

20191026 **Bill Ginger of the Nuuchah-nulth** Viktor Nonong Nonong

I yesterday met Bill Ginger of the Nuuchah-nulth, or the Nootka tribe of BC, Canada, at the café Starbucks, here on Lulu Island. He actually has Scottish ancestry, also. I saw him firstly, sitting and reading a book, having coffee, and wearing camouflage grey pants. His surname Ginger is an anglicization of the sound of a Nootka name. It sounds close to "ginger." His native language is virtually extinct. He and his family made recordings of Nootka, as an anthropological and ethnolinguistic study. I told him that his language was a "treasure for Canada." I told him that I wanted to learn about Canada through the natives. He said, "Canada is a great country." I agreed, but I told him that I wished that the native cultures were more prominent in the mainstream, as in Mexico with the Nahuatl (Aztecs) and the Maya peoples. He said that smallpox and other diseases decimated native populations in Canada during the contacts with Europeans. The natives were in isolation in the New World and had no immunity to Old World diseases. I told him that I once lived in East Vancouver, BC, and there was a native restaurant there. He said that it was difficult to maintain. I joked that probably the menu was really exotic, like "salmon with blueberries" or something. Bill showed sympathy or empathy with East Asians. In the 1960's, he served in the Vietnam War. (Incidentally, he has dual Canadian-American citizenship.) He mentioned that the military stationed him in Subic Bay and Olongapo in the Philippines then. He said that it was "a young man's

dream," referring to the carnal paradise there and then. He was in Japan, also.

The Nootka live on the Pacific Coast of Vancouver Island. Bill said that as a 7-year-old boy, he only knew his native Nootka, and he really lived natively, eating salmon and algae. He learned English, later. Bill is 81, now.

I previously have noted Nootka on the Web. It is a language full of affricate and fricative consonants and of glottalizations and ejectives. I remarked to Bill that his language was "like Japanese." He retorted, "No, it's like German!" Then, he recited a few eerie sentences in Nootka. My meaning about his language being "like Japanese" stems from the *psychology* of the language, but he was referring to the *phonology*, being "like German." The thinking of the Nootka, I opine, is more akin to Japanese. I guess that when Bill was just a boy, his thinking was more Japanesque.

Bill told of other Amerindian tribes. Bill mentioned his interest in Chinook Jargon, a pidgin trade language popular in the 19th century, in Oregon, Washington State, BC, and as far as Alaska. I have encountered this language during my serendipitous linguistic edutainment. He mentioned that he has at least one Musqueam relative. Bill is a positive man, and he said that he still feels young.

When Europeans first arrived in the Americas, there were hundreds of different Amerindian and Eskimo tribes with their different languages in different language families.

There was great variety in grammars, morphologies, and phonologies. In time, their numbers severely dwindled.

Nearing the end of our conversation, Bill pointed to the outside of the café's window and shouted, "Look! Eagles!" There were two eagles hovering in the greyish sky outside. He mentioned that they preyed on the crows and seagulls. Bill still has an *animistic* heart after all these years. The sighting of the eagles was extraordinary *synchronicity*.

I am an avid ethnolinguist and anthropologist about the Americas. I collect research papers and other documents concerning native languages and cultures in the Americas. I have fantasies about them. I always enjoy rereading Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home*, a special sci-fi book about the far future in Northern California, where people would live as the natives did. I used to watch a children's animated show on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network, APTN. It was *Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock*, about mid-1800's Tlingit cultural stories. They were deep in thought. My favourite native languages are Inuktitut (Eskimo), Classical Nahuatl (Aztec of Mexico), and Haida (of Haida Gwaii, formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands). I have learned just bits and pieces.



Anash and the Legacy of the Sun-Rock



"Xocolātl" or chocolate beverage of the Aztecs