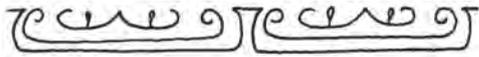


# Kekina'muek (learning)

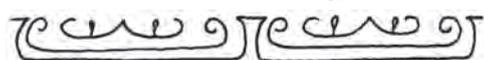
Learning about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia



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Wela'lioq

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Donald M. Julien". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Donald M. Julien, DCL, DHumL, O.N.S.

Executive Director, The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

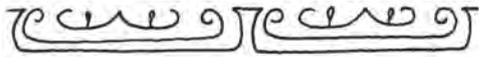
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# Introduction



There is so much to say and so many stories to tell about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. This manual by no means presumes to tell it all. Rather we have tried to tell a little about a variety of aspects of Mi'kmaw life and history—past and present—and hope to instill an interest that will leave the reader wanting to explore the story of the Mi'kmaq a little further. It is a story of a people who have survived challenges and hardships and managed to maintain pride in their history and strong cultural values. It is a testament to the numerous contributions the Mi'kmaq have made to support and enhance the cultural mosaic we now call Nova Scotia.

The Mi'kmaq have always been here, are here today, and will continue to be here for millennia to come, sharing their stories and experiences. The title “Kekina'muek” is a Mi'kmaw word for “study” or “learn.” We hope all readers will enjoy our legacy, learn of our present day life, and look forward to sharing a prosperous future with us.

Wela'lioq

# How to use this manual



This manual is comprised of ten chapters; each formatted in a similar manner.

Each chapter begins with a statement of the theme or key message followed by a brief text.

Several resources/references are available to reinforce and elaborate on the content.

Suggestions for activities are also included for further discussion to inspire interpretation, interaction and sometimes debate in the classroom.

As vocabulary is one of the cornerstones of literacy, several words are underlined in each chapter that are defined in a glossary at the end of the manual. Readers are expected to familiarize themselves with the words and use them in the discussion groups and learning activities.

A bibliography of resources and references used to compile this publication is also included that will lead interested readers to learn more about the Mi'kmaq.

For quick reference, a historical timeline has been reproduced from the Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (Fourth Edition) and other sources to assist the student.

# The Story Begins. . .

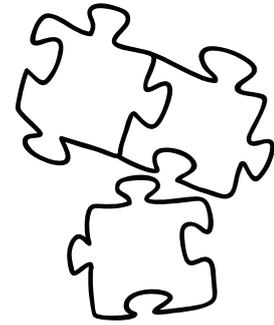


The history of Mi'kmaw people is very long and our homeland, called Mi'kma'ki, is very large. There have been people living here for more than 11,000 years! Mi'kma'ki, is made up of all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island and large areas of New Brunswick, the Gaspé Peninsula and Newfoundland.

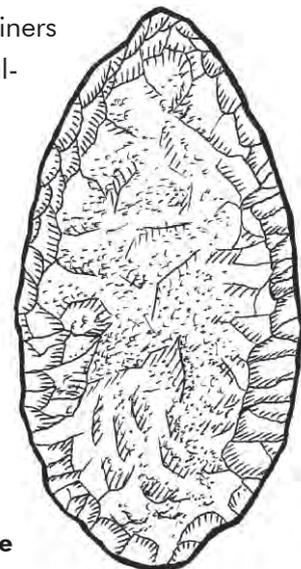
While many histories are written only from historical documents, understanding our past and our homeland requires understanding many different kinds of information. In the past, Mi'kmaw people learned about their culture and history through stories and legends. These oral (spoken) histories are very important to understanding our past. In addition, because our history is so old, we use sciences like archaeology and geology to help us tell our stories.

Mi'kmaw history and culture is like a puzzle that has many different pieces. Some pieces come from geology. They tell us about the environment in the past. Other pieces come from archaeology. They tell us about where and how our ancestors lived. We also use historical documents that were written mostly by Europeans, since it was rare for Mi'kmaw people to write their histories down on paper. Most of all, we listen to each other—and

especially to the Elders in our community—because it is our stories and legends that help us put all the pieces of the puzzle together into a picture we can call our own.



One of the most exciting things about the puzzle is that the pieces are all around us, whether we are Mi'kmaq or not. Chances are you are living near a river that once had encampments along it; today these encampments are archaeological sites. All of us live near places with Mi'kmaw names—like Shubenacadie or Tracadie. Others may live near certain islands, hills, or special places that are part of Mi'kmaw stories. Perhaps there is a special source of stone nearby that people used to make their tools, or a place with clay that people used to make their bowls, and containers for cooking. Whether we realize it or not, everyone travels over and through ancestral Mi'kmaw places, and we do it every day.



**biface knife**

## Legends of Kluskap

Amethyst, sacred stone to the Mi'kmaq, has been gathered for generations. Traditional places for gathering amethyst can be found in the legends of Kluskap (Glooscap).

"Kluskap's Campsite" at Blomidon is one of these places. Another is located just two kilometers across the Bay of Fundy, at Partridge Island—home of Kluskap's Grandmother. Before a large storm called the "Saxby Gale" created a permanent land bridge from the mainland to the island in 1869, you could only get to it on foot at low tide. The Mi'kmaq called Partridge Island "Wa'so'q," which means "Heaven."

In the legends of Kluskap, we find more than just detailed descriptions of landforms that we can see in Mi'kma'ki today, we also find evidence of our "Cultural Memory Timeline" that points to events and changes that are confirmed by modern day science.

One legend tells of a battle Kluskap fought with the "God of Winter." Kluskap lost, making it "winter" here year-round. In the past 13,000 years of our ancestral occupation, and since the last Ice Age, studies of climate changes have confirmed conditions like year-round winter. Even after Kluskap took his people south to ask the "Goddess of Summer" to bring back our four seasons, there is a legend that says there was still one giant chunk of ice left. When you look at elevation maps of the Cobequid Mountains, you see that the mountain has been eroded on the North and South sides, yet there is no major water source on top of that mountain. Geological and glacial studies show that the Cobequid Mountains were eroded by a piece of ice that remained after the last Ice Age, a piece of ice two kilometres thick.

The stories of our people relate to events that happened very recently and those that happened a long time ago. The stories contain lots of different kinds of information, especially about things that we believe, feel, and think. There are many values and beliefs that are shown through Mi'kmaw stories and through the language itself. By listening to the stories, we come to understand how important family is, how courage and determination were essential for living through dramatic changes in our climate and our lives. The stories share with us what our culture thinks is beautiful, strange and important for life at different times and places in our past. Stories also carry key information for the use of plants, animals, rocks and other resources in the land. They tell us when to harvest and when not to harvest, warn us about dangerous tidal areas, and map important places onto the landscape.

With stories, the exact **time** events took place is not the most important thing. However the sciences of archaeology and geology depend upon knowing the dates of sites and artifacts. Because Mi'kmaw people and their ancestors



Kluskap (Glooscap) gives an amethyst necklace to his grandmother. Partridge Island, Cape Split and Blomidon are seen in the background.

have lived in Mi'kma'ki for such a long period of time, archaeologists have created blocks of time, called periods, that help them to organize the hundreds of sites and thousands of artifacts that have been found. This is called a chronology.

There are more than 800 Mi'kmaw archaeological sites in Nova Scotia. There are hundreds more in the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.

### The Debert Sites, Debert, NS

More than 11,000 years ago, people lived on plains that stretched south from the Cobequid Mountains. The Debert archaeological sites, near Truro, Nova Scotia, are among the most important sites of this age in North America. Archaeological excavation revealed numerous living areas as well as a large and diverse set of stone artifacts. Archaeologists recognize the time between 13,500 and 10,000 years ago as the oldest

**Archaeology** is the study of past human life through the artifacts that people leave behind. Archaeology tells us about how and where people lived. It tells us about how big family units were, whether people lived all in one place, or moved throughout the year (as was true for the Mi'kmaq), what things were important to them economically (like which rocks and minerals were important), and what animals and plants people used. Archaeology is good at telling us about certain parts of people's lives—the things we can touch and see. However, archaeology tells us less about the parts of life we can't see, such as how we feel, what we believe, or what language we speak.

**Geology** is the study of the physical, chemical, geological, and biological happenings at or near the earth's surface. Geologists study landforms, soils, fossils, fluids (mostly water), and rocks to tell us about past environments: temperature, rain, snow, plants and even animals. Archaeologists are interested in geology because it tells us what kinds of environments people lived in. Geology usually works at very long time frames, but it tells us about shorter frames too.

## Mi'kmakik Teloltipnik L'nu'k

(How People Lived in Mi'kma'ki)

	Radio Carbon Years	Calendar Years
<b>Sa'qewe'k L'nu'k</b> (Ancient People—Palaeo Period)	11,500 – 8,500 B.P. (B.P.=Before Present)	13,500 – 10,000 B.P.
<b>Mu Awsami Kejikawe'k L'nu'k</b> (Not so Recent People—Archaic Period)	8,500 – 3,000 B.P.	10,000 – 3,000 B.P.
<b>Kejikawe'k L'nu'k</b> (Recent People—Woodland Period & early European contact era traditions)	3,000 – 300	3,000 -500 B.P.
<b>Kiskuke'k L'nu'k</b> (Today's People—early European contact and colonial era traditions)	1,000 – present	500 – present

period of human settlement in North and South America. Today, the Mi'kmaw First Nation works to protect this important area of our homeland.

People lived in a dramatically changing environment at the end of the last glaciation (Ice Age). By 13,000 years ago the continental glaciers from the last Ice Age had melted away from this region. Even with the ice gone, it was still a cold and rapidly changing environment compared with the climate today. Most of the land was covered in grasses, with small forests of spruce, birch and alder growing in the more protected areas. The shoreline of the Bay of Fundy was near Cape Split, leaving the Minas Basin as dry grass land.

At this time large Ice Age mammals may have still roamed this land. These mammals included mastodons and mammoths, giant beavers, giant short-faced bears, and dire

wolves. Archaeologists believe that the large Ice Age animals lived in this region perhaps as late as 10,000 years ago. In addition to these large mammals, more familiar animals also lived in Mi'kma'ki, including caribou, musk ox, bison, elk, moose, and red and arctic foxes, to name a few. Though at the time Debert was many kilometers inland from the ocean, sea mammals such as walrus and seals, as well as fish and other resources of the sea, were available to the people who lived here. Birds and other small animals were also present.

Life at Debert would be both strange and familiar to people today. Excavations (diggings) at the site tell us a lot about some parts of community life, very little about others. Having relatively little information, archaeologists put a picture of life together as best they can. Because so much is not known and because new pieces of the puzzle are added all the time, our understandings change frequently. Much is left for us to imagine about people's lives.



Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa

When we imagine the community at Debert, we can see it was filled with sophisticated, knowledgeable people. They had an intimate knowledge of the weather, plants, landscape and animals with which they lived. They cared for each other, fought on

**Fieldwork at Debert, 1964.**

occasion, solved problems and found humour in their daily lives. Older people in the community carried valuable knowledge from their lifelong experience, which was shared with others.

The community at Debert was not alone; nor is it likely that people remained at one location all year long. While Debert is the only site in Mi'kma'ki with numerous artifacts and features like hearths (fireplaces for cooking), there are other areas where single artifacts have been found. People traveled for many reasons, including hunting, visiting relatives and friends, and gathering other kinds of resources, especially the special rock for tools from areas such as Scots Bay and Parrsborro, Nova Scotia.

It is also very likely that these ancient people traveled to places outside the Maritimes. Relations extending over large areas would have been important in times when food was hard to find, as well as for gathering together and sharing news. We do not know how far such networks extended.

Most sites from this period of time are called Clovis, due to artifact styles and methods of making them. Many of the tools at Debert were probably made of stone that came from the Bay of Fundy area. Controversial techniques for analyzing blood traces on the tools suggest that blood on several of the tools is caribou.

The excavations produced more than 4,500 artifacts, which are today curated (housed) at the Museum of Civilization, in Gatineau, Quebec. In the 1990s even more sites were found nearby the original Debert site.



top right: Michelle LeLievre, Archaeologist (Pictou) and Scott Buchanan, Archaeological Project Manager (Musquodoboit), at Mi'kma'wey Debert Site Delineation Project, 2006

right: Donna Morris, Mi'kma'w Archaeologist (Indian Brook First Nation) and Sharon Farrell, Mi'kma'w Archaeologist (Miawpukek First Nation, NL) at Mi'kma'wey Debert Site Delineation Project, 2006



# Fish Weirs

by Roger Lewis

A fish weir (say “WEER”) is a wooden or stone barrier or trap placed at the mouth of a river or in a river channel to capture fish for food. It is the oldest of known fishing practices and has been used as far back in time as 8,000 years ago.

While remnants of this ancient fishing technology are found on most rivers in Nova Scotia, the majority of fish weirs identified to date have been found in rivers located in the southwest part of the province.

Four types of fish weirs have been identified through archaeological investigation:

1. Wooden fence-stake weirs found at the mouths of rivers
2. Large down-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found in the interior of the province at outlets of lakes
3. Smaller up-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found where salt and fresh water meet and what is known as the “head of tide”
4. Circular or rectangular stone fish weirs found in river channels just above the “head of tide”



G. Gloade

**an eel weir made of stone**

Each fish weir is used to catch a different type of fish. For example, fish that move between salt and fresh water during their life cycle; fish that mature at sea and spawn in freshwater; and those that mature in fresh water but spawn at sea.

A wooden fence-stake weir found at the mouth of a river is built in a way that allows it to work with the rise and fall of the tide. Fish enter over the fish weir at high tide and are trapped behind the barrier or trap when the tide lowers.

These types of fish weirs would have been used to catch larger fish species such as sturgeon, shad and striped bass.

Smaller stone up-stream pointed stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found at the “head of tide” are

used to catch smaller fish that are not trapped in a wooden fence-stake fish weir. These would include smaller fish species like gaspereau, smelt, mackerel, as well as male eels which do not travel up rivers and into lakes to mature like female eels do.

Circular-rectangular stone fish weirs are used to trap salmon as they move up-stream to spawn. It is important to catch them just above the “head of tide” when they are at their fattest. The larger down-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs that are found in the interior at the outlets of lakes are used to catch just one species of fish, the female American eel that matures in interior lakes and travels downstream to the ocean to spawn in the fall.

## Mersey River Sites

In the summer of 2004, Nova Scotia Power lowered the water level of the Mersey River in southwest Nova Scotia to repair six power dams. What the archaeologists uncovered as a result was a wealth of artifacts that indicated many ancient camp and fishing sites. More than 100 sites were found along the river.

Archaeologists also found and collected more than 10,000 artifacts for further study and eventual display. Embedded in the muddy riverbed were pieces of Native pottery, a wide range of pecked and ground stone tools such as axes, celts and gouges. Also found were a variety of spear points as well as stone chip-pings or flakes left behind from the making of these tools. Many of these tools were dated between 500 and 6,000 years old.

Large stone woodworking tools are very distinct for this period and were made from grinding a coarse-grained rock against another or by pecking or tapping the stone to form its shape. These were made from hard igneous types of rock such as granites, basalts or rhyolites.

Roger Lewis, a Mi'kmaw archaeologist, took part in the Mersey River project. Mr. Lewis is an expert in fishing weirs. He saw four different types of weirs built on the Mersey River—each one designed to catch a different type of fish.

**(above and right)  
weirs made of stone**



Photo courtesy of Roger Lewis

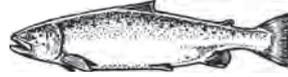
The fish weirs found on the Mersey River date back thousands of years, yet they were in good condition. The Mersey River was dammed in 1929 to produce electricity and greater portions of the river and shoreline had remained under water until the river was drained in 2004. This protected the weirs and other artifacts from natural damage such as exposure to air, frost, fire, looting and development.

The Mersey River is one of eleven primary water courses found in the southwestern end of Nova Scotia. It drains Lake Rossignol and Kejimikujik Lake, both to the south and north, and extends from Liverpool in Queens County to Annapolis Royal in Annapolis County.



Photo courtesy of Roger Lewis

Many of the sites discovered on the Mersey River and Indian Gardens (Ponhook Reserve) at Lake Rossignol were known as places where the Mi'kmaq harvested food sources and gathered over the millennia (past thousands of years).



Tall ships, canoes, human figures, and cultural symbols are the most common pictures. Other carvings depict animals, lodges, crosses and hieroglyphics. Many of the images portray men and women wearing traditional clothing. Over 60 of them depict the unique peaked cap worn by women, suggesting the importance of women in Mi'kmaw society.

### Kejimkujik Petroglyphs

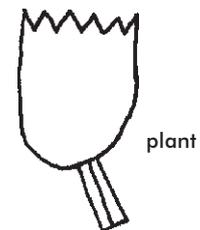
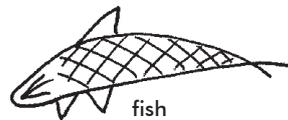
More than 60 archaeological and historical sites have been found in Kejimkujik, a large area in southwestern Nova Scotia that is also a National Park.

Kejimkujik is known best for the hundreds of individual pictures that are carved into stone along lake shorelines and other areas. These pictures are called petroglyphs. There are more than 500 known from the area, which make it the largest number of petroglyphs in eastern North America.

### Conclusion

As you can see, Mi'kmaw people and their ancestors have lived in many different places at many different times. In this way, over many generations Mi'kmaw people came to be experts on the land, plants, animals, rivers, lakes, rocks, and other aspects of life in Mi'kma'ki. This knowledge is part of our stories and our language. It is even in the places where archaeological sites are found and in the technology of our artifacts.

## Petroglyph(s) - A carving or inscription on a rock



## Resources

### ***Maritime Provinces Prehistory***

by James A. Tuck. Ottawa: Archaeological Survey of Canada, 1984. (102 pgs)

### ***Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre***

PO Box 1590, Truro, NS B2N 5V3  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
fax: (902) 893-1520

### ***Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq***

by Stephen A. Davis. Nimbus, Halifax, 1997.  
(74 pgs)

### ***Wabanaki: People of the Dawn (Part One)***

produced by Nova Scotia Office of  
Aboriginal Affairs. Halifax, 2005.  
(26 min video)  
OAA website: [www.gov.ns.ca/abor/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/abor/)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Archaeological excavations provide a rich resource for scientific evidence of the history of humankind. Some people believe that much more archaeological excavation should take place to provide more information. However, many Mi'kmaq are not so anxious to disturb the evidence of past lives of their ancestors and would prefer to have archaeological sites identified and protected. What is your opinion on this topic? Explain.
2. The petroglyphs told of Mi'kmaw life some 2500 years ago. You are tasked to design images for petroglyphs telling the story of modern day people that will be uncovered some 2500 years from now. What would you include and why?
3. You are a Mi'kmaw person and you know that the Kejimikujik area holds a strong connection to the past for your people and a host of Mi'kmaw cultural resources. However, Kejimikujik is also a major tourist site and a National Federal Park and as such is managed, regulated and owned by the government. It is open for use and enjoyment by the general public. Everyone pays an entrance fee and is allowed in the Park during specified hours. Do you, as a Mi'kmaw person think this situation should change? Why and How?



# Meet the Mi'kmaq of Yesterday and Today



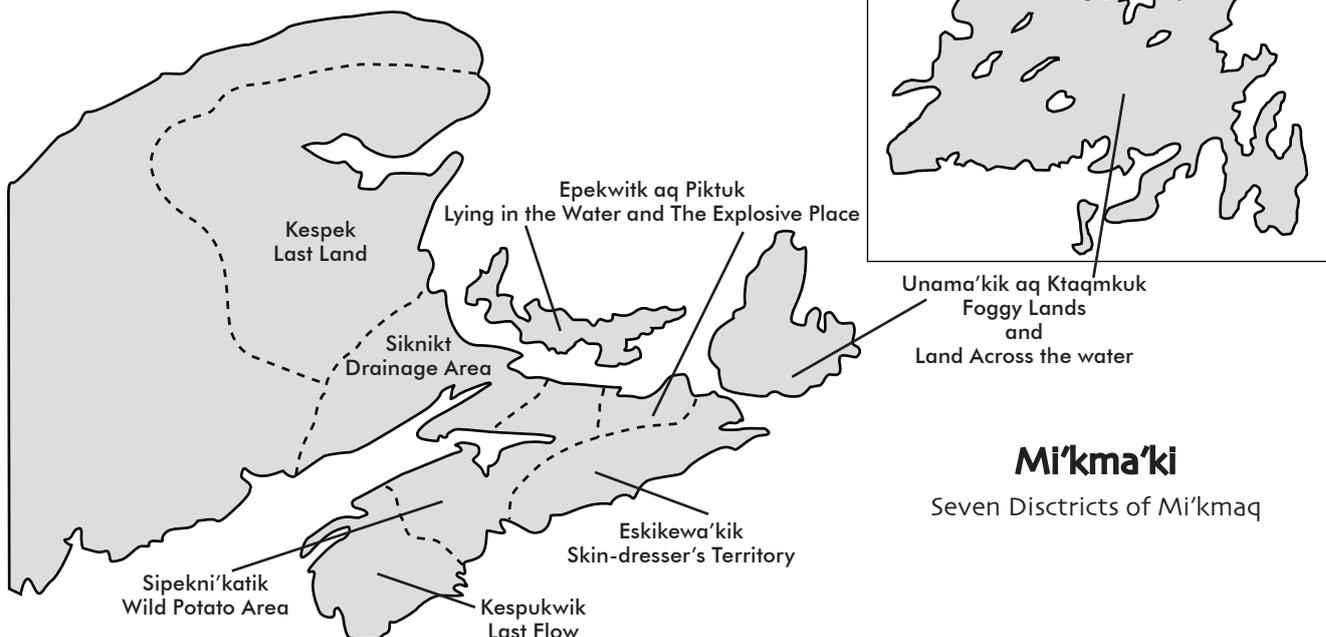
## As it Was ...

At the time of European contact (circa 1500), the Mi'kmaq occupied a large area known as Mi'kma'ki. This region included all of what is today Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, part of the Gaspé Peninsula, Newfoundland and most of New Brunswick.

Mi'kma'ki was divided into seven districts, each of which was led by a District Chief. This group of seven district chiefs made up the Mi'kmaw Grand Council, which governed over the Mi'kmaw people. There were many smaller communities in each district. These communities were led by a local chief.

The Mi'kmaw names for the seven districts came from the geographical characteristics of the areas:

- Unama'kik aq Ktaqmkuk ("foggy lands" and "land across the water")—Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland
- Epekwitk aq Piktuk ("lying in the water" and "the explosive place")—Pictou County and Prince Edward Island
- Eskikewa'kik ("skin-dresser's territory")—the area stretching from Guysborough to Halifax County
- Sipekni'katik ("wild potato area")—the counties of Halifax, Lunenburg, Kings, Hants and Colchester
- Kespukwik ("last flow")—the counties of Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby and Annapolis
- Siknikt ("drainage area")—including Cumberland County in Nova Scotia, and the New Brunswick counties of Westmorland, Albert, Kent, Saint John, Kings and Queens
- Kespek ("last land")—the area north of the Richibucto, including its rivers and parts of Gaspé



**Mi'kma'ki**  
Seven Districts of Mi'kmaq

Mi'kmaq also belonged to a large political organization known as the Wabanaki Confederacy. This confederacy was led by the grand chiefs of several tribes who lived in eastern North America. The tribes included Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Abenaki.

### Hierarchy of Mi'kmaw Leadership at the Time of European Contact

The European settlers were met by a Mi'kmaw Nation that was orderly, well-governed, strong, knowledgeable and successful. The chart below explains the reporting structure of their government at that time.

We do not know how many Mi'kmaq lived in Mi'kma'ki in the 1600s. Historians think that there were between 50,000 and 100,000. This number is based on the writings of the Jesuit missionaries who were among the earliest newcomers. Some of these writings



quote Grand Chief Membertou, who referred to the Mi'kmaq as being as plentiful as “the number of hairs on my head.” That’s a large number!

The Mi'kmaq were a seasonal people. They moved to the coastal areas in the warmer seasons and inland in winter. They used well-established travel routes—traveling the same paths from year to year. Mi'kmaq traveled light, relying on the natural environment to provide for their needs. A group of Mi'kmaq could set up camp in a matter of hours, building a fire and making wigwams. Everyone was organized to help gather the building materials and supplies.

The Mi'kmaq regularly traveled great distances along the waterways of the Maritimes and they depended on the canoe for transportation. Skilled artisans constructed these canoes by hand, using handmade tools and local wood like birch and beech. They sewed the parts of the canoe together using a bone needle and fir tree roots. Only the most skilled artisans were entrusted with making these canoes, which had to be seaworthy and reliable.

The daily life of the Mi'kmaq centered on finding and preparing food, and the sharing of wealth among members of the village. Daily activities were all about survival—finding and preparing food, clothing, shelter, medicines, etc. Mother Nature provided the basics of life and her gifts were taken with respect and gratitude.

Throughout Mi'kma'ki, the Mi'kmaq enjoyed an active social life. We loved to socialize, holding frequent and lavish ceremonies to celebrate important events like a successful hunt, marriages, funerals, visiting tribes, peace or even war. A fabulous feast was always the highlight of these ceremonies, which also featured lots of traditional food, song, dance and laughter. Often the Chief or a community Elder would entertain the crowd with stories of ancestors, legends and Mi'kmaw history.

The Mi'kmaq also had a keen sense of competition, taking part in competitive events and vying to be the most successful hunter in the village. Canoe races, and games of chance such as Waltes (a traditional dice game) were other opportunities for competition.

The Mi'kmaq were a communal people. They shared everything from hunting dogs and canoes, to food and shelter. All community members worked for the survival of the village. Exploitive (wasteful) or selfish behaviour was not acceptable to the Mi'kmaq, who believed in respect for oneself, for others and for the natural environment.

The Mi'kmaq depended on their knowledge of the seasons, weather, animals, plants, and hunting and preparation skills for survival. This knowledge was passed on from generation to generation. Mi'kmaw education included the teaching of traditional hunting skills, construction techniques for things like

shelter or canoes, food preparation, sewing skills, etc. Traditional teachings, stories, and histories were mainly passed on orally.

The clothes worn by the Mi'kmaq were made from animal skins. They were designed to be practical and protective. Any decoration on the clothing was modest and made from



**Traditional Mi'kmaw Dress**

National Museum of the American Indian

other parts of the animal such as claws, bones or antlers. Shells, quills and feathers were also used for decoration. The Mi'kmaq used natural dyes from plants and animals for color. They were a creative and artistic people.

### As It Is ...

Today, in the 21st century, the Mi'kmaq live very differently. Divided by provincial borders, confined to smaller land areas and restricted by the Indian Act and federal laws, Mi'kmaq communities at first glance look like any small rural community in Canada.

In Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq are divided into 13 Bands. Each band is led by a Chief and Council elected by community members. The 13 bands occupy specific areas of land known as Indian Reserves. These reserves are located throughout the province.



**First Nation Communities in Nova Scotia**

### Hierarchy of Mi'kmaq Leadership Today

Government of Canada/Provincial Government



Chief and Council of the Mi'kmaq Community



Community Members

### Hierarchy of Mi'kmaq Leadership Today

The Mi'kmaq hierarchy of today reflects the impact of the Europeans over the last 400 years. Rather than the Mi'kmaq themselves, the Canadian government is the highest authority in the hierarchy.

According to Statistics Canada (2006 census), there are 24,175 Aboriginal people living in Nova Scotia. Of these, 7978 are living in Reserve communities and 16,197 are living off-Reserve. The Mi'kmaq share the province with many other cultures. Aboriginal people make up 2.7 percent of Nova Scotia's population. Although the Mi'kmaq have a higher birthrate than other Nova Scotians, they also have a higher suicide rate and shorter life span.

Most Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia go to public school because few communities have on-Reserve schools. Although staying in school is still a concern in many communities, more and more Mi'kmaq are graduating from high

school and many of them go on to university. The number of Mi'kmaq who have professional careers (doctors, lawyers, etc.) is also on the rise. Unfortunately, many must leave their home communities to find work. Traditional Mi'kmaw skills and knowledge are no longer seen as important for finding work and are slowly disappearing.

Today, Mi'kmaq no longer depend on Mother Nature for food and survival. Instead, they focus on earning money to buy food at the grocery store. While many Mi'kmaq still hunt moose or fish for salmon and eel, it is no longer a means of survival.

Since the 1950s, Mi'kmaq with low incomes have been able to take advantage of Canadian social programs like the Welfare Program, Employment Insurance and Family Benefits. Because they have limited land and resources, many First Nations people are dependent on this social welfare system. And while there are many stories of successful Mi'kmaw business ventures, the unemployment rate is still high in First Nation communities.

Today Mi'kmaq live in modern homes with modern conveniences. Young people participate in organized sports, wear the latest fashions, and listen to modern music. However, traditional songs, dance, language,

spirituality, food, and herbal medicines are being slowly re-introduced to the First Nation communities. These efforts validate the importance of the traditional ways.

The Mi'kmaw language is considered to be a "threatened" language. Less than 25 percent of Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia are fluent in their own language. Even fewer have Mi'kmaw as their mother tongue. While First Nation communities are working hard to revive the Mi'kmaw language, English is still the main language spoken in most communities.

Competitive sports like hockey, softball and basketball are very popular among the Mi'kmaw people. They also continue to enjoy traditional activities such as hunting, canoeing, and games of chance. Traditional Mi'kmaw song and dance are also a big part of annual community powwows. Community feasts honoring Elders, war veterans, marriages and funerals are still an important part of Mi'kmaw life. St. Anne's Day (July 26) and Mi'kmaq Treaty Day (October 1) are special Mi'kmaw holidays.

**Treaty Day Celebrations  
in Halifax, Nova Scotia**



Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)

While Mi'kmaq Reserve lands are communal (meaning they are shared by all members of the community), life in a Mi'kmaq community today is not communal in the traditional sense. Sharing wealth is no longer common nor is it needed for survival. Individuals accumulate their own possessions and wealth.

The challenge for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq is to be successful in modern society, while also preserving their traditional culture and way of life.

Because most of the land in Nova Scotia is owned by individuals or the government, Mi'kmaq who live on-Reserve do not have much access to the natural resources. Most Crown Lands (government-owned) are leased (rented) to the pulp and paper industry.



**(right and below)  
Old and current photos taken  
at Millbrook First Nation  
Community**



## Resources

### **Mi'kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi'kmaw culture and history.

Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **The Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (4th Ed)**

Eastern Woodland Print Communications,  
Truro NS, 2007.

Eastern Woodland Print Communications  
72 Church Rd, Truro, NS B2N 6N4  
email: [ewpc@easternwoodland.ca](mailto:ewpc@easternwoodland.ca)  
ph: (902) 895-2038  
fax: (902) 895-3030  
Toll free: 1-877-895-2038

### **The Nova Scotia Museum's Mi'kmaq Portraits Database**

Collection of portraits and illustrations  
in various media, of the Mi'kmaq  
of Atlantic Canada.

website: [www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq](http://www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq)

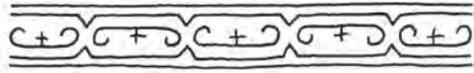
## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Under the headings of Governance, Education, Social Activity, Language, Economics, Employment, and Natural Environment, compare the Mi'kmaq of 400-500 years ago (before European contact) with the Mi'kmaq of today.
2. Discuss the pros and cons of change under each heading. In your opinion, is the Mi'kmaw culture stronger or weaker today than it was in the 1500s. (This activity could take place in the form of a debate with teams supporting two differing opinions.)
3. Using the definitions of Nation, Culture and Society provided in the Glossary, use these words to describe the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq of the 1500s. Do these words apply to the Mi'kmaq of today.



# From Legends to Modern Media

Tracing the language and communication of the Mi'kmaq from legends to modern media



## The Importance of Language

“Language is one of the main instruments for transmitting culture from one generation to another and for communicating meaning and making sense of collective experience.”

(Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples)

Indeed, the “heart” of any culture is in its language. By expressing our thoughts and beliefs, language is critical to our cultural identity.

“If you lose the language the Creator gave you, you won’t be able to speak from your heart to him.”

pg 55, Towards a New Beginning Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. July 28, 2005. Department of Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Language Directorate.

## Mi'kmaw Language— An Oral Tradition

Before European contact 500 years ago, Mi'kmaq was primarily an oral (spoken) language passed on from generation to generation through the stories and teachings of family and Elders. Often, storytelling was used to teach children about their natural environment. Mi'kmaw children learned

about their culture and history by listening to these legends and stories of mythical characters.

The early settlers from Europe wrote down the stories and legends of the Mi'kmaq. One of the famous mythical characters they wrote about was the Mi'kmaw hero “Kluskap,” which is also spelled “Glooscap.”

Kluskap had many magical powers, including being able to turn things into stone. As a result, strangely shaped rocks throughout the Maritimes are said to have been put there by Kluskap.



**Kluskap with the Whale  
and the Beaver**

## The Legend of the Tidal Bore (Why the water is muddy)

In the days of Kluskap (Glooscap) the river water from the Bay of Fundy was clear and fresh. Then a monster Eel swam down the river and pushed all of the fishes and all the fresh water into the salty bay. Turtle told Kluskap of the cruel hardships that resulted. Kluskap gave great powers to Lobster, who grew much in size and strength and fought the evil Eel. The long battle stirred up much mud and many waves far up the river until the Eel was killed. And even today in Kluskap's bay and on the muddy river, with an elbow bend, the battle scene takes place twice a day.

## High Tides of the Bay of Fundy (Why the Bay Rises and Falls)

Kluskap, the giant, legendary Mi'kmaw figure, wanted to take a bath. He called his friend Beaver and told him to find some water. Beaver built a huge dam across the mouth of a great river. Water backed up behind the dam and stopped flowing into the sea. As Kluskap stepped into the water, Whale stuck her head over the dam and asked, "Why have you stopped this water from coming to my domain?" Not wanting to anger his friend, Kluskap got up and walked back to land. With a stroke of her mighty tail, Whale destroyed the dam and sent salt water flooding into the river. As she turned and swam back out to sea, she set the water of the Bay sloshing back and forth, a movement it has kept to this day.

First Nations history and language is also evident in Mi'kmaw place names in Nova Scotia. Here are some examples:

- "Tatamagouche" translates to "Blocked across the entrance with sand"
- "Musquodoboit" means "Rolling out in foam"

It is through many of these Mi'kmaw place names and translations that historians can figure out where Mi'kmaq lived and how they traveled.

## The Written Word

Before European contact, the Mi'kmaq wrote in hieroglyphs (symbols) which were scratched into tree bark or animal hides. Fortunately some of these writings have been preserved as petroglyphs (carvings in stone). In Nova Scotia, petroglyphs found at Kejimikujik National Park and Bedford Barrens tell the story of Mi'kmaw life.



The Mi'kmaq also used a special belt known as a wampum belt to record history. A member of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council called a "pu'tus" was responsible for the wampum belt. Meetings of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council were "recorded" and read back by the pu'tus, who organized shells and beads on

(above)  
**Bird and Chiefs Crest  
petroglyphs**

the belt as a way of recording information. At each meeting the Pu'tus would re-tell the history of his people and add more shells and beads to the wampum belt. In this way, the wampum belts tell the history of the Mi'kmaw people.

Over the years many Nova Scotians have tried to track the history of the Mi'kmaw language. Silas Terius Rand (1810-1889), a farmer's son from Canning, Nova Scotia, is one such person. He dedicated his life to the study of the Mi'kmaw language. Rand could speak and write a dozen languages including Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but it was the Mi'kmaw language that intrigued him the most. When Rand lived in Hantsport from 1853 to 1889, he compiled a 40,000-word Mi'kmaw dictionary, translated the Bible, and wrote of the rich mythological lore of the Mi'kmaq.

Documenting (tracking) a language is no easy task. The English alphabet has five vowels and 21 consonants. Combinations of these letters are used to make all sounds in the English language. The Mi'kmaw language uses fewer letters than English, but has one additional character, the schwa "i̇". Letters at the start or end of a word can tell its number (singular or plural), its tense, or its formality. Mi'kmaq is an efficient language, meaning much can be said

with relatively few words.

In the early 1970s linguists Bernie Francis, a Mi'kmaw linguist, and Doug Smith identified a Mi'kmaw alphabet. It is made up of eleven consonants (p,t,k,q,i,s,l,m,n,w,and y) and six vowels (a,e,i,o,u, and a schwa denoted by a barred "i̇") These are the only letters required to speak and write the Mi'kmaw language.

In 1976 Francis and Smith researched and developed a new orthography to distinguish Mi'kmaq from other languages. Completed in 1980, and now known as the Smith-Francis orthography, it has been accepted as the official written language of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. In 2002, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada formally recognized the Smith-Francis orthography as the written form for all documents written in the



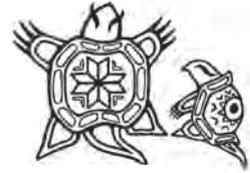
**Andrew Alex, Pu'tus, wearing a Mi'kmaw wampum belt**

History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax

Mi'kmaw language.  
**The Decline of the  
 Mi'kmaw Language**

Today, English is the main language spoken by First Nations people in Nova Scotia. English is used throughout all media, publications, modern film and music. However, English is not the only reason for the decline of the Mi'kmaw language. Other significant events have also played a part in the decline.

