did have complex relationships with their belief system and morals. They were true to their word and brought food and provisions to Crespel and his men, despite their fears of harm and awareness of European illness. Indigenous peoples also built a relationship with the Dutch, who provided them with muskets. It would be remarkable if Indigenous peoples did not see the flaws in Crespel's relationships based on his treatment of them during this time. Indigenous peoples have a secure and intricate connection to the land. To exist, one needs four elements, air, water, earth and fire. In taking away one life would end. There is a balance that needs to be had mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually, and by disrupting this balance and by not having one of those four areas, one cannot exist. If it were not for this belief system, perhaps Crespel and his men would not have been aided by the Indigenous peoples.

Works Cited

Crespel, M. 1797. *Travels In North America*. Soho: Sampson Low.

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