

The Maymaygweshiwuk - A good start - <http://www.native-languages.org/memegwesi.htm>

Note all the different spellings of the name for these spirit beings!

A more academic examination of the maymaygweshiwuk by two current pictograph researchers from the University of Montreal.

<https://books.google.ca/books?id=HKq9BAAAQBAJ&pg=PA123&lpg=PA123&dq=maymaygweshiwuk&source=bl&ots=0iTCj3X0kw&sig=pV16WLhERazn0wJeoD39CvAi61A&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjNyrn9yOLXAhUI5oMKHbLrAHOQ6AEILTAB#v=onepage&q=maymaygweshiwuk&f=false>

Daniel Arsenault and Dagmara Zawadzka. “Canadian Shield Rock Art Rock Art Within Its Sacred Landscape”. pp. 122-123 of *Rock Art and Sacred Landscapes* edited by Donna L. Gillette, Mavis Greer, Michele Helene Hayward, William Breen Murray.

A preference for making rock art on vertical cliffs is well attested in the Canadian Shield (Lambert 1986; Norder 2003:156), and this is partly due to the fact that such locations have previously yielded significant clues about the passage or presence of such powerful entities. For example, stains of white calcite covering a rock face where rock paintings can be seen is an important clue that a Thunderbird has its nest on top of the cliff, the whitish stains symbolize the mighty creature’s droppings (Conway and Conway 1990:12–13). This intimate association between the place, the natural features and the spiritual entities triggers ritual behaviors and the creation of rock art.

Beside these entities, rock art is notably linked with other-than-human beings who, live on earth’s surface close to humans and share many resources with them. These earthly creatures are known as “*mamakwasiuch*” by the Cree, “*memekweshuat*” by the Innu, or “*maymaygweshiwuk*” by the Ojibwa (Fabvre 1970:70; Flannery 1931; Martijn and Rogers 1969:196, note 5; Silvy 1974:145; Speck 1977[1935]:69; see also Arsenault 2004a; Arsenault et al. 1995; Lemaitre 2013; Zawadzka 2008). According to the Algonquian traditions, these “little people” are characterized by individuals having a slim hairy body with a strong musky scent, and their face is very narrow allowing them to pass easily through the fractures in rock formations, the rocks being their dwellings. These beings are also sometimes linked with falls and rapids, and they travel in “lithic canoes” while on a lake or a river. These singular anthropomorphic creatures have been sometimes credited with the creation of rock art using their blood as a pigment (Rajnovich 1994). Based on this, it is not surprising that some rock art images have been seen as the depiction of an encounter between humans and those unusual nonhuman beings. It is also said that the *maymaygweshiwuk* act as the transmitter of some sacred knowledge, notably with the medicine men to whom they teach the uses of medicinal plants and of mineral substances in exchange for tobacco and fish (Arsenault et al. 1995; Dewdney and Kidd 1967; Jones

1979:84–86; Wheeler 1975). Medicine men could enter the inhabited rock through cracks or caves in order to visit with the *maymaygweshiwuk* and obtain medicine and sacred knowledge from them (Hallowell 1975:166; Wheeler 1975:710).

Some rock art sites are clearly identified as the house of the *memekweshuat*, named *memekweshushuap* by the Innu, and there are stories told about their past interactions with peoples coming too close to their rocky dwellings. This is the case for example at *Kaapepehshapisinikanuuch* (a Cree name meaning “where old pictures on the rock can be seen”), a pictograph site located on Lake Nemiscau, James Bay area (Québec); during a visit to that site in 1998, two Cree elders told us that some *mamakwasiuch* inhabited the rock (Waller and Arsenault 2008). Inland of the north shore of the St. Lawrence River, on a lake called Tétépisca (*Tetepishcauw* in Innu language), some Innu elders still refer to a house where *memekweshuat* lived, and pictographs were recently found on the rock cliff face not far from the entrance of a shallow cave considered to have been the entrance to that *memekweshushuap* (Lemaitre and Arsenault 2011). In these cases, as in many others across the Canadian Shield (Dewdney and Kidd 1967:13–14), these singular beings have been “seen” passing through cracks and crevices in the rock (Arsenault 2004a) (Fig. 8.2). At Lake Nemiscau, in central Quebec, there is a small cavern entrance visible just below a trident-like motif, which was their portal and through which some privileged humans can also pass. However, with the conversion of the various Algonquian groups to Christianity, these kinds of traditional activities have been abandoned, and it seems that the *maymaygweshiwuk* are gone forever. Cracks and crevices are not the only important element in determining the sacred nature of rock art sites, the properties of the rock outcropping are also significant.