When the early settlers came to Nova Scotia in the late 1500s, they brought their own language, school system and religion. English quickly became the main language in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaw families encouraged their children to learn English as it was seen as the way to an education and better life. Unfortunately, this too contributed to



the decline of the Mi'kmaw language.

Mi'kmaw language suffered a severe blow during the residential school era—a time when Native students were forced to speak English at school. Children who spoke their own language were punished. In Nova Scotia, more than 1000 Mi'kmaw children attended the Shubenacadie Residential School between 1930 and 1967. These students were separated from their families, their traditional ways and their language. By the time they graduated from the Shubenacadie Residential School, very few students still spoke Mi'kmaq. Sadly, this meant that the generations who came after them did not have any knowledge of the Mi'kmaw

## Language: Aboriginal Identity Population by mother tongue (Nova Scotia)

<b>Aboriginal Identity Population</b>	<b>24,175</b>
% of Aboriginal Identity population with Aboriginal language(s) first learned and still understood	18.1%
% of Aboriginal Identity population with Aboriginal language(s) still spoken at home	11.3%
% of Aboriginal Identity population with knowledge of Aboriginal language(s)	20.6%

**In Nova Scotia Canada:**

1 out of 10 people who knew Mi'kmaw spoke it regularly at home

Almost 65% of homes on-Reserve in the Atlantic region spoke English only

—Statistics Canada 2006 Census data

language.

## Mi'kmaw Language Today

In recent years there have been many efforts to revive the Mi'kmaw language. The Government of Canada and other organizations, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, agree that language is an important part of cultural identity. In Nova Scotia, many initiatives are in place to encourage Mi'kmaw youth to learn their language. These initiatives include:

- Reserve schools in Eskasoni, Member-tou, Wagmatcook, Pictou Landing, and We'koqma'q work to ensure students are immersed in Mi'kmaw language and culture.
- Some public schools and universities are now offering Mi'kmaw language courses.
- Mi'kmaw language courses and materials are available via (through) the Internet.
- Mi'kmaw resource materials are being created to assist those interested in the language.
- Community daycares and preschools teach Mi'kmaw language to First Nations children.
- Several First Nations communities are using Mi'kmaw signage.
- Some communities are using Mi'kmaw street names and re-naming their communities using Mi'kmaw words. For example: "Afton" is now "Paq'tnkek" "Whycocomagh" is now "We'koqma'q"

At first glance this daycare looks pretty much like any other. The sound of children singing...pictures of fruit, vegetables and animals cover the wall. Numbers are everywhere.



Four-year-old Julianne Johnson points to some of the Mi'kmaw words on the wall at the daycare

But the Millbrook Mi'kmaq Daycare has a difference. Take a closer look at some of those pictures on the wall. Many are bilingual. Not English and French as you might expect but, rather, English and Mi'kmaq.

*The daycare has been teaching some words in Mi'kmaq to its children since it opened in 1996. Parents say language programs like these are a first step in helping today's generation regain part of their heritage.*

"Mi'kmaw culture is much more accepted now than it was when I went through the school system," says Tim Bernard, whose son attends the daycare. "It's exciting to listen to Jace participate in language instruction there. It makes my day when I pick him up and, as we leave, he turns and waves to his classmates and daycare staff and says 'Nmu'ltes' (I'll see you again)."

(From "Daycare with a Difference" by Steve Smith. Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News Oct 2004)

"Chapel Island" is now "Potlotek"

- Modern Mi'kmaw music is becoming popular in the communities.
- Mi'kmaq/Nova Scotia/Canada agree-

ments are now translated into Mi'kmaq. **Communications/Mi'kmaw Media**

Mi'kmaq are also using the media to share their stories, news, culture and language.

For example, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News, launched in November 1990, provides a valuable communications link among Atlantic First Nations. This monthly newspaper provides newsworthy information and human-interest articles specific to First Nations in the Atlantic region. Through this newspaper, First Nations can share their opinions and ideas.

Another example of Mi'kmaw media is Golivision, a cable station that reaches all households in Eskasoni. This TV station has been used for numerous cultural initiatives within the community of Eskasoni. It also broadcasts in the Mi'kmaw language.

Nationally, APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) has given First Nations a way to share their opinions and perspectives across Canada.

### “Micmac, Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaw”

The word **Mi'kmaq**, (ending with a “Q”) is a noun that means “the people.”

According to research done by Bernie Francis and Virick C. Francis, the word Mi'kmaq is the regular form of the possessive (showing ownership) nouns **nikmaq**, **kikmaq**, and **wikma**—which mean “my people,” “your people” and “his/her people.”

The word **Micmac** is a mispronunciation of the word **Mi'kmaw**.

**Mi'kmaq** is the plural form of the singular word **Mi'kmaw**. Because it is plural, the word **Mi'kmaq** always refers to more than one Mi'kmaw person or to the entire Nation.

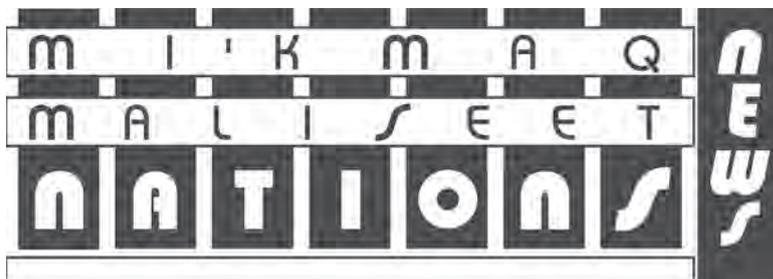
Examples:

The Mi'kmaq have a rich history and culture.  
A Mi'kmaw came to see me.

In addition to being a singular noun, the word **Mi'kmaw** can also be used as an adjective.

Examples:

A Mi'kmaw person  
The Mi'kmaw Nation  
Mi'kmaw stories often feature Kluskap  
A Mi'kmaw Elder came to see me.



**The Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News is a monthly publication**

## Resources

### **Atlantic Canada's**

#### **First Nations Help Desk**

47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5

ph: (902) 567-0842

fax: (902) 567-0337

Toll-free: 1-877-484-7606

Language web page: [firstnationhelp.com/ali/](http://firstnationhelp.com/ali/)

### **Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News**

Eastern Woodland Print Communications,

Truro, NS. (monthly newspaper)

72 Church Rd, Truro, NS B2N 6N4

ph: (902) 895-2038

fax: (902) 895-3030

Toll-free: 1-877-895-2038

e-mail: [news@easternwoodland.ca](mailto:news@easternwoodland.ca)

### **Red Earth: Tales of the Mi'kmaq**

by Marion Robertson. Nimbus, Halifax,

2006. (96 pgs)

Originally published as *Red Earth: Tales of the Micmacs*. Self-published, 1969.

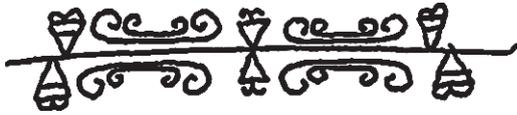
## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. There is no word for good-bye in the Mi'kmaw language. There is a term Nmu'ltis app that informally translated to English is "I'll see you again." What does this tell you of the culture?
2. We have all watched as Canada moved to promote bilingualism (English/French). Signage, government services and publications all require both French and English text. All federal government documents are to be available in both "official" languages. Millions of dollars have been spent to make Canada a bilingual country. However, very little attention has been given to the original language of this country—the Aboriginal languages. In your opinion, why has this occurred? Should the Aboriginal languages be considered as "official" languages also? Why or why not?
3. Essay question: You are a Mi'kmaw leader and want to increase the use of Mi'kmaw language in your community and encourage youth to use the language. What would be your approach? What projects/activities/games would you use?



# The Evolution of Mi'kmaw Education

Charting the challenges, the failures and the successes



## Traditional Mi'kmaw Education

In the past, traditional Mi'kmaw education was all about learning the skills for survival and community living. Parents, Elders, extended family members and other community experts taught young people the skills they needed. Rather than sit in a classroom, the Mi'kmaq learned as they went. Education was a continuous process taking place wherever and whenever needed.

Children were taught according to their future roles as adult men and women. Men were taught to hunt, fish and provide for the community. Handcrafted tools such as bows, arrows, lances, arrowheads, fish traps, wood frames, axes and canoes were made with great skill and precision. Women were taught to prepare and preserve food, prepare materials, make all clothing, set up camps, and care for children. All Mi'kmaw children were given an in-depth knowledge of the natural environment.

## The Role of Elders in Mi'kmaw Education

Elders played an important role in traditional Mi'kmaw education. Elders were—and still are—seen as the “keepers of the culture.”

They keep alive the Mi'kmaw stories, legends, cultural beliefs, spirituality, language, history, and traditions from generation to generation.

Mi'kmaw Elders are teachers, philosophers, linguists, historians, healers, judges, counselors—all these and more. They are living embodiments of Mi'kmaw tradition and culture. Elders are keepers of the spiritual knowledge that has kept the culture alive through thousands of years. Their knowledge of ceremonies and traditional activities, of laws and rules set down by the Creator, enables the Mi'kmaw people to live as a Nation.

Not all Elders are seniors, and not all old people are Elders. Some are quite young. But Elders have gifts of insight and understanding, as well as communications skills to pass on the collective wisdom of generations that have gone before.

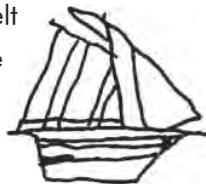
Elders do not hoard their knowledge. Their most important task is to pass their knowledge on, so that the culture of their people can continue. The Elders share their cultural knowledge through action, example and oral traditions.



These may be stories, jokes, games or other shared activities. When listeners hear the stories and teachings of the Elders, they feel the pain, the joy, the victories and defeats of their people. They reach out to one another across time. Past, present and future become one.

### The European Influence on Mi'kmaw Education

With European contact came a new language and a new way to record history by writing it down. The Europeans also brought with them new systems of land ownership, trade, education, and organized religions. Many European missionaries felt it was their job to “educate” the Mi'kmaq in the modern ways and encouraged them to build churches and schools. The writings of the early missionaries provide us with most of the written history of the time.



In 1605, the French settlers in Nova Scotia began to work to convert the Mi'kmaq to Christianity by giving them religious instruction. They continued with this religious education until the first school was built in Le Have in 1633 for Mi'kmaw and French students. When teaching the Mi'kmaq, the missionaries focused on the teachings of the Roman Catholic church. In 1610, Chief Membertou and his family were the first Mi'kmaq baptized into the Catholic faith. Today, the majority of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq are Catholic.

Religious education by the French continued until 1710 when control of “Acadie” changed from France to England. The English were not as interested in educating the Mi'kmaq as they were in keeping them under control and confining them to small areas of land. During the decades leading up to Confederation in 1867, the English showed very little interest in educating the Mi'kmaq.



### The Mi'kmaw Educator

While the writings of the missionaries tell us about their efforts to educate the Mi'kmaq, it is important to understand that the Mi'kmaq had much to teach the newcomers in return. Without knowledge of the natural environment, survival in the “new world” would have been next to impossible for those early settlers. Having survived in this region for millennia, the Mi'kmaq were the experts on the natural environment. The writings of the early missionaries document some of this information and express admiration for the vast knowledge of the Mi'kmaq.

### The Role of the Federal Government

During the 1800s, the Mi'kmaq lost even more control of their culture. The British North America Act of 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876 stated that First Nations were wards of the Federal Government. These Acts moved control over First Nations life far away from the local community. Now, the federal

government was responsible for Indian education. This marked the beginning of the Indian day-school system in Canada.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s a number of one-room schools were built in Mi'kmaw communities. The schools were built in recognition of the federal government's commitment to providing First Nations with an education. Unfortunately, the subjects taught in these schools did not reflect Mi'kmaw culture. Furthermore, there was no instruction in the Mi'kmaw language. The federal government did little to keep these schools going and few Mi'kmaq were interested in attending them.

The Mi'kmaq were soon to be victims of an even more destructive method of education—the residential school. While people in the federal government thought residential schools would be a positive experience, they turned out to be one of the most detrimental experiences of the Mi'kmaw culture.

### **Residential Schools— A Detrimental Experience**

According to the Indian Act, the federal government was obliged to provide the Mi'kmaq with an education. The government also wanted to help integrate First Nations people into Canadian society. Between the 1930s

and the 1960s, residential schools were opened in every province of Canada except New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The federal government ran the residential schools in partnership with various religious organizations in Canada until April 1, 1969 when the government took over full responsibility for the school system. More than 100,000 children attended these schools over the years.

In Nova Scotia, the federal government ran the Shubenacadie Residential School in partnership with the Roman Catholic Church from Feb 5, 1930 until June 26, 1966. Government agents and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) took Mi'kmaw children from their homes across Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and transported them to the school—sometimes without the consent or knowledge of their families. Approximately 1000 Mi'kmaw children

*(continued on page 32)*

**An early photograph, taken on June 21, 1966, of children attending Residential School.**



Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)

## Education in Indian Brook

Mi'kmaw parents have always been educators, teaching their children how to hunt and fish, how to make their traditional equipment etc. With the intrusion of the Europeans, they perceived that if they were going to survive, avail themselves of opportunities to compete, then an education was of the utmost importance. A school was necessary.

In 1880 Indian Brook Mi'kmaq appealed to the Department of Indian Affairs via the Indian Agent for a school. Tenders were submitted for the job; but each proved too expensive. It wasn't until 1890 that a school was finally built. In 1894 Chief James Paul and Council again appealed to the Department of Indian Affairs; this time for a teacher.

In the fall of 1894, Robert J. Logan, a non-Catholic, was hired. In spite of differences with government, church and parish priest, Mr. Logan remained teacher for twelve years. This was followed by the lack of qualified unbiased teachers, and poor attendance, which caused temporary school closings. Reasons for poor attendance and school closings were never questioned.

The day school at Indian Brook closed indefinitely on February 1, 1930. Parents were not dismayed, however, because just five miles away in Shubenacadie they had watched this new red brick building being built. They were aware that it was a school, where according to the articles in the Halifax Chronicle, June 16, 1929,



Photo: Elsie Basque

### Indian Brook Day School

Indian children would be given every opportunity towards a higher education. It would provide endless opportunities for the Mi'kmaw child to become all that he/she could be.

In the beginning, parents willingly allowed their children to attend, only to discover that children were exposed to physical and mental abuses. Children were deprived of their culture. They were not allowed to speak to their siblings and other family members of the opposite sex. In some instances they were severely punished merely for speaking their own language. Slave labor had also been introduced to the Mi'kmaw Nation.

Indian Brook parents retaliated by refusing to allow their children to attend the residential school. They kept their children at home and demanded the federal government re-open the day school on the Reserve.

Between 1930 and 1939 the schoolhouse had been used as a family dwelling. A new home was provided for the family, and the building was now available to be used as a school. A vacant building; it was lacking in all classroom amenities except for a blackboard and a box of chalk. Four wooden church benches provided the seating arrangement. It was September 5, 1939.

Twenty-six children and their parents were already at the school when the Mi'kmaw teacher arrived at 8:30. Eighteen children were coming to school for the very first time. A lot of "catching up" was needed, but first a good deal of improvisation needed to be done until the classroom amenities arrived. The Nova Scotia school curriculum was adopted. The teacher believed that if these children were to compete in this world they must be given the same advantages offered to the dominant society. They were the ideal class: inquisitive, and eager to

learn. They soon discovered they could not only dream, but with determination and dedication fulfill their dreams.

In the early 1940s, centralization was the most talked about subject on all Nova Scotia reserves. Indian Brook, the designated Reserve for all mainland Mi'kmaq, found itself in need of a larger building to accommodate the ever increasing school-age population. A large four-room school with basement facilities (Work Shop, Home Economics) was built at the top of the hill about where the Band Office now stands. In 1945-47 two classrooms were in service. A public health nurse was established in a third classroom.

With centralization came other changes other than a larger population influx. The Indian Agent, his assistant, a resident priest, the Sisters of Charity, a post office, a general store, and a resident health nurse were now a part of the Indian Brook population.

With the arrival of the Sisters of Charity, the two lay teachers were told their services were not longer needed. Looking back on the years 1939-47, the four wooden church benches, the blackboard and the box of chalk, much had been accomplished. In 1947, two girls were ready for high school. Arrangements had been made for them to attend a boarding school in Meteghan, NS. The following years others would be ready to follow. Young men were pursuing carpentry careers. Our youth had grown to tremendous heights. Lay teachers had shown the way to greater things in life. That is

what education is all about. Our children responded in kind.

The Sisters of Charity were now in charge of the education of the Mi'kmaq. All was well until sometime in the early 1970s. The new school was burned to the ground. Indian Brook was again without a school. Provision was made for the children to attend school in Shubenacadie village and Milford. Buses provided transportation to both areas. Mi'kmaw children were now a part of the dominant society population, exposed to prejudice and subtle discrimination. Native teachers at the schools tried to be a buffer for the Mi'kmaw child and, by example, prove all nations could be equal.

The larger school was never rebuilt at Indian Brook. Instead a much smaller school now stands in its place, the Sister Elizabeth Cody school. During her tenure at Indian Brook, Sister Cody made an impression on our youth, hence the school's name.

Today, the school houses the Kindergarten class, Tiny Tots and Head Start. The Mi'kmaw language is taught by an Elder in all the above classes. Children are entertained by story-telling, and are encouraged to speak the Mi'kmaw language in all their conversations.

Without a doubt, Indian Brook is attempting to revive the language and culture taken from us by the residential school. Mi'kmaw language studies are part of Native studies offered in Grades Primary through Twelve. Native studies

are offered as a required class to all students who attend off-Reserve schools. In high school, students have an option to study Mi'kmaq or French.

Prejudice and racism were always a constant in Shubenacadie and Milford but never more so than in 1997. Parents and Community decided that if children were to succeed, reach their full potential, they needed a peaceful environment in which to do so. The Community Center could easily be adopted into classrooms. Children could now study in peace and quiet.

Education, once again, was of the most importance. Parents had the option of sending their children to Shubenacadie, Milford or stay on the Reserve. In this newly-formed school, Grades Primary through 12, there are six Mi'kmaw teachers and nine non-native teachers, plus two Mi'kmaw language specialists. It is found that Mi'kmaw graduates often pursue higher education at nearby universities. Statistics show that during the past ten years that number has increased four fold.

As of this date [2006], the federal government has promised monies to build a new school at Indian Brook. Ground breaking should take place sometime this year, with occupancy in 2007.

Indian Brook has come a long way from the day Chief James Paul first applied for a school. Was this what he envisioned? I'd like to believe so. I'm sure he would be proud.

—Elsie Charles Basque, 2006

attended the Shubenacadie Residential School. They were separated from their families, their communities, their language and their culture. In some cases, Mi'kmaw parents were promised a better education for their children and voluntarily sent them.

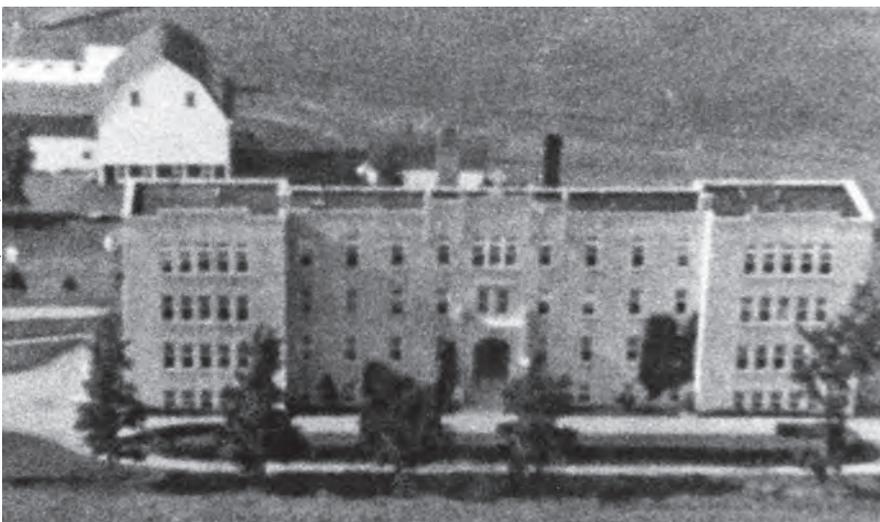
In recent years, individuals have come forward to tell of the physical and sexual abuse they experienced in residential schools. This is a tragic legacy for many former students. Mi'kmaw families still feel the effects of the Shubenacadie Residential School. Physical and substance (drugs/alcohol) abuse still present problems in today's First Nations communities, and many children and grandchildren of the residential school survivors suffer the ongoing legacy of the abuse they suffered there.

It was not until 1998, that the Canadian Government offered a Statement of Reconciliation that acknowledged its role in the development and administration of residen-

tial schools and the harm that was done by their action. The following is an excerpt from the Statement of Reconciliation offered to Canadian First Nations by the Prime Minister.

“Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations.

Against the backdrop of these historical legacies, it is a remarkable tribute to the strength and endurance of Aboriginal people



**Shubenacadie Residential School**

that they have maintained their historic diversity and identity. The Government of Canada today formally expresses to all Aboriginal people in Canada. "Our profound regret for past actions of the federal government, which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together."

One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over this period that requires particular attention is the Residential School system. This system separated many children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their own languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities to this day. Tragically, some children were the victims of physical and sexual abuse.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry."

The late Rita Joe, a Mi'kmaw poet, wrote this poem about her experiences at the Shubenacadie Residential School:

I lost My Talk  
I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie School.

You snatched it away:  
I speak like you  
I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my world.

Two ways I talk  
Both ways I say,  
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.

Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)

## Integrated Education

Throughout the Residential School era, there were also small Indian day schools throughout the province. In 1946, the Indian Act was reviewed and amended resulting in the closure of these local Indian day schools. Mi'kmaw students were integrated into the public school system. After the Shubenacadie School closed in 1966, many Mi'kmaw youth began to attend the public schools throughout the province. The provincial schools received funding (money) directly from the federal government to educate Mi'kmaw students.

# HISTORY MADE

## AS JURISDICTION FOR EDUCATION RETURNED TO MI'KMAQ

MEMBERTOU, Nova Scotia (May 4, 1999)—Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, announced today that the final steps have been taken by the federal and provincial governments, for the return of jurisdiction for education on-Reserve, to nine First Nations in Nova Scotia.

On April 22, 1999, the Honourable Romeo LeBlanc, Governor General of Canada, signed an Order-In-Council, proclaiming Bill CB30, the Mi'kmaq Education Act, as federal law. The Honourable John James Kinley, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, signed an Order-In-Council, proclaiming Bill No. 4, the Mi'kmaq Education Act, as provincial law effective the same day.

These Orders-In-Council are the final steps of a process that has been underway since 1992 to transfer jurisdiction for education on-Reserve from the federal government to First Nations in Nova Scotia. These steps give force to a Final Agreement signed by nine Nova Scotia First Nations, Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia on February 14, 1997.

“The completion of this process re-affirms the right of our people to govern the education of our children” said Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. “As we approach the new millennium, our people can then look to the future with renewed hope and confidence. This step will allow for

the development of educational policies that reflect the values, beliefs, culture and language of our people, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.”

The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, applauded the signing of the Orders-In-Council. “On behalf of the Government of Canada, I want to congratulate the First Nations. Assuming jurisdiction of education will enable First Nations in Nova Scotia to incorporate traditional cultural values and language into the everyday curriculum, as well as encourage greater community involvement in helping youth determine their future direction. This legislation is an example of our commitment to Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, and its objectives to strengthen Aboriginal governance and support strong communities, people and economies.”

“Nova Scotia is honoured to be a part of this process, recognizing the right of Mi'kmaw bands to govern their children's education on reserves,” Nova Scotia Education and Culture Minister, Wayne Gaudet said today. “Our legislation was developed in partnership with the bands, and we look forward to continuing

a close partnership as we work to improve the quality of education for all Mi'kmaw students.”

This is the first time in Canada that such legislation has been enacted. Nine of the thirteen First Nation communities in Nova Scotia (Esksani, Membertou, Chapel Island, Wagmatcook, Waycobah, Pictou Landing, Shubenacadie, Annapolis Valley and Acadia) have opted to participate in this legislation. The other four First Nation communities may choose to participate in the future.

This arrangement will see the transfer of approximately \$140 million to participating Mi'kmaw First Nations, over a five-year period for education. Programs covered under this agreement include primary, elementary and secondary education on-Reserve and post-secondary education funding to band members on and off-Reserve. The funding will also provide for the operation and maintenance of facilities, band administration and capital.



From the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey publication "Return of Education Jurisdiction to the Mi'kmaq"

The Mi'kmaq always recognized the importance of education to the future of their youth. With young people dropping out of school, they became greatly concerned about the effectiveness of integrated education. During the 1970s and 80s, the Mi'kmaq began to speak out on this subject. They wanted more control over the education of Mi'kmaq youth. During the 1990s, the Mi'kmaq began a movement to take control over on-Reserve Mi'kmaq education in Nova Scotia.

The Department of Indian Affairs began to transfer money to each First Nation community to negotiate their own agreements with the local public school boards. Education Counselors were hired by each community. They were given responsibility for purchasing books and other educational materials. Many communities began to develop their own study areas and resource centers for students. They started to provide tutors as needed. More Mi'kmaq youth were now choosing to finish school, but more work needed to be done.

Gradually, school boards began to invite members of the Mi'kmaq community to sit on their boards. This improved communication between the school boards and Mi'kmaq communities.

In 1996, the Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME) was established. The Council is made up of 14 Mi'kmaq members who represent

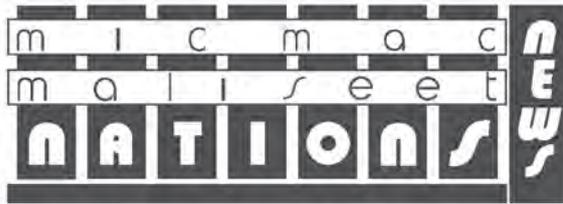
the district school boards and other Mi'kmaq organizations. The CME advises Nova Scotia's Minister of Education on issues relating to Mi'kmaq education, both with the band schools and the provincial schools. These issues include Mi'kmaq Studies at the high-school level, Mi'kmaq Language and adult education. The CME provides direct contact with provincial education authorities.

On April 22, 1999, two new pieces of legislation came into effect. Provincial and federal legislation was passed to enable the transfer of jurisdiction and authority for education to Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. These two pieces of legislation are firsts of their kind in Canada. They mark the final steps of the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia in returning control for education to First Nations in Nova Scotia.

As of October 2007, there are ten Nova Scotia First Nation Participating Communities who have signed the Jurisdiction Agreement. The agreement is administered through the Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK).

## **Mi'kmaq Education in the 21st Century**

As we move into the 21st century, the future of Mi'kmaq education looks promising. Nowadays, Mi'kmaq children start their education early with the on-Reserve daycare centers, and culturally appropriate preschool programs such as Head Start.



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**QUOTE**

“I don’t want to be dug up in the years to come”

Elder Elsie Paul / 3

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## Education Jurisdiction Transferred to Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia

**CHAPEL ISLAND:** Mi’kmaq Chiefs of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Ronald A. Irwin, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Honourable John Savage, Premier of Nova Scotia signed an historic agreement today transferring jurisdiction for education to the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. Minister David C. Dingwall also attended the signing ceremony at Chapel Island.

“I am honored to be participating in this important step in Aboriginal and Canadian history,” said Minister Irwin. “This transfer of jurisdiction will allow the Mi’kmaq to take control of their future through the education of their children, the very leaders of tomorrow. Moreover, this initiative establishes Aboriginal control of education in Nova Scotia and in that sense I believe it is consistent with the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ recommendations for more Aboriginal control of education systems and institutions. I am certain all First Nations in Canada will now look to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia for leadership in this direction.”

“As we approach the end of this century, ready to embrace the new millennium, it is fitting that we assume the jurisdiction of our education,” said Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti. “For many generations, since the first breath of the Mi’kmaq, we knew how to teach our young. Time has shown that we, the Mi’kmaq, knew best. The essential component that has been missing for so long was control. By virtue of this agreement, control returns to where it rightly belongs, to the Mi’kmaq. As in many first ventures in these modern times, cau-

tion is best, so therefore the speed and change in education will be dictated by the individual First Nations. My vision for the future includes the vision of a people who stand and take charge of their destiny. The future offers the bright aura of optimism, let us bid farewell to this era and embrace the start of another. Taho!”

“Nova Scotia has consistently made clear its solid commitment to making self-government more than just a dream for Aboriginal people,” said Nova Scotia Premier, John Savage. “Today’s historic agreement brings that dream a step closer, by giving the Mi’kmaq community control of their education system on-reserve.”

This is the first agreement in Canada to transfer jurisdiction for education from the federal government of First Nation communities. The agreement



The winner of the title of Little Miss Paqtnkek is Jocelyn Poulette. Jocelyn is the daughter of Janice and Alex Poulette.



allows for the transfer of approximately \$140 million to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia over a five-year period for education.

Programs covered under this agreement include primary, elementary and secondary education on-reserve and post-secondary education funding to band

members on and off-reserve. The funding will also provide for the operation and maintenance of facilities, band administration and capital.

The agreement will now be introduced as legislation by the federal and provincial governments. ☉



After six years of negotiations, Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti (Education), Federal and Provincial governments have transferred the jurisdiction for Education back to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia on February 14, 1997. On hand for the official signing held at the Chapel Island First Nation included from (l to R) MK Lawyer Jamie Campbell, Indian Affairs Joe McNeil, Minister Ron Irwin, MK Financial Controller Lauretta Welsh, Wacohah Chief Morley Googoo, MK Executive Director Majorie Gould and Indian Affairs Gerry Kerr.

In 1997, Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti (Education), Federal and Provincial governments transferred responsibility for the education of their children back to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia. The agreement they signed was the first of its kind in Canada.

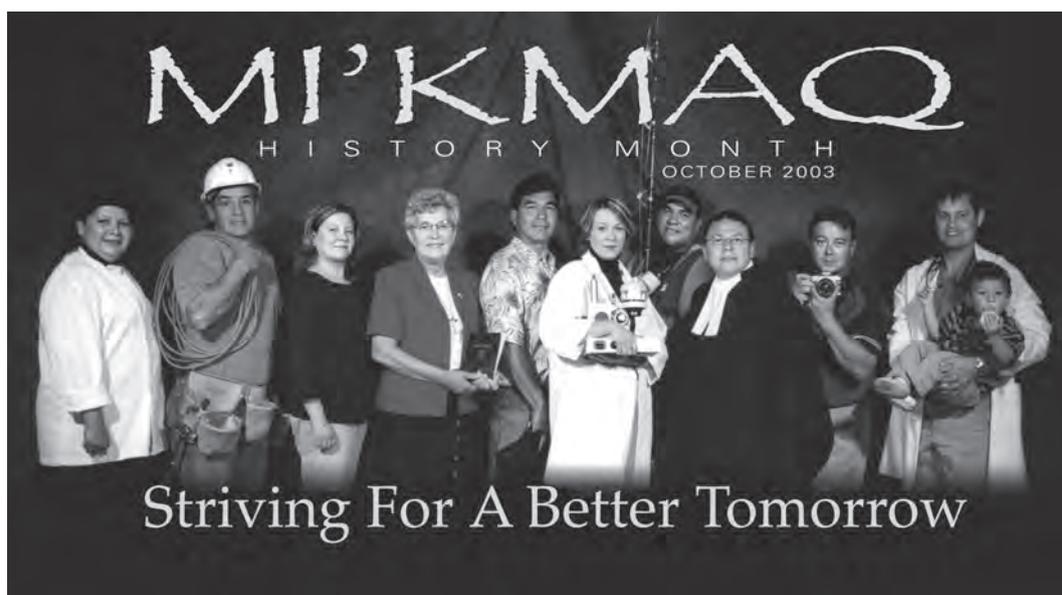
To see a copy of the whole education agreement, visit the Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey website at [www.kinu.ns.ca](http://www.kinu.ns.ca)

There are 7 elementary, 4 junior high and 4 senior high schools in Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia which provide culturally relevant material and include the Mi'kmaw language in the curriculum. More and more qualified Mi'kmaw teachers are working in these schools.

Many Mi'kmaq today continue to attend regular public schools, although graduation rates are low and drop-out rates high compared to their non-Native counterparts. Early childhood development programs are including more culturally appropriate material in the classroom, helping to change this picture. Today, each Mi'kmaw community enters into an agreement with the local school board to fund education for their students. This gives the community a limited say in the education of their children. Other supports include having Mi'kmaw teaching assistants in the classroom and providing school supplies. Several public schools across the province offer Mi'kmaw language and history courses via video conferencing from Cape Breton.

The Post-Secondary Education Program offers financial support for students who want to continue their education after high school. Numerous organizations and companies offer scholarships and bursaries to encourage young people to continue their education. The result is that more and more Mi'kmaq are pursuing professional careers.

Universities are also reaching out to First Nations to increase the number of Mi'kmaq in their institutions. For example, with the assistance of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Dalhousie University has a post-secondary counseling unit to provide support to Mi'kmaw students attending university in the Halifax area. As well, Dalhousie offers the Transition Year Program (TYP) to help Mi'kmaq make the transition from high school to university life. It is also home to the Dalhousie Law School's Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program. Meanwhile, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish has a part-time Aboriginal counselor, hosts the bi-annual Mi'kmaw Language Conference, and offers courses in Mi'kmaw language and history.



**2003 Mi'kmaq History Month poster focused on several Mi'kmaw professionals**

The Mi'kmaq are proud of the Mi'kmaq College Institute (MCI), which is located on the campus of Cape Breton University. The MCI offers distance education programs, which means that Mi'kmaq students can have access to university education without leaving their communities.

In 2001, the MCI announced the Integrated Science Program ("Toqwa'tu'kl Kijijitaqnn"). This program, the first of its kind in North America, gives students the opportunity to learn about science from the Mi'kmaq point of view. It brings together the modern sciences and traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge.

Several Mi'kmaq have received Honorary Doctoral Degrees in recognition of their knowledge and community contributions.

## Community Colleges and Customized Training

Mi'kmaq who attend community colleges and other training institutions are supported through the METS (Mi'kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat). METS is the Mi'kmaq "arm" of HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada). It provides funding for Mi'kmaq to attend various institutions, customized training courses, and mentorship/apprenticeship opportunities. The organization also funds summer student employment programming.

The Department of Indian Affairs encourages the development of customized training to meet specific needs of the First Nations communities. Programs are designed to match specific skills to employment opportunities. Examples of this type of training include the EDO (Economic Development Officer) training

offered in the early 1990s, the Mi'kmaq Court Worker training (2004), and the Silviculture (forestry) training offered to several communities throughout the 1980s and 1990s.



**Sister Dorothy Moore, C.M., O.N.S. (right) received an honorary doctorate from Mount Saint Vincent University (2002)**

## 2006 Census Statistical Profile

(School Attendance based on unadjusted 2001 Census, Statistics Canada;  
Education Attendance based on 2006 census, statistics Canada)  
Aboriginal Identity Population

### School Attendance (15 years and over)

	Total Aboriginal Identity Population Nova Scotia		Total Aboriginal Identity Population Canada		Total Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Population Canada	
	Total #	%	Total #	%	Total #	%
Total Reporting	11,605		652,350		23,901,360	
Not attending school	9,365	80.7	516,700	79.2	20,004,485	83.7
Attending school	2,235	19.2	135,655	20.8	3,896,875	16.3
Attending full-time	1,825	15.7	104,335	16.0	2,777,225	11.6
Attending part-time	410	3.5	31,320	4.8	1,119,650	4.7

### Education Attainment: Highest Level of Schooling (15 years & over)

	Total #	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total Reporting	17,870		823,890		25,664,220	
Less than High School Graduation Certificate	6,510	36.4	359,780	43.7	6,098,325	23.8
High School Graduation certificate only	3,800	21.3	179,590	21.8	6,553,420	25.5
Some Post-secondary Education	565	3.1	22,950	2.8	1,136,150	4.4
Trades certificate or diploma	2,425	13.6	93,885	11.4	2,785,420	10.8
College certificate or diploma	2,870	16.1	119,680	14.5	4,435,135	17.3
University certificate, diploma or degree	1,705	9.5	48,015	5.8	4,665,765	18.2

It should be noted that the youngest people counted in this table may not have a high level of education due to their age.

School Attendance Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census 97F0011XCB2001043  
Selected Educational Characteristics (29), Aboriginal Identity (8), Age Groups (5A)  
and Sex (3) for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces, Territories and  
Census Metropolitan Areas 1, 2001 Census - 20% Sample Data



**Graduates from the MLSN (Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network) Courtworker and Caseworker training program with Nova Scotia Community College (2003)**

## Resources

### **Aboriginal Healing Foundation**

75 Albert St, Suite 801, Ottawa, ON K1P 5E7  
ph: (613) 237-4441 Toll free: 1-888-725-8886  
fax: (613) 237-4442  
website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

### **The Elder Transcripts:**

#### **History You Can't Get from a Book**

website: [www.municipalities.com/elders/elder\\_charlielabrador.htm](http://www.municipalities.com/elders/elder_charlielabrador.htm)

### **The Learning Path**

National Film Board and Tamarack Productions. 1991. (video)

### **Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)**

A collective voice for Mi'kmaw education  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
ph: (902) 567-0336  
fax: (902) 567-0337  
e-mail: [mkeducation@kinu.ca](mailto:mkeducation@kinu.ca)  
website: [www.kinu.ns.ca](http://www.kinu.ns.ca)

### **Nova Scotia Department of Education**

Provincial government resources for  
Aboriginal education  
website: [www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca)

### ***Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie***

by Isabelle Knockwood. Roseway Publishing, Lockeport, 1992.

