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{BIGFOOT! BE LOCAL! SKI TO SEA!}

LOCAL

Nelson River footage.

Q: Tell me about the Nelson River video.

A: If you are one of those that consider that Bigfoot is out there, then once in a blue moon, someone is going to have an encounter who has a camera. I think, if this isn't an elaborate hoax or Bobby Clarke isn't being fooled, this is a location where we would expect Bigfoot.

As I have said, if the whole call from cryptozoology is "to bring us back some evidence" and "take some pictures," why are we surprised that an amateur didn't take Hollywood quality footage?

They are fuzzy, the creature was far away, and we can't tell much yet. I'm not discouraged by this. I am happy people are thinking, "Hmm, maybe there is something there." We have to remain open-minded to what we may run across in these investigations.

Q: Tell me about last year's sighting of Bigfoot by Inuit in the high Arctic and another near Kamloops, B.C. Why are these important?

A: Once again, they demonstrate a repeat in the pattern of getting a routine flux in the sightings depending on climate, media interest, and possible movement of the animals. It takes active

people in the location of sightings, in conjunction with increased activity of Sasquatch. If you have the two happening together, you get sightings.

Q: Is the ecosystem of the Pacific Northwest sufficiently vast to sustain a species of giant anthropoids?

A: I live in a state (Maine) that is covered 95 percent, by actual surface, with trees. Something similar is happening in the PNW, despite cities, highways and malls.

Yes, this is a vast ecosystem that is from the Pacific Northwest. All across the northern tier of North America you have an extensive range of coniferous boreal-forest zone and the transition zone between the boreal and the southern hardwoods forests.

This is ideal habitat for these late-Pleistocene survivals. The musk oxen and moose are two good survivors, but few people realize that the pronghorn antelope is a very real Pleistocene living fossil. Step back for a moment and take this animal in... hey, we have an antelope in North America and that's cool. How about a Bigfoot too?

Could a bunch of large, hairy, near-human ape-men, or hirsute giants, be living unfound in America? A parallel story from just 50 years ago suggests that this is a very real possibility. The largest

LOREN COLEMAN, Continued on page 14

The Middle Way?

Artist seeks to channel Bigfoot mystery

SAN FRANCISCO-BASED

American artist Jill Miller is interested in the philosophical, social and metaphorical implications Bigfoot represents. Western culture has long been obsessed with monsters and the unknown, the artist says. Miller postulates that Bigfoot is a metaphor for the natural human desire for mystery and the unknown.

Miller seeks to peel back the layers of fear, irony and pop culture that surround Bigfoot and create a space that will generate larger questions of belief and inquiry. To this end, she will spend several weeks in the wilderness of northern California attempting to refine and channel a Bigfoot experience.

Q: You say there's been a lot of Bigfoot activity recently. What's been happening and why is it significant?

A: You may have heard about a recent Sasquatch sighting in Manitoba and a subsequent video that aired on *A Current Affair*. Also, there was another sighting in Northern California in Shasta County on April 5. Disney also recently sent a team to the Himalayas to research the culture (including the Yeti legend) for a new ride at one of their parks. I don't know if that technically qualifies as "Bigfoot activity" but it adds to the latest wave of excitement and interest in Bigfoot.

Q: What do you hope to achieve through your artist statement?

A: Last November I was in Vancouver and I went to a Sasquatch exhibit at a natural history museum. I had always been interested in Bigfoot, but I was completely overwhelmed by the artifacts from expeditions (like plaster footprint castings) and the handwritten reports from interviews with people who had spotted Bigfoot.

I left the exhibit with questions that went beyond the objects I'd seen: Is it possible that a hairy ape lives in the Pacific Northwest? Why would thousands of people see this creature if it didn't exist? Is the belief in Bigfoot a kind of secular religion? Do I believe in God? As humans, we need to believe in something—our belief systems create meaning in our lives. What is left if we have no meaning? The answer is "nothing."

Of course, this is not to say that Bigfoot doesn't exist. Maybe they do. I'm not interested



in proving or disproving anything.

For me, art-making is a process that allows me to work through those existential questions that keep me awake at night.

Q: Your work seems to say that, in some way, humans need mystery.


A: Although Carl Jung posits that our experiences with supernatural creatures likely come from glimpses into our collective unconscious, he also writes that the supernatural may exist unto itself, outside of the human mind. He's very careful to not offer an absolute answer. This is why I think Jung is so relevant today—perhaps the truth lies somewhere in the middle.

Perhaps the truth is that spirits or ghosts exist in both places. Maybe Bigfoot does too.

Q: Is metaphoric mythmaking a backlash against a culture of science and technology, or is it something that is more deeply rooted in what it means to be human?

A: Technology comes with as many red flags as it does benefits. Take webcams for example. You can use them to violate privacy, but you can also use them as tools for activism and documentation.

Q: Does your work imply your sense that there is no physical manifestation, but rather purely metaphoric? Or is something else at work, some fusion of these things?

A: I don't know if Bigfoot exists. I am a naturalist at heart, and my plan is to go into the forest with respect for nature and an open mind. This seems to be the most logical approach to seeing any creature living in the forest. 

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