

# Honouring a Legacy: Gerald Gloade Reflects on his Journey with Mi'kmawey Debert



Gerald Gloade

by Ross Nervig  
Communications Officer  
Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre

For nearly two decades, Gerald Gloade has been a guiding force at Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, bringing his talents as an artist, educator, and storyteller to the forefront of its development. Beginning his career as a graphic designer with the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, Gerald's focus shifted from forestry education to sharing Mi'kmaw culture and history through the landscapes and stories of Mi'kma'kik. As Program Development Officer, he has played a vital role in shaping educational programs and the future of the Centre itself. His storytelling—especially his interpretations of Kluskap stories—has captivated audiences of all ages,

deepening connections to Mi'kmaw knowledge and traditions.

Gerald has also been instrumental in MDCC's curatorial work, broadening the group's understanding of collections, places, people, practices, and events that will help shape the future Centre. Raised in Millbrook, where he still resides with his family, he has dedicated his life to passing on Mi'kmaw knowledge. As he prepares for retirement, Gerald reflects on his journey, the lessons he's learned, and the legacy he leaves behind

**Q: You've been part of MDCC for many years. Looking back, what are you most proud of during your time here?**

**Gerald Gloade:** It's been since 2005—20 years now. My proudest moments? Well, one that stands out was a presentation we did for Queen Elizabeth and Prince Philip. That was a

huge moment in my life. I mean, who gets to go one-on-one with the Queen of England, right?

We were told about it nine months in advance and were sworn to secrecy. I couldn't even tell my wife! It wasn't until a week before the event that Dr. Don Julien spilled the beans. He was talking to my wife and said, "Gerald must have told you about his presentation next week." She said no. And Don said, "Oh, this one is with the Queen of England."

That was in 2010, and I'll never forget it. I remember the Queen saying she was always fascinated with the Indigenous people of the colonies. That stuck with me.

**Q: How has your work contributed to shaping MDCC's mission of bringing belongings home to Mi'kma'kik and building the Centre?**

**Gerald Gloade:** Back

in 2005, I was working with Natural Resources, doing presentations on environmental teachings like Project Learning Tree and Project WILD. My Mi'kmaw perspective kept coming out in those sessions, and it was actually Tim Bernard (MDCC's Executive Director) who saw me present and said, "Buddy, you don't belong here—you belong with us."

That shift was natural for me. I come from a family of hunters and fishers, and we never did it for trophies—it was always about putting food on the table. That way of life shaped me, and it naturally led to my role at MDCC, where I could share knowledge about our land, history, and traditions.

A big part of my work has been ensuring that traditional knowledge is recognized. Whether it's Mi'kmaw History Month, working with knowledge holders, or being part of conversations about bringing our belongings home, I've always tried to make sure our voices and stories are front and centre.

**Q: What lessons have you learned through your work at MDCC?**

**Gerald Gloade:** Tons. It's a continuous learning process—never-ending. It's not like finishing a school year or completing a project. You're constantly gathering and sharing

knowledge, applying it, and adapting.

One thing I've really learned is the importance of looking at things through traditional teachings. Our ancestors always thought ahead—they prepared. Winter wasn't just something you endured; it was something you got ready for. Today, people live always about preparing for what's to come. That mindset is something we need to hold onto.

Another big lesson is about the responsibility of passing knowledge on. We lost someone recently, Becky Julian, who had so much traditional and ecological knowledge, but she was quiet—she didn't share even half of what she knew. And now, some of that knowledge is gone. That's why it's so important to pass things down while we can.

**Q: As you step into retirement, what are you looking forward to? Do you have personal projects or passions you plan to focus on?**

**Gerald Gloade:** I've always been an artist and a craftsman, but when you're working, you don't always get to create for yourself. Most of what I made was based on someone else's vision—what they wanted. Now, I'm looking forward to creating for me.

That's where the fun is.

I plan to be on the Elders' Advisory Council, and I'd be happy to contribute in that way. Even my last few trips to Washington—I didn't go as a researcher or employee; I went as an Elder. And I was still learning, still seeing new things. So, while it's "retirement," I don't see myself stepping away completely. I'll just be doing things on my own time now, which is a nice feeling. As my wife Natalie put it, "You can be as busy as you want, and you can work on your own time!"

**Q: What message would you like to share with your colleagues, community members, and supporters of MDCC?**

**Gerald Gloade:** There's still so much to learn. Our traditional knowledge—our ways—hold answers that people are just starting to recognize. For so long, we were told what to do, but now, people are coming to us and asking, "What do your people think about this?" That's something new.

We have a lot to contribute. Our teachings have so much to offer—not just to our own people but to the world. The most important thing is making sure we pass those teachings on to our kids, to the next generation. That's our responsibility. ✨

## NEXT Month's Deadline March 27<sup>th</sup>

### LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News will accept letters regarding various topics of interest. All letters addressed to the editor must be signed by the writer and include an address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit any and all letters if we deem it necessary.