### **SchoolNet (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)**

website: [www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp](http://www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Various methods of delivery have been discussed in this chapter: the original “home schooling,” Indian Day Schools, Residential Schools, Integration into Provincial systems, on-Reserve schools today. With each of these “systems” there are pros and cons—both from the Mi'kmaw perspective and that of the government. Assigning each student one of these delivery systems and a perspective (Mi'kmaw or government), facilitate a group discussion and prepare a chart reflecting the findings.
2. The Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is the body responsible for Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia. Ask the class to prepare interview questions for a MK representative (John Jerome Paul, Laretta Welsh) to answer at a class presentation. Suggestions:
  - How did the MK come to be? Historical overview
  - How is the MK governed? How are decisions made?
  - What major project has the MK undertaken?
  - What does it mean to have “jurisdictional” control over education?
  - What about the communities who have not signed on to the MK legislation? Under what jurisdiction do they operate?
3. Contact the Healing Foundation for more information on the Residential School movement—the impacts and the healing process. The family unit is the central focus of the Mi'kmaw culture. Focusing on the family, prepare a discussion paper on the effects of the residential school on the family unit of the time, in today's society, and the implications for future generations.

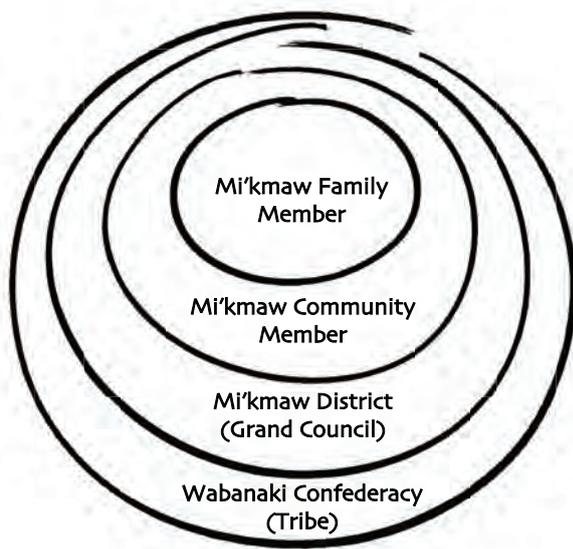
# The Challenge of Identity

Addressing the complex question of Mi'kmaw citizenship



## Who is Mi'kmaq?

Before European contact, the question of who was Mi'kmaq wasn't an issue. Everyone knew his or her place in society. Here's how things used to look in the Mi'kmaw Society:



Each individual knew where he or she belonged in this sophisticated hierarchy—as member of a family, a village, the Grand Council, the tribe. Early settlers were met by a self-governing, proud Mi'kmaw Nation. For example he/she might be a member of the Paul family from the Millbrook community (village) in the district of Sipekni'katik and member of one of the tribes (Mi'kmaq) belonging to the group of tribes making up the Wabanaki Confederacy.

## North American Citizens— The Jay Treaty

In 1794 the Jay Treaty gave Aboriginal peoples the right to trade and travel between the United States and Canada, which was at that time a colony of Great Britain. Aboriginal people were recognized as North American citizens.

Aboriginal people who could prove that they had 50 percent Aboriginal blood quantum were given certain rights under the Jay Treaty. These rights, which are still in effect today, include the right to:

- Cross the U.S./Canadian border freely;
- Live and work in either country;
- Have access to public benefits such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicare, Unemployment benefits and other benefits; and
- Register for college or university in the United States as a “domestic student” rather than as a “foreign student”

Blood quantum is a unit used to state the amount or degree of Native heritage of a person. For example, if both parents are of First Nations ancestry, the children would have 100% blood quantum. If one parent was First Nations and the other non-Native, the children would have 50% blood quantum.

To be given Aboriginal status in the United States, First Nations people must prove a blood quantum of 50%.

In Canada, however, Aboriginal status is defined in the Indian Act of 1867. Aboriginal people in Canada must also be listed in the Indian Registry. Because of the way that First Nations became recognized in Canada, Aboriginal status (until 1985) was granted to women who married into First Nation communities and who have no Native ancestry. These different methods of recognizing Aboriginal status in Canada and the United States make the Jay Treaty difficult to interpret.

### External Control of Indian Status

The 17th and 18th centuries were busy times in Atlantic Canada as settlers moved into the area. Land ownership quickly became an issue. The Europeans slowly pushed the Mi'kmaq into smaller land areas. They began



to view the Mi'kmaq way of life as interfering with European progress and development. Soon it became important to the British to identify and control the Mi'kmaq.

With the fall of Fortress Louisbourg in 1758, the French settlers surrendered to the British. This allowed the British to take control over life in the colonies. Britain began to offer land to those wishing to settle in the new world. It therefore became important to identify the Mi'kmaq, their numbers, and the lands they occupied.

The Europeans introduced many ideas and laws that were foreign to the Mi'kmaq. For example, European land ownership was contrary to the Mi'kmaq view of Mother Earth. (How could anyone claim to own a piece of Mother Earth?) As a seasonal people, the Mi'kmaq rarely stayed in one place for long periods of time, moving with the seasons to provide for themselves. The European settlers believed it was necessary to identify, count and locate all Native people living in the area in order to carve out their individual parcels of land and estimate the Mi'kmaq population who may be seen as competition for land and resources. The task of identifying just who was an Indian began.

The earliest known definition for the term "Indian" is from 1850—An Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada. It states:

“That the following classes of persons are and shall be considered as Indians belonging to the Tribe or Body of Indians interested in such lands:

First – All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular Body or Tribe of Indians interested in such lands and their descendants;

Secondly – All persons intermarried with any such Indians and residing amongst them, and the descendants of all such persons;

Thirdly – All persons residing among such Indians whose parents on either side were or are Indians of such Body or Tribe, or entitled to be considered as such; and,

Fourthly – All persons adopted in infancy by any such Indians, and residing in the village or upon the lands of such Tribe or Body of Indians, and their descendants.”

In 1868, the federal government passed a law which finalized the definition of “Indian.” The new definition excluded non-Indian men who married Indian women but included non-Indian women who married Indian men. The new law also described the Indian people as “wards of the Crown.” This meant that Indian people were now dependent on the federal government and had limited rights and privileges.

In an attempt to decrease the number of Indian people dependent on the federal government, the Enfranchisement Act became

law in 1869. If you were enfranchised, you were no longer considered to be an “Indian.” In this way, the Act was designed to integrate the Indians into the non-Native community, but only after they could prove that they were able to reject their way of life.

Here’s how it worked:

- If you passed grade 12 or entered university, you were automatically enfranchised;
- If you received any professional designation, you were enfranchised;
- If you left the country for more than five years, you were enfranchised.

Also in the 1869 Indian Act, Indian women who married non-Native men lost their right to be a Status Indian. Their children from that marriage also lost their status. This discriminatory approach to determining Indian status was an issue for more than 100 years. It was not until 1985 that a new law, Bill C-31, finally gave Indian women back their status and recognized their children as having part status.

No one disputes the fact that the First Nations were the first peoples of Canada. However, they were not considered Canadian citizens at the time of Confederation. (1867) Special laws were considered necessary to identify and define the Indian people, their rights and their “status” in this new country.

## Indians Become Canadian Citizens

Even though they were not considered Canadian citizens, Mi'kmaw men were proud to fight for the freedom of all Canadians during World War I (150 Mi'kmaw men enlisted), World War II (250 enlisted), and the Korean War (60 enlisted).

In fact, it was not until an amendment to the Citizenship Act in 1956 that Indians finally became citizens of Canada. In 1960 they were finally given the right to vote in federal elections.

## The Indian Registry

An amendment to the Indian Act in 1951 clearly defined the word "Indian." Next the Indian Registry was created to keep records. The point of the registry was to determine Indian status and membership. The federal Indian Act defines an Indian as "a person who, pursuant to [according to] this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian." To be eligible to receive benefits under the Indian Act, individ-



uals must be registered in the Indian Register. The Registry is maintained by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). People registered by the

**WWII Veteran Noel Abram Smith  
of Glooscap First Nation**

federal government under the Indian Act are referred to as Registered Status Indians. The term "membership" as it pertains to the Indian Registry refers to the First Nation Community (or Band) to which the individual belongs.

Historically, the definition of "Indian" was more inclusive than the definition under the current Indian Act. Today, you can be registered as "Indian" if you meet certain conditions. These include:

"6(1)(f) That person is a person both of whose parents are, or, if no longer living, were at the time of death, entitled to be registered under this section." (This means having two parents with status as of 1985.)

"6(2) Subject to Section 7, a person is entitled to be registered if that person is a person one of whose parents is, or, if no longer living, was at the time of death, entitled to be registered under Subsection 1." (This means having only one parent who has status.)

## Creation of "Indian Bands"

In 1960, eleven Indian Bands (Reserves) were created in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaq were now classified by Band or community and membership identified accordingly in the Indian Registry. Band lists must be approved by the federal government. Any change in status (marriage, births, etc) or membership (transfers, etc.) also had to be registered and approved by the government.

## The White Paper Policy

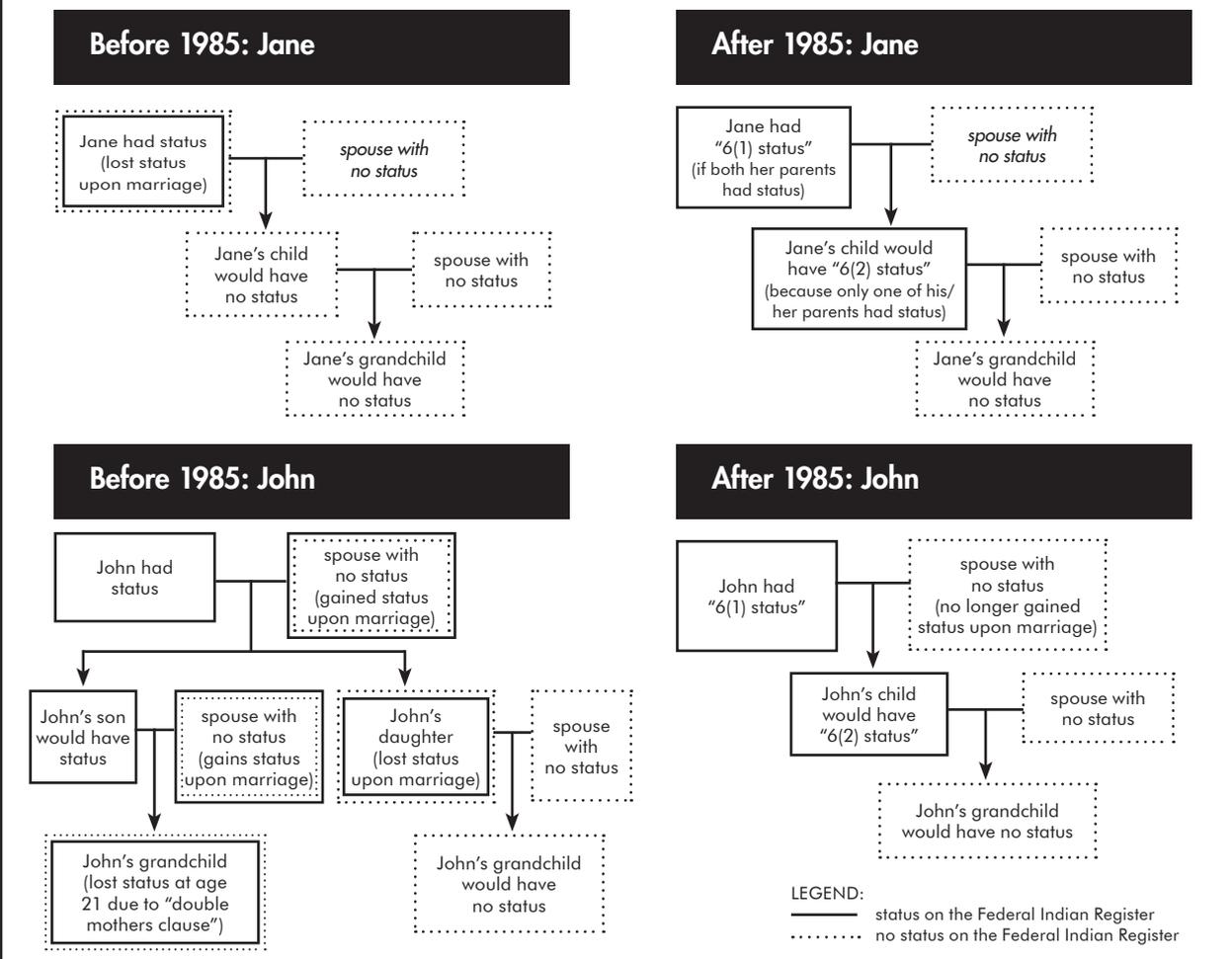
In 1969, the federal government introduced the White Paper Policy. The policy was a new approach to First Nations status. Before 1969, the government practice was to identify all Indians, and where they lived, and control most of their daily life. Systems of Social Assistance, education, health services, social housing programs were all costing the federal government a lot of money. In response, the White paper proposed:

- To assimilate (integrate) First Nations into Canadian society

- To eliminate the Indian Act
- To end federal responsibility for Indians
- To stop giving special status to Native people
- To cancel previous treaties and related land claims

The White Paper Policy was very contentious. After much debate, then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau withdrew the policy in 1971. Unfortunately, the policy continues to be a contentious issue. It has left a legacy of mistrust between the federal government and First Nations.

### Bill C-31 (1985) and some impacts to "Indian Status" because of marriage, for men and women



## Constitutional Protection

Following the repatriation of the constitution by Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1982, First Nations were assured (under Section 35 of the Constitution Act) that their rights and status would be constitutionally protected.



It is this legislation that acknowledges the First Nations—not only as one of the many cultures making up our country—but as a unique nation—with special status and rights stemming from their unique unprecedented connection to and occupation of this land.

### Bill C-31

As previously mentioned, Bill C-31 (1985) was an attempt to fix the part of the Indian Act that deals with status. Unfortunately, many issues still remain.

Bill C-31 gave back status to Indian women who had married non-Native men and lost their status as a result. It also gave partial status to their children. However, these children **cannot** pass on status to their future children unless they marry someone who has status.

Problems arise in situations where Indian men married non-Native women before 1985. The non-Native women were given full Indian status under the Indian act even though their heritage was 100 percent non-Native before they married. Children of these marriages have full status and therefore they can pass it on to the next generation.

Another question not addressed by Bill C-31 is that non-Native women who married into the culture before 1985 did not lose their Indian status. Furthermore, status was not granted to non-Native men who married in before 1985.

While many people welcomed Bill C-31 as long overdue recognition of the unfair treatment of Mi'kmaw women who had lost their status due to marriage, not everyone was happy. For one thing, the reinstatement of these women presented problems. The main problem with Bill C-31 was that the federal government had once again decided who would be considered an Indian in the face of many unsettled inequities.

Bill C-31 greatly increased the number of status Indians in First Nations communities. At the time the bill was passed in 1985, Indian communities were already struggling with a number of problems. These included limited Reserve lands, overcrowded housing, dependence on social programs, and high unemployment rates. The arrival of Bill C-31 members was not always welcome in a stressed and poor community. To help ease this situation the government decided to offer special housing and other supports for the Bill C-31 members. Unfortunately, in some instances this only resulted in long-standing community members (many living in overcrowded, sub-standard conditions) resenting these newcomers to the community. To this day, some communities continue to struggle with these issues.

## Status in the 21st Century

As we move into the 21st century, Mi'kmaq continue to face the big question of Indian status.

As a result of Bill C-31, marriages outside the First Nations culture present the very real possibility that the Mi'kmaq will eventually be assimilated into Canadian society. That's because intermarriages "dilute" status. As well, an increasing number of Mi'kmaq are living off-Reserve. This means that there are even more opportunities for Mi'kmaq to intermarry and be assimilated. Small rural First Nations worry that their communities will have very few status Indians within the next two generations. The future does not look bright for these communities as they receive money from the federal government based on the number of status Indians they have living on-Reserve.

## Whose Rights are They Anyway? The Beneficiary Question

Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq are slowly starting to negotiate the implementation of Treaty Rights and Mi'kmaw Title. Successful negotiation may offer the Mi'kmaq land, access to resources, monetary compensation, etc. The negotiation process and the magnitude of settlement and compensation are unclear at this time.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the Mi'kmaq will be answering the beneficiary question. That is, who will benefit from these rights and settlements? More specifically, the Mi'kmaq will be in a position to decide (on their own terms) who **is** Mi'kmaw. The answer to this question will define a nation—the Mi'kmaw Nation.

This beneficiaries question is made up of many smaller questions like these:

- What will "citizenship" criteria be?
- Who will be consulted?
- What will be the process?
- Who will decide?
- What about future generations?

The complex history of the Mi'kmaq, and the influence of non-Native identification systems that have been applied to identify and classify "Indian Status" contribute even more confusion to the beneficiaries question.

However, the question will have come full circle—from pre-contact self-identification to imposed identification schemes and now once again the Mi'kmaq will have the opportunity (and challenge) of defining who they are on their own terms.

To sort out the beneficiaries question is an ultimate test for a nation. It defines a nation by drawing a distinction between who is and who is not a Mi'kmaw person.



## References/Resources

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands,  
Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31,  
Indian Status, etc.

INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

### **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)**

#### **Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative**

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
ph: (902) 843-3880  
Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrights.com)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Is it possible for two first cousins whose mothers are sisters to have different status? Explain your answer.

When these cousins marry and have children, what First Nations status (according to the Indian Act) will their children have:

- a. If they marry a status First Nation person?
  - b. If they marry a non-Native person?
2. If, over a number of generations, the percentage of First Nations full status members is reduced, and the number of residents with no status increases, what will be the impact on the economic and social situation of a First Nation community?
  3. The White Paper Policy of 1969, proposed an assimilated and just society-one in which all people had equal rights and privileges. If it had been implemented, how would it have impacted the Mi'kmaq culture?

# Mi'kmaw Spirituality and Organized Religion

The fascinating formation of contemporary Mi'kmaw spiritual expression



The spirituality of a people cannot be described on its own. It's part of what makes up their culture—something that defines who they are. Spirituality is not simply worship of a higher being or holding certain ceremonies. The spirituality of a people is wrapped up in their language and their songs, in their stories and dances, in how they live and interact with each other, and who or what they honor.

## Mi'kmaw Spiritual Beliefs

The spirituality of the Mi'kmaq is very old. It dates back thousands of years and has a deep connection to the land. Like much of Mi'kmaw culture, the beliefs and practices about spirituality are passed from one generation to the next by the stories and teachings of the Elders.

The Mi'kmaq believe that a great spirit called Kisu'lk ("the Creator") made the universe and everyone and everything in it. They believe that all things—plants, animals, people, and Mother Earth herself—all have the Creator's spirit in them and must be respected. And because everything on Earth is connected, no part should be exploited or abused. Each part must work in harmony with the rest.

This does not mean that people cannot cut down trees, or hunt for food, but it does mean that the proper respect must be shown to the Creator for making these resources available to them in the first place.

## Spiritual Practices: How the Mi'kmaq Show their Spirituality

Like other cultures, the Mi'kmaq practice their spirituality through rituals (special things they do) and ceremonies (special events they hold) that acknowledge and give thanks to a higher power.

They pray and give thanks on a daily basis for all creation—for fish, for food, for children, for Elders, for all the Creator has given them.

Like Western culture, the Mi'kmaq pay respect to the dead through certain rituals and ceremonies. The Mi'kmaq believe that death is a part of the cycle of life and that the souls of the dead go to a Spirit World where they are happy. There is no concept of Hell in traditional Mi'kmaw beliefs.



Because they believe all things are part of nature and must be respected, the Mi'kmaq give thanks when they use part of nature for their own needs. For example, when they cut down a tree, or dig up plant roots for medicine, or kill an animal for food, there are certain rituals they must follow to pay the proper respect—to give thanks for things they disturb for their own use. Some animals, like moose, give their lives so the Mi'kmaq may have food. They show respect to the moose by treating the remains with respect. The bones of the moose should never be burned or given to household pets, they should be used to make something or buried.

### The Spirit World

Traditional Mi'kmaw spirituality includes the belief that there is a Spirit World as well as a physical world. The Creator teaches that people can gain knowledge and wisdom from both worlds. The Mi'kmaq believe there are spirits and people among us who can bridge these two worlds. Here are a few examples:

Kinap—a male spirit with special powers that he uses to help the Mi'kmaq

Puowin (male) or Puowini'skw (female)—a sorcerer or witch spirit who has powers which are used against the Mi'kmaq

Keskimsit—a person born with special power, gifts or strengths

Nikaniijijitekewimu—a person who can predict the future

Wiklatmu'j—a spiritual being who lives in the woods. He takes the human form of a man the size of a small child

Mi'kmuesu—a spiritual being who can take human form, and can appear and disappear at will. He can give supernatural powers to humans

Skite'kmuj—a ghost or spirit of someone who died

Skitekmujewawti—Milky Way; a path to the Spirit World



## Sacred Symbols, Customs and Values

The Mi'kmaq expressed their spirituality through many symbols, customs and traditions. The following examples are just some of these ways:

### Dreams

It is one of the Creator's teachings that important knowledge can be learned from dreams. All dreams need to be looked at to find those which contain a message from the Spirit World. While the skill to interpret dreams is disappearing from today's world, there are still some Elders who are able to carry out this practice.

### The Drum

For centuries, Native people have believed that the drum and the human heart share a similar purpose. This purpose is to provide life through its beat. This connection promotes a oneness between humanity and nature. It reinforces the unique relationship between humans and nature and it promotes love and respect for all living things. It is the belief of the Mi'kmaq that the drum is the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

### The Eagle Feather

The eagle is the only creature that is said to have touched the face of the Great Spirit. Because of this, the eagle is highly respected and honored. It represents the way through which Native people can feel the Great Spirit's presence among them. Those who own or carry a feather or



claw of an eagle are also highly respected. The eagle feather is also very important in any talking or healing circle. It is used as a powerful symbol in many cultural activities and ceremonies. To be presented with an eagle feather is the highest honor a Mi'kmaw can receive. Such an honor is only given to someone who has contributed unselfishly to the betterment of his or her community.

### Respect for Elders

In Mi'kmaw culture, all things must learn their place in the world through interaction with it, and through guidance from the Elders. Elders are people who are recognized by the community to have attained knowledge and wisdom through age and experience. Elders are the keepers of the sacred lessons of tribal and global harmony for all living things within the environment.

### Mi'kmaw Language

The Creator gave the Mi'kmaq their language to help them share knowledge and to survive. For this reason, they see their language as holy. The sacred knowledge within the Mi'kmaw language provides wisdom and understanding. It focuses on the processes of gaining knowledge, on the action or verbs, and not on the nouns or collecting material goods.

### Death and Mourning

The Mi'kmaq believe that a dying person should not be alone. All family members are encouraged to be with the dying person during their final hours. A candle is lit in the room to signify the light which was given at birth, and to help the person find the path to the Spirit World. Each family member must seek peace with the dying person so he or she can go to the Spirit World completely at peace. When the time of death is close, the Elders will tell everyone not to cry until the person has passed to the Spirit World. They believe that the person will have an easier passage if tears are not shed. After the person has died, everyone is encouraged to cry freely, because once the tears are gone, people will have an easier time coping with the death.

### Sacred Pipe

The sacred pipe is often called the “peace pipe.” Often used during sweat lodge ceremonies, the pipe is broken into two pieces, symbolizing a man and a woman. When the pieces of the pipe are joined—to symbolize unity—it becomes a sacred part of the ceremony.



### Sweat Lodge



Common to most northern Native peoples, the sweat lodge is a place of spiritual communication and cleansing. The lodge is made of young willow saplings placed in a pattern, with the door always facing toward the east. The sweat lodge has room for four to 12 people. They sit in a circle around a central dugout where preheated rocks create heat and steam for the ceremony. The ceremony is very humbling. It is a time for reflection and prayer. It teaches respect, patience, endurance and free speech.

### Sweet Grass

Sweet grass is a sacred herb associated with love. A sweet-grass ceremony (Pekitne'mank) is a cleansing and purification process. Also referred to as “smudging,” the ceremony is often used to open prayer circles, gatherings and higher ceremonies. When sweet grass is burned, participants fan the smoke over themselves and the areas around them. The smoke gets rid of evil spirits and invites positive energies to enter. Some believe that burning sweet grass carries the prayers to the Great Spirit in its smoke.

### Sage

Sage is also a sacred herb used in smudging ceremonies. It drives out the bad spirits and feelings, and cleanses the area for prayer.

### Talking Circle

The talking circle is a gathering of people sitting in a circle. The leader of the talking circle holds a sacred symbol such as

an eagle feather, a pipe, or sweet grass to symbolize his or her leadership. As long as the speaker is holding the symbol, he/she has the sole right to speak to the members of the circle on any subject. When the leader is finished speaking, the sacred symbol is passed to the next person who then can speak directly to the members of the circle. The circle is a form of societal healing or cleansing. Participants are able to speak openly on matters that otherwise would be private. The talking circle is completely confidential and all participants honor its sacred nature.



The Mi'kmaq lived their spirituality. Mi'kmaq spiritual teachings were passed on orally from generation to generation. Early settlers thought the Mi'kmaq were believers of superstition; they did not understand that the Mi'kmaq were a people of great spirituality and faith. This is why the early settlers tried to convert the Mi'kmaq to more "organized" religious practices. They gave very little credit to the respectful, humble and very complex spirituality of the Mi'kmaq.

### The Introduction of Christianity

The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had the first known contact with European explorers in 1497 when John Cabot arrived. Soon after, fishing ships from Europe were a regular

sight in Mi'kma'ki. Organized fur trade began in the 1500s. Settlers and Christian missionaries moved here during the 1600s and 1700s.

The Europeans did not understand the ways of the Mi'kmaq and they were inaccurately portrayed as barbarians and savages. For example, the Mi'kmaq belief that animals and trees had a spirit was seen as a sin to Roman Catholics. The Mi'kmaq concept that the land was shared by all and owned by none, was seen as backward to the Europeans.

Bowing to the pressure of the missionaries, the Mi'kmaq began to convert to Christianity. On June 24, 1610 at Port Royal, Grand Chief Membertou was the first Mi'kmaq to be baptized a Roman Catholic. Mi'kmaq began to follow the Grand Chief's example, adopting many of the practices of Catholicism. In the absence of the Missionary Priests, many Mi'kmaq people, especially members of the Grand Council, assumed the role of teachers as well as religious and prayer leaders.

While the Mi'kmaq accepted the teachings of the Catholic Church, they did not give up their own beliefs. In fact, they found that many of the Catholic teachings went well with their traditional teachings. They also continued



**Chief Membertou**

to practice their own Mi'kmaw spirituality. Unfortunately when the Shubenacadie Residential School opened in 1930, Mi'kmaw youth were forced to give up both the Mi'kmaw language and spiritual beliefs in favour of the Catholic religion. Convinced by religious leaders that Mi'kmaw spirituality was evil, more and more Mi'kmaq gradually converted to Catholicism.

In 1628, St. Anne, who had the respected status of grandmother, was adopted as the Patron Saint of the Mi'kmaw people. She is honored each year on the feast of St. Anne on July 26, which is celebrated in Mi'kmaw communities throughout the region. The largest celebration is the St. Anne Mission held in Chapel Island. Many Mi'kmaq retreat to this small island in Cape Breton for several days to honor St. Anne through prayer,

feasting, and celebration. As well, many Mi'kmaw communities work hard all year to raise funds to support seniors' retreats to St. Anne de Beaupré in Quebec.



Throughout history, there have been many challenges and much confusion about Mi'kmaw spirituality. Today it is estimated that 90 percent of Mi'kmaq are Roman Catholic. Most communities have their own Catholic churches. However during the past few decades, the Mi'kmaq have also been showing increasing respect for their traditional beliefs and practices. Today Mi'kmaq are finding their own balance between organized religion and traditional ways to guide their lives.

**Celebration  
of the Feast of  
St. Anne, circa 1905,  
Shubenacadie, NS**



*History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax*

## Resources

### **Lessons of “The Life Cycle”**

by Murdena Marshall. Cape Breton University. 1990.

### **Mi’kmaq Association of Cultural Studies**

A source of information and speakers on Mi’kmaw culture  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
PO Box 961, Sydney, NS B1P 6J4  
ph: (902) 567-1752 fax: (902) 567-0776  
e-mail: macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca

### **Mi’kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi’kmaw culture and history.  
Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **Values, Customs and Traditions of the Mi’kmaq Nation**

by Murdena Marshall. Cape Breton University. 1988.

### **Validity of Native Spirituality**

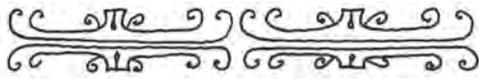
by Doctor Dorothy Moore, C.M., O.N.S., c.s.m.  
St. Michael’s College, Vermont.  
September 25 and 26, 2001. (speech)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Define and give example(s) of spirituality, religion, philosophy, superstition.
2. There are many religions: Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, etc. The word “religion” is seldom used to describe Mi’kmaw beliefs. Is/was there a Mi’kmaw religion? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think Chief Membertou agreed to be baptized Catholic? What changes in the course of Mi’kmaw history would have occurred if he had not converted?



# Entertainment and Recreation



From storytelling to the sports arena, here's a look at how the Mi'kmaq have succeeded in combining traditional practices with contemporary recreation.

## Early Mi'kmaw Pastimes

For centuries, Mi'kmaw storytelling was a way to entertain people and share information. Mi'kmaw stories were more like story cycles—a storyteller could take parts of one story and insert them into another to highlight certain points. Beating time on a noisemaker, a drum, or even a hollowed-out log, would let everyone know that storytelling was about to begin. Stories often lasted several days and included singing, dancing and feasting. The art of storytelling was a much-admired skill that was passed down from generation to generation.

Mi'kmaq also enjoyed smoking as part of their social life. They made tobacco from red willow bark, bearberry leaves and a native tobacco plant.

The Mi'kmaq loved games of chance and competition. They would play *Waltes*—a traditional Mi'kmaw dice game—for hours. Participants put a great deal of effort and skill into constructing this traditional game, which included a wooden plate of the hardest wood, carefully carved dice from animal bones and a set of “counting sticks” shaped from long thin animal bones.

Some other Mi'kmaw games are:

*Wapnaqn* (a men's game requiring skill with colour, memory, coordination and dexterity);  
*Kunte'juaqn* (a girls' game, requiring eye-hand



**The Game of Waltes**

*Waltes* (WALL-tess) is a very old game played by Mi'kmaq. It is made up of a shallow wooden bowl, six flat, round dice often carved from caribou bone, and sticks used to keep score. Each of the six dice is plain on one side, and has a cross marked on the other. Different styles of sticks are used to represent one or more points earned by the players. Each player takes a turn picking up the bowl and knocking it down with enough force to flip the dice. To earn points, a player must have 5 or 6 of the marked sides showing, or 5 or 6 of the plain sides showing. He gets 5 sticks if all the dice are the same, and 1 stick if only 5 of the 6 dice are the same. If the player earns points on his turn, he goes again. If he does not, then it is the next player's turn. The game continues until one player wins all the counting sticks or both players decide to end the game.

coordination, where rocks are tossed up and caught on the back of the hand); and Koqa'ltimk (a boys' wrestling game).

Mi'kmaq of all ages enjoyed competitions involving running, hunting, archery, canoe racing and many other physical skills. Any community member would take pride in being recognized as the best at any of these skills.

Competitive sport was also an important part of Mi'kmaw life and remains so today. Early writings tell us that by the early 1800s, the Mi'kmaq were already participating in team sports resembling hockey and baseball.

Always ready for a celebration, Mi'kmaq frequently held feasts and celebrations to acknowledge births, to welcome the seasons, to celebrate weddings, or to honor the life of a community member. For music, they used drums, rattles, whistles and chanting sticks. They also performed different dances, depending on the occasion. The most common

one was the friendship dance—a simple dance that everyone could do. Those performing the friendship dance held hands in a circle. They moved in a clockwise direction, taking three steps forward and one step back in time with the rhythm of the drum.

### **Mi'kmaw Hockey**

“Old Joe Cope, a much respected and multi talented Mi'kmaw Elder, was a boxer, musician, and hockey stick carver. As an historian of the Mi'kmaw Nation, he traveled from village to village keeping in touch with the life of the Mi'kmaq. In 1943, when he happened to read that people in Kingston, Ontario were claiming that they were the birthplace of hockey, he wrote this message to the Halifax Herald from his home in Millbrook:

“Long before the pale faces strayed to this country, the Micmacs were playing two ball games, a field game and an ice game.”

(The Puck Starts Here: The Origin of Canada's Great Winter Game: Ice Hockey by Garth Vaughan.)

“Old Joe” set the record straight.

Long before the Europeans arrived, Native craftsmen were making their own “hockey” sticks for their traditional game of Oochamadyk. Later, they gave the name of Alchamadytk to the European game of “Hurley on Ice” which later became known as “Hockey.”

Mi'kmaq also crafted the first form of ice skate. The skates were made of long bones shaped and sharpened into a rough “blade” and strapped to the foot with leather laces.



The early ice hockey sticks were carved from Hornbeam trees that are native to Nova Scotia. One of the tools the Mi'kmaq used to carve the sticks was known as a "crooked knife." Hornbeam is also known as 'ironwood' and 'stinkwood' because of the unpleasant smell it gives off when it is cut. Hornbeam was such a popular wood for hockey sticks that eventually local supplies began to disappear and the Mi'kmaq began to use Yellow Birch instead.

These hand-carved ice hockey sticks were shipped across Canada for decades, ever since the 1870s when Montreal athletes first took up the Nova Scotia winter game of hockey. The first games between Queen's University and the Royal Military College in Kingston in 1886 were played with Mi'kmaq hockey sticks from Nova Scotia.

### **Snowshoes**

During the winter, Mi'kmaq used snowshoes as a useful means of getting around. The Jesuit missionaries referred to the snowshoe as a "broad piece of network." Mi'kmaq called it "aqam"—indicating that the first snowshoes were made from White Ash (Aqamaq). Later, they used Beech to make the snowshoes. The curved ends of the shoes were bound together with leather made

from moose skins. Women wove the shoes together in a crisscross and diagonal design.

### **The Powwow - Mawio'mi**

In Nova Scotia, most Mi'kmaq communities have a yearly Powwow. This is a gathering that brings Mi'kmaq together to celebrate being Mi'kmaq. There is traditional dancing, singing, games of chance, craft displays, storytelling, and more. Because they are outdoor celebrations, Powwows are usually held in the milder months. People attend from other communities and non-Native people are welcome as well.



**Participants at a Powwow**



Before you attend a Powwow, it is wise to know some Powwow etiquette:

1. Powwows are fun events, but they are also sacred events. Ceremonial songs and dances, which are sacred, are performed from time to time throughout the Powwow.
2. People should stand during all ceremonial songs and dances. These include the Grand Entry, Flag Songs, Veteran Songs, Honor Songs and any other songs that the Master of Ceremonies (MC) designates as ceremonial songs.
3. Do not take any photos, videos, or sound recordings of ceremonies without asking permission.
4. It is important to listen to the (MC) because he will announce the different activities and will also let people know when they can dance and when they cannot. He will also give out other information and news.
5. Respect the Elders, drummers, singers, dancers, and the Powwow staff and committee.
6. The dancers wear regalia while they are dancing, not “costumes.” People should not touch the regalia.
7. You must dress and behave in an appropriate manner in the dance area.
8. People should supervise their children at Powwows.
9. Do not hold children while dancing in the dance area. The child may be construed as a gift to the Creator.
10. Do not run around the dance area. Always walk in a clockwise direction when you are in the dance area. Horseplay is not tolerated.
11. Do not bring alcohol or drugs to a Powwow. Do not come to a Powwow while you are intoxicated.
12. Dogs are not allowed around the Powwow area.
13. Bring your own chairs. Do not sit on someone else’s chair unless you have their permission.
14. Remember you are a guest. Have fun, ask questions and meet people.

## Mi'kmaq Treaty Day

In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the validity of the Treaty of 1752. This ruling validated Aboriginal Treaty rights and confirmed the unique relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and the Federal Crown.

In 1986, Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaw Nation, Donald Marshall Sr., invited all Mi'kmaq to "observe October 1, 1986 and every year thereafter as Treaty Day." Treaty Day commemorates the unique and special relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and Her Majesty, the Queen of England.

Every year Treaty Day festivities are held in Halifax. All festivities are planned to reflect the beliefs of the Mi'kmaw people with respect to the obligation of Treaty Rights. All Nova Scotians are welcome to share in the festivities and to learn more about the Mi'kmaw Nation and its history.

