The Memory of Grey Owl

After Archie Belaney died, the Prince Albert National Park did not look after his house. Maybe they wanted to forget the story of the Indian who was not an Indian. But, as the years passed, opinions slowly changed. Now more people remember what was good about Archie Belaney. The park built Beaver Lodge again. Today you can visit it and learn more about the man and his life.

But not many visitors will find the answers to all their questions. Who was Archie Belaney really? The man was a mystery. He loved the natural world and the native people of Canada, but he hurt everybody in his private life. He told lies for most of his years. Is it possible that part of him started to believe those lies?

We can be sure of one thing – Archie Belaney lived a life full of lies, but Grey Owl’s message was important and true. And that message is still true today. If we do not look after the natural world, we will lose it.
In 1976, Maathai interviewed many farmers in the Kenyan countryside. Most of them were women, and they often had the same concerns. They needed more firewood, which was their main source of energy. They needed clean water for drinking, cooking, and bathing. They needed to be able to grow their own food. In addition, they needed to be able to make more money so that they could become self-sufficient.

Maathai knew that the destruction of the forests was at the root of these problems. She decided to put her knowledge and creativity to work. Trees were needed to stop soil erosion. They were also important sources of firewood for cooking. Why not encourage farmers in Kenya to plant as many trees as possible? This would be a simple way to improve the farmers' living conditions. And this method wouldn’t require expensive tools or large sums of money.

In 1977, Maathai founded the Green Belt Movement. A greenbelt is a band of farmland or parks surrounding a village.