The Plourdes and Kitpou

Nora Plourde formerly of Sydney writes a brief history on how they were taken by an Indian imposter by the name of Kitpou:

In the fall of 1966, there was an ad in the Toronto papers for teachers in Adult Education of Indian people. The locale was 1,300 miles from Toronto. My husband and I, both hired as instructors, sold all of our belongings and ventured into a life which we believe in so much today. Teaching in Kenora, Ontario, was difficult...made more so because of both of us rebelled at the stupidity and ignorance of rules applied to a people forty miles from town—without electricity, water or convenience of any kind. Though the reserve we were on was only forty miles from town, we were at most times completely isolated due to weather conditions.

After our term was up in 1967, we came to Ottawa with high hopes that we could do more here since this is Canada's capital —the seat of government and also the headquarters of the Federal Department of Indian Affairs. How naive we were in thinking such ideas.

The business...Indian business...is a wonderful one but unfortunatly for us and our brothers, we have to fight a little harder than usual because of prejudice. This I am going to explain in detail.....

In May, just when we were coming back on top of the heap after the loss in March, we suffered our second theft....this time by a man we had taken in our home a month earlier as an Indian Midicine Man. James Munster, alias, Kitpou, etc. is not in any way an Indian but has been masquerading as one for the past eight or nine years. He has been received by people in high places and had received many letters under this false name. Monies have been paid to him which were supposed to be for Indian people, none ever reached the Indian people.

Munster came to us in the month of April after we had contacted him to assist us in putting on a Pow-Wow here in Ottawa. We had been given his name by an Indian who believed him to be an Indian. Munster arrived in Paril even though the show had been postponed. After explaining at length at how he had been working at the cause we have been fighting for and we believing...he stayed on with our family at our home. When my husband had mentioned money, this man Munster, alias Kitpou, stated that as a medicine man all he asked for was a shelter and food for him and his family... This we strongly believed for the medicine man in the old Indian culture was truly a missionary and relied on his people for his livlihood. By his good deeds he was fed and looked after...very much like the pope or queens of today.

While we awaited the day of the PowWow which was to be held on Sunday May 18, we busied ourselves making the clothing which was to be worn by the participants.

Our show was held without too much success at the boxoffice but it was enough of a showing to realize that people in this society wanted to find out more of the Indian culture of today and yesterday.

That night we celebrated in a little way by going to one of our coffee shops where a young American Cherokee-Irish by the name of Leonda was appearing. Munster and his wife went with us and we were also accompanied by at least fifteen Indian young people. The show was beautiful, lasted two hours.

Our arrival home at about twelve thirty brought about the exchange between Munster and us that we, were not going into the shoppe the next until late in the afternoon. Little were we to know that we were answering vital questions.

The next day, Monday the 29th of May, was a holiday here in Canada. We arose at about noon and already we found out that Kitpou had made arrangements to have his wife and children board the train for Nova Scotia. His own words were "they are too much of a burden on me". He asked my husband if he could borrow our car, little did we then realize that he had being using it all morning in transporting his theft.

My husband remarked that he suspected Munster would not be back and to my question as to why he thought so, he answered: "I have this funny feeling that something is wrong."

We made our way to the shoppe to find out our suspicions were true, not only that he had flown the coup but in his escape he had ransacked the shoppe and had further gone to the hall where the production had been held and removed all the clothing and props we had left there. (Because of the heavy rain and als because of the late hour after the last Pow-Wow of the day before, we had arrived at the decision to let the collecting be done on Monday. Because Munster, was known to be with my husband, the caretaker at the hall saw no reason to disbelieve him when he mentioned that the goods were being collected for return to the shoppe. Instead of packing off the goods collected for return to the shoppe Munster packed most of the merchandise into his suitcases and packed them off to a hostel. Because he had mentioned many times the name of this hostel, this was the first place we checked into. Sure enough, the clerk was most cooperative and told us the Kitpou (they knew him by no other name) had been there and and had even booked a room for his son.

We called the police and a policemen came some time later to the shoppe for our report. He accompanied my husband to the hostel to see the packages of Munster. My husband was told to return the next day to the police station as this was all that could be done for that day.

The next day Tuesday the 21st, my husband went to the police stationa to see what charges he would lay. The detective went to the hostel with him and looked through the baggage that had been left there by so-clled Kitpou andremoveall that which belonged to this shoppe All of this merchandise, worth approximately $800.was taken to the police station by the detective and there it remains to today. ! The total stolen by this man at least $2000. I say least because we were not sure of the amount of small items such as necklaces, etc that he removed as well as deerskins and mooseshide skins.

That afternoon at around five o'clock the detective, called to inform my husband that the whole matter would be settled the morning at the police station, where he, the detective, as well as his police chief, Mr. Munster, (alias Kitpou) and my husband would confront one another.

The next morning, I accompanied my husband to the police station but was not allowed to enter the place where the goods were being held. My husband said that only the detective and the man thief were in the room (no police chief, as promised) when the detective said that surely they as men, could settle this between themselves, maybe by splitting the goods. Mr. Munster naturally said this would be very well with him but my husband said that he was not splitting any goods as they rightfully belong to our shoppe and that we had the receipts for them. The detective, in answer to this statement by my husband, said that as far as he was concerned nothing further could be done until we got in touch with our lawyers.