## St. Anne's Mission

The Feast of St. Anne is celebrated in every community on July 26th each year to honor St. Anne—the patron Saint for Aboriginal people. This is a religious occasion. It involves a religious and spiritual ceremony, which is usually followed by a feast and celebration.

Many Mi'kmaq from across Atlantic Canada retreat to the traditional location of the St. Anne Mission at Chapel Island, Cape Breton. Here, several days are set aside for prayer, reunion and cultural celebration.

## Mi'kmaw Treaty Day Proclamation

When the English began to make their new homes in our land, our forefathers protected the livelihood and survival of the Mi'kmaq by signing treaties with their Kings. Throughout the seasons the treaties have remained.

On November 21, 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the Treaty of 1752 is still strong. The Mi'kmaq are still protected by its articles and we call upon Her Majesty to honour this Treaty and others made with the Mi'kmaw Nation.

On this 234<sup>th</sup> year of the Treaty of 1752, I, as Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq, invite every Mi'kmaw to observe October 1 this year and every year thereafter as "Treaty Day" to commemorate the unique and special relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and Her Majesty.

PROCLAIMED at Halifax, Nova Scotia, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of October, A.D. 1986.

(signed)  
DONALD MARSHALL  
Grand Chief

## **Mi'kmaw Sports and Athletics in the 21st Century**

Today, Mi'kmaq organize Mi'kmaw ball tournaments and hockey tournaments. They also encourage youth to play on non-Native teams. Participation by Mi'kmaw youth is sometimes limited due to economic circumstances and lack of suitable facilities in the communities. However, over the last 20 years some First Nations communities have constructed new community facilities complete with gymnasiums and rinks.

With more and more Aboriginal youth falling prey to such diseases as obesity and Type II diabetes, it is more important than ever that Mi'kmaw youth are encouraged to follow an active lifestyle. The Mi'kmaw Nation is responding to this concern. In November 2003 the Mi'kmaq, in partnership with the federal and provincial governments, endorsed the Mi'kmaw Youth, Recreation and Active Circle for Living (MYRACL). This program promotes active lifestyles in Mi'kmaw communities. With financial support from its partners, the MYRACL will work to promote healthy choices and lifestyles to youth. It will also help communities to develop the resources for sport and recreation activities.

## Resources

### **Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies**

A source of information and speakers on Mi'kmaw culture  
47 Maillard Street, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
PO Box 961, Sydney, NS B1P 6J4  
ph: (902) 567-1752  
fax: (902) 567-0776  
e-mail: macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca

### **Mi'kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi'kmaw culture and history.  
Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **The Nova Scotia Museum's Mi'kmaq Portraits Database**

Collection of portraits and illustrations in various media, of the Mi'kmaq of Atlantic Canada.  
website: [www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq](http://www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq)

## Activities/ Discussion Questions

1. You are in charge of the Treaty Day celebrations on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Outline what you would plan for that day and why.
2. Discuss what you think may be the challenges facing a Mi'kmaw youth wishing to enter professional sport as a career. Are these challenges any different than those facing non-Native youth? Explain your answer.
3. List the materials from the natural environment that were used in the past for recreational activities. Can you figure out why these materials were chosen for this purpose?



# A Oneness with Nature

Understanding the connection and interaction between the Mi'kmaq and the natural environment



Before they encountered the first European settlers over 400 years ago, the Mi'kmaq were seasonally-mobile people. They moved with the seasons, traveling to locations that could provide for their basic needs.

The Mi'kmaq depended entirely on Mother Earth for their survival. Food, clothing, shelter, and medicine—all came from the forest and from the sea. This bonded the Mi'kmaq with the land.

Recognizing the importance and generosity of Mother Earth, Mi'kmaq used her bounty

sparingly and with great reverence. Wildlife was taken for clothing and food. The forest, sea and plant life offered food, shelter, warmth and medicine.

Mi'kmaq made use of the natural environment in every aspect of their life. The depth of the knowledge, understanding, and history among the Mi'kmaw Nation that made up the culture before European contact continues to challenge the scientists of today.

The natural environment also helped Mi'kmaq educate themselves about sciences such as

## Examples of Uses of the Natural Bounty

### Food

- fish, fowl, moose, deer, bear, beaver, etc.
- berries of all kinds, apples, cherries, wild turnip
- eggs from a variety of fowl

### Medicine

- turpentine from balsam fir—used to treat wounds. A broken bone would be re-set and wrapped in pads of moss soaked in turpentine. The break was wrapped in birch bark and splints applied.
- cold remedy—syrup of Black Cherry
- porpoise oil —ear aches, a laxative

### Clothing

- skins of moose, deer, beaver, otter, bear, lynx
- moose hide and deer hide moccasins
- thread for sewing was made by beating the tendon found on either side of the spine of a moose until it separated into strands almost as fine as silk embroidery thread
- babies were swaddled in the softest of furs and skins—fox, swans and wild geese

### Spirituality & Ceremony

- sage and Sweet Grass for cleansing and purification.
- tobacco offering

## Shelter

- fir boughs used on floor of wigwam
- spruce
- birch bark and moose/deer/caribou skin for exterior of wigwam

## Transportation

- birch bark canoes
- cedar slats as ribs for canoes, fir and spruce roots for lacing and binding
- snow shoes were first made of white ash, later of beech

## Tools & Utensils

- wooden tubs and kettles from tree trunks
- birch bark vessels sewn together with cedar roots or black spruce roots and sealed with spruce gum
- moose antlers and bones to make needles for sewing and fasteners
- baskets from rushes, splints of cedar, juniper, spruce and other woods.
- smokehouses were built from poles and birch bark
- fishing weirs from stone, and boughs

## Games

- waltes boards from burls of trees
- dice and Waltes sticks made from bone of animals

## Music

- the drum was made from animal skin stretched taught over a wood rim and sewn with leather laces or sinew

## Ceremony

- pipes of willow wood, and lobster claw were used in many ceremonies
- willow bushes, and birch bark were used to build traditional sweat lodges
- red willow bark was smoked as a tobacco

## Sports

- hockey sticks from hornbeam roots
- skates were made from long thin bones strapped by leather straps to the foot
- sledding, snowshoes from beech and sinew

## Communication

- shells were used to record the stories and history of the Mi'kmaq on Wampum belts—the “official” recording device of the Mi'kmaw Grand Council

## Art & Design

- shells of varying sizes and colors were used for adornment
- porcupine quills were used to decorate many items—dyed and sewn into skins, bark, etc.
- bone, teeth, claws, feathers as decoration on a variety of items
- moose hair weaving on clothing

## Dyes

- the inner bark of the birch tree was used to produce an orange dye
- purple came from red cedar roots, red maple (inner bark)
- brown—acorns, larch, white oak

medicine, biology, botany and meteorology. For example, it was not only important to know how to use birch bark, it was also necessary to know where to find it, what tools to use for harvesting, when to harvest it, how to store it, etc.

Mother Earth also provided content for stories and legends. For example, the legends of Kluskap describe the geography of the area, the attributes of animals. Many spiritual beliefs and practices referred to nature.

Even the structure of the Mi'kmaw language reflects the strong connection with Mother

Earth. For example Mi'kmaw place names offer some physical description of the natural landscape at the time:

- Bras d'Or Lake—Pitu'paq
- Halifax—Jipuktuk—"chief harbour or great, long harbour"
- Shubenacadie—Sipekni'katik—"the place where the *ground nut* or Segubun (Mi'kmaw potato) grows"

The Mi'kmaq only took what they needed from nature. They believed in conservation and sharing and they frowned upon excess and waste. From the Moose, the Mi'kmaq took meat, blood

## Fireflies and Birch Bark

In early spring when the frost comes out of the ground and the buds on the birch trees begin to open, it is also the time when the fireflies emerge in their grey beetle form. Around Truro, this happens around the first of May. When you see these grey firefly beetles, you know that the trees are getting water from the ground. The water travels up under a thick layer of bark to feed the emerging leaves. The Mi'kmaq knew that removing the bark at this time would yield strong sheets—up to 1/4 inch thick. Bark like this could be used for sturdy objects like canoes and coverings for homes.

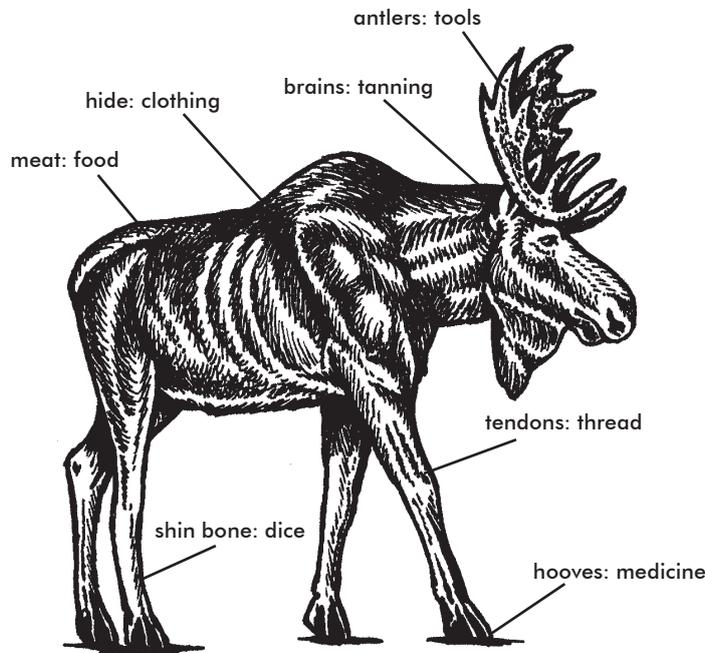
After several weeks, the fireflies begin to fly and light their tails in a mating dance. At this time the birch tree leaves are fully out. The water in the tree now runs between many outer layers of bark. Peeling the birch bark at this time gives paper thin and pliable layers. These are good for making containers like cups and bowls, basket liners, and for decorative items like birch bark biting—a craft where bark is folded into quarters and designs are bitten into it by the eye tooth. Experienced craftpeople can create designs like flowers, butterflies, leaves, or delicate patterns. These bark pieces could be used as artwork, applied to objects like cups or boxes, or sewn onto traditional leather clothing.

## Song of the Crickets

At the end of the summer, the Mi'kmaq knew they must wait to hear the chirp of the crickets in the evenings before it would be safe to dry their meat for the winter. If the meat was dried too soon, it might rot because the air was still too humid. The song of the crickets starts when that humidity is gone, sometimes in late August, sometimes in early September.



## Some Uses for the Moose



and bone marrow for food, and hides and fur for clothing. Rawhide strips became woven snowshoe filling. Moose brains were used in tanning, antlers were worked into tools, dew-claws became rattles, the shin bones were carved into dice, the hair used in embroidery, and the tendons became sewing thread. Even the hooves were important—as an ingredient in a remedy for epilepsy.

Each of the seven Mi'kmaw districts of Atlantic Canada had its own traditional hunting areas. The Mi'kmaw Grand Council oversaw these territories and made sure that everyone knew their place. However, the idea of “owning” land was not possible—after all, who could claim to “own” a piece of Mother Earth? The natural environment was for sharing. The philosophy was simple—use

what you need and save the rest for those who come after you.

All living things were believed to have a spirit, including animals and plants. Mi'kmaq believed that animals and plants sacrificed their lives for the survival of the community. For this gift, the Mi'kmaq were grateful and humble.

It was not until European contact that the Mi'kmaq were introduced to the concept of land ownership. At this time they were also introduced to the idea of trading their resources for European goods—the beginning of commercial trade for the Mi'kmaq. Before long, Mi'kmaq were restricted to smaller areas where they continued to practice their traditional ways. Today, Mi'kmaq occupy small “Reserve” parcels of land throughout Atlantic Canada that were set aside for them by the federal government.

As the King of England approved land grants, the European settlers began to “own” specific areas of land. Slowly, the Mi'kmaq began to change their traditional ways. They traded animal fur for food, blankets, clothing, and other items. Meanwhile, the settlers started using the forest resources to build things like barrels and containers for export. They also cut down trees for the construction of villages and fortresses for the settlers. Mi'kmaq baskets, porcupine quillwork, beading and other crafts were sold or traded.

The consumption of the natural resources by the new settlers slowly eroded many traditional ways. One example is the depletion of the Black Ash tree species in the province. The physical characteristics of the Black Ash tree made it perfect for creating baskets and other containers. Mi'kmaw basketmakers took great pride in their basket designs. Many of them are considered works of art today. However, the pliability of Black Ash soon became known to the settlers who used large amounts of it for shipping containers for export. Today the Black Ash species is almost depleted. Consequently the art of Mi'kmaw basket making has also declined.

### **Traditional Knowledge and the Use of Natural Resources**

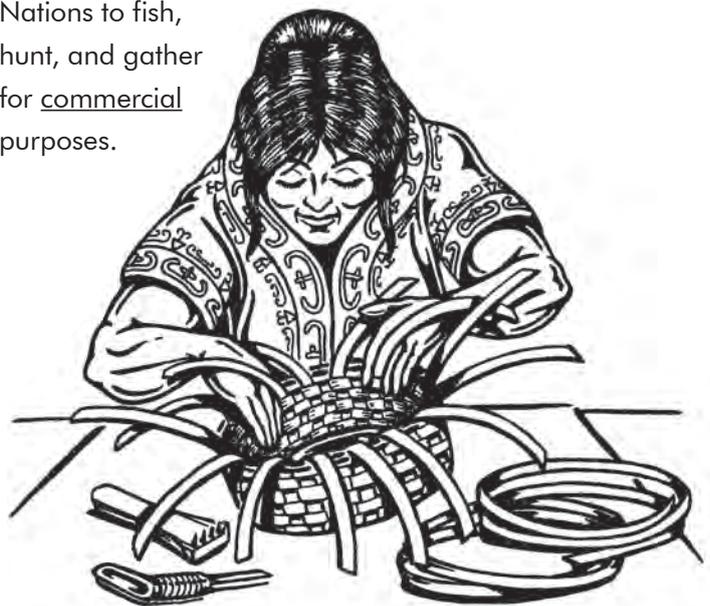
In order to survive on the land, the Mi'kmaq had extensive knowledge of the natural environment and the way that all living things are connected. Much of this knowledge remains sacred to the Mi'kmaw culture and we must respect that fact. However, the Mi'kmaq have shared some of their knowledge over the generations.

### **The Fight for Natural Resources**

New inventions, industrial development, modern transportation and technology have all helped to create the society and lifestyle we know today. Sadly, big industry is taking its toll on the environment, and forests and wildlife are slowly disappearing. Mi'kmaq no

longer depend directly on nature for survival. Instead, factors like government regulations, licensing schemes, and the introduction of land ownership have excluded the Mi'kmaq from their natural environment. Today, the use of natural resources has little to do with basic survival. It has become a commercial activity with little or no participation by Mi'kmaq. For example, the forest resource is used by the pulp and paper industry, sawmills, as well as for exports. The fishery is regulated by the province through licensing. The resource is processed with much of it being exported. Native peoples have had to stand by and watch as non-Natives prosper from the rich resources of the land and the sea.

In order to protect their right to participate in the fishery, the Mi'kmaq turned to the courts to have their treaty rights recognized. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada issued the Marshall decision. This legal decision recognizes the treaty right of First Nations to fish, hunt, and gather for commercial purposes.



And while this decision has opened up many commercial opportunities for the Mi'kmaq it has also presented many challenges, both for the Mi'kmaw and for non-Mi'kmaw communities. On the positive side however, today there are many Mi'kmaq who earn their living from the fishery. Many Mi'kmaw communities own communal licenses to harvest various species of fish.

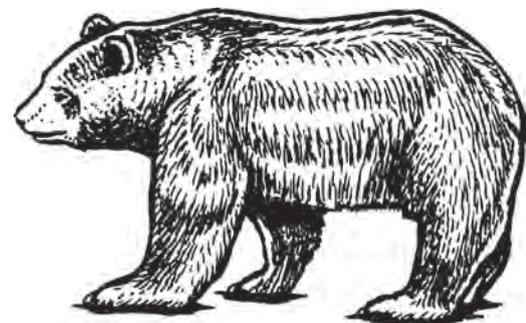
In 2003, Mi'kmaq were back in court to confirm their treaty right to commercial logging. In 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that commercial logging was not a treaty right. The ruling was based on the fact that logging was not a traditional practice at the time the treaties were negotiated. Even though they lost this legal battle, the Mi'kmaq did make some progress. Recognizing that First Nations do not have equitable access to the forestry, the provincial government is working with the Mi'kmaq to fix the situation. Both groups are negotiating to ensure that the Mi'kmaq get greater access to the forest resource for commercial purposes.

### **Land Occupation**

Before contact, Mi'kmaq enjoyed the land, living in harmony with nature and sharing the bounty among community members. They had no concept of land ownership, property deeds, or boundary lines. The land belonged to all living things and Mother Nature was her keeper.

European contact and settlement brought new concepts of land tenure, carving out individual pieces of land that would be owned by individuals. Soon, properties were passed from generation to generation and this makes up the land ownership system we have today in Nova Scotia.

Today, many Mi'kmaq own property and live away from the Reserve community. However, those who choose to live with their own communities are confined to federal Reserves. Mi'kmaq living on the federal Reserve lands share equal use and occupation of the land with all community residents. Reserve lands are owned by the federal government (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs) and therefore cannot be bought or sold by individual occupants. As the "landlord," the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has control of the land and is responsible for any activity that takes place on the Reserve lands. For example, community residents are required to apply to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for a permit if they wish to harvest any natural resources located on Reserve lands. If trees are cut from Reserve property, community members



must pay a fee to the federal government. This money is held in a trust for the benefit of the community.

There are many fundamental differences between federal Reserve land and the provincial system of private ownership. For example:

- People living on Reserve lands owned by the federal government do not have to pay provincial property tax.
- A private landowner can buy and sell private property. The landowner can also use the land to get bank loans. Indian Reserves are held in trust by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for the use and benefit of the Aboriginal community. Individuals who live on Reserve lands are like tenants. The federal government is their landlord. Therefore their land and anything located on their land cannot be used as collateral for a bank loan.
- A private landowner can pass on/transfer property to his/her family. Reserve land belongs to the community as a whole.

After death, family members cannot inherit land as it belongs to the whole community. Nevertheless, homes and land on the Reserves are “unofficially” passed on, preserving the family unit.

- Land use on Reserves is a community decision subject to the approval and authority of the federal government. Individual landowners, off-Reserve, can use their land as they wish, subject to provincial land laws.
- An individual landowner can add to his or her lands by simply buying more. Reserve land base is limited. Communities must get special permission from the federal government to add land to the Reserves. This is no easy task. There have been very few Reserve land additions in Atlantic Canada.
- A private landowner can decide who lives on his/her property. The situation is much more complicated on Reserve lands. Native peoples come and go, depending on their financial situations.

Mi'kmaq must often choose between the traditional communal concept of ownership and individual ownership for personal gain.

## Resources

**Awakening: Living with today's forest** by First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), NS, in cooperation with The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. Eastern Woodland Print Communications, Truro, NS, 2006. (Mi'kmaw perspective on forest management today)

### **First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), NS**

ph: (902) 895-6385 fax: (902) 893-1920  
e-mail: forestry@cmmns.com

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands, Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31, Indian Status, etc. INAC Atlantic Regional Office, 40 Havelock St PO Box 160, Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200 fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: www.inac.gc.ca

### **Micmac Medicines: Remedies and Recollections**

by Laurie Lacey. Nimbus, Halifax, NS, 1993.

### **Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre**

PO Box 341, Shubenacadie, NS, B0N 2H0  
ph: (902) 758-1953 For researching historical information on the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

### **Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources**

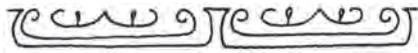
Represents five Cape Breton Mi'kmaw communities to address concerns regarding natural resources and their sustainability. Produces a series of Newsletters.  
ph: (902) 379-2024 fax: (902) 379-2195  
e-mail: info@uinr.ca website: www.uinr.ca

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. You own 100 acres of land and live there with your relatives and friends. All of a sudden the government passes a law that says you must share the same amount of land with some long lost relatives and the number of people living on your land will now be 125 people. These people come from various places and may also have extended families that will someday want to live with them. They could be great people with good education and many skills or they could be "undesirables." To add to this situation, there are many cultural and language differences. In any case, you have no choice. You now have 25 extra people living on your land. Explain your thoughts as the land owner. List the positive and negative possibilities of this change. How would you feel as one of the newcomers?
2. Many Nova Scotians make their living from the natural resource sector. Why do the Mi'kmaq not work in these industries as well? What is keeping them away? Explain your answer.
3. Land "ownership" off-Reserve is very different from land "occupation" on-Reserve. Discuss the pros and cons of each of these relationships with the land:
  - a. From the Mi'kmaw perspective; or
  - b. From the non-Native perspective.

# Governing a Nation

Overview of the traditional Mi'kmaw system of government and the challenges faced by Native peoples today



## The Traditional Mi'kmaw System of Government

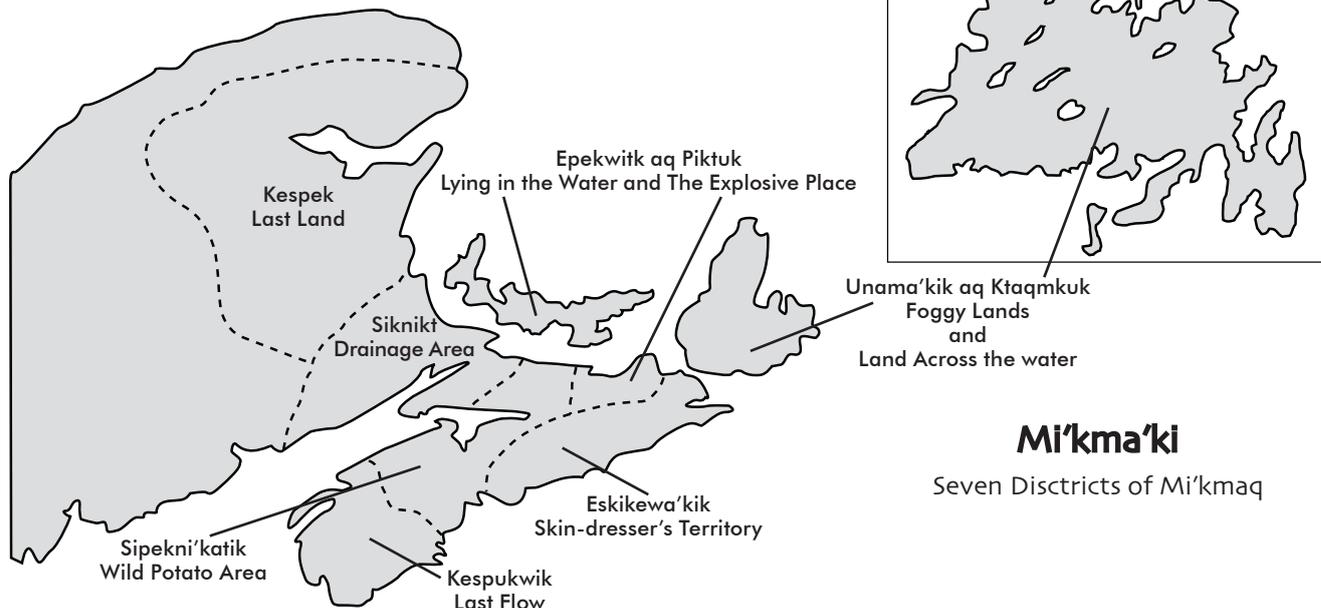
When European settlers came here in the 1600s, the Mi'kmaw Nation belonged to the Wabanaki Confederacy. This Confederacy included the Mikmaq, the Maliseet, the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, and the Abenaki tribes. The tribes were all members of the Algonquin family which occupied lands east of the St. Lawrence River, the Adirondacks and the Appalachians.

All these tribes respected the territory occupied by the Mi'kmaq, who divided it into seven hunting and fishing districts. This region, known as Mi'kma'ki, included all of what is today Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, the eastern part of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and southern Gaspé.

## The Role of the Chief in the Mi'kmaw Society

The early Mi'kmaq had a complex system of government. The political structure was made up of a hierarchy of chiefs, including the Local Chief, the District Chief and the Grand Chief.

The Local Chief looked after the affairs of the village community. He presided (ruled) over the "Council of Elders" which was the governing body of the village. This group was made up of family heads or representatives. The Local Chief provided dogs for the chase, canoes for transportation, and supplies for hunting expeditions. He also provided emergency food supplies in times of need.





Each of the seven Mi'kmaq districts had a chief known as the Saqamaw. The Saqamaw, like all Chiefs, was usually the eldest son of a powerful family group. The District Chief presided over the Council of Local Chiefs in his area. The Council met usually in the spring or autumn to resolve such issues as peace, truce and war. The Council made decisions by means of consensus.

When issues affecting the whole Mi'kmaq Nation arose, a Grand Council meeting was called by the Grand Chief. This meeting was attended by all District Chiefs and their families. A Grand Chief was a District Chief who was appointed by his peers as the chief spokesperson. Grand Chief Membertou was the spokesperson for the Mi'kmaq at the time of European contact. The Grand Council also assigned hunting and fishing territories to the Chiefs and their families. They agreed on treaties of friendship with other tribes, and later they approved treaties with the Colonial Government of Nova Scotia.

Choosing Mi'kmaq leaders was a very serious matter. This is how it was structured:

- A Council of Elders chose Local Chiefs
- The Local Chiefs chose District Chiefs
- The District Chiefs, who made up the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, appointed the Grand Chief

In many cases these appointments may have only been a formality, as the position of Chief was normally passed on to the eldest son of the former Chief. The eldest son, however, had to be worthy. Otherwise, some other male in the same family group would get the job.

The Mi'kmaq Nation was governed by well-defined laws and procedures. Territories were clearly identified and local, district and national jurisdictions were well understood by all. The Mi'kmaq also understood and respected tribal affiliation and local village citizenship. Their leaders were well-respected and exceptional individuals who took their responsibilities very seriously. Meetings of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council were recorded by the Pu'tus, who was the keeper of the records and stories.

The traditional Mi'kmaq style of governing included the following features:

- They used consensus-building to make decisions.
- They discussed issues in the form of a talking circle, where every individual there had lots of time to express his or her opinions and views.
- They respected the wisdom and knowledge of community Elders when it came to making decisions.
- The Mi'kmaq did not keep a written record of how their government operated. Instead, policies and procedures were understood and passed on from generation to generation through the teachings of

the Elders. As well, the wampum belt kept by the Pu'tus recorded the history of the Mi'kmaq and the decisions of the Grand Council.

- There was opportunity for nationhood and strength on a tribal basis. i.e. The process allowed tribes to unite against common threats. Tribes could agree to unite and work together in times of war or natural disaster.

### European Contact and the Transition Period

European contact and their eventual takeover forever changed the way the Mi'kmaq governed themselves. This happened because the colonists imposed their own system of government on the "citizens" of the Colonies.

Several factors contributed to the fall of the traditional Mi'kmaw style of government. They include:

- European settlers quickly began to outnumber the Mi'kmaq and dominate the area.
- The settlers implemented a private land tenure system. They received grants of land from the British Crown and they began to take over the hunting territories traditionally used by the Mi'kmaq. The idea that one individual could own a

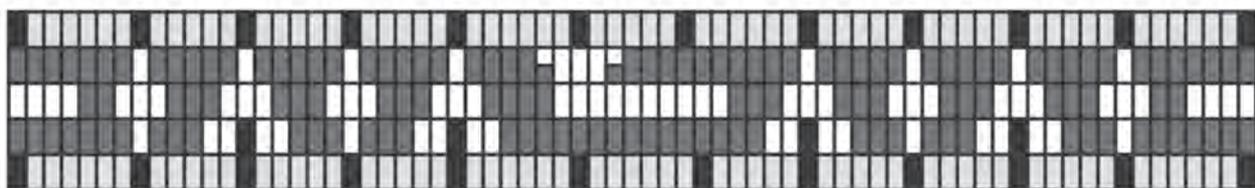
piece of land was completely foreign to the Mi'kmaq who were a communal people.

- The Europeans were diligent record-keepers. They wrote everything down, including information about land ownership, trade practices and population statistics. Soon the Mi'kmaq were kept from their traditional lands. The settlers counted them regularly to make sure the number of Native people was not growing too quickly. The early settlers worried that the Mi'kmaq could threaten their newfound home.

During the 1700s, the Mi'kmaq and the colonists signed a series of treaties. These treaties recognized the Mi'kmaq as a nation living in peace and friendship with the colonists. They also set out rules about trade and economic relations between the two peoples. However, the Mi'kmaq were gradually pushed into smaller and smaller areas. The colonists were exerting more and more control over their lives.

In 1867 the Constitution Act came into being. This act established provincial boundaries. It also established federal and provincial jurisdictions in the European style. The Constitution Act did not consider the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Instead, the colonists were more concerned with developing plans to keep the Mi'kmaq under control.

#### A "Protocol Belt" sent to the Chiefs of the Wabanki Confederacy to request a meeting



Then, in 1876 the Indian Act was passed. This act referred to the Mi'kmaw people as "wards" (dependents) of the federal government." Now the Mi'kmaq could not move about freely. They had no say in government issues that affected their traditional territory and they had little chance of being self-sufficient. The federal government had all the power and the Mi'kmaw Nation was forced to become a dependent people. The proud, self-sufficient, self-governing nation that greeted the early settlers was no longer visible.

By the early 20th century, the Mi'kmaq were truly disadvantaged. Anything the federal government did seemed to make things worse for the Mi'kmaq. First, the government decided to create Indian Reserves, which grouped Native peoples together in small communities. Later (1942), the federal government imposed centralization. The aim of centralization was to relocate all of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to reserves in Shubenacadie and Eskasoni. Next the Indian Registry was created, forcing Native peoples to record their Indian status. The Indian Act gave the federal government complete control over the Mi'kmaq—deciding which lands they could live on, telling them how to elect their community leaders, and even defining their Native status and membership. The traditional Mi'kmaw system of government was destroyed.

## Mi'kmaw Leadership and Governance Today

In Nova Scotia today, there are 13 Mi'kmaw communities. Each community has its own elected leadership which is made up of a chief and councilors. Mi'kmaw communities hold elections every two years and follow the regulations set out by the Indian Act. One council member is elected for every 100 members.

Until recently, only those members living on the Indian Reserve were eligible to vote in community leadership elections. In 1999 the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Corbiere vs. Canada* that band members living off-Reserve were eligible to vote in community leadership elections. The result of this decision is that community elections are now a complicated, expensive and drawn-out process. This is because community members may be living all over North America and beyond. The First Nations community election process takes 90 days—considerably longer than the Canadian Federal election process.

The Government of Canada recognizes the autonomy of each First Nation. This means that each community has the right to make its own decisions on some local matters. However, each community must also present Band Council Resolutions (BCRs) to the federal government in order to get

### Wabanaki Confederacy Wampum Belt



money for housing and other programs, for the implementation of local by-laws, land administration, and other community needs. The Minister of Indian Affairs has the power to accept or reject the BCR.

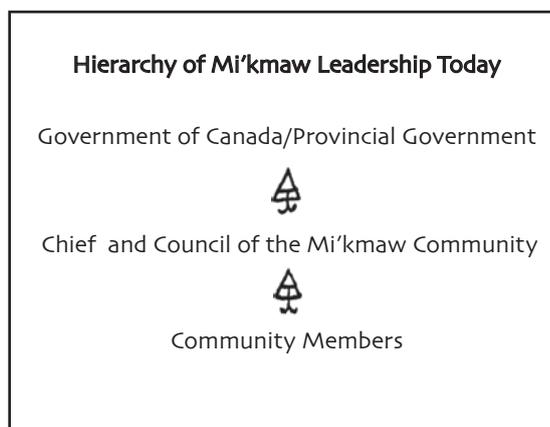
The local band office in each community oversees programs such as Social Assistance, Economic Development, Housing and Health. However, all these programs are subject to the policies and rules of the federal government. Mi'kmaq continue to have little say in the policies that affect them directly.

In an effort to come together to discuss matters that affect all First Nations, the Mi'kmaq have taken a couple of steps. First, in 1970, they formed the Union of Nova Scotia Indians (UNSI). The UNSI was formed to bring together all Nova Scotia Chiefs to discuss issues that concern them all and to advocate for change.

In 1986, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) was formed as a Tribal Council. The CMM represents six Mi'kmaq Bands located on mainland Nova Scotia—Bear River, Annapolis Valley, Glooscap, Millbrook, Pictou Landing and Paqtnkek. These bands withdrew from UNSI to become members of the Confederacy.

Today, both UNSI and CMM provide advocacy and advisory services to their respective communities. The governing board of these tribal organizations is made up of the chiefs of member communities. In addition to the two tribal organizations, several other Mi'kmaq organizations have been formed to provide specific services to Mi'kmaq communities across Nova Scotia. Some of these include:

- Mi'kmaq Family & Children's Services (MFCS)
- Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies (MACS)
- Mi'kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat (METS)
- Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK)



All of these organizations are non-profit, and each of them has a board of directors who are Mi'kmaw chiefs. The boards have decision-making powers over the programs and services offered by these organizations. However, funding for programs is provided by the federal government to make sure that federal rules and regulations are followed. At an even broader level, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs meets regularly to discuss matters concerning all 13 Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw communities.

### Governance and Policing

Governance involves creating laws, rules and policies that are needed to organize, operate and protect a community. But how are these laws monitored and enforced? Traditionally, Mi'kmaw settlements lived according to established oral laws and traditions. The laws were enforced by the community working together. The situation is much different today.

All Nova Scotians are subject to local, federal and provincial authorities/jurisdictions to monitor and enforce the rules.

However, as First Nations communities occupy federal lands and are subject to the Indian Act, jurisdiction on some matters is unclear. Some provincial rules do not even apply to First Nations, for example:

- regulation of gaming on-Reserve is different from regulation in non-Native communities. Gaming agreements are negotiated between the provincial government and each Mi'kmaw community, and do not necessarily follow the same rules and distribution as in non-Native communities.
- First Nations are exempt from provincial land tax because the federal government is viewed as the owner of federal land.
- Provincial licensing schemes do not apply on federal land, etc.

Often provincial laws conflict with Treaty Rights—many of which have been interpreted and upheld by the court system. The recognition by the courts of the Mi'kmaw right to fish commercially for a moderate livelihood (the Donald Marshall Decision, 1999) upset provincial fishing quota and licensing regimes. As a result the federal/provincial authorities began to negotiate communal fishing agreements with the First Nations communities as a method of responding to this significant Supreme Court decision.

Once the rules are understood and the jurisdiction is clear, there is still a question of who then polices the First Nations? Community bylaws on local matters are often monitored by local community bylaw officers. Enforcement is usually the responsibility of the RCMP.

### Six Nations Wampum Belt



Today, each Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw community has negotiated a community policing agreement with the RCMP which is cost-shared by the federal and provincial governments. The RCMP officers must know about the special jurisdictional circumstances of the communities in order to be effective.

Mi'kmaq are subject to laws, enforcement and court systems that are far-removed from traditional Mi'kmaw justice practices. Unfortunately, a much larger percentage of Aboriginal people experience conflict with the law than do other Canadians. Many believe that this is due to the huge difference between traditional Mi'kmaw justice and the justice system of today. As a result, Mi'kmaq are creating culturally appropriate programming to support those Aboriginal people facing conflict with the law. And they are encouraging community involvement in their sentencing and rehabilitation.

In 2000, the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN) was developed to build a bridge between the justice system and

the Mi'kmaw communities. MLSN programs include:

- The Mi'kmaw Court Worker Program (MCWP) which provides assistance, support services, translation (as needed) to Aboriginal people charged with an offence.
- The Mi'kmaw Customary Law Program (MCLP) that supports youth facing the justice system.
- The delivery of traditional Sentencing Circles as an alternative to court sentencing. This involves the Mi'kmaw community in decision-making on how youth may make amends for their offence(s) and what, if any, rehabilitative measures will be taken.

The MLSN is working with the federal and provincial justice departments to enhance today's justice system by bringing in traditional practices and culturally appropriate activities whenever possible.

#### Peace Wampum Belt



## Resources

### **The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq**

Information and/or speakers about Mi'kmaw governance today. (See also "KMK" for info)  
57 Martin Cres, Truro, NS B2N 6N7  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424  
website: [www.cmmns.com](http://www.cmmns.com)

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands, Centralization/Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31, Indian Status info, etc.  
INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

### **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)**

#### **Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative**

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
ph: (902) 843-3880  
Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrightrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrightrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrightrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrightrights.com)

### **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

INAC website contains excerpts from the Royal Commission Reports  
website: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp)

### **RCMP First Nations Community Policing Service**

Local RCMP detachments also may have staff to give presentations on Aboriginal policing.  
website: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/fncps-spcpn-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/fncps-spcpn-eng.htm)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. In 1942, the government decided to centralize all Mi'kmaq by relocating them to two large reserves: Eskasoni and Shubenacadie. Centralization was not successful. Many families did not want to leave their homes and friends to move to another place not knowing what would face them. Imagine yourself in this position. What would be your feelings and thoughts if you were the head of the household?
2. Traditional governance made decisions by reaching consensus. Today's governments make decisions based on a majority of the representatives agreeing and supporting the decision. What would be the pros and cons of each of these systems of decision making? This might be a good topic for a class debate.
3. What barriers/challenges do you see to the Mi'kmaw Nation becoming a free and self governing nation? In your opinion will the Mi'kmaq ever become an independent, self-governing nation as it was at the time of European contact. Why or why not?

