

I grew up in a small fishing town turned tourism hub on the South Shore of so-called Nova Scotia, the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. I grew up connected to the land and the sea, both personally through my days spent outside exploring, and through my heritage. My mother's side of the family were farmers in Nova Scotia, and Scotland before that. She grew up working on the land surrounded by the same forests and beaches as me; she passed down to me the care for them that she was taught by her own parents. My father was Acadian, so though he grew up mostly in Montreal, his heritage tied him to Atlantic Canada. An adventurer at heart, he would tell me stories about his journeys at sea, deep in Canadian forests, or lost in distant lands.

My care for the environment is personal and embodied as it grew from days spent in the woods and splashing in the waves near my childhood home, but it is also necessarily informed by my heritage. I come from a family of Christian settlers, and my worldview is accordingly founded on anthropocentric Western stories of human dominion over the environment. As such, growing up my environmentalism was anthropocentric and paternalistic, based on idolization of a mythical pristine wilderness that painted humans as a disease to which wilderness is the antidote. I do my best now to broaden my worldview and consider reciprocal-relationships but I know that while I critique colonial Western environmental thought, I am inescapably influenced by it.

Both of my parents worked in communications. So, I was raised to carefully consider my words, and taught that they held power. My father's first language was French, but having lived and work for so long in English he became more comfortable expressing himself in his second language. I think that is partly why it was so important to him that his children grow up bilingual, but it also caused him to shy away from speaking to us in French. I grew up with a very French first name, speaking both French and English in a predominantly English-speaking area. However, the family that surrounded me was all from my mother's side. I was left feeling simultaneously deeply connected to my Acadian heritage and shamefully alienated from it. This continues to impact how I show up today, having now lived in various Canadian and foreign cities, I remain very aware of the power language can hold.

Growing up, I was taught to be proud of my Acadian heritage, I was told stories of our resilience in the face of the deportation, I was told that we were victims but we persevered. The narrative often left out the role Acadians as colonizers themselves. I have done my best to unlearn this narrative and relearn my position in Mi'kma'ki in a way that allows me to hold both truths to be true. As I navigate through the world, I am very aware of the complex connections between land, language, and identity because of my complex relationship with my own. Continually influenced by my parents, I want to pursue geomatics as a tool for exploration and storytelling. I am a curious person and I learn best when connecting with others and sharing stories. But as a geographer, I do my best to understand the history that contextualizes my discipline, one that is based in unequal power dynamics, colonization, and racism. While I love to learn through travel, and have lived abroad, I am still learning about how to do that in a way that does not inadvertently cause harm. I continually wrestle with what it means to amplify others rather than speak for them, and how to understand other people's stories before I fully understand my own.