That day, Wednesday and the next Thursday we contacted three different lawyers only to have the first two refuse our case very diplomatically, of course, and the third to answer my husband's "What in the hell is the matter with you guys anyway, no one wishes to take my case?" with a "Frankly, Mr. Plourde, the detective believes the other guy (meaning Munster Kitpou) and not you". With this I made plans to go to Toronto the next day to see about a lawyer. A woman writer gave us the name of the Civil Rights Liberties and they,in turn got us in touch with the lawyers here in Ottawa.

These lawyers found out that they could under no circumstance lay any charges against the man either for theft, forgery, impersonation, fraud, etc. and this was because the police would not accept the charge. The next step was to lay a charge against the detective, the Mr Morell, for holding our goods in the custody of the city of Ottawa. In law, this seems to be very legal!

Before our laying of the charge could be completed, however, we the owners of Indian Crafts had to post a bond in cash equal in value to double of the amount of goods that are now in the police station. This, incidentally, is to show our good faith and intentions, according to law, that we would have to find two bondable persons who would sign for the amount of $800. (The amount of the goods in the station is about $800.but the lawyers lowered the amount to make it easier for us to get the bond.) As far as the money was concerned we were not able to lay down in cash $800.not after the loss we had had (incidentally, as well as stealing from us, this man Munster Kitpou also made it a point to go to very nearly every business on this street of Bank to say that we at Indian Crafts were going bankrupt and that he himself had put in $1500 into the business of Indian Crafts and all to no avail...This was an absolute lie and of course, very damaging as it did our shoppe no good during the months of June and July...receipts for these months, which should have been the hottest months of the year in money were our worst. People will always tend to believe the bad news about another rather than the good.)the only person whom we have found in this province of Ontario not only believing about also having a position high enough to be able to sign a bond is my brother. He worked for the Union of Ontario Indians Association in Toronto. Another sister, is willing to sign but because she is in another province she cannot be accepted as a bondsman. Many people have listened to us and our fantastic story, but none have gone on to assist in the way we need help. About a month ago, when we received a letter from our lawyers saying that as far as they were concerned the vase of PLOURDE versus THE POLICE versus KITPOU was closed as we had not sent the name of the other bondsman nor produced the money On January 27th, the local paper, Ottawa Citizen, carried a picture of a detective with goods that had been recovered. Under the picture it was stated that stolen goods like this, after being recovered, and that were reclaimed within a year would be auctioned off. The year since our theft of May 1969 will be up in another month or so, and although we do not have much to gain, moneywise in the recovery of our goods, the principle in this case is that as Indian people we are stuck...we can't win because we do not have money backing us or else not enough people to help us.

Another incident that may help in your evaluation this long story was that during the Christmas holidays we were again broken into. Someone broke the back window of our shoppe and walked out with approximately $10,000 worth of of finished merchandise. When we reported the matter to the police on December 29th, they sent a police constable to get the report.. All he did was write the list of missing articles in a little black book and say that we, of course, realized that the police could do very little in our case. He also asked if we had any insurance and to this we answered "no".Our reason for this is that the insurance companies wish to have this place burglar-proof and we would have to have iron bars on three windows as well as a door to make this possible. This we cannot afford as the cost is exorbitant and the landlord for this building believes in receiving every penny for his premises and not placing one fraction of a penny back into the property. When we rented this place almost two years ago, we did much cleaning up and repairing .. putting up complete new walls, sanding the floor to remove part of the dirt of many years, etc. and the few times we needed the landlord's assistance the Safety Inspector has had to write very strong letters to make him do repairs that are his responsibility. When we phoned the police station on January 27th to ask about the progress being made on our case of December, 1969, and why we had not received any communication from them, I was given the name of the detective in charge of our case, and also told that he would come into the shoppe the next day to speak with us, I, probably very rashly, said that if he had to wait for us to phone him in order to communicate with us he could very well stay away and also that it was very nice to know what we were getting for our tax dollars if strongly felt that nothing was done in this latest of matters because of the other theft of May, 1969 and the subsequent laying of a charge against the police and the City of Ottawa.

I have since found out that the RCMP have compiled or did compile a file on the man who stole from us...James Munster, alias Kitpou, Shaman of the Children of Light, etc. and this was done for the department of Indian Affairs of Amherst, Nova Scotia. This file I have been told is private and cannot be exposed. He did verify or answer my question that Mr. Munster is not an Indian in any way, but this was all he would say.

Last week we received a letter from British Columbia asking for information about a Shaman Kitpou who he is considering to employ as he is interested in opening a longhouse museum in which he, Mr. Maybee, is to provide the funds and Munster Kitpou is to provide the collection. (This collection the man mentions is genuine and consists of artifacts from Indian people taken from them by Munster Kitpou. Indian people have never thought to complain because they realize the facts they have to fight or rather the odds against them as Indians. It is pure fact that a white man is easier to believe than an Indian!

No doubt even if we write back to this gent with our information he would find it very hard to believe us as Munster Kitpou travels around the country with much literature, all to his favour. As I have previously mentioned in this letter, he has written to many people including the former Prime Minister Diefenbaker, the late Governor General Vanier, the former mayor of this city..Mayor Reid and when a person sees these documents it is very easy to believe this manwho dresses in Indian clothing!

I know not how to finish other than that I hope all that we have worked for in these years is not in vain...that there is a hope for us as a people and that there is justice in this immense country of ours. Can you show us that there is some?