# Freedom, Dependence and Nation Building

Tracking the ever-changing relationship between Mi'kmaq and Canadian governments



## In the Beginning— a proud and free nation

Prior to European contact, the Mi'kmaq were an independent Nation with a sophisticated (complex) system of government. They used diplomacy with other First Nations and they were skilled negotiators. As members of the Wabanaki Confederacy (which included the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and Abenaki tribes), they worked together to resolve various issues.

The Mi'kmaq and the other members of the Wabanaki Confederacy often held meetings. They recorded their agreements on a series of Wampum Belts. The Wampum Belts were made of shells arranged in a special pattern. These belts told the story of the Mi'kmaq and the treaty agreements they had with other First Nations. The Wampum belt was the responsibility of the Pu'tus who knew how to record and read the messages of the belt.

First Nations peoples believed that everything was interconnected—meaning, connected to everything else. Their goal was to create and maintain harmony among all living things and to avoid conflict. This worldview was reflected in the Wampum Belts, which were used to record the treaties between First Nations and the European settlers.

## The Treaty Relationship

Prior to Confederation in 1867, a number of treaties were signed between the Mi'kmaq and the Colonial government.

In the 1700s the Mi'kmaq signed a series of “Peace and Friendship” treaties called the Covenant Chain of Treaties. These agreements recognized friendly and respectful relations between the Mi'kmaq and the Europeans. They were based on a shared understanding of mutual independence and trade. In exchange for their loyalty to the Europeans, the treaties guaranteed that the Mi'kmaq would be able to continue hunting and fishing in their territory. These treaties have been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada as legal and binding documents and have been referenced in many recent court decisions.

**Andrew Alex holding  
a Wampum belt**



History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax

# 1752

Enclosure in letter of Governor Hopson  
to the  
Right Honourable The Earl of Holderness 6th of Dec. 1752  
Treaty or  
Articles of Peace and Friendship Renewed

BETWEEN

His Excellency Peregrine Thomas Hopson Esquire Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia or Acadie Vice Admiral of the same & Colonel of One of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot, and His Majesty's Council on behalf of His Majesty.

AND

Major Jean Baptiste Cope Chief Sacham of the Tribe of Mick Mack Indians, Inhabiting the Eastern Coast of the said Province, and Andrew Hadley Martin, Gabriel Martin and Francis Jeremiah members & Delegates of the said Tribe, for themselves and their said Tribe their heirs and the heirs of their heirs forever. Begun made and Concluded in the manner form & Tenor following, viz.

1. It is agreed that the Articles of Submission & Agreements made at Boston in New England by the Delegates of the Penobscot Norridgewolk & St. John's Indians in the Year 1725 Ratified and Confirmed by all the Nova Scotia Tribes at Annapolis Royal in the Month of June 1726 and lately Renewed with Governor Cornwallis at Halifax and Ratified at St. John's River, now read over Explained & Interpreted shall be and are hereby from this time forward renewed, reiterated and forever Confirmed by them and their Tribe, and the said Indians for themselves and their Tribe, and their Heirs aforesaid do make and renew the same Solemn Submissions and promises for the strict Observance of all the Articles therein Contained as at any time heretofore hath been done.
2. That all Transactions during the Late War shall on both sides be buried in Oblivion with the Hatchet, And that the said Indians shall have all favour, Friendship & Protection shewn them from this His Majesty's Government.
3. That the said Tribe shall use their utmost Endeavours to bring in the other Indians to Renew and Ratify this Peace, and shall discover and make known any attempts or designs of any other Indians or any Enemy whatever against his Majesty's Subjects within this Province so soon as they shall know thereof and shall also hinder and Obstruct the same to the utmost of their power, and on the other hand if any of the Indians refusing to ratify this Peace shall make War upon the Tribe who have now Confirmed the same; they shall upon Application have such aid and Assistance from the Government for their defence as the Case may require.
4. It is agreed that the said Tribe of Indians shall not be hindered from, but have free liberty of Hunting and Fishing as usual and that if they shall think a Truck house needful at the River Chibenaccadie, or any other place of their resort they shall have the same built and proper Merchandize, lodged therein to be exchanged for what the Indians shall have to dispose of and that in the mean time the Indians shall have free liberty to being to Sale to Halifax or any other Settlement within this Province, Skins, feathers, fowl, fish or any other thing they shall have to sell, where they shall have liberty to dispose thereof to the best Advantage.
5. That a Quantity of bread, flour, and such other Provisions, as can be procured, necessary for the Familys and proportionable to the Numbers of the said Indians, shall be given them half Yearly for the time to come; and the same regard shall be had to the other Tribes that shall hereafter Agree to Renew and Ratify the Peace upon the Terms and Conditions now Stipulated.
6. That to Cherish a good harmony and mutual Correspondence between the said Indians and this Government His Excellency Peregrine Thomas Hopson Esq. Capt. General & Governor in Chief in & over His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia or Acadie Vice Admiral of the same & Colonel of One of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot hereby promises on the part of His Majesty that the said Indians shall upon the First Day of October Yearly, so long as they shall Continue in Friendship, Receive Presents of Blankets, Tobacco, some Powder & Shot, and the said Indians promise once every year, upon the first of October, to come by themselves or their Delegates and Receive the said Presents and Renew their Friendship and Submissions.
7. That the Indians shall use their best Endeavours to save the Lives & Goods of any People Shipwrecked on this Coast where they resort and shall Conduct the People saved to Halifax with their Goods, and a Reward adequate to the Salvage shall be given them.
8. That all Disputes whatsoever that may happen to arise between the Indians now at Peace and others His Majesty's Subjects in this Province shall be tryed in His Majesty's Courts of Civil Judicature, where the Indians shall have the same benefits, Advantages & Priviledges an any others of His Majesty's Subjects.

In Faith & Testimony whereof the Great Seal of the Province is hereunto appended, and the Partys to these Presents have hereunto interchangeably Set their Hands in the Council Chamber at Halifax this 22nd day of Nov. 1752 in the 26th Year of His Majesty's Reign.

P. T. Hopson  
Chas. Lawrence  
Benj. Green  
Jno. Salusbury  
Willm. Steele  
Jno. Collier

Jean Baptiste Cope, his Mark  
Andrew Hodley, his Mark  
Francois Jeremie, his Mark  
Gabriel Martin, his Mark

Some of the well-known treaties include:

1725—Treaty with the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet signed in Boston. It was the first of several treaties to be signed between the British and the Mi'kmaq to establish a peaceful alliance.

1726—The 1725 Treaty was ratified and confirmed by all the Mi'kmaw tribes in NS during talks at Port Royal. This was the first of what is now known as the Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

1728—Further ratification of the 1725 Treaty.

1749—Treaty signed with the Aboriginal peoples at Chebucto and St. Johns River renewing the Treaty of 1725.

1752—The Treaty of 1752, signed by Jean Baptiste Cope and Governor Hopson of Nova Scotia, made peace and promised hunting, fishing and trading rights.

1753—Ratification of the Treaty of 1752.

1760/61—Treaties of Peace and Friendship were made by the Governor of Nova Scotia with Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy communities. They include the rights to harvest fish, wildlife, wild fruit and berries to support a moderate livelihood.

1762—Belcher's Proclamation described the British intention to protect the just rights of the Mi'kmaq to their land.

1763—The Royal Proclamation of 1763 is a complicated document that reserved large areas of land in North America as Indian hunting grounds and set out a process for cession and purchase of Indian lands.

It should be noted that the treaties were written in English and the Mi'kmaq were not fluent in that language at the time they signed them. This meant that they were open to interpretation.

Many Mi'kmaq recalled other spoken agreements and ceremonies with the Europeans. They also considered these agreements to be like treaties. However, there are very few records of these ceremonies and spoken agreements in existence today.

### **From Freedom to Dependence— How did it happen?**

The first European settlements began to spring up around Nova Scotia in the late 1700s. Large British settlements included a fort at Annapolis and a fishing station at Canso. The French settled in Port Royal. Early relationships and treaties between the Mi'kmaq and the Europeans were mostly about trade. The City of Halifax was founded in 1749 and by the 1780s the British Loyalists began to arrive in Nova Scotia. The population of Europeans in Nova Scotia grew quickly as they settled on the land and began to establish their own economies.

With the arrival of large numbers of settlers, the Mi'kmaq soon became dispossessed. Land grants were given to the newcomers by the British crown to encourage them to settle in the "new world." The newcomers set up their own Colonial government and took control of the area.

Over the years, the newcomers made many attempts to assimilate the Mi'kmaq and control their lands. By the 1830s, the Colonial Government tried to relocate the Mi'kmaq on small areas of land throughout Nova Scotia known as Indian Reserves. However, the Mi'kmaq did not want to move to reserves because it didn't suit their traditional seasonal lifestyle. The lands set aside for Indian Reserves were inadequate and isolated.

Following the Confederation of Canada in 1867, many further government acts and policies to control the Mi'kmaq were enacted. They included:

**The Indian Act (1876)**—This act made Native peoples the wards (dependents) of the federal government. The point of the Indian Act was to train the Mi'kmaw people to abandon their language, culture and religion and force them to assimilate into Canadian society.

**The Centralization Movement**—The policy began in the 1910s. In the 1940s Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia were forced to move to two large reserves—in Shubenacadie and Eskasoni. Although the Centralization policy was not completely successful, many Mi'kmaq did move to these reserves. Today these two First Nations have the largest Mi'kmaw population in Nova Scotia.

**Indian Status and Registration**—From the 1850s onward, the Mi'kmaq continued to lose their identity. It became the job of the

federal government to decide who was and who was not Indian. The Mi'kmaq could no longer even decide who they were on their own terms. There was a ban on all cultural activities between 1884 to 1951.

**Residential Schools**—With the Residential School movement of the 1930s, many Mi'kmaq had their language and cultural practices taken away from them.

Left with poor-quality land reserves, community membership decided by the federal government, and the Indian Act dictating all aspects of their life, the Mi'kmaq of the 19th and 20th centuries became almost totally dependent on the federal government. From total independence to complete government dependence—the Mi'kmaq became a broken nation.

## **Re-building a Nation**

During the last part of the 20th century, the relationship between the government and the Mi'kmaq slowly began to change.

## **Policies and Legislation**

In 1969, the Liberal government, under the leadership of Pierre Elliot Trudeau introduced the White Paper Policy. This policy proposed complete assimilation so that the Aboriginal people would be treated and viewed as all other Canadians. This would mean the loss of status, community and culture.

It was this policy that gave the Mi'kmaw Nation a wake-up call. Realizing that they were in very real danger of being assimilated, the Mi'kmaq began to work together to get back their independence. Their goal was to preserve their culture and their communities. Fortunately, the White Paper Policy was withdrawn and never became law. However, to this day, First Nations continue to believe that the government may still be working to assimilate the Aboriginal culture.

The Constitution Act of 1982 added Section 35(1) to the Constitution of Canada. For the first time, existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights were affirmed as constitutionally protected rights. This secured the position of all Aboriginal people in Canada, stating their special position as Canada's first peoples.

In 1985, the federal government passed Bill C-31 to reinstate Native women who had, in accordance with the Indian Act (pre-1985), lost Indian status by marrying non-Native men. Although many welcomed the opportunity to regain their status, Bill C-31 had several negative impacts.

- There were now four different "classifications" imposed on First Nations, which has sometimes led to lack of unity within communities:
  - Mi'kmaq, who had status even before Bill C-31

- Mi'kmaq who have had status restored under Bill C-31
- Mi'kmaq who are descendants of those who were reinstated, and
- Non-status Mi'kmaw persons of Mi'kmaw ancestry who are not eligible for Indian Status.

- This resulted in an immediate increase in First Nations population with no corresponding increase in land and resources. The First Nations population increased by 100,000 across Canada.
- While the population ballooned shortly after Bill C-31, the provisions under this legislation have the potential, over time, to dramatically decrease the number of people who have Mi'kmaw status. This is seen as a threat to the future of the culture. It limited the ability of children with one Native and one non-Native parent to pass on status to their children if they marry outside of the culture. If the Mi'kmaq continue to marry outside the culture, assimilation may happen within the next two generations. The future may see Reserve lands occupied by people with no Indian status. This threat of assimilation has motivated the Mi'kmaq to work toward building a nation that defines "status" on its own terms.



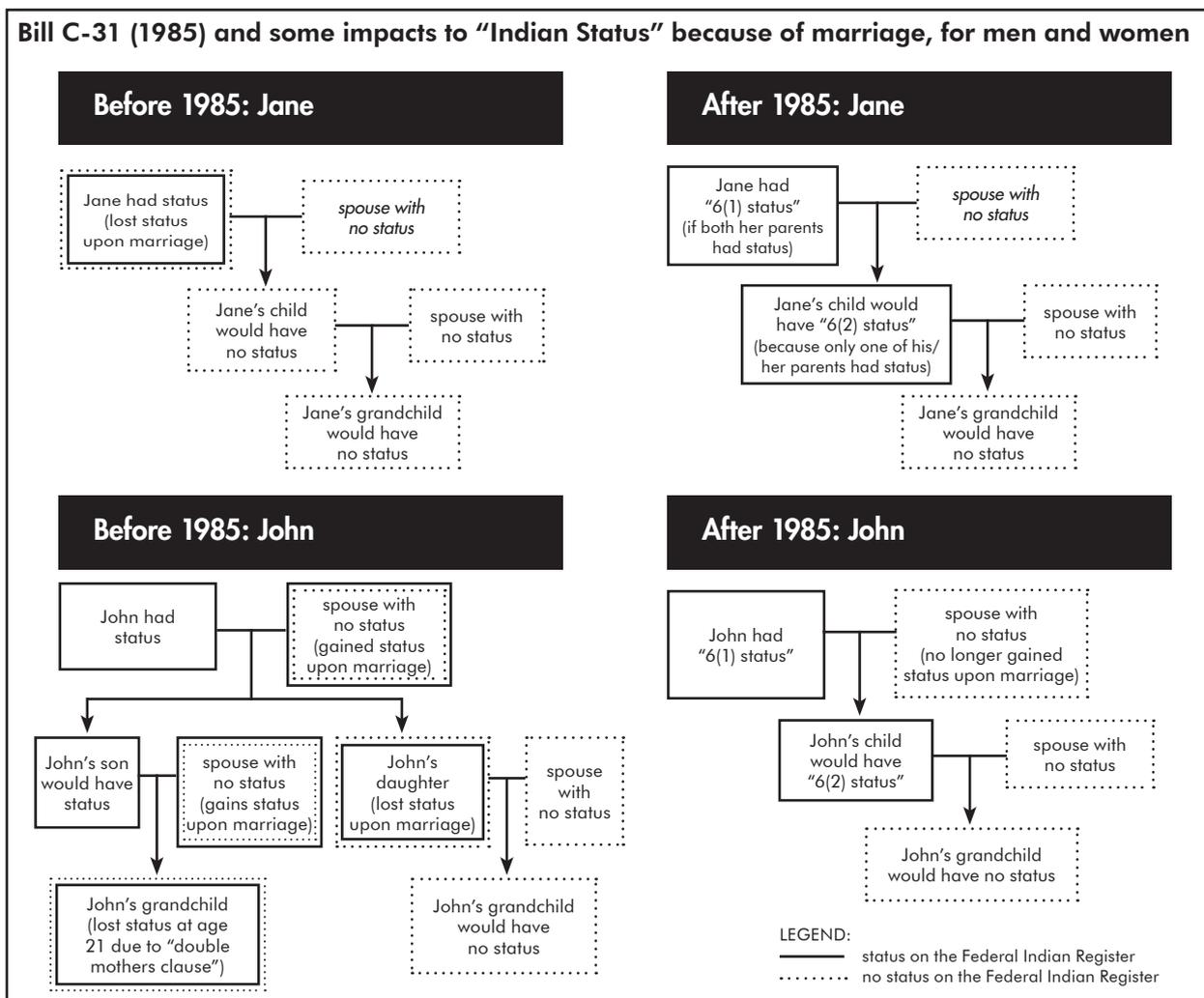
Bill C-31 further divided status into two classifications:

Members whose parents are both Mi'kmaw status Indians were given the classification of 6(1) and those who only have one parent with Indian status were classified as 6(2).

The following chart compares Indian Act status inheritance before and after Bill C-31. We can see from this chart the potential of decreasing status population.

### Mi'kmaw Administrative and Program Delivery Organizations

Not satisfied with services from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and concerned over the White Paper Policy, the Mi'kmaq started to be more involved in looking after their own affairs at the local community level across Nova Scotia. Social programs were soon managed and administered by the local community. Gradually other programming was shifted from government to community in areas like housing, infrastructure and membership. At the same



time, organizations led by Mi'kmaq were set up to provide services to their members. Many of these organizations continue to operate today.

### **The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

In the summer of 1990, the Oka crisis brought worldwide attention to Native rights in Canada. The town of Oka, in the province of Quebec, announced its intention to develop a golf course on lands that had been claimed for many years as traditional burial ground for the Mohawk of the Kanehsatake First Nation. This clash turned into a 78-day armed standoff between Native warriors, the Quebec provincial police, and eventually the Canadian army. What began as a disagreement over land, was expanded to bring attention to the living conditions of Aboriginal Canadians and their relationship with the government.

Immediately following the Oka crisis, the Canadian government initiated the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP).

The mandate of the Commission was to study the evolution of the relationship of the Aboriginal peoples, the government of Canada, and Canadian society as a whole. Four of the seven individuals appointed to the Commission were Aboriginal.

The RCAP visited Native communities across the country, heard briefs from over 2000 people and commissioned over 350 research studies. A five-volume report was released on November 21, 1996. The main conclusion of the report was the need for a complete restructuring of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The RCAP Report provides an Aboriginal perspective on Canadian history and the role Aboriginal peoples should play in modern society.

In response, federal and provincial governments began to support practical initiatives to address Aboriginal social and economic issues raised by the report.

It was not until 1997 that the Canadian Government purchased the land in dispute on behalf of the Native community. In 1999, Kanehsatake signed a land management agreement with the federal government giving the community management authority over the land. Today the land has been used to extend the community's burial ground.

## Recent Court Decisions

Several issues have been brought before the courts that have significantly changed the lives of First Nations and contributed to the relationship with government that is unfolding today.

1985—The Supreme Court of Canada held that the Treaty of 1752 was an existing treaty in *R.v.Simon*.

1990—The Supreme Court of Canada, in the *Sparrow* decision, set out the way in which Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution, and indicated that the government and First Nations should negotiate the details of implementation.

1990—The Nova Scotia Court of Appeal held that the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had Aboriginal rights to fish for food, protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution in the case of *Denny, Paul and Sylliboy*.

1997—The Supreme Court of Canada provided guidance on the question of Aboriginal title in the *Delgamuukw* case, stating how rights to land, and not just rights to fish or hunt on the land, were to be determined. The Supreme Court of Canada also directed that governments and First Nations should try to negotiate how these rights should be recognized and implemented.

1999—The Supreme Court of Canada released the *Donald Marshall* decision recognizing the treaties of 1760 and 1761 and the right to hunt, fish and gather for a moderate livelihood.

1999—The Supreme Court of Canada released the *Marshall II* decision, explaining in more detail the rights identified in the first *Marshall* decision, and the power of the government to justify infringing the rights.

These decisions gave support and momentum to the negotiation of Aboriginal and treaty rights.

## Political Infrastructure

In the 1990s as a result of the wrongful conviction of Donald Marshall Junior for the murder of Sandy Seale, the Government of Nova Scotia launched an investigation and inquiry. A Royal Commission appointed by the Government of Nova Scotia examined the events and presented its findings and recommendations for change in support of fair and equitable treatment for Aboriginal people interacting with the Justice System.

With federal, provincial and local support, many of these recommendations have come to life:

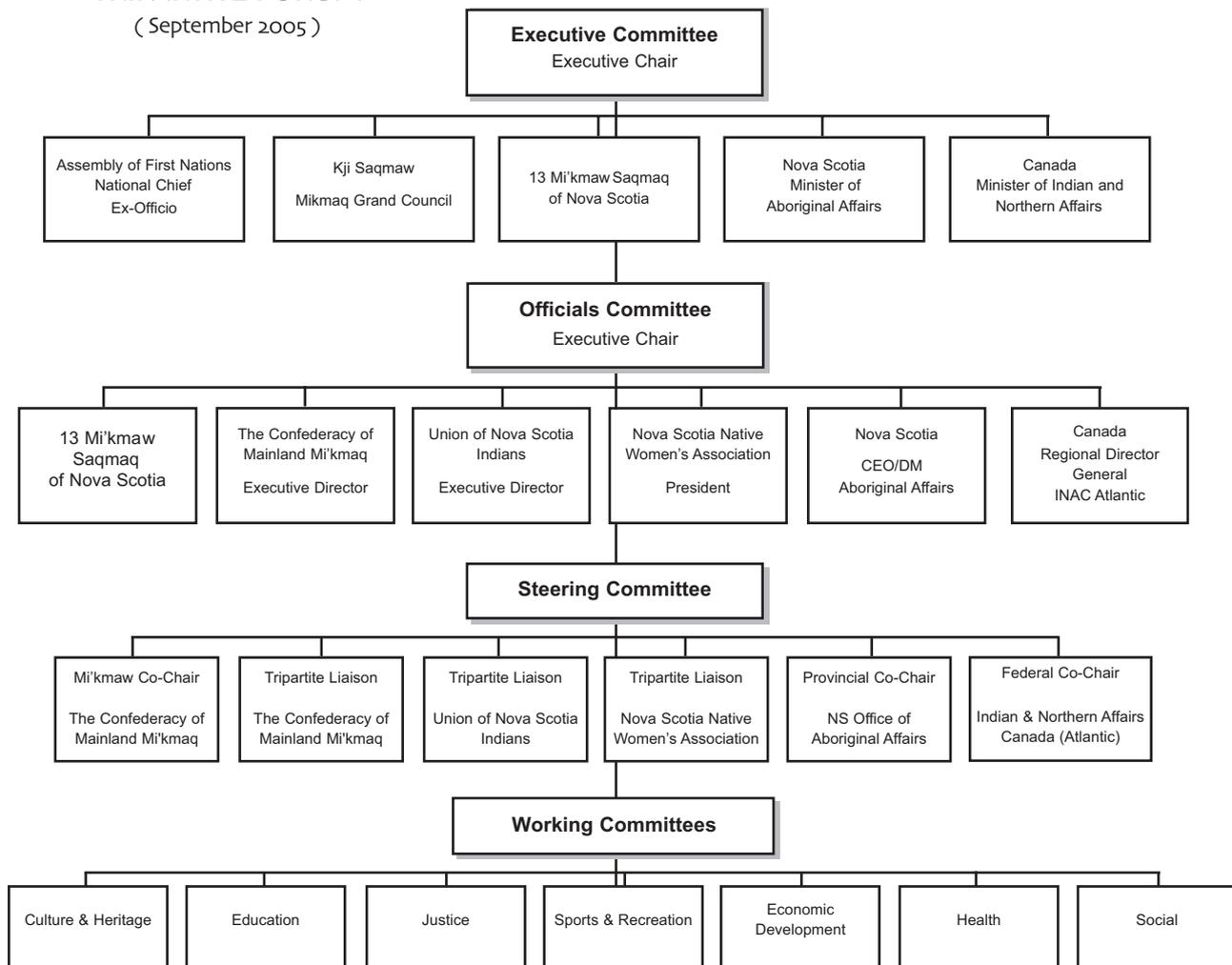
- More Mi'kmaw students are entering and graduating from law school.
- There are RCMP detachments in many First Nations.

- The Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network (MLSN) was established to help Aboriginal people dealing with the legal system in Nova Scotia.
- The Mi'kmaq Court Worker Program was established.
- Mi'kmaw-speaking clients are now offered translation services.
- The MCLP (Mi'kmaw Customary Law Program) was launched to assist Aboriginal young offenders.

**Mi'kmaq • Nova Scotia • Canada**  
**TRIPARTITE FORUM**

[www.tripartiteforum.com](http://www.tripartiteforum.com)

( September 2005 )



**KEY**

**ACOA:** Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency  
**APC:** Atlantic Policy Congress  
**CMM:** Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (The)  
**EEDC:** Eskasoni Economic Development Corp.  
**Fed DOJ:** Federal Dept of Justice

**FN&IB:** First Nations & Inuit Health Branch  
**INAC:** Indian & Northern Affairs Canada  
**MHC:** Membertou Health Centre  
**MK:** Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey  
**NS DCS:** NS Dept of Community Services  
**NS DOE:** NS Dept of Education

**NS ED:** Nova Scotia Economic Development  
**NS CS:** Nova Scotia Correctional Services  
**NS DOH:** Nova Scotia Dept of Health  
**NS TCH:** Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture & Heritage  
**NS OHP:** Nova Scotia Office of Health Promotion  
**RCAP:** Royal Commission on Aboriginal People

Another of the recommendations of the Donald Marshall Inquiry was to establish a discussion table where the Mi'kmaq, the federal government and the provincial government could meet on a regular basis to resolve issues of mutual concern. It was this recommendation that gave birth to the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum.

The Tripartite Forum provides a mechanism where problems can be solved through mutual discussion and agreement.

The Forum has three levels:

1. The Working Committees—These committees bring issues to the discussion table. Each of the three parties of the Forum assigns representatives to the committees to initiate the discussion process. If the issue is not resolved at this level, it moves to the Officials Committee.

2. The Officials Committee—This committee is made up of the regional directors of the government departments involved and the

Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. It is at this table that decisions are made regarding the work plan and budgets of the Forum.

3. The Executive of the Tripartite—The Executive of the Tripartite meets on an annual basis to review the progress of the Forum. At this level, Mi'kmaq leaders meet with government ministers to resolve issues that could not be resolved at the other levels of the Forum. The Executive can also make changes to the tripartite process as needed. In 2000, the Executive revised the tripartite process to accommodate room for the negotiation of Mi'kmaq treaty rights.

## Moving Ahead in the 21st Century

### The Umbrella Agreement

On June 7, 2002, the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Umbrella Agreement was signed. This was an important day in Mi'kmaq history. This agreement:

- (1) Reaffirmed the commitment of all parties to the Tripartite Process
- (2) Committed the parties to enter into good-faith negotiations to address Aboriginal Title and the implementation of Treaty rights.
- (3) Committed all parties to developing terms of reference for a consultation process to support the negotiation process.



**Signing of the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Umbrella Agreement, Halifax, NS, June 7, 2002**

## **The Mi'kmaw "Made-in-Nova Scotia" Process**

The "Made in Nova Scotia Process" refers to the negotiations process referred to under the Umbrella Agreement of 2002. For the Mi'kmaq, the purpose of this process is to negotiate the definition, recognition and implementation of Mi'kmaw, Aboriginal and treaty rights. As the name implies, the process is unique and designed to address Aboriginal rights of the Mi'kmaw treaties. It is designed to put these rights into operation. It is not about re-negotiating the treaties. In essence, the process will bring about an understanding of what is included in these rights and what the Mi'kmaq may do under these rights. Under this process, Mi'kmaw legal rights will not be surrendered or given up.

The Made in Nova Scotia process also includes a Consultation Table to determine when and how Canada and Nova Scotia should consult with the Mi'kmaq over issues that might affect their rights. Other issues

with Nova Scotia and Canada that do not immediately concern Aboriginal land or treaty rights will be dealt with through the Tripartite Forum. However, the Tripartite Forum and the "Made in Nova Scotia Process" may work together on related issues in the future.

By 2003, all three parties had named their Lead Negotiators and began discussion on the Framework Agreement—the blueprint that sets out the process to be followed in negotiating Mi'kmaw rights.

## **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)- "Searching for Consensus"**

In 2004, a non-profit society was incorporated to administer and manage the Mi'kmaw participation in the negotiation process. The "Made in Nova Scotia Process" began to be referred to as the KMKNO. The KMKNO conducts research and facilitates community discussion on matters to be negotiated.



(left to right)  
Chief Lawrence Paul  
(Millbrook), The Hon.  
Michael Baker Q.C.,  
(Nova Scotia Office  
of Aboriginal Affairs),  
The Hon. Robert Nault  
(Indian and Northern  
Affairs Canada) and  
Chief Terrance Paul  
(Membertou) during the  
signing of the Mi'kmaq-  
Nova Scotia-Canada  
Umbrella Agreement,  
Halifax, NS, June 7, 2002

The Mi'kmaq have also begun to formalize the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, which meets monthly to discuss matters of concern to all Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Decisions of the Assembly must be supported by Band Council Resolutions from each community before being legally binding. The Assembly provides the venue for Mi'kmaq leaders to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern as a "nation."

Negotiating Mi'kmaq rights will take many years of extensive research, consultation and negotiation among the three parties. As well, the negotiation of Mi'kmaq title will proceed slowly. In both instances the beneficiaries question must be addressed. The answer to this question will decide who will be eligible to receive the benefits of these negotiation processes. This is a challenging question that will see the Mi'kmaq Nation redefine its membership on its own terms.

With programs administered through Mi'kmaq organizations and Band Councils, a structure is in place to foster a negotiation process, the Supreme Court decision to uphold the treaties, and a more educated population, the Mi'kmaq are well on their way toward once again governing themselves as a Nation.



## References

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands,  
Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31,  
Indian Status, etc.

INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

### **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)**

#### **Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative**

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
ph: (902) 843-3880  
Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrights.com)

### **Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada**

#### **Tripartite Forum Secretariat**

The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq  
57 Martin Cres, Truro, NS B2N 6N7  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424  
fax: (902) 893-1520  
website: [www.tripartiteforum.com](http://www.tripartiteforum.com)

### **Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs,**

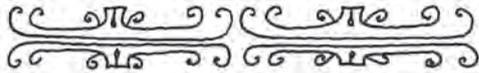
Suite 910, Centennial Bldg, 1660 Hollis St  
PO Box 1617, Halifax, NS B3J 2Y3  
ph: (902) 424-7409  
fax: (902) 424-4225  
e-mail: [abor\\_off@gov.ns.ca](mailto:abor_off@gov.ns.ca)  
website: [www.gov.ns.ca/abor](http://www.gov.ns.ca/abor)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Prepare a short essay explaining the role played by government and the Courts to motivate the Mi'kmaq toward nation building.
2. Do you think the Mi'kmaq will ever become a self-governing and independent nation again? Why or why not?
3. You are a status Mi'kmaw adult living on-Reserve. You are told that the Mi'kmaq will soon become a Nation. How will this affect your life and that of future generations? Do you have any concerns about this development? What questions would you ask your Band Council about this change?



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## Other Resources

### Aboriginal Healing Foundation

75 Albert St, Suite 801  
Ottawa, ON K1P 5E7  
ph: (613) 237-4441  
fax: (613) 237-4442  
Toll free: 1-(888) 725-8886  
website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

### Atlantic Canada's

#### First Nations Help Desk

47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
ph: (902) 567-0842  
fax: (902) 567-0337  
Toll-free: 1-877-484-7606  
website: [firstnationhelp.com/ali/](http://firstnationhelp.com/ali/)

### Atlantic First Nations

#### Environmental Network

Information on First Nations environmental concerns and programs in Atlantic Canada  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
website: [www.afnen.ca](http://www.afnen.ca)

### The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

Information and/or speakers about Mi'kmaw governance today. (See also "KMK" for info)  
57 Martin Crescent, Truro, NS B2N 6N7  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424  
website: [www.cmmns.com](http://www.cmmns.com)

### The Elder Transcripts: History

#### You Can't Get from a Book

website: [www.municipalities.com/elders/elder\\_charlielabrador.htm](http://www.municipalities.com/elders/elder_charlielabrador.htm)

### First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), NS

ph: (902) 895-6385  
fax: (902) 893-1920  
e-mail: [forestry@cmmns.com](mailto:forestry@cmmns.com)  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424

### Indian and Northern Affairs Canada

Information on First Nation lands, Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31, Indian Status, etc.  
INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

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<http://home.rushcomm.ca/~hsack/spirit.html>

### Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)

#### Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
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Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrightrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrightrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrightrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrightrights.com)

### Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies

A source of information and speakers on Mi'kmaw culture  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
PO Box 961, Sydney, NS B1P 6J4  
ph: (902) 567-1752 fax: (902) 567-0776  
e-mail: [macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca](mailto:macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca)

**Mi'kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on  
Mi'kmaw culture and history  
Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Centre,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902)-563-1660 fax: (902)-562-8899  
e-mail: [pjohnson@capebretonu.ca](mailto:pjohnson@capebretonu.ca)  
website: <http://mrc.uccb.ns.ca>

**Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News**

Eastern Woodland Print Communications,  
PO Box 1590, Truro, NS B2N 6N4  
ph: (902) 895-2039  
fax: (902) 895-3030  
e-mail: [news@easternwoodland.ca](mailto:news@easternwoodland.ca)  
website: [www.easternwoodland.ca](http://www.easternwoodland.ca)

**Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada  
Tripartite Forum**

Tripartite Forum Secretariat  
The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq  
57 Martin Cres, Truro, NS B2N 6N7  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
fax: (902) 893-1520  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424  
website: [www.tripartiteforum.com](http://www.tripartiteforum.com)

**Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)**

A collective voice for Mi'kmaw education  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
ph: (902) 567-0336  
fax: (902) 567-0337  
E-mail: [mkeducation@kinu.ca](mailto:mkeducation@kinu.ca)  
website: [www.kinu.ns.ca](http://www.kinu.ns.ca)

**Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre**

PO Box 1590, Truro, NS B2N 5V3  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
fax: (902) 893-1520

**Nova Scotia Department of Education**

Provincial government resources for  
Aboriginal education  
website: [www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca)

**The Nova Scotia Museum's  
Mi'kmaq Portraits Database**

Collection of portraits and illustrations  
in various media, of the Mi'kmaq of  
Atlantic Canada.  
website: [www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq](http://www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq)

**Nova Scotia Office of Aboriginal Affairs,  
Suite 910, Centennial Bldg, 1660 Hollis St**

PO Box 1617, Halifax, NS B3J 2Y3  
ph: (902) 424-7409  
fax: (902) 424-4225  
e-mail: [abor\\_off@gov.ns.ca](mailto:abor_off@gov.ns.ca)  
website: [www.gov.ns.ca/abor](http://www.gov.ns.ca/abor)

**RCMP First Nations  
Community Policing Service**

Local RCMP detachments also may have staff  
to give presentations on Aboriginal policing.  
website: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/  
fncps-spcpn-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/fncps-spcpn-eng.htm)

**Royal Commission on  
Aboriginal Peoples**

INAC website contains excerpts from the  
Royal Commission Reports  
website: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/  
rpt-eng.asp](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp)

**SchoolNet (Indian and  
Northern Affairs Canada)**

website: [www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp](http://www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp)

**Treaty and Aboriginal Rights  
Research Centre**

PO Box 341, Shubenacadie, NS, B0N 2H0

ph: (902) 758-1953

For researching historical information on  
the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

**Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources**

Represents five Cape Breton Mi'kmaw  
communities to address concerns regarding  
natural resources and their sustainability.

Produces a series of Newsletters.

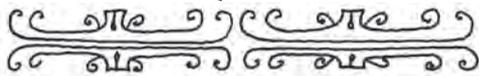
ph: (902)-379-2024

fax: (902)-379-2195

e-mail: [info@uinr.ca](mailto:info@uinr.ca)

website: [www.uinr.ca](http://www.uinr.ca)

# Glossary



Aboriginal—existing from the beginning.

Aboriginal people include Métis, Inuit and First Nation, regardless of whether they live in Canada and regardless of whether they are “registered under the Indian Act of Canada”

Administer(ed)—to manage affairs

Advocate/Advocacy—to plead in favour of

Affiliation—connection through close association

Affliction—the cause of continued pain or distress

Anthropology—The scientific study of the origin, the behavior and the physical, social and cultural development of humankind from its beginnings millions of years ago to the present day

Apprenticeship—The time during which one is an apprentice; an apprentice is defined as a person learning a trade or art. In return for instruction, the person agrees to work for his employer a certain length of time for little or no pay

Archaeology—The scientific study of past human life and cultures by analyzing the material remains (sites and artifacts) that people left behind

Artifact—an object made, modified or used by people

Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs—A group, comprised of the elected Chiefs of the 13 First Nations (Mi'kmaw) communities in Nova Scotia, that meets on a regular basis to discuss matters of common concern to the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia

Assimilation—the process of making or becoming like in customs and viewpoint; the social process of absorbing one cultural group into another

Autonomy—the state of being self-governing.

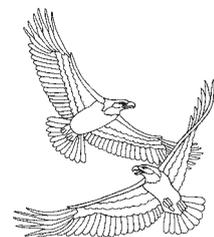
Band—see Indian Band. . .

Band Council—The elected leadership body that represents a First Nations community. Comprised of a Chief and Councillors. The size of the Council depends on the size of the First Nation. There is one councillor representing every one hundred community members

Band Council Resolution—An agreement by a majority of the Band Council at a duly convened Band Council Meeting that is documented and forwarded as the official decision of the governing body of the community

Band Lists—a series of names belonging to a specific group of status Aboriginal people traditionally associated with a geographical land base. Each First Nation has its own Band List

Beneficiaries—persons who are entitled to specific rights, privileges, compensation or other benefits. The term “beneficiaries question” in this text refers to the bigger question of which Mi'kmaq will receive the benefits of treaty and Aboriginal title



**Blood Quantum**—a measurement of the percentage of blood based on heritage. Used to classify Aboriginal status in the United States

**Bounty**—something that is given generously

**Briefs**—short summaries of events, opinions, or other news

**British Loyalists**—a name given to those early settlers who remained loyal to the British Empire

**British North America Act**—Federal legislation passed in 1867 by which Canada became a country

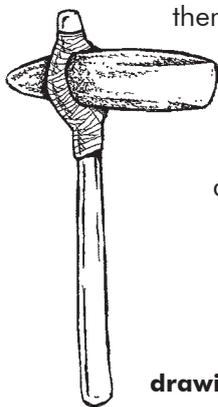
**Canoe**—A wide bottom boat of Mi'kmaw origin, raised at both ends with the sides curved upwards in the middle. Canoes were 3-8 m long, made of birch bark over a light wooden frame. A small canoe could take a load of several hundred pounds, but was light enough for one person to carry

**Ceded**—withdrew; granted or yielded typically by treaty

**Celt**—a woodworking tool, made of stone, which is used much like an axe

**Centralization**—A government movement in Nova Scotia to locate all Native people to two locations in the province—Eskasoni and Shubenacadie—in order to control them and limit their movement.

Centralization was not successful, although the two largest Mi'kmaw populations reside in these two areas today



**drawing of a celt**

**Circa**—about that time (or approximately)

**Citizenship**—the duties, rights and privileges of a person who, by birth or by choice, is a member of a state or nation

**Collateral**—something of value that is promised as payment; in case someone cannot repay a loan

**Collective**—a number of people or groups who cooperatively work together toward a common goal

**Colonies**—the territory inhabited by a body of people who moved to this new territory, but who remained loyal and dependent on the parent state from which they originated

**Commemorate**—to acknowledge by some ceremony or observation

**Commercial**—suitable for generating revenue or gain

**Communal**—owned jointly by all; used or participated in by all members of a group or community

**Community**—a group of people who interact in their day-to-day lives

**Confederacy**—a group of people joined together for a special purpose; a union of countries or states. In the case of the Wabanaki Confederacy—a union of tribes

**Confederation**—uniting together; a name given to the time during which Canada became a country (1867)

**Consecutive**—following one after the other in order without gaps

**Constitution**—the system of fundamental principles according to which a nation, state, or group is governed

**Consensus**—general agreement

Continental Glaciers—Large sheets of ice that covered most of northern North America. In some areas the sheets were more than 2 km thick

Contentious—quarrelsome; fond of arguing

Conviction—a strong persuasion or belief

Counterpart—a person or thing that has a connection or similarity to another

Covenant Chain of Treaties—refers to a series of peace and friendship treaties signed between the Mi'kmaq and the British colonists to describe the working relationship between the two

Crown—as in British Crown, indicating a ruling authority

Culture—the practices, customs, values and beliefs that make a people unique

Curriculum—the courses offered by an educational institution

Customized training—training designed for a particular purpose; not ready-made

Detachments—as in RCMP detachment, refers to a branch office of the RCMP

Detrimental—something that causes damage

Diplomacy—the art and practice of conducting negotiations between Nations

Discriminatory—acting in a manner that makes decisions based on certain distinguishing characteristics

Disaggregated—broken up into parts

Dispossessed—to be denied possession (ownership/use) of something.

Distorted—changed from the true or original meaning.

Economy(ies)—The structure of economic life in a country based on the production, distribution and consumption of goods and services

Embodiments—acts of giving a spirit or soul to

Enactment—the process by which something is made legal or authoritative.

Encampment(s)—a place where people camp, or live, for a period of time

Enlisted—joined, participated in

Enfranchised—(in this text) to gain Canadian citizenship and give up “Indian Status”

Equitable—fair; just

Era—a period of time

Evolution—a process of continuous change from a lower, simpler, or worse to a higher, more complex or better state

Excavation—to dig out and remove; in archaeology means to uncover, dig out and carefully remove artifacts

Excerpts—selected passages or quotations

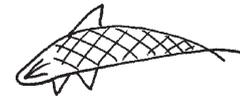
Exploitive—making unfair use of; using selfishly for one’s own advantage

Export—to send to another country or place.

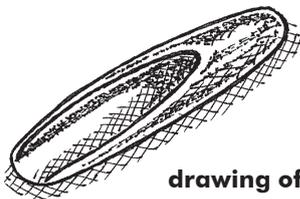
Fishery—the legal system of taking fish at a particular place or in particular waters

First Nation(s)—A term which came into use in the 1970s to replace the word “Indian,” which many people found offensive. First Nations refers to those people who are the descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada

Geology—the study of the physical, chemical, geological, and biological happenings at or near the earth’s surface. Geologists study landforms, soils, fossils, fluids (mostly water), and rocks to tell us about past environments: temperature, rain, snow, plants and even animals



Glaciated—covered with glaciers  
 Glacier—a large body of permanent (or year round) ice moving slowly down a slope or valley or spreading outward on a land surface  
 Gouge(s)—a woodworking tool, made of stone, which is used much like a chisel  
 Governing body—the organization that makes and implements decisions  
 Governance—the method by which a group is ruled/administered  
 Hierarchy—the order of higher and lower ranks in an organization or system  
 Hieroglyphs—a system of writing mainly in pictorial characters  
 Holistic—a word used by the Mi'kmaw to indicate the inclusion of all aspects of a topic  
 Immemorial—extending beyond the reach of memory, record, or tradition  
 Inclusive—covering or intended to cover all items; broad in scope  
 Indian Band—A body of Indians for whose collective use and benefit lands have been set apart or money is held by the Crown. Today, referred to as "First Nation"  
 Indian Reserve—Lands owned by the Crown, and held in trust for the use and benefit of a First Nation for which they were set apart. First Nations have the rights stipulated under the Indian Act to the indefinite use of the Reserve land and to



**drawing of a gouge**

receive the beneficial interest derived from those lands



Indigenous—originating from a particular region or environment  
 Infrastructure—foundation or framework  
 Integrate—to include or become part of something  
 Integration—to make available an institution or facilities to people regardless of race, nationality, religion, etc.  
 Interaction—mutual action or influence.  
 Interconnectivity—an arrangement to advance the interests of one another  
 Interdependence—to depend on one another  
 Intermarriage—legal union between members of different religious, social or ethnic groups  
 Jesuit Missionaries—A religious order who were among the early settlers in Eastern Canada. They worked to educate the Mi'kmaq as well as the early settlers and teach them Christianity  
 Jurisdiction—authority, power, control  
 Language—the words, their pronunciation and the methods of combining them used and understood by a large community  
 Legacy—something that has been handed down from an ancestor or predecessor.  
 Legend—a story coming down from the past; one popularly regarded as historical although not verifiable  
 Legislation—the exercise of the power and function of making laws  
 Lifespan—an expected number of years of life based on statistical probability  
 Linguist—someone who studies the science of languages

Linguistics—The study of human speech including the units, nature, structure and modification of a language

Lore—The facts and stories about a certain subject

Mechanism—a process or technique for achieving a result

Mediator—one that works to bring agreements between parties

Membership—belonging to a group

Mentorship—an opportunity to learn from an expert advisor

Meteorology—a science that studies the weather of a region

Missionaries—people commissioned by a religious organization to teach its faith or undertake humanitarian service

Momentum—a constant force or movement

Mythical—of myths or legends

Nation—a community of people who maintain a separate political structure of government over a defined territory, a common system of values, language, religion, world view and history

Network—groups of people or communities that are connected in some way

Orally—communicating by spoken word

Orthography—The system of writing words with the proper letters according to standard usage; the representation of the sound of a language by written or printed symbols

Palaeo Indian—the name given to a period of time between 10-13,000 years ago

Patrilineal—tracing descent through the male member of the family unit

Petroglyph(s)—a carving or inscription on a rock

Phenomena—an observable fact or event

Philosophy—the beliefs, concepts and attitudes of an individual or group

Pliability—the quality or state of being flexible

Post secondary education—education following high school completion

Powwow—a celebratory ceremony usually accompanied by feasting and dancing

Prosper—to succeed or thrive

Pu'tus—a member of the Mi'kmaw Grand Council tasked to record the decisions of the Council on a wampum belt; the keeper of the Mi'kmaw story

Radiocarbon dating—The determination of the approximate age of an ancient object, such as an archaeological specimen, by measuring the decay of “carbon 14” contained in “organic” materials (i.e. anything that was once alive)

Reconciliation—bringing together again in friendship; a settlement or adjustment of disagreements or differences, etc.

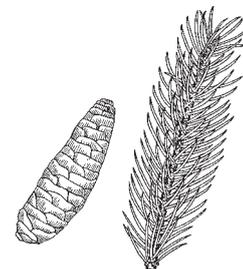
Regime—a regular pattern of occurrence or action

Reinstatement—to restore to a previous state.

Repatriation—restoring or returning to original state or ownership

Residential Schools—A movement by the federal government to educate Aboriginal youth. Unfortunately, this movement took many youth away from their home communities, culture, and language

Reverence—honor or respect felt or shown



Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP)—In 1991 the Canadian Government formed the RCAP appointing 4 Aboriginal and 3 non-Aboriginal commissioners to the task of restoring justice to the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people in Canada to renew and redefine the relationship. The RCAP Reports were released in 1996 and consist of five volumes of background material with recommendations for improving the relationship between First Nations and the government.

Saqamaw—A Mi'kmaw Chief

Schwa—a vowel in the Mi'kmaw written word that is denoted by a barred "i"

Seasonally-mobile—occasionally moving from place to place

Shell midden—an accumulation of discarded shells and other trash; for archaeology, the calcium content of shell middens preserved many artifacts in the refuse

Societal—relating to a community, nation or broad grouping of people having common traditions, institutions, and collective activities and interests

Society—the people of a particular time or place, their activities and customs

Spirituality—an inner sense of something greater than oneself. Recognition of a meaning to existence that transcends one's immediate circumstances

Statistics—a branch of mathematics dealing with the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of masses of numerical data

Status Indian—a First Nations person who is listed in the federal Indian Registry and therefore subject to the provisions of the Indian Act of Canada

Supernatural—of or relating to an order of existence beyond the visible observable universe

Superstition—a belief or practice resulting from fear of the unknown, or trust in magic or chance

Taking its toll—causing damage or exhausting

Tenure—the act, right, manner or term of holding something (as a landed property, a position, or office)

Testimonial(s)—A statement used for evidence or proof

Tipi/Teepee—not a Mi'kmaw word—usually refers to a tent covered with skins, not bark

Title—an alleged or recognized right

Treaty—1) According to the 1969 Vienna Convention, a Treaty is defined as "An international agreement concluded between States in written form and governed by International Law whether embodied in a single instrument or two related instruments whatever its practical designation  
—2) a contract in writing between two or more political authorities formally signed by representatives duly authorized by the law-making authority of the state

Tribe—a group of people united by race and customs under the same leaders

Tripartite Forum—The Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum was formed



in 1997 to strengthen relationships and to resolve issues of mutual concern affecting Mi'kmaq communities. The parties are committed to working and learning together in partnerships in a manner that respects the needs of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq.

Truce—a suspension of fighting by agreement of opposing forces

Trust—(to hold in trust) something that is cared for by one, on behalf of another

Unprecedented—having never previously occurred

Vatican—the papal headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church in Rome

Venue—the place where an event occurs

Video conferencing—involves two or more parties in different locations engaging in communication via video transmission

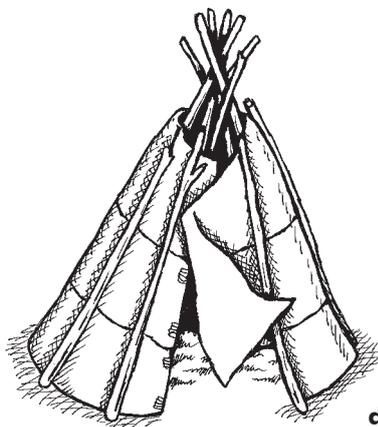
Waltes—a traditional Mi'kmaq game of chance

Wampum Belt—the record of the proceedings of meetings of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Decisions and stories were “recorded” by arranging colored shells in a particular order as a method of reminding the Pu'tus (record keeper)

Wards—persons under care of a guardian or court

White Paper Policy—a policy tabled in 1969 to implement the assimilation of all First Nations into Canadian Society. If passed it would have meant the loss of special status and culture. Fortunately, it was withdrawn

Wigwam—from the Mi'kmaq word “wikuom” meaning dwelling. Built by the women, they could be constructed in a day. The basic structure was five spruce poles, lashed together at the top with split spruce root and spread out at the bottom. A hoop of moosewood was tied under the poles just down from the top to brace them. Shorter poles tied to the hoop all around provided supports for the birch bark cover. Birch bark sheets were laid over the poles like shingles, starting from the bottom and overlapping as they worked up the sides of wigwam. Extra poles laid over the outside helped hold the birch bark down. The top was left open for fireplace smoke to escape. The floor was lined with fir boughs, woven mats and animal furs. A large hide acted as a door cover. The largest cone shaped wigwam housed 12 to 15 people. For larger families, a longer style with two fireplaces was built. Birch bark made a good cover for a wigwam as it was waterproof and portable.



**drawing of a wikuom (wigwam)**



# Historical Timeline



13,500-10,000 B.P.\* – Saqiwe’k L’nuk  
(Ancient People–Palaeo Period) – Archaeological evidence indicates that ancestors of the Mi’kmaq lived in the area of Nova Scotia now known as Debert, near Truro.  
(\* Before Present)

1000AD – Norsemen made first contact with the Native people of Newfoundland.

1398 – Henry St. Clair, a Scotsman, is believed to have landed in Guysborough Harbour and travelled to Pictou and Stellarton.

1492 – Christopher Columbus landed in North America and claimed that he discovered the New World.

1497 – Acadia and Newfoundland visited by John Cabot, merchant and explorer under the orders of Henry VII of England. Cabot took formal possession of the land in the name of King Henry VII.

1500 – Gaspar Corte Real, a Portuguese slave trader, captured several Natives; some were believed to be Mi’kmaq. Corte Real’s own ship was lost at sea, although the two other ships travelling with him returned to Portugal safely.

1510 – Mi’kmaw Grand Chief Membertou was born.

1534 – Jacques Cartier sailed with two ships to North America under the orders of King Francis I. Cartier traded furs with the Mi’kmaq. This is the first recorded incident of trade with the Europeans.

1537 – Bull Sic Dilexit, issued by Pope Paul III in 1537 stated that Indians should not be deprived of their liberty, property or in any way be enslaved.

1546 – The Desceliers Mappemonde (a map by cartographer by Pierre Desceliers) showed the discovered areas in North America as well as the native fauna and Native people.

1578 – Marquis de la Roche-Mesgouez received a commission from King Henri IV of France authorizing him to colonize North America.

1598 – Marquis de la Roche-Mesgouez built a colony on Sable Island using 40 convicts to supply labour.

1603 – Samuel de Champlain travelled to North America on an exploration voyage.

- 1603 – Pierrede Giva, Sieur de Monts, Governor of Acadia, received a royal commission to colonize Acadia.
- 1604 – The First Jesuit missionary Abbé Jessé Fléché arrived at Port Royal.
- 1606 – Marc Lescarbot’s first contact with the Mi’kmaq. He wrote the earliest detailed records of Mi’kmaw life.
- 1607 – French colonists evacuate Port Royal. While the French were gone, Grand Chief Membertou took responsibility for the encampment until the return of the French in 1610.
- 1610 – The Concordat with the Vatican was signed. It affirmed the Mi’kmaw right to choose Catholicism, Mi’kmaw tradition or both. Mi’kmaw Grand Captain Pesamoet spent a year living in France and he realized that a large number of French people would be settling in Acadia, and therefore it was necessary to form good relations with them. This meant accepting and protecting the Catholic religion.
- 1610 – Chief Membertou was the first North American Native to be baptized. Membertou along with 21 members of his family were baptized by Abbé Jessé Fléché as a sign of alliance and friendship.
- 1621 – Sir William Alexander obtained a grant from King James I of Britain for all of Acadia. The territory that the Mi’kmaq called home was given the name Nova Scotia.
- 1628 – Ste. Anne’s Chapel was established by Vimont and Vieux Point. Ste. Anne was adopted by the Mi’kmaq as their patron saint.
- 1632 – Capuchins established a school at LaHave for Mi’kmaw children.
- 1639 – Pope Urban VIII issued a statement that the Indians should not be enslaved or deprived of their liberty or property.
- 1676 – Father Chretien Le Clercq, O.F.M. (Franciscan order) began his work in Gaspesia. He was the first to use hieroglyphic characters to teach Mi’kmaq.
- 1676 – The memoirs of Charles Aubert de la Chesnay, a business man from New France, contained the first written reference to the term “Mi’kmaq.” The Mi’kmaq called themselves the “El ‘nu” meaning “the people.”
- 1713 – The “Submission and Agreement of the Eastern Indians,” including those of St. Johns River and eastward, was signed at Portsmouth.
- 1716 – Gaulin established a mission at Antigonish in order to induce the Mi’kmaq to settle and farm the land.

- 1717 – A Church was approved for the Mi'kmaq of Antigonish.
- 1720 – Construction of Fort Louisbourg began.
- 1722 – The Indian War began in 1722 and lasted until 1726. Gaulin established a mission on Bras d'Or Lake. Phillips banned the sale of arms and ammunition to the Indians.
- 1725 – Treaty with the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet signed in Boston. It was the first of several treaties to be signed between the British and the Mi'kmaq to establish a peaceful alliance.
- 1726 – The 1725 Treaty was ratified and confirmed by all the Mi'kmaq tribes in Nova Scotia during talks at Port Royal.
- 1735 – Pierre Maillard arrived at Louisbourg and began work on Mi'kmaq grammar.
- 1744 – Mascarene requested that Gorham's Rangers keep the Mi'kmaq under control.
- 1749 – Edward Cornwallis was appointed Governor of Nova Scotia. He was followed by over 2,000 settlers who founded the settlement of Halifax.
- 1749 – Treaty signed with the Indians at Chebucto and St. Johns renewing the Treaty of 1725.
- 1749 – In the continuing campaign in Chignecto, Cornwallis' instructions include a reward of ten guineas for the scalps of Mi'kmaq men, women and children. The Lords of Trade disagreed with this "extermination" policy. The Mi'kmaq military began to decline after they lost the support of the French.
- 1752 – Treaty between Peregrine Thomas Hopson, Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia and Jean Baptiste Cope, Chief Sachem of the Mi'kmaq signed in Halifax. Grand Chief Cope was assured that Britain intended to make peace, provide trading posts and protect the land and way of life of the Mi'kmaq people. This treaty designated October 1st as the date on which the Mi'kmaq people would receive gifts from the British to "renew their friendship and submissions."
- 1753 – Thomas Wood and SPG Missionary started work on a Mi'kmaq grammar dictionary and Bible.
- 1753 – Up until 1756, Lawrence issued a proclamation ordering hostilities to be committed on the Mi'kmaq Indians.
- 1755 – A Mi'kmaq by the name of Paul Laurent requested hunting lands for the Mi'kmaq people.
- 1758 – Louisbourg fell to the British for the last time – a vital turning point in Mi'kmaq resistance to the British presence.

- 1758 – Lawrence issued a proclamation inviting immigrants to Nova Scotia and promising them land grants with no rent for ten years.
- 1760-1761 – Mi'kmaw Chiefs discussed terms of peace with the British.
- 1761 – Treaty of Peace and Friendship signed on Governor Belcher's farm. The "Burying of the Hatchet Ceremony" celebrated the successful conclusion of the treaties.
- 1761 – Royal Instructions were issued to Governors instructing them to enter into treaties with the various tribes; the said treaties were to be honoured and enforced without exception.
- 1762 – Belcher's Proclamation stated that His Majesty was determined to maintain the just rights of the Indians to all lands reserved or claimed by them.
- 1763 – The Royal Proclamation brought the management of Indian Affairs under central direction. It was an attempt to prevent the illegal seizure of native lands by the incoming British settlers.
- 1764 – A plan for future management of Indian affairs was created.
- 1776 – Treaty signed between Americans and delegates of St. Johns and Mi'kmaw tribes. This treaty, signed at Watertown, Massachusetts, stated that the Mi'kmaw Nation and America would help one another against any enemy. Most of the Mi'kmaw people did not agree with this arrangement, therefore, this treaty did not last.
- 1779 – The final treaty between the Mi'kmaq and the British was signed. The Mi'kmaq ceased to be a military threat.
- 1782 – Loyalist refugees from New York fled to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaw population was now outnumbered and no longer considered to be a threat to the British. They were placed on reservations.
- 1783 – The Colonial Government of Nova Scotia granted licenses of occupations to several Mi'kmaw Bands, which were merely confirmation of the existence of settlements already established.
- 1786 – Charles Morris was commissioned to carry out an extensive survey of lands assigned to the Mi'kmaq.
- 1789 – Schools for Mi'kmaw children were started.
- 1794 – The Jay Treaty between the United States and Great Britain was signed. Mi'kmaw people were allowed to cross the international boundary without any hindrance.
- 1800 – A committee was formed to study the plight of the Mi'kmaq.

- 1801 – The Nova Scotia government allotted ten Indian reserves.
- 1804 – Jean Mandé Sigogné compiled a book of Mi'kmaw translations.
- 1807 – Lieutenant Governor John Wentworth ordered a census be taken of the Mi'kmaw population.
- 1820 – Charles Morris was ordered to submit a plan for tracts of land which were to be given to Mi'kmaw Indians.
- 1822 – The Mi'kmaq of St. George's Bay, NL, built their own schooner.
- 1840 – Silas T. Rand, a Baptist Minister, compiled a Mi'kmaw dictionary.
- 1841 – Grand Chief John Denny Jr. was born. Denny was to become the last Mi'kmaw Grand Chief to acquire his title by succeeding his father.
- 1848 – Abraham Gesner, the Indian Commissioner, settled 14 families at Shubenacadie.
- 1850 – An Act for Lower Canada defined the term "Indian" and established the criteria for eligibility for Indian status.
- 1851 – The criteria for Indian status in the 1850 Act was revised to state that Indian ancestry would be through the male line. If a Native woman married a non-Native, her child could not claim Indian status.
- 1855 – The Nova Scotia government enacted legislation for the purpose of taking title to all lands reserved for the exclusive use of Indians and to hold it in trust for them.
- 1859 – An Act was passed that allowed squatters to buy the land on which they were trespassing. This allowed settlers to obtain land set aside for the Mi'kmaq.
- 1866 – Samuel P. Fairbanks, Commissioner of Crown Lands and Indian Affairs, prepared a schedule of lands to be set apart for the Mi'kmaq.
- 1868 – The Indian Act was created.
- 1876 – The Indian Act establishes the Department of Indian Affairs. In order to become a Canadian citizen, Natives had to relinquish their Indian Status.
- 1894 – Father Pacifique translated prayers into Mi'kmaq.
- 1900 – The Mi'kmaw flag was first raised in Restigouche, Quebec, on October 4, 1900 and in Halifax in 1901.
- 1914 – Over 150 Mi'kmaw men signed up during World War I.
- 1918 – Gabriel J. Sylliboy became the first elected Grand Chief at a ceremony in Chapel Island.

- 1929 – Rex. v. Sylliboy became an important precedent-setting case in which the Treaty of 1752 did not give the Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton Island immunity from the Lands and Forests Act. This was overruled in 1985 by the R. v. Simon Case.
- 1931 – The Residential School in Shubenacadie opened. It closed in 1967. It was used as a means of speeding up the process of assimilation.
- 1939 – Over 250 Mi'kmaq signed up during World War II.
- 1942 – The Indian Affairs Branch introduced centralization programs in Nova Scotia. The aim of centralization was to relocate the Mi'kmaq to reserves located at Eskasoni and Shubenacadie.
- 1945 – The Veterans Land Act grant was used to buy houses for veterans returning from World War II.
- 1950 – Over 60 Mi'kmaq enlisted for service in Korea.
- 1951 – Revisions were made to the Indian Act that removed the ban against performing traditional ceremonies as well as the clause forbidding Indians from entering public bars.
- 1956 – The Canadian Government granted citizenship to Indians.
- 1958 – Eight of eleven Mi'kmaq Bands in Nova Scotia took over control of their own affairs, including the management of Band funds.
- 1960 – The Canadian Government permitted Indians to vote in federal and provincial elections without any loss of their status under the Indian Act.
- 1969 – The Union of Nova Scotia Indians (UNSI) was formed.
- 1969 – Prime Minister Trudeau introduced the “White Paper Policy” which was an attempt to make Native people adopt the values and culture of Canadians of European descent. It would eliminate special status for Native people and repeal the Indian Act.
- 1969 – The Citizen Plus, also known as the “Red Paper,” was presented to Prime Minister Trudeau. It was a response by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta rejecting the provisions of the White Paper.
- 1970 – The federal government began funding Native groups and associations to conduct research into treaties and Indian rights.
- 1971 – The White Paper Policy was withdrawn.
- 1972 – The Micmac Association of Cultural Studies was formed.
- 1972 – The Nova Scotia Native Women's Association was formed.

- 1973 – The Acadia Band became the 12th Band in Nova Scotia.
- 1974 – The Micmac Association of Cultural Studies initiated a new writing system for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq.
- 1975 – The Native Council of Nova Scotia was formed by the non-status Mi'kmaq and Métis.
- 1977 – The Mi'kmaw Grand Council and UNSI (The Union of Nova Scotia Indians) presented their Aboriginal Rights position paper to the Minister of Indian Affairs.
- 1980- The Francis/Smith writing system became the official writing system for the Mi'kmaw language in Nova Scotia.
- 1981- The Constitution Act recognized existing Aboriginal and treaty rights.
- 1982 – Treaty and Aboriginal Rights were recognized under Section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982.
- 1983 – Mi'kmaw Petroglyphs were found in Bedford, Nova Scotia.
- 1985 – James Matthew Simon vs. The Queen, a Supreme Court ruling held that the 1752 treaty was still valid and enforceable.
- 1985 – Mi'kmaq Family & Children's Services was established to serve the Native communities of Nova Scotia.
- 1985 – Bill C-31 went into effect. This bill permitted the reinstatement of 8,000 individuals to Indian status.
- 1986 – The Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq announced that October 1st would be known as "Treaty Day" to commemorate the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and Her Majesty.
- 1986 – The Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall Jr. Prosecution was established by the Executive Council of Nova Scotia by Order in Council on October 28th.
- 1986 – The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq was established by the Band Councils of six mainland Nova Scotia Bands.
- 1987 – Meech Lake Accord recognized Quebec as a "distinct society," a right denied to First Nations People.
- 1989 – The Dalhousie Law School Programme for Indigenous Blacks and Micmacs was established. (now called the Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program)
- 1990 – First publication of the Micmac Nation News which would later become the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News.
- 1990 – The Marshall Inquiry Report highlighted the inadequacies of the Nova Scotia justice system in regards to the Mi'kmaw people.
- 1991 – The Micmac Heritage Gallery opened its doors in Halifax.

- 1992 – The Mi'kmaw Cultural Alliance was established at Hants East Rural High School.
- 1993 – A Policing Agreement was signed by the Nova Scotia and federal governments with the UNSI (The Union of Nova Scotia Indians).
- 1994 – The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and Ronald A. Irwin, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development Canada, signed an accord which would allow Mi'kmaw jurisdiction over education.
- 1995 – The Canadian Government launches plans for negotiating Aboriginal self-government.
- 1995 – The Minister of Indian Affairs issued department policy that recognized an Inherent right to self-government.
- 1996 – The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples released five volumes after a five-year study.
- 1996 – Lee Cremo became the first recipient of the First Nations Category of the East Coast Music Awards.
- 1997 – The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, the Province of Nova Scotia, and the Government of Canada signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a Tripartite Forum.
- 1997 – Education Jurisdiction transferred to the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. It was the first agreement in Canada to transfer jurisdiction for education from the federal government to First Nation Communities.
- 1997 – Delgamuukw v. British Columbia proved the existence of Aboriginal title within Canada. It provides a test for the proof of Aboriginal title and the content of which that entails.
- 1997 – 100th Anniversary Celebration of St. Anne's Church on Merigomish Island.
- 1998 – Micmac Native Friendship Centre celebrated its 25th anniversary.
- 1998 – Eskasoni High Tech High School opens.
- 1998 – Chapel Island opens Mi'kmawey Potelotekewey Kina'matno'kuom for Grades Primary to Eight.
- 1998 – 25th anniversary of The Wally Bernard Memorial Indian Youth Hockey Invitational.
- 1999 – The Native Alcohol & Drug Abuse Counselling Association of Nova Scotia celebrated its 25th Anniversary.
- 1999 – *Mi'kmite'lmanej Mikmaqik': Let us Remember the Old Mi'kmaq* Photo Exhibit was opened at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History in Halifax. The exhibit provided a rare visual record of the late 1920s and early 1930s as seen through the eyes of American Anthropologist Frederick

Johnson. The show was produced by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology.

1999 – A Memorandum of Association concerning Mi'kmaw Heritage was signed. It addresses the treatment of sacred burial sites, access to archaeological and ethnological collections and the involvement of Mi'kmaq in the management of cultural resources.

1999 – In a 5-2 decision on September 17, the Supreme Court of Canada agreed that Donald Marshall Jr. had a treaty right to fish for sustenance and earn a moderate livelihood from the commercial fishery as guaranteed under the treaties of 1760/61 signed between the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy and British Crown. On November 17, in denying a motion for a stay, the Supreme Court issued a more detailed analysis of the commercial aspect of R. v. Marshall.

1999 – In December, Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs and Maritimes & Northeast Pipeline (M&NP) officially signed an agreement dealing with environmental studies, monitoring and socio-economic opportunities as they relate to the M&NP.

1999 – (June) Formation of *Atlantic Canada's First Nations Help Desk*, a website to assist students and teachers in developing high-tech support for First Nation

schools, taking a proactive approach to helping create teachable moments by conducting contests for children, rather than sitting back waiting for people to have problems or questions.  
([www.firstnationhelp.com](http://www.firstnationhelp.com))

1999 – In December, Eskasoni's Seymour Doucette, representing both Canada and the Mi'kmaq, placed 12th at the World Bench Press Championship in Vaasa, Finland, pressing 501 lbs.

2000 – Potlotek announced opening of expanded water treatment plant and water tower, IBM school vista, the C@P site, Potlotek Canoe Company, Mi'kmawey Etli Mawa'tasik (Resource Centre), and the formation of the Potlotek School Board.

2000 – Glooscap (formerly Horton) Band opened a new facility, Glooscap Healing Centre, enabling the delivery of more programs and activities in the health field to their community.

2000 – In August, the Gaspé Chiefs (Listuguj, Gesgapegiag & Gespeg) sign historical accord, which will see them pool resources to work on issues of common interest.

2000 – Eskasoni Artist Eugene Denny's artwork chosen to represent the East, for design on reverse side of the Governor General's Academic Medal. His artwork, the East circle, represents the rising sun, symbol of dawn, and the Eagle, the gatekeeper of the East.

- 2000 – An Historic Plaque Ceremony “Mi’kmaq Cultural Landscape at Kejimikujik” was held at Kejimikujik National Park on October 1st, in recognition of Mi’kmaw presence there since time immemorial.
- 2000 – Sword of Peace presented to Mi’kmaq, a salute and tribute of peace and friendship from descendants of Prince Henry Sinclair who had arrived on the shore of Mi’kma’ki in 1398. It is housed at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq.
- 2000 – Dalhousie University’s TYP (Transitional Year Program) celebrates its 30th anniversary. TYP is a program designed to assist mature Mi’kmaw & African Canadian students prepare for university.
- 2000 – The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq is awarded the Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage’s “Outstanding Exhibit Award” for the photo exhibit “Let Us Remember The Old Mi’kmaq.”
- 2000 – Shubenacadie Band’s Noel Knockwood became the first Mi’kmaq to serve as Sergeant-At-Arms for the Nation’s oldest House of Assembly in Nova Scotia.
- 2000 – Pictou Landing Band became certified by SmartWood as a well-managed source of wood products whose forest management practices adhere to strict environmental & socio-economic standards in accordance with the principles and criteria of the Forest Stewardship Council.
- 2000 – Listuguj Band builds new Fisheries Centre to house offices, boat storage and repair, laboratories and a warehouse.
- 2000 – Mi’kmaw Lodge Treatment Centre in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, celebrates its 15th anniversary.
- 2000 – Gelulg Glusuaqan, Gisiteget Agnutmugsi’gw, the New Testament in Mi’kmaq and English, is released by the Canadian Bible Society.
- 2001 – Archaeologists find six new artifacts from the Palaeo period at Mi’kmawey Debert site: Five flakes that had been created by toolmakers, and one scraper which would have been used to clean caribou over 11,000 years ago.
- 2001 – Construction begins of Membertou Market & Gas Bar at the Membertou Business Park, Sydney, Nova Scotia.
- 2001 – On October 26th, Chief Lawrence Paul and Fisheries Minister Herb Dhaliwal cut the ribbon to officially open Millbrook’s new \$1.25 million wharf in Sheet Harbour. It can house up to 10 boats, and has large cold and freezer storage and ice making capabilities.

2001 – On January 11, Nova Scotia Premier John Hamm, Chief Lawrence Paul and Indian Affairs Minister Robert Nault cut the ribbon to officially open the Millbrook Band's 'Power Centre' in Truro.

The Centre contains a permanent heritage exhibit and display of fine Mi'kmaw artifacts, a grand hall, restaurant, retail craft shop and classroom and meeting rooms.

2001 – Millbrook Band opens doors of new office building for Treaty Enterprises, as well as for an Ultramar gas station/Needs convenience store/A&W restaurant, and the largest Tim Horton's in Eastern Canada at their 'Power Centre.'

2001 – Mi'kmaw filmmaker Catherine Martin, of the Millbrook Band, wins prominent International 'Andres Slapinsh Memorial' Award for her film 'Spirit Wind' which was premiered nationally on VISION TV, March 27. The award is for Best Indigenous Filmmaker.

2001 – A new RCMP complex is officially opened in Millbrook in October. It is the first On-Reserve full-size detachment in Atlantic Canada.

2001 – The Mi'kmaq College Institute of UCCB (University College of Cape Breton, now Cape Breton University) in Sydney, celebrates approval of Integrative Science Program "Toqwa'tu'kl Kijijitaqnn" on April 19. This program, the first of its kind in North America, will give students the opportunity to learn about science from the Mi'kmaw perspective.

2001 – In November, a newly constructed \$8 million overpass was opened, allowing highway 102 travellers on and off access to the Millbrook 'Power Centre.' It also connects Millbrook for the first time to the part of its community on the other side of the highway.

2001 – On June 8th, Eskasoni's Tuma Young, became the first Mi'kmaw speaking lawyer to be called to the Bar.

2001 – In a ruling handed down on March 8, the Nova Scotia Provincial Court found 35 Mi'kmaw loggers guilty of cutting logs on crown land. The case would be appealed in April 2001.

2001 – Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News celebrates its 10th anniversary.

2001 – On June 8, the Wagmatcook Culture and Heritage Centre opened its doors with grand opening ceremonies including performances by Aboriginal artists Susan Aglukark, Morning Star and Joel Denny.

2001 – For the first time in the history of the Canada Games, a First Nation will participate in the organization of the games. A \$2.3 million fencing facility is constructed in Eel River Bar, New Brunswick.

- 2001 – Ada Benoit of Conne River, NL, became the first Aboriginal person to graduate as a nurse practitioner.
- 2001 – In January, the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, Provincial and Federal Governments in the Tripartite Forum issued a joint statement regarding their willingness to work together to resolve outstanding Aboriginal issues including the long-term implementation of the Marshall decision.
- 2001 – Chief Lawrence Paul named 'Newsmaker of the Year' by the Truro Daily News (Truro, NS) who reported that "New-found prosperity in the Millbrook (Mi'kmaw) First Nation has brought unheard-of attention to the small community of 1,200 people near Truro and a new appreciation of their chief of the past 17 years."
- 2002 – The Millbrook Band began construction of its \$2.9 million Aquaculture Facility at the Power Centre, Truro, NS.
- 2002 – Membertou Band gains international recognition as the first indigenous government in Canada to receive ISO 901:2000 Certification. The purpose of which is to further enhance their economy based on the pillars of sustainability, conservation, innovation and success, allowing Membertou to be a very credible player in the global market economy.
- 2002 – Empire Theatres Studio 7 opened at Millbrook's Power Centre in Truro, NS.
- 2002 – Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies (MACS) celebrates its 30th anniversary.
- 2002 – Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA) celebrates its 30th anniversary.
- 2002 – *Technology Helps Preserve Mi'kmaw Language*. Junior High School Students at Riverside Education Centre, Milford, NS, are learning Mi'kmaw via highspeed broadband connections through video conference technology, from a teacher 300 kms away in Cape Breton.
- 2002 – Indian Brook Band Member, Noel Knockwood, wins National Achievement Award for his work in restoring and rebuilding Aboriginal spirituality in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.
- 2002 – Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and Provincial and Federal Governments signed an Umbrella Agreement that reaffirms their long-standing relationship and commitment to work together in good faith to resolve issues of mutual concern on June 7th. Specifically, the parties will continue to move forward with the existing Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum, as well as engage in a broad negotiations process in Nova Scotia to consider issues of asserted Aboriginal rights (including title) and treaty rights. The parties have agreed to establish a consultation process.

2002 – Grand Opening of the \$3.6 million state-of-the-art scientific research facility, the Unama’ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR), September 6, at Eskasoni, NS. It features a large boardroom, a marine exhibit, training and laboratory space, classrooms and offices for administration of UINR and staff of the Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Commission.

2002 – On October 1st, during Treaty Days Celebrations at Province House in Halifax, NS, representatives from the Mi’kmaq, Province and Canada Tripartite Forum signed a resolution ratifying the Smith-Francis Orthography as the official Mi’kmaq writing system for Nova Scotia, and encouraging the promotion and utilization of the Mi’kmaq language in public areas and on signage.

2002 – In October, at Dartmouth, NS, the Officials of the Mi’kmaq, Province and Canada Tripartite Forum approved the formation of a Tripartite Forum Secretariat.

2002 – Mi’kmaq author and longtime advocate for Mi’kmaq Human Rights, Daniel Paul, was honoured on October 2 by the Province with an Order of Nova Scotia Medal; the first time the award has been given to a Mi’kmaq.

2002 – Launch of new book, “Tracking Doctor Lonecloud: Showman to Legend Keeper” by Ruth Whitehead, Nova

Scotia Museum, October 16. Contains first known memoir of Mi’kmaq hunter, healer and showman, Jerry Lonecloud.

2002 – Stephen Marshall from Eskasoni was inducted into the Nova Scotia Horseshoe Hall of Fame. He is a three-time Nova Scotia singles champ, and first Native to be inducted into Hall of Fame. In 1989, he placed 6th out of 168 competitors in “Horseshoe Canada.”

2002 – On November 27th, five Mi’kmaq men were honoured with Queen’s Golden Jubilee Medal: Mi’kmaq lawyer, Bernd Christmas of Membertou; former Chief Albert Denny of Pictou Landing; The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq Executive Director, Don Julien; Millbrook Chief Lawrence Paul; and Mi’kmaq artist, Alan Syliboy of Millbrook. All were recognized for their significant and substantial contributions to the Province, Canada and the British Commonwealth.

2002 – Indian Brook’s 16-year-old Sarah-Lynne Knockwood earned gold medals for Taekwondo (under 16 light-weight division) at the North American Indigenous Games, the Pan-American Championships, and the World Championships. In 2003, she was awarded the Tom Longboat Award in recognition of these accomplishments.

- 2002 – The Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network (MLSN) began operation in September, after receiving ratification from the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs and acceptance from the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum's Justice Working Committee.
- 2002 – For the first time at Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site, visitors are offered a glimpse of what an authentic Mi'kmaw campsite may have looked like 500 years ago, featuring a life-size wigwam covered with birch bark in a wooded area near a lake, a fire pit, a bearskin and two white-tailed deerskins, a hide stretcher, sweat lodge, basketry, hunting gear, fishing spear, cooking kettle and drying rack.
- 2002 – The Acadia Band receives \$2.1 million in compensation, put in trust for future generations, for the final settlement of an historic land claim, the 6th specific claim settlement in the Maritimes.
- 2002 – The Honourable Robert D. Nault, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, introduced the First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act in the House of Commons on December 2.
- 2002 – Membertou Band and Province sign first Joint Registration Agreement to facilitate training to Aboriginal apprentices, at Province House, December 5.
- 2003 – The Annual Wally Bernard Indian Youth Hockey Invitational Tournament, hosted by Membertou Band in Sydney, NS, hosts its 30th year.
- 2003 – Grand Opening of Membertou Market and Gas Bar in Sydney, NS, on April 26.
- 2003 – Point of Sale Tax Exemption state-of-the-art technology installed at gas pumps in Eskasoni, NS.
- 2003 – Arlo Looking Cloud and John Graham (John Boy Patton) charged in 1975 murder of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, Mi'kmaw woman, American Indian Movement Activist.
- 2003 – Membertou Band forms another alliance with Grant Thornton LLP, a national accounting firm, designed to offer workable solutions for First Nations financial management. The alliance launches a business model for Aboriginal self-management.
- 2003 – On May 26th, the first Super 8 Motel in Atlantic Canada and the 100th in Canada opened its doors at Millbrook's Power Centre in Truro, NS.
- 2003 – Mi'kmawey Debert opens its Interpretive Trail in Debert, NS, on June 11.
- 2004 – The first "Sobeys Express" is opened in Millbrook – a mini market featuring convenience items plus grocery needs.

- 2004 – Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs hold the first strategic planning session (February) for the "Made-in-Nova Scotia Process."
- 2004 – The MLSN takes on the MYOP (Mi'kmaw Young Offenders Program) and renames it as the Mi'kmaw Customary Law Program (MCLP) in order to expand its services to the adult population.
- 2004 – Grand opening of the Eskasoni Supermarket.
- 2004 – Official opening of the Bear River First Nation Cultural and Heritage Gallery.
- 2004 – Epona Communications (Eskasoni) enters into a joint venture agreement with Messa Computing Inc., an Ottawa based IT firm to provide IT personnel under the Federal Government Online initiative.
- 2004 – Pictou Landing receives a 2004 International Best Practices Award to Improve the Living Environment from the United Nations Human Settlements Program and the Municipality of Dubai.
- 2004 – Eagle's Nest Recovery House (Indian Brook) celebrates its 15th anniversary.
- 2004 – Seymour Doucette, Eskasoni, wins the title of World Bench Press Champion.
- 2004 – Esmond "Blue" Marshall is the first Aboriginal to be elected to Regional Council. An Eskasoni Band Member, Marshall was elected to the Council of the Cape Breton Regional Municipality.
- 2004 – UNSI (Union of Nova Scotia Indians) celebrates its 35th anniversary.
- 2004 – Bear River First Nation Cultural and Heritage Centre wins the prestigious Crystal Tourism Innovator Award of Excellence presented by the Tourism Industry of Nova Scotia. The Winner exemplifies innovation in market positioning in contributing toward Nova Scotia's unique tourism product offering.
- 2004 – The Membertou First Nation and Nova Scotia Community College sign a landmark business and education partnership agreement to develop and deliver customized training programs relevant to Membertou's employment opportunities, programs to support the transition of high school graduates to the College, and information technology initiatives.
- 2004 – Membertou opens the Membertou Trade and Convention Center, a world-class conference facility.
- 2004 – Nova Scotia Power Inc. lowered the water level on the Mersey River for maintenance of the power dams uncovering a wealth of Mi'kmaw artifacts dating back thousands of years.

- 2005 – FirstNet website is launched – an on-line “one-stop shop” for Nova Scotia’s Mi’kmaw communities offering links to jobs, scholarships, business information, community events ([www.mns-firstnet.ca](http://www.mns-firstnet.ca))
- 2005 – Chapel Island unveiled a commemorative plaque recognizing the national historical significance of the community.
- 2005 – St. Thomas and Dalhousie Universities collaborated to offer the Mi’kmaq/Maliseet Bachelor of Social Work Program to 30 students from across the Maritimes.
- 2005 – Chad Denny drafted to the NHL Atlanta Thrashers hockey team.
- 2005 – Assembly of First Nations signed a political accord with the federal government to resolve the legacy of residential schools.
- 2005 – The Province of Nova Scotia acknowledged the need to delineate the boundaries of the Debert land designated under the Special Places Act. The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq hires a team of archaeologists and students to begin the process.
- 2005 – The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in the Joshua Bernard case stating that the Mi’kmaq do not have a treaty right to harvest wood on Crown Lands.
- 2005 – Wegadesk Gorup-Paul (Paqtn’kek) captured the gold medal and breaks a Canada Games record for diving at the Canada Summer Games.
- 2005 – Cape Breton Mi’kmaw communities signed Tar Ponds Protocol that will guide discussions on economic opportunities in the Tar Ponds and Coke Ovens Cleanup.
- 2005 – Membertou and YMCA signed an agreement to open an Entrepreneur Centre to provide customized business training and support to interested entrepreneurs in the Membertou community.
- 2006 – Aboriginal Achievement Awards granted to Andrea Dykstra, Pictou Landing (Youth Award) and Bernd Christmas, Membertou (Business and Commerce Award).
- 2006 (April 25) – The Conservative government announced its intention to consider the final settlement agreement, interim payments and the timing of payments for former Indian Residential School students.
- 2006 – Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission launched an initiative to develop an Aboriginal framework and action plan to improve the services offered to Mi’kmaw communities and other Aboriginal people in Nova Scotia.

2006 – Grand opening of the Glooscap Heritage Centre, Truro Power Centre.

2006 – Mi'kmaw Lodge Treatment Centre, Eskasoni marked its 20th anniversary.

2006 – Treaty Day celebrated its 20th anniversary.

2006 – Mawi Ta'mk Society established to improve the quality of life for Mi'kmaw people with disabilities, We'koqma'q.

2006 – Launching of video “Wabanaki: People of the Dawn” by the Office of Aboriginal Affairs—a documentary of the archaeological work done on the Mersey River when the water level was lowered for maintenance. Twenty thousand Mi'kmaw artifacts were discovered, some dating back thousands of years.

2006 – Bill C292, an Act to Implement the Kelowna Accord was passed in the House of Commons—a ten-year plan to close the poverty gap between Aboriginal peoples and the rest of Canadians.

2006 – The Bras d'Or Charter was signed by mayors, wardens and Cape Breton Chiefs to work with UINR (Unima'ki Institute of Natural Resources) to launch the Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI) to promote and contribute to the understanding and protection of the environment in the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people in Cape Breton.

2006 – The Supreme Court of Canada held the right of Mi'kmaw and Maliseet people to harvest wood for their domestic use. R.v. Gray, Sappier and Polchies.

2006 – The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq celebrated its 20th anniversary.

2007 – The Framework Agreement is signed by the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, the Provincial Government and the Federal Government. The agreement signals the start of a formal negotiations process to address the definition, recognition and implementation of Mi'kmaw rights and title in Nova Scotia and commits the parties to address the broad issues of land, natural resources and governance.



# The Story Begins



- Debert Sites
- Mersey River Sites
- Kejimikujik Petroglyphs

- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# The Story Begins. . .

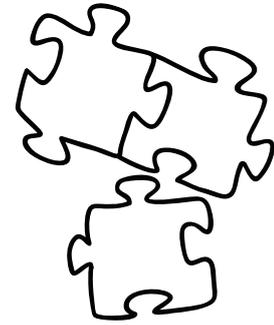


The history of Mi'kmaw people is very long and our homeland, called Mi'kma'ki, is very large. There have been people living here for more than 11,000 years! Mi'kma'ki, is made up of all of Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island and large areas of New Brunswick, the Gaspé Peninsula and Newfoundland.

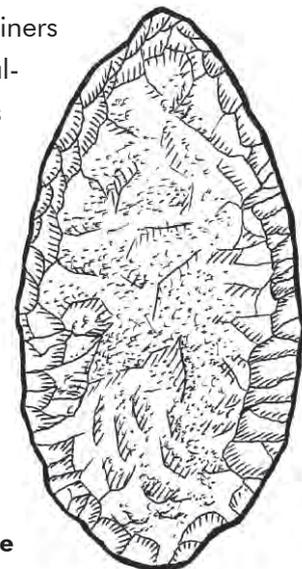
While many histories are written only from historical documents, understanding our past and our homeland requires understanding many different kinds of information. In the past, Mi'kmaw people learned about their culture and history through stories and legends. These oral (spoken) histories are very important to understanding our past. In addition, because our history is so old, we use sciences like archaeology and geology to help us tell our stories.

Mi'kmaw history and culture is like a puzzle that has many different pieces. Some pieces come from geology. They tell us about the environment in the past. Other pieces come from archaeology. They tell us about where and how our ancestors lived. We also use historical documents that were written mostly by Europeans, since it was rare for Mi'kmaw people to write their histories down on paper. Most of all, we listen to each other—and

especially to the Elders in our community—because it is our stories and legends that help us put all the pieces of the puzzle together into a picture we can call our own.



One of the most exciting things about the puzzle is that the pieces are all around us, whether we are Mi'kmaq or not. Chances are you are living near a river that once had encampments along it; today these encampments are archaeological sites. All of us live near places with Mi'kmaw names—like Shubenacadie or Tracadie. Others may live near certain islands, hills, or special places that are part of Mi'kmaw stories. Perhaps there is a special source of stone nearby that people used to make their tools, or a place with clay that people used to make their bowls, and containers for cooking. Whether we realize it or not, everyone travels over and through ancestral Mi'kmaw places, and we do it every day.



**biface knife**

## Legends of Kluskap

Amethyst, sacred stone to the Mi'kmaq, has been gathered for generations. Traditional places for gathering amethyst can be found in the legends of Kluskap (Glooscap).

"Kluskap's Campsite" at Blomidon is one of these places. Another is located just two kilometers across the Bay of Fundy, at Partridge Island—home of Kluskap's Grandmother. Before a large storm called the "Saxby Gale" created a permanent land bridge from the mainland to the island in 1869, you could only get to it on foot at low tide. The Mi'kmaq called Partridge Island "Wa'so'q," which means "Heaven."

In the legends of Kluskap, we find more than just detailed descriptions of landforms that we can see in Mi'kma'ki today, we also find evidence of our "Cultural Memory Timeline" that points to events and changes that are confirmed by modern day science.

One legend tells of a battle Kluskap fought with the "God of Winter." Kluskap lost, making it "winter" here year-round. In the past 13,000 years of our ancestral occupation, and since the last Ice Age, studies of climate changes have confirmed conditions like year-round winter. Even after Kluskap took his people south to ask the "Goddess of Summer" to bring back our four seasons, there is a legend that says there was still one giant chunk of ice left. When you look at elevation maps of the Cobequid Mountains, you see that the mountain has been eroded on the North and South sides, yet there is no major water source on top of that mountain. Geological and glacial studies show that the Cobequid Mountains were eroded by a piece of ice that remained after the last Ice Age, a piece of ice two kilometres thick.

The stories of our people relate to events that happened very recently and those that happened a long time ago. The stories contain lots of different kinds of information, especially about things that we believe, feel, and think. There are many values and beliefs that are shown through Mi'kmaw stories and through the language itself. By listening to the stories, we come to understand how important family is, how courage and determination were essential for living through dramatic changes in our climate and our lives. The stories share with us what our culture thinks is beautiful, strange and important for life at different times and places in our past. Stories also carry key information for the use of plants, animals, rocks and other resources in the land. They tell us when to harvest and when not to harvest, warn us about dangerous tidal areas, and map important places onto the landscape.

With stories, the exact **time** events took place is not the most important thing. However the sciences of archaeology and geology depend upon knowing the dates of sites and artifacts. Because Mi'kmaw people and their ancestors



Kluskap (Glooscap) gives an amethyst necklace to his grandmother. Partridge Island, Cape Split and Blomidon are seen in the background.

have lived in Mi'kma'ki for such a long period of time, archaeologists have created blocks of time, called periods, that help them to organize the hundreds of sites and thousands of artifacts that have been found. This is called a chronology.

There are more than 800 Mi'kmaw archaeological sites in Nova Scotia. There are hundreds more in the provinces of New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador.

### The Debert Sites, Debert, NS

More than 11,000 years ago, people lived on plains that stretched south from the Cobequid Mountains. The Debert archaeological sites, near Truro, Nova Scotia, are among the most important sites of this age in North America. Archaeological excavation revealed numerous living areas as well as a large and diverse set of stone artifacts. Archaeologists recognize the time between 13,500 and 10,000 years ago as the oldest

**Archaeology** is the study of past human life through the artifacts that people leave behind. Archaeology tells us about how and where people lived. It tells us about how big family units were, whether people lived all in one place, or moved throughout the year (as was true for the Mi'kmaq), what things were important to them economically (like which rocks and minerals were important), and what animals and plants people used. Archaeology is good at telling us about certain parts of people's lives—the things we can touch and see. However, archaeology tells us less about the parts of life we can't see, such as how we feel, what we believe, or what language we speak.

**Geology** is the study of the physical, chemical, geological, and biological happenings at or near the earth's surface. Geologists study landforms, soils, fossils, fluids (mostly water), and rocks to tell us about past environments: temperature, rain, snow, plants and even animals. Archaeologists are interested in geology because it tells us what kinds of environments people lived in. Geology usually works at very long time frames, but it tells us about shorter frames too.

## Mi'kmakik Teloltipnik L'nu'k

(How People Lived in Mi'kma'ki)

	Radio Carbon Years	Calendar Years
<b>Sa'qewe'k L'nu'k</b> (Ancient People—Palaeo Period)	11,500 – 8,500 B.P. (B.P.=Before Present)	13,500 – 10,000 B.P.
<b>Mu Awsami Kejikawe'k L'nu'k</b> (Not so Recent People—Archaic Period)	8,500 – 3,000 B.P.	10,000 – 3,000 B.P.
<b>Kejikawe'k L'nu'k</b> (Recent People—Woodland Period & early European contact era traditions)	3,000 – 300	3,000 -500 B.P.
<b>Kiskuke'k L'nu'k</b> (Today's People—early European contact and colonial era traditions)	1,000 – present	500 – present

period of human settlement in North and South America. Today, the Mi'kmaq First Nation works to protect this important area of our homeland.

People lived in a dramatically changing environment at the end of the last glaciation (Ice Age). By 13,000 years ago the continental glaciers from the last Ice Age had melted away from this region. Even with the ice gone, it was still a cold and rapidly changing environment compared with the climate today. Most of the land was covered in grasses, with small forests of spruce, birch and alder growing in the more protected areas. The shoreline of the Bay of Fundy was near Cape Split, leaving the Minas Basin as dry grass land.

At this time large Ice Age mammals may have still roamed this land. These mammals included mastodons and mammoths, giant beavers, giant short-faced bears, and dire

wolves. Archaeologists believe that the large Ice Age animals lived in this region perhaps as late as 10,000 years ago. In addition to these large mammals, more familiar animals also lived in Mi'kma'ki, including caribou, musk ox, bison, elk, moose, and red and arctic foxes, to name a few. Though at the time Debert was many kilometers inland from the ocean, sea mammals such as walrus and seals, as well as fish and other resources of the sea, were available to the people who lived here. Birds and other small animals were also present.

Life at Debert would be both strange and familiar to people today. Excavations (diggings) at the site tell us a lot about some parts of community life, very little about others. Having relatively little information, archaeologists put a picture of life together as best they can. Because so much is not known and because new pieces of the puzzle are added all the time, our understandings change frequently. Much is left for us to imagine about people's lives.



Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization, Ottawa

When we imagine the community at Debert, we can see it was filled with sophisticated, knowledgeable people. They had an intimate knowledge of the weather, plants, landscape and animals with which they lived. They cared for each other, fought on

**Fieldwork at Debert, 1964.**

occasion, solved problems and found humour in their daily lives. Older people in the community carried valuable knowledge from their lifelong experience, which was shared with others.

The community at Debert was not alone; nor is it likely that people remained at one location all year long. While Debert is the only site in Mi'kma'ki with numerous artifacts and features like hearths (fireplaces for cooking), there are other areas where single artifacts have been found. People traveled for many reasons, including hunting, visiting relatives and friends, and gathering other kinds of resources, especially the special rock for tools from areas such as Scots Bay and Parrsborro, Nova Scotia.

It is also very likely that these ancient people traveled to places outside the Maritimes. Relations extending over large areas would have been important in times when food was hard to find, as well as for gathering together and sharing news. We do not know how far such networks extended.

Most sites from this period of time are called Clovis, due to artifact styles and methods of making them. Many of the tools at Debert were probably made of stone that came from the Bay of Fundy area. Controversial techniques for analyzing blood traces on the tools suggest that blood on several of the tools is caribou.

The excavations produced more than 4,500 artifacts, which are today curated (housed) at the Museum of Civilization, in Gatineau, Quebec. In the 1990s even more sites were found nearby the original Debert site.



top right: Michelle LeLievre, Archaeologist (Pictou) and Scott Buchanan, Archaeological Project Manager (Musquodoboit), at Mi'kma'wey Debert Site Delineation Project, 2006

right: Donna Morris, Mi'kma'wey Archaeologist (Indian Brook First Nation) and Sharon Farrell, Mi'kma'wey Archaeologist (Miawpukek First Nation, NL) at Mi'kma'wey Debert Site Delineation Project, 2006

# Fish Weirs

by Roger Lewis

A fish weir (say “WEER”) is a wooden or stone barrier or trap placed at the mouth of a river or in a river channel to capture fish for food. It is the oldest of known fishing practices and has been used as far back in time as 8,000 years ago.

While remnants of this ancient fishing technology are found on most rivers in Nova Scotia, the majority of fish weirs identified to date have been found in rivers located in the southwest part of the province.

Four types of fish weirs have been identified through archaeological investigation:

1. Wooden fence-stake weirs found at the mouths of rivers
2. Large down-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found in the interior of the province at outlets of lakes
3. Smaller up-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found where salt and fresh water meet and what is known as the “head of tide”
4. Circular or rectangular stone fish weirs found in river channels just above the “head of tide”



G. Gloade

**an eel weir made of stone**

Each fish weir is used to catch a different type of fish. For example, fish that move between salt and fresh water during their life cycle; fish that mature at sea and spawn in freshwater; and those that mature in fresh water but spawn at sea.

A wooden fence-stake weir found at the mouth of a river is built in a way that allows it to work with the rise and fall of the tide. Fish enter over the fish weir at high tide and are trapped behind the barrier or trap when the tide lowers.

These types of fish weirs would have been used to catch larger fish species such as sturgeon, shad and striped bass.

Smaller stone up-stream pointed stone “v-shaped” fish weirs found at the “head of tide” are

used to catch smaller fish that are not trapped in a wooden fence-stake fish weir. These would include smaller fish species like gaspereau, smelt, mackerel, as well as male eels which do not travel up rivers and into lakes to mature like female eels do.

Circular-rectangular stone fish weirs are used to trap salmon as they move up-stream to spawn. It is important to catch them just above the “head of tide” when they are at their fattest. The larger down-stream pointing stone “v-shaped” fish weirs that are found in the interior at the outlets of lakes are used to catch just one species of fish, the female American eel that matures in interior lakes and travels downstream to the ocean to spawn in the fall.

## Mersey River Sites

In the summer of 2004, Nova Scotia Power lowered the water level of the Mersey River in southwest Nova Scotia to repair six power dams. What the archaeologists uncovered as a result was a wealth of artifacts that indicated many ancient camp and fishing sites. More than 100 sites were found along the river.

Archaeologists also found and collected more than 10,000 artifacts for further study and eventual display. Embedded in the muddy riverbed were pieces of Native pottery, a wide range of pecked and ground stone tools such as axes, celts and gouges. Also found were a variety of spear points as well as stone chip-pings or flakes left behind from the making of these tools. Many of these tools were dated between 500 and 6,000 years old.

Large stone woodworking tools are very distinct for this period and were made from grinding a coarse-grained rock against another or by pecking or tapping the stone to form its shape. These were made from hard igneous types of rock such as granites, basalts or rhyolites.

Roger Lewis, a Mi'kmaw archaeologist, took part in the Mersey River project. Mr. Lewis is an expert in fishing weirs. He saw four different types of weirs built on the Mersey River—each one designed to catch a different type of fish.

**(above and right)  
weirs made of stone**



Photo courtesy of Roger Lewis

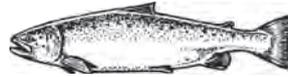
The fish weirs found on the Mersey River date back thousands of years, yet they were in good condition. The Mersey River was dammed in 1929 to produce electricity and greater portions of the river and shoreline had remained under water until the river was drained in 2004. This protected the weirs and other artifacts from natural damage such as exposure to air, frost, fire, looting and development.

The Mersey River is one of eleven primary water courses found in the southwestern end of Nova Scotia. It drains Lake Rossignol and Kejimikujik Lake, both to the south and north, and extends from Liverpool in Queens County to Annapolis Royal in Annapolis County.



Photo courtesy of Roger Lewis

Many of the sites discovered on the Mersey River and Indian Gardens (Ponhook Reserve) at Lake Rossignol were known as places where the Mi'kmaq harvested food sources and gathered over the millennia (past thousands of years).



Tall ships, canoes, human figures, and cultural symbols are the most common pictures. Other carvings depict animals, lodges, crosses and hieroglyphics. Many of the images portray men and women wearing traditional clothing. Over 60 of them depict the unique peaked cap worn by women, suggesting the importance of women in Mi'kmaw society.

### Kejimkujik Petroglyphs

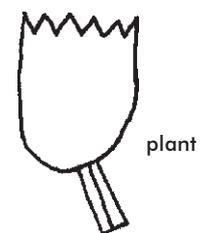
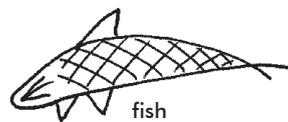
More than 60 archaeological and historical sites have been found in Kejimkujik, a large area in southwestern Nova Scotia that is also a National Park.

Kejimkujik is known best for the hundreds of individual pictures that are carved into stone along lake shorelines and other areas. These pictures are called petroglyphs. There are more than 500 known from the area, which make it the largest number of petroglyphs in eastern North America.

### Conclusion

As you can see, Mi'kmaw people and their ancestors have lived in many different places at many different times. In this way, over many generations Mi'kmaw people came to be experts on the land, plants, animals, rivers, lakes, rocks, and other aspects of life in Mi'kma'ki. This knowledge is part of our stories and our language. It is even in the places where archaeological sites are found and in the technology of our artifacts.

## Petroglyph(s) - A carving or inscription on a rock



## Resources

### ***Maritime Provinces Prehistory***

by James A. Tuck. Ottawa: Archaeological Survey of Canada, 1984. (102 pgs)

### ***Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre***

PO Box 1590, Truro, NS B2N 5V3

ph: (902) 895-6385

fax: (902) 893-1520

### ***Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq***

by Stephen A. Davis. Nimbus, Halifax, 1997.  
(74 pgs)

### ***Wabanaki: People of the Dawn (Part One)***

produced by Nova Scotia Office of  
Aboriginal Affairs. Halifax, 2005.

(26 min video)

OAA website: [www.gov.ns.ca/abor/](http://www.gov.ns.ca/abor/)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Archaeological excavations provide a rich resource for scientific evidence of the history of humankind. Some people believe that much more archaeological excavation should take place to provide more information. However, many Mi'kmaq are not so anxious to disturb the evidence of past lives of their ancestors and would prefer to have archaeological sites identified and protected. What is your opinion on this topic? Explain.
2. The petroglyphs told of Mi'kmaw life some 2500 years ago. You are tasked to design images for petroglyphs telling the story of modern day people that will be uncovered some 2500 years from now. What would you include and why?
3. You are a Mi'kmaw person and you know that the Kejimikujik area holds a strong connection to the past for your people and a host of Mi'kmaw cultural resources. However, Kejimikujik is also a major tourist site and a National Federal Park and as such is managed, regulated and owned by the government. It is open for use and enjoyment by the general public. Everyone pays an entrance fee and is allowed in the Park during specified hours. Do you, as a Mi'kmaw person think this situation should change? Why and How?

# Meet the Mi'kmaq of Yesterday and Today



- As it Was ...
  - Hierarchy of Mi'kmaq Leadership at the Time of European Contact
  - As It Is ...
  - Hierarchy of Mi'kmaq Leadership Today
- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# Meet the Mi'kmaq of Yesterday and Today



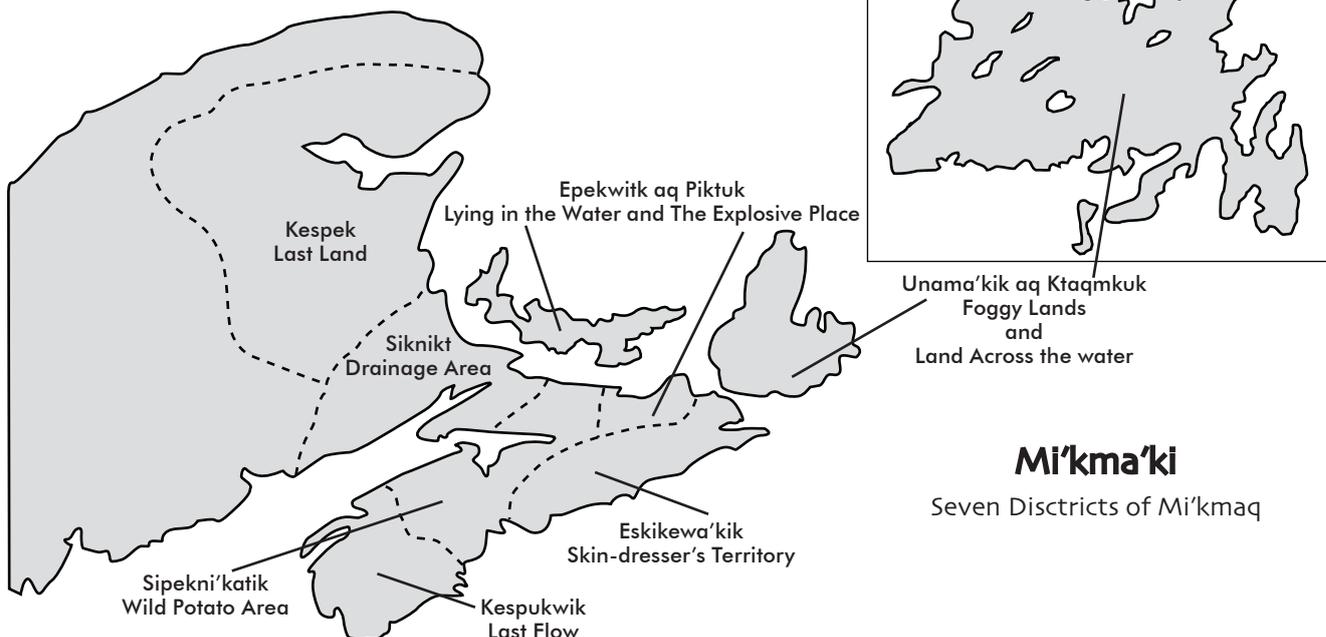
## As it Was ...

At the time of European contact (circa 1500), the Mi'kmaq occupied a large area known as Mi'kma'ki. This region included all of what is today Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, part of the Gaspé Peninsula, Newfoundland and most of New Brunswick.

Mi'kma'ki was divided into seven districts, each of which was led by a District Chief. This group of seven district chiefs made up the Mi'kmaw Grand Council, which governed over the Mi'kmaw people. There were many smaller communities in each district. These communities were led by a local chief.

The Mi'kmaw names for the seven districts came from the geographical characteristics of the areas:

- Unama'kik aq Ktaqmkuk ("foggy lands" and "land across the water")—Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland
- Epekwitk aq Piktuk ("lying in the water" and "the explosive place")—Pictou County and Prince Edward Island
- Eskikewa'kik ("skin-dresser's territory")—the area stretching from Guysborough to Halifax County
- Sipekni'katik ("wild potato area")—the counties of Halifax, Lunenburg, Kings, Hants and Colchester
- Kespukwik ("last flow")—the counties of Queens, Shelburne, Yarmouth, Digby and Annapolis
- Siknikt ("drainage area")—including Cumberland County in Nova Scotia, and the New Brunswick counties of Westmorland, Albert, Kent, Saint John, Kings and Queens
- Kespek ("last land")—the area north of the Richibucto, including its rivers and parts of Gaspé



**Mi'kma'ki**  
Seven Districts of Mi'kmaq

Mi'kmaq also belonged to a large political organization known as the Wabanaki Confederacy. This confederacy was led by the grand chiefs of several tribes who lived in eastern North America. The tribes included Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, and Abenaki.

### Hierarchy of Mi'kmaw Leadership at the Time of European Contact

The European settlers were met by a Mi'kmaw Nation that was orderly, well-governed, strong, knowledgeable and successful. The chart below explains the reporting structure of their government at that time.

We do not know how many Mi'kmaq lived in Mi'kma'ki in the 1600s. Historians think that there were between 50,000 and 100,000. This number is based on the writings of the Jesuit missionaries who were among the earliest newcomers. Some of these writings



quote Grand Chief Membertou, who referred to the Mi'kmaq as being as plentiful as “the number of hairs on my head.” That’s a large number!

The Mi'kmaq were a seasonal people. They moved to the coastal areas in the warmer seasons and inland in winter. They used well-established travel routes—traveling the same paths from year to year. Mi'kmaq traveled light, relying on the natural environment to provide for their needs. A group of Mi'kmaq could set up camp in a matter of hours, building a fire and making wigwams. Everyone was organized to help gather the building materials and supplies.

The Mi'kmaq regularly traveled great distances along the waterways of the Maritimes and they depended on the canoe for transportation. Skilled artisans constructed these canoes by hand, using handmade tools and local wood like birch and beech. They sewed the parts of the canoe together using a bone needle and fir tree roots. Only the most skilled artisans were entrusted with making these canoes, which had to be seaworthy and reliable.

The daily life of the Mi'kmaq centered on finding and preparing food, and the sharing of wealth among members of the village. Daily activities were all about survival—finding and preparing food, clothing, shelter, medicines, etc. Mother Nature provided the basics of life and her gifts were taken with respect and gratitude.

Throughout Mi'kma'ki, the Mi'kmaq enjoyed an active social life. We loved to socialize, holding frequent and lavish ceremonies to celebrate important events like a successful hunt, marriages, funerals, visiting tribes, peace or even war. A fabulous feast was always the highlight of these ceremonies, which also featured lots of traditional food, song, dance and laughter. Often the Chief or a community Elder would entertain the crowd with stories of ancestors, legends and Mi'kmaw history.

The Mi'kmaq also had a keen sense of competition, taking part in competitive events and vying to be the most successful hunter in the village. Canoe races, and games of chance such as Waltes (a traditional dice game) were other opportunities for competition.

The Mi'kmaq were a communal people. They shared everything from hunting dogs and canoes, to food and shelter. All community members worked for the survival of the village. Exploitive (wasteful) or selfish behaviour was not acceptable to the Mi'kmaq, who believed in respect for oneself, for others and for the natural environment.

The Mi'kmaq depended on their knowledge of the seasons, weather, animals, plants, and hunting and preparation skills for survival. This knowledge was passed on from generation to generation. Mi'kmaw education included the teaching of traditional hunting skills, construction techniques for things like

shelter or canoes, food preparation, sewing skills, etc. Traditional teachings, stories, and histories were mainly passed on orally.

The clothes worn by the Mi'kmaq were made from animal skins. They were designed to be practical and protective. Any decoration on the clothing was modest and made from



**Traditional Mi'kmaw Dress**

National Museum of the American Indian

other parts of the animal such as claws, bones or antlers. Shells, quills and feathers were also used for decoration. The Mi'kmaq used natural dyes from plants and animals for color. They were a creative and artistic people.

### As It Is ...

Today, in the 21st century, the Mi'kmaq live very differently. Divided by provincial borders, confined to smaller land areas and restricted by the Indian Act and federal laws, Mi'kmaq communities at first glance look like any small rural community in Canada.

In Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq are divided into 13 Bands. Each band is led by a Chief and Council elected by community members. The 13 bands occupy specific areas of land known as Indian Reserves. These reserves are located throughout the province.



### Hierarchy of Mi'kmaq Leadership Today

The Mi'kmaq hierarchy of today reflects the impact of the Europeans over the last 400 years. Rather than the Mi'kmaq themselves, the Canadian government is the highest authority in the hierarchy.

According to Statistics Canada (2006 census), there are 24,175 Aboriginal people living in Nova Scotia. Of these, 7978 are living in Reserve communities and 16,197 are living off-Reserve. The Mi'kmaq share the province with many other cultures. Aboriginal people make up 2.7 percent of Nova Scotia's population. Although the Mi'kmaq have a higher birthrate than other Nova Scotians, they also have a higher suicide rate and shorter life span.

Most Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia go to public school because few communities have on-Reserve schools. Although staying in school is still a concern in many communities, more and more Mi'kmaq are graduating from high

school and many of them go on to university. The number of Mi'kmaq who have professional careers (doctors, lawyers, etc.) is also on the rise. Unfortunately, many must leave their home communities to find work. Traditional Mi'kmaw skills and knowledge are no longer seen as important for finding work and are slowly disappearing.

Today, Mi'kmaq no longer depend on Mother Nature for food and survival. Instead, they focus on earning money to buy food at the grocery store. While many Mi'kmaq still hunt moose or fish for salmon and eel, it is no longer a means of survival.

Since the 1950s, Mi'kmaq with low incomes have been able to take advantage of Canadian social programs like the Welfare Program, Employment Insurance and Family Benefits. Because they have limited land and resources, many First Nations people are dependent on this social welfare system. And while there are many stories of successful Mi'kmaw business ventures, the unemployment rate is still high in First Nation communities.

Today Mi'kmaq live in modern homes with modern conveniences. Young people participate in organized sports, wear the latest fashions, and listen to modern music. However, traditional songs, dance, language,

spirituality, food, and herbal medicines are being slowly re-introduced to the First Nation communities. These efforts validate the importance of the traditional ways.

The Mi'kmaw language is considered to be a "threatened" language. Less than 25 percent of Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia are fluent in their own language. Even fewer have Mi'kmaw as their mother tongue. While First Nation communities are working hard to revive the Mi'kmaw language, English is still the main language spoken in most communities.

Competitive sports like hockey, softball and basketball are very popular among the Mi'kmaw people. They also continue to enjoy traditional activities such as hunting, canoeing, and games of chance. Traditional Mi'kmaw song and dance are also a big part of annual community powwows. Community feasts honoring Elders, war veterans, marriages and funerals are still an important part of Mi'kmaw life. St. Anne's Day (July 26) and Mi'kmaq Treaty Day (October 1) are special Mi'kmaw holidays.

**Treaty Day Celebrations  
in Halifax, Nova Scotia**



Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)

While Mi'kmaq Reserve lands are communal (meaning they are shared by all members of the community), life in a Mi'kmaq community today is not communal in the traditional sense. Sharing wealth is no longer common nor is it needed for survival. Individuals accumulate their own possessions and wealth.

The challenge for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq is to be successful in modern society, while also preserving their traditional culture and way of life.

Because most of the land in Nova Scotia is owned by individuals or the government, Mi'kmaq who live on-Reserve do not have much access to the natural resources. Most Crown Lands (government-owned) are leased (rented) to the pulp and paper industry.



**(right and below)  
Old and current photos taken  
at Millbrook First Nation  
Community**



## Resources

### **Mi'kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi'kmaw culture and history.

Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **The Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (4th Ed)**

Eastern Woodland Print Communications,  
Truro NS, 2007.

Eastern Woodland Print Communications  
72 Church Rd, Truro, NS B2N 6N4  
email: [ewpc@easternwoodland.ca](mailto:ewpc@easternwoodland.ca)  
ph: (902) 895-2038  
fax: (902) 895-3030  
Toll free: 1-877-895-2038

### **The Nova Scotia Museum's Mi'kmaq Portraits Database**

Collection of portraits and illustrations  
in various media, of the Mi'kmaq  
of Atlantic Canada.

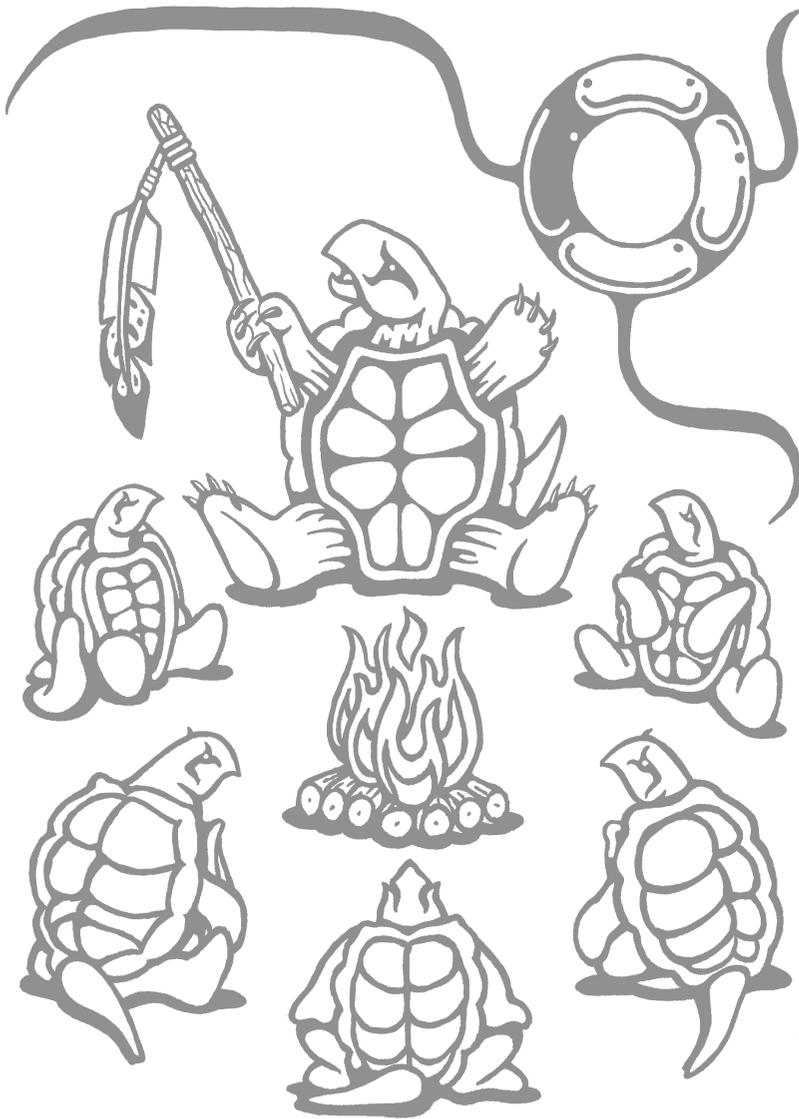
website: [www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq](http://www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Under the headings of Governance, Education, Social Activity, Language, Economics, Employment, and Natural Environment, compare the Mi'kmaq of 400-500 years ago (before European contact) with the Mi'kmaq of today.
2. Discuss the pros and cons of change under each heading. In your opinion, is the Mi'kmaw culture stronger or weaker today than it was in the 1500s. (This activity could take place in the form of a debate with teams supporting two differing opinions.)
3. Using the definitions of Nation, Culture and Society provided in the Glossary, use these words to describe the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq of the 1500s. Do these words apply to the Mi'kmaq of today.

# From Legends to Modern Media

Tracing the language and communication of the Mi'kmaq

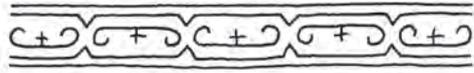


- The Importance of Language
- Mi'kmaw Language – An Oral Tradition
- The Written Word
- The Decline of the Mi'kmaw Language
- Mi'kmaw Language Today
- Communications/Mi'kmaw Media
- “Micmac, Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaw”

- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# From Legends to Modern Media

Tracing the language and communication of the Mi'kmaq from legends to modern media



## The Importance of Language

“Language is one of the main instruments for transmitting culture from one generation to another and for communicating meaning and making sense of collective experience.”

(Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples)

Indeed, the “heart” of any culture is in its language. By expressing our thoughts and beliefs, language is critical to our cultural identity.

“If you lose the language the Creator gave you, you won’t be able to speak from your heart to him.”

pg 55, Towards a New Beginning Task Force on Aboriginal Languages and Cultures. July 28, 2005. Department of Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Language Directorate.

## Mi'kmaw Language— An Oral Tradition

Before European contact 500 years ago, Mi'kmaq was primarily an oral (spoken) language passed on from generation to generation through the stories and teachings of family and Elders. Often, storytelling was used to teach children about their natural environment. Mi'kmaw children learned

about their culture and history by listening to these legends and stories of mythical characters.

The early settlers from Europe wrote down the stories and legends of the Mi'kmaq. One of the famous mythical characters they wrote about was the Mi'kmaw hero “Kluskap,” which is also spelled “Glooscap.”

Kluskap had many magical powers, including being able to turn things into stone. As a result, strangely shaped rocks throughout the Maritimes are said to have been put there by Kluskap.



**Kluskap with the Whale  
and the Beaver**

## The Legend of the Tidal Bore (Why the water is muddy)

In the days of Kluskap (Glooscap) the river water from the Bay of Fundy was clear and fresh. Then a monster Eel swam down the river and pushed all of the fishes and all the fresh water into the salty bay. Turtle told Kluskap of the cruel hardships that resulted. Kluskap gave great powers to Lobster, who grew much in size and strength and fought the evil Eel. The long battle stirred up much mud and many waves far up the river until the Eel was killed. And even today in Kluskap's bay and on the muddy river, with an elbow bend, the battle scene takes place twice a day.

## High Tides of the Bay of Fundy (Why the Bay Rises and Falls)

Kluskap, the giant, legendary Mi'kmaw figure, wanted to take a bath. He called his friend Beaver and told him to find some water. Beaver built a huge dam across the mouth of a great river. Water backed up behind the dam and stopped flowing into the sea. As Kluskap stepped into the water, Whale stuck her head over the dam and asked, "Why have you stopped this water from coming to my domain?" Not wanting to anger his friend, Kluskap got up and walked back to land. With a stroke of her mighty tail, Whale destroyed the dam and sent salt water flooding into the river. As she turned and swam back out to sea, she set the water of the Bay sloshing back and forth, a movement it has kept to this day.

First Nations history and language is also evident in Mi'kmaw place names in Nova Scotia. Here are some examples:

- "Tatamagouche" translates to "Blocked across the entrance with sand"
- "Musquodoboit" means "Rolling out in foam"

It is through many of these Mi'kmaw place names and translations that historians can figure out where Mi'kmaq lived and how they traveled.

## The Written Word

Before European contact, the Mi'kmaq wrote in hieroglyphs (symbols) which were scratched into tree bark or animal hides. Fortunately some of these writings have been preserved as petroglyphs (carvings in stone). In Nova Scotia, petroglyphs found at Kejimikujik National Park and Bedford Barrens tell the story of Mi'kmaw life.



The Mi'kmaq also used a special belt known as a wampum belt to record history. A member of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council called a "pu'tus" was responsible for the wampum belt. Meetings of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council were "recorded" and read back by the pu'tus, who organized shells and beads on

(above)  
**Bird and Chiefs Crest  
petroglyphs**

the belt as a way of recording information. At each meeting the Pu'tus would re-tell the history of his people and add more shells and beads to the wampum belt. In this way, the wampum belts tell the history of the Mi'kmaw people.

Over the years many Nova Scotians have tried to track the history of the Mi'kmaw language. Silas Terius Rand (1810-1889), a farmer's son from Canning, Nova Scotia, is one such person. He dedicated his life to the study of the Mi'kmaw language. Rand could speak and write a dozen languages including Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but it was the Mi'kmaw language that intrigued him the most. When Rand lived in Hantsport from 1853 to 1889, he compiled a 40,000-word Mi'kmaw dictionary, translated the Bible, and wrote of the rich mythological lore of the Mi'kmaq.

Documenting (tracking) a language is no easy task. The English alphabet has five vowels and 21 consonants. Combinations of these letters are used to make all sounds in the English language. The Mi'kmaw language uses fewer letters than English, but has one additional character, the schwa "i̇". Letters at the start or end of a word can tell its number (singular or plural), its tense, or its formality. Mi'kmaq is an efficient language, meaning much can be said

with relatively few words.

In the early 1970s linguists Bernie Francis, a Mi'kmaw linguist, and Doug Smith identified a Mi'kmaw alphabet. It is made up of eleven consonants (p,t,k,q,i,s,l,m,n,w,and y) and six vowels (a,e,i,o,u, and a schwa denoted by a barred "i̇") These are the only letters required to speak and write the Mi'kmaw language.

In 1976 Francis and Smith researched and developed a new orthography to distinguish Mi'kmaq from other languages. Completed in 1980, and now known as the Smith-Francis orthography, it has been accepted as the official written language of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia. In 2002, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, the Province of Nova Scotia and the Government of Canada formally recognized the Smith-Francis orthography as the written form for all documents written in the



**Andrew Alex, Pu'tus, wearing a Mi'kmaw wampum belt**

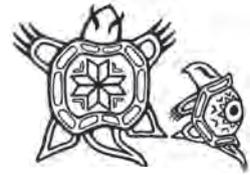
History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax

Mi'kmaw language.

### The Decline of the Mi'kmaw Language

Today, English is the main language spoken by First Nations people in Nova Scotia. English is used throughout all media, publications, modern film and music. However, English is not the only reason for the decline of the Mi'kmaw language. Other significant events have also played a part in the decline.

When the early settlers came to Nova Scotia in the late 1500s, they brought their own language, school system and religion. English quickly became the main language in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaw families encouraged their children to learn English as it was seen as the way to an education and better life. Unfortunately, this too contributed to



the decline of the Mi'kmaw language.

Mi'kmaw language suffered a severe blow during the residential school era—a time when Native students were forced to speak English at school. Children who spoke their own language were punished. In Nova Scotia, more than 1000 Mi'kmaw children attended the Shubenacadie Residential School between 1930 and 1967. These students were separated from their families, their traditional ways and their language. By the time they graduated from the Shubenacadie Residential School, very few students still spoke Mi'kmaq. Sadly, this meant that the generations who came after them did not have any knowledge of the Mi'kmaw

## Language: Aboriginal Identity Population by mother tongue (Nova Scotia)

<b>Aboriginal Identity Population</b>	<b>24,175</b>
% of Aboriginal Identity population with Aboriginal language(s) first learned and still understood	18.1%
% of Aboriginal Identity population with Aboriginal language(s) still spoken at home	11.3%
% of Aboriginal Identity population with knowledge of Aboriginal language(s)	20.6%

### In Nova Scotia Canada:

1 out of 10 people who knew Mi'kmaw spoke it regularly at home

Almost 65% of homes on-Reserve in the Atlantic region spoke English only

—Statistics Canada 2006 Census data

language.

## Mi'kmaw Language Today

In recent years there have been many efforts to revive the Mi'kmaw language. The Government of Canada and other organizations, including the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, agree that language is an important part of cultural identity. In Nova Scotia, many initiatives are in place to encourage Mi'kmaw youth to learn their language. These initiatives include:

- Reserve schools in Eskasoni, Member-tou, Wagmatcook, Pictou Landing, and We'koqma'q work to ensure students are immersed in Mi'kmaw language and culture.
- Some public schools and universities are now offering Mi'kmaw language courses.
- Mi'kmaw language courses and materials are available via (through) the Internet.
- Mi'kmaw resource materials are being created to assist those interested in the language.
- Community daycares and preschools teach Mi'kmaw language to First Nations children.
- Several First Nations communities are using Mi'kmaw signage.
- Some communities are using Mi'kmaw street names and re-naming their communities using Mi'kmaw words. For example: "Afton" is now "Paq'tnkek" "Whycocomagh" is now "We'koqma'q"

At first glance this daycare looks pretty much like any other. The sound of children singing...pictures of fruit, vegetables and animals cover the wall. Numbers are everywhere.



Four-year-old Julianne Johnson points to some of the Mi'kmaw words on the wall at the daycare

But the Millbrook Mi'kmaq Daycare has a difference. Take a closer look at some of those pictures on the wall. Many are bilingual. Not English and French as you might expect but, rather, English and Mi'kmaq.

*The daycare has been teaching some words in Mi'kmaq to its children since it opened in 1996. Parents say language programs like these are a first step in helping today's generation regain part of their heritage.*

"Mi'kmaw culture is much more accepted now than it was when I went through the school system," says Tim Bernard, whose son attends the daycare. "It's exciting to listen to Jace participate in language instruction there. It makes my day when I pick him up and, as we leave, he turns and waves to his classmates and daycare staff and says 'Nmu'ltes' (I'll see you again)."

(From "Daycare with a Difference" by Steve Smith. Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News Oct 2004)

"Chapel Island" is now "Potlotek"

- Modern Mi'kmaw music is becoming popular in the communities.
- Mi'kmaq/Nova Scotia/Canada agree-

ments are now translated into Mi'kmaq.  
**Communications/Mi'kmaw Media**

Mi'kmaq are also using the media to share their stories, news, culture and language.

For example, the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News, launched in November 1990, provides a valuable communications link among Atlantic First Nations. This monthly newspaper provides newsworthy information and human-interest articles specific to First Nations in the Atlantic region. Through this newspaper, First Nations can share their opinions and ideas.

Another example of Mi'kmaw media is Golivision, a cable station that reaches all households in Eskasoni. This TV station has been used for numerous cultural initiatives within the community of Eskasoni. It also broadcasts in the Mi'kmaw language.

Nationally, APTN (Aboriginal Peoples Television Network) has given First Nations a way to share their opinions and perspectives across Canada.

**“Micmac, Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaw”**

The word **Mi'kmaq**, (ending with a “Q”) is a noun that means “the people.”

According to research done by Bernie Francis and Virick C. Francis, the word Mi'kmaq is the regular form of the possessive (showing ownership) nouns **nikmaq**, **kikmaq**, and **wikma**—which mean “my people,” “your people” and “his/her people.”

The word **Micmac** is a mispronunciation of the word **Mi'kmaw**.

**Mi'kmaq** is the plural form of the singular word **Mi'kmaw**. Because it is plural, the word **Mi'kmaq** always refers to more than one Mi'kmaw person or to the entire Nation.

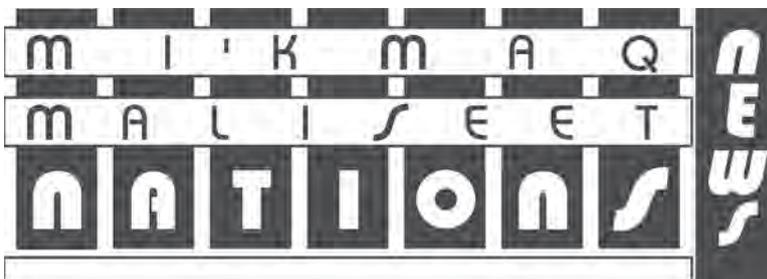
Examples:

The Mi'kmaq have a rich history and culture.  
A Mi'kmaw came to see me.

In addition to being a singular noun, the word **Mi'kmaw** can also be used as an adjective.

Examples:

A Mi'kmaw person  
The Mi'kmaw Nation  
Mi'kmaw stories often feature Kluskap  
A Mi'kmaw Elder came to see me.



**The Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News is a monthly publication**

## Resources

### **Atlantic Canada's**

#### **First Nations Help Desk**

47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5

ph: (902) 567-0842

fax: (902) 567-0337

Toll-free: 1-877-484-7606

Language web page: [firstnationhelp.com/ali/](http://firstnationhelp.com/ali/)

### **Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News**

Eastern Woodland Print Communications,

Truro, NS. (monthly newspaper)

72 Church Rd, Truro, NS B2N 6N4

ph: (902) 895-2038

fax: (902) 895-3030

Toll-free: 1-877-895-2038

e-mail: [news@easternwoodland.ca](mailto:news@easternwoodland.ca)

### **Red Earth: Tales of the Mi'kmaq**

by Marion Robertson. Nimbus, Halifax,

2006. (96 pgs)

Originally published as *Red Earth: Tales of the Micmacs*. Self-published, 1969.

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. There is no word for good-bye in the Mi'kmaw language. There is a term Nmu'ltis app that informally translated to English is "I'll see you again." What does this tell you of the culture?
2. We have all watched as Canada moved to promote bilingualism (English/French). Signage, government services and publications all require both French and English text. All federal government documents are to be available in both "official" languages. Millions of dollars have been spent to make Canada a bilingual country. However, very little attention has been given to the original language of this country—the Aboriginal languages. In your opinion, why has this occurred? Should the Aboriginal languages be considered as "official" languages also? Why or why not?
3. Essay question: You are a Mi'kmaw leader and want to increase the use of Mi'kmaw language in your community and encourage youth to use the language. What would be your approach? What projects/activities/games would you use?



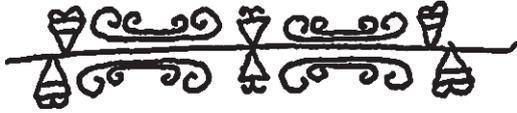
# The Evolution of Mi'kmaw Education

Charting the challenges, the failures and the successes

- Traditional Mi'kmaw Education
  - The Role of Elders in Mi'kmaw Education
  - The European Influence on Mi'kmaw Education
  - The Mi'kmaw Educator
  - The Role of the Federal Government
  - Residential Schools — A Detrimental Experience
  - Integrated Education
  - Mi'kmaw Education in the 21st Century
  - Community Colleges and Customized Training
- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# The Evolution of Mi'kmaw Education

Charting the challenges, the failures and the successes



## Traditional Mi'kmaw Education

In the past, traditional Mi'kmaw education was all about learning the skills for survival and community living. Parents, Elders, extended family members and other community experts taught young people the skills they needed. Rather than sit in a classroom, the Mi'kmaq learned as they went. Education was a continuous process taking place wherever and whenever needed.

Children were taught according to their future roles as adult men and women. Men were taught to hunt, fish and provide for the community. Handcrafted tools such as bows, arrows, lances, arrowheads, fish traps, wood frames, axes and canoes were made with great skill and precision. Women were taught to prepare and preserve food, prepare materials, make all clothing, set up camps, and care for children. All Mi'kmaw children were given an in-depth knowledge of the natural environment.

## The Role of Elders in Mi'kmaw Education

Elders played an important role in traditional Mi'kmaw education. Elders were—and still are—seen as the “keepers of the culture.”

They keep alive the Mi'kmaw stories, legends, cultural beliefs, spirituality, language, history, and traditions from generation to generation.

Mi'kmaw Elders are teachers, philosophers, linguists, historians, healers, judges, counselors—all these and more. They are living embodiments of Mi'kmaw tradition and culture. Elders are keepers of the spiritual knowledge that has kept the culture alive through thousands of years. Their knowledge of ceremonies and traditional activities, of laws and rules set down by the Creator, enables the Mi'kmaw people to live as a Nation.

Not all Elders are seniors, and not all old people are Elders. Some are quite young. But Elders have gifts of insight and understanding, as well as communications skills to pass on the collective wisdom of generations that have gone before.

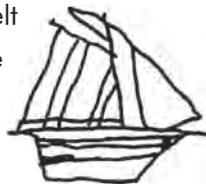
Elders do not hoard their knowledge. Their most important task is to pass their knowledge on, so that the culture of their people can continue. The Elders share their cultural knowledge through action, example and oral traditions.



These may be stories, jokes, games or other shared activities. When listeners hear the stories and teachings of the Elders, they feel the pain, the joy, the victories and defeats of their people. They reach out to one another across time. Past, present and future become one.

### The European Influence on Mi'kmaw Education

With European contact came a new language and a new way to record history by writing it down. The Europeans also brought with them new systems of land ownership, trade, education, and organized religions. Many European missionaries felt it was their job to “educate” the Mi'kmaq in the modern ways and encouraged them to build churches and schools. The writings of the early missionaries provide us with most of the written history of the time.



In 1605, the French settlers in Nova Scotia began to work to convert the Mi'kmaq to Christianity by giving them religious instruction. They continued with this religious education until the first school was built in Le Have in 1633 for Mi'kmaw and French students. When teaching the Mi'kmaq, the missionaries focused on the teachings of the Roman Catholic church. In 1610, Chief Membertou and his family were the first Mi'kmaq baptized into the Catholic faith. Today, the majority of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq are Catholic.

Religious education by the French continued until 1710 when control of “Acadie” changed from France to England. The English were not as interested in educating the Mi'kmaq as they were in keeping them under control and confining them to small areas of land. During the decades leading up to Confederation in 1867, the English showed very little interest in educating the Mi'kmaq.



### The Mi'kmaw Educator

While the writings of the missionaries tell us about their efforts to educate the Mi'kmaq, it is important to understand that the Mi'kmaq had much to teach the newcomers in return. Without knowledge of the natural environment, survival in the “new world” would have been next to impossible for those early settlers. Having survived in this region for millennia, the Mi'kmaq were the experts on the natural environment. The writings of the early missionaries document some of this information and express admiration for the vast knowledge of the Mi'kmaq.

### The Role of the Federal Government

During the 1800s, the Mi'kmaq lost even more control of their culture. The British North America Act of 1867 and the Indian Act of 1876 stated that First Nations were wards of the Federal Government. These Acts moved control over First Nations life far away from the local community. Now, the federal

government was responsible for Indian education. This marked the beginning of the Indian day-school system in Canada.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s a number of one-room schools were built in Mi'kmaq communities. The schools were built in recognition of the federal government's commitment to providing First Nations with an education. Unfortunately, the subjects taught in these schools did not reflect Mi'kmaq culture. Furthermore, there was no instruction in the Mi'kmaq language. The federal government did little to keep these schools going and few Mi'kmaq were interested in attending them.

The Mi'kmaq were soon to be victims of an even more destructive method of education—the residential school. While people in the federal government thought residential schools would be a positive experience, they turned out to be one of the most detrimental experiences of the Mi'kmaq culture.

### **Residential Schools— A Detrimental Experience**

According to the Indian Act, the federal government was obliged to provide the Mi'kmaq with an education. The government also wanted to help integrate First Nations people into Canadian society. Between the 1930s

and the 1960s, residential schools were opened in every province of Canada except New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island.

The federal government ran the residential schools in partnership with various religious organizations in Canada until April 1, 1969 when the government took over full responsibility for the school system. More than 100,000 children attended these schools over the years.

In Nova Scotia, the federal government ran the Shubenacadie Residential School in partnership with the Roman Catholic Church from Feb 5, 1930 until June 26, 1966. Government agents and the RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) took Mi'kmaq children from their homes across Nova Scotia and New Brunswick and transported them to the school—sometimes without the consent or knowledge of their families. Approximately 1000 Mi'kmaq children

*(continued on page 32)*

**An early photograph, taken on June 21, 1966, of children attending Residential School.**



Mi'kmaq Resource Guide (2003)

## Education in Indian Brook

Mi'kmaw parents have always been educators, teaching their children how to hunt and fish, how to make their traditional equipment etc. With the intrusion of the Europeans, they perceived that if they were going to survive, avail themselves of opportunities to compete, then an education was of the utmost importance. A school was necessary.

In 1880 Indian Brook Mi'kmaq appealed to the Department of Indian Affairs via the Indian Agent for a school. Tenders were submitted for the job; but each proved too expensive. It wasn't until 1890 that a school was finally built. In 1894 Chief James Paul and Council again appealed to the Department of Indian Affairs; this time for a teacher.

In the fall of 1894, Robert J. Logan, a non-Catholic, was hired. In spite of differences with government, church and parish priest, Mr. Logan remained teacher for twelve years. This was followed by the lack of qualified unbiased teachers, and poor attendance, which caused temporary school closings. Reasons for poor attendance and school closings were never questioned.

The day school at Indian Brook closed indefinitely on February 1, 1930. Parents were not dismayed, however, because just five miles away in Shubenacadie they had watched this new red brick building being built. They were aware that it was a school, where according to the articles in the Halifax Chronicle, June 16, 1929,



Photo: Elsie Basque

### Indian Brook Day School

Indian children would be given every opportunity towards a higher education. It would provide endless opportunities for the Mi'kmaw child to become all that he/she could be.

In the beginning, parents willingly allowed their children to attend, only to discover that children were exposed to physical and mental abuses. Children were deprived of their culture. They were not allowed to speak to their siblings and other family members of the opposite sex. In some instances they were severely punished merely for speaking their own language. Slave labor had also been introduced to the Mi'kmaw Nation.

Indian Brook parents retaliated by refusing to allow their children to attend the residential school. They kept their children at home and demanded the federal government re-open the day school on the Reserve.

Between 1930 and 1939 the schoolhouse had been used as a family dwelling. A new home was provided for the family, and the building was now available to be used as a school. A vacant building; it was lacking in all classroom amenities except for a blackboard and a box of chalk. Four wooden church benches provided the seating arrangement. It was September 5, 1939.

Twenty-six children and their parents were already at the school when the Mi'kmaw teacher arrived at 8:30. Eighteen children were coming to school for the very first time. A lot of "catching up" was needed, but first a good deal of improvisation needed to be done until the classroom amenities arrived. The Nova Scotia school curriculum was adopted. The teacher believed that if these children were to compete in this world they must be given the same advantages offered to the dominant society. They were the ideal class: inquisitive, and eager to

learn. They soon discovered they could not only dream, but with determination and dedication fulfill their dreams.

In the early 1940s, centralization was the most talked about subject on all Nova Scotia reserves. Indian Brook, the designated Reserve for all mainland Mi'kmaq, found itself in need of a larger building to accommodate the ever increasing school-age population. A large four-room school with basement facilities (Work Shop, Home Economics) was built at the top of the hill about where the Band Office now stands. In 1945-47 two classrooms were in service. A public health nurse was established in a third classroom.

With centralization came other changes other than a larger population influx. The Indian Agent, his assistant, a resident priest, the Sisters of Charity, a post office, a general store, and a resident health nurse were now a part of the Indian Brook population.

With the arrival of the Sisters of Charity, the two lay teachers were told their services were not longer needed. Looking back on the years 1939-47, the four wooden church benches, the blackboard and the box of chalk, much had been accomplished. In 1947, two girls were ready for high school. Arrangements had been made for them to attend a boarding school in Meteghan, NS. The following years others would be ready to follow. Young men were pursuing carpentry careers. Our youth had grown to tremendous heights. Lay teachers had shown the way to greater things in life. That is

what education is all about. Our children responded in kind.

The Sisters of Charity were now in charge of the education of the Mi'kmaq. All was well until sometime in the early 1970s. The new school was burned to the ground. Indian Brook was again without a school. Provision was made for the children to attend school in Shubenacadie village and Milford. Buses provided transportation to both areas. Mi'kmaw children were now a part of the dominant society population, exposed to prejudice and subtle discrimination. Native teachers at the schools tried to be a buffer for the Mi'kmaw child and, by example, prove all nations could be equal.

The larger school was never rebuilt at Indian Brook. Instead a much smaller school now stands in its place, the Sister Elizabeth Cody school. During her tenure at Indian Brook, Sister Cody made an impression on our youth, hence the school's name.

Today, the school houses the Kindergarten class, Tiny Tots and Head Start. The Mi'kmaw language is taught by an Elder in all the above classes. Children are entertained by story-telling, and are encouraged to speak the Mi'kmaw language in all their conversations.

Without a doubt, Indian Brook is attempting to revive the language and culture taken from us by the residential school. Mi'kmaw language studies are part of Native studies offered in Grades Primary through Twelve. Native studies

are offered as a required class to all students who attend off-Reserve schools. In high school, students have an option to study Mi'kmaq or French.

Prejudice and racism were always a constant in Shubenacadie and Milford but never more so than in 1997. Parents and Community decided that if children were to succeed, reach their full potential, they needed a peaceful environment in which to do so. The Community Center could easily be adopted into classrooms. Children could now study in peace and quiet.

Education, once again, was of the most importance. Parents had the option of sending their children to Shubenacadie, Milford or stay on the Reserve. In this newly-formed school, Grades Primary through 12, there are six Mi'kmaw teachers and nine non-native teachers, plus two Mi'kmaw language specialists. It is found that Mi'kmaw graduates often pursue higher education at nearby universities. Statistics show that during the past ten years that number has increased four fold.

As of this date [2006], the federal government has promised monies to build a new school at Indian Brook. Ground breaking should take place sometime this year, with occupancy in 2007.

Indian Brook has come a long way from the day Chief James Paul first applied for a school. Was this what he envisioned? I'd like to believe so. I'm sure he would be proud.

—Elsie Charles Basque, 2006

attended the Shubenacadie Residential School. They were separated from their families, their communities, their language and their culture. In some cases, Mi'kmaw parents were promised a better education for their children and voluntarily sent them.

In recent years, individuals have come forward to tell of the physical and sexual abuse they experienced in residential schools. This is a tragic legacy for many former students. Mi'kmaw families still feel the effects of the Shubenacadie Residential School. Physical and substance (drugs/alcohol) abuse still present problems in today's First Nations communities, and many children and grandchildren of the residential school survivors suffer the ongoing legacy of the abuse they suffered there.

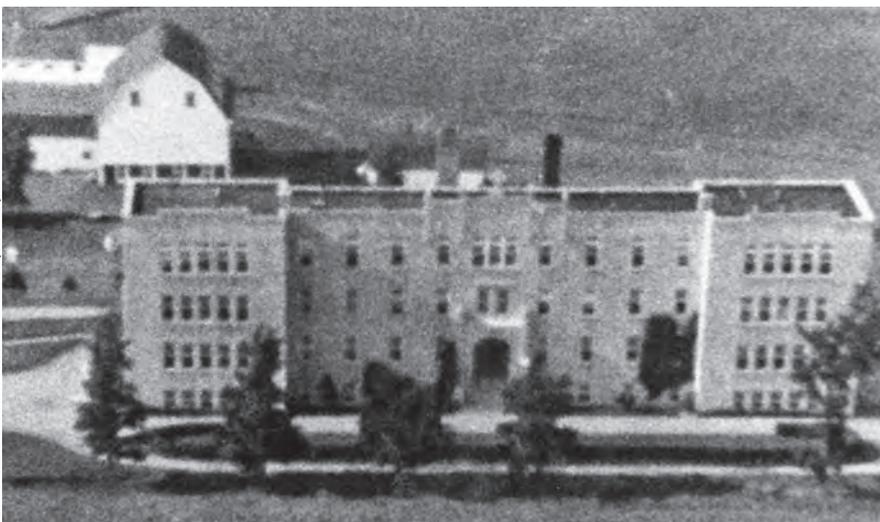
It was not until 1998, that the Canadian Government offered a Statement of Reconciliation that acknowledged its role in the development and administration of residen-

tial schools and the harm that was done by their action. The following is an excerpt from the Statement of Reconciliation offered to Canadian First Nations by the Prime Minister.

“Sadly, our history with respect to the treatment of Aboriginal people is not something in which we take pride. Attitudes of racial and cultural superiority led to a suppression of Aboriginal culture and values. As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act. We must acknowledge that the result of these actions was the erosion of the political, economic and social systems of Aboriginal people and nations.

Against the backdrop of these historical legacies, it is a remarkable tribute to the strength and endurance of Aboriginal people

Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)



**Shubenacadie Residential School**

that they have maintained their historic diversity and identity. The Government of Canada today formally expresses to all Aboriginal people in Canada. "Our profound regret for past actions of the federal government, which have contributed to these difficult pages in the history of our relationship together."

One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over this period that requires particular attention is the Residential School system. This system separated many children from their families and communities and prevented them from speaking their own languages and from learning about their heritage and cultures. In the worst cases, it left legacies of personal pain and distress that continue to reverberate in Aboriginal communities to this day. Tragically, some children were the victims of physical and sexual abuse.

The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry."

The late Rita Joe, a Mi'kmaw poet, wrote this poem about her experiences at the Shubenacadie Residential School:

I lost My Talk  
I lost my talk  
The talk you took away.  
When I was a little girl  
At Shubenacadie School.

You snatched it away:  
I speak like you  
I think like you  
I create like you  
The scrambled ballad, about my world.

Two ways I talk  
Both ways I say,  
Your way is more powerful.

So gently I offer my hand and ask,  
Let me find my talk  
So I can teach you about me.

Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (2003)

## Integrated Education

Throughout the Residential School era, there were also small Indian day schools throughout the province. In 1946, the Indian Act was reviewed and amended resulting in the closure of these local Indian day schools. Mi'kmaw students were integrated into the public school system. After the Shubenacadie School closed in 1966, many Mi'kmaw youth began to attend the public schools throughout the province. The provincial schools received funding (money) directly from the federal government to educate Mi'kmaw students.

# HISTORY MADE

## AS JURISDICTION FOR EDUCATION RETURNED TO MI'KMAQ

MEMBERTOU, Nova Scotia (May 4, 1999)—Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, announced today that the final steps have been taken by the federal and provincial governments, for the return of jurisdiction for education on-Reserve, to nine First Nations in Nova Scotia.

On April 22, 1999, the Honourable Romeo LeBlanc, Governor General of Canada, signed an Order-In-Council, proclaiming Bill CB30, the Mi'kmaq Education Act, as federal law. The Honourable John James Kinley, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, signed an Order-In-Council, proclaiming Bill No. 4, the Mi'kmaq Education Act, as provincial law effective the same day.

These Orders-In-Council are the final steps of a process that has been underway since 1992 to transfer jurisdiction for education on-Reserve from the federal government to First Nations in Nova Scotia. These steps give force to a Final Agreement signed by nine Nova Scotia First Nations, Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia on February 14, 1997.

“The completion of this process re-affirms the right of our people to govern the education of our children” said Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. “As we approach the new millennium, our people can then look to the future with renewed hope and confidence. This step will allow for

the development of educational policies that reflect the values, beliefs, culture and language of our people, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.”

The Honourable Jane Stewart, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, applauded the signing of the Orders-In-Council. “On behalf of the Government of Canada, I want to congratulate the First Nations. Assuming jurisdiction of education will enable First Nations in Nova Scotia to incorporate traditional cultural values and language into the everyday curriculum, as well as encourage greater community involvement in helping youth determine their future direction. This legislation is an example of our commitment to Gathering Strength—Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan, and its objectives to strengthen Aboriginal governance and support strong communities, people and economies.”

“Nova Scotia is honoured to be a part of this process, recognizing the right of Mi'kmaw bands to govern their children's education on reserves,” Nova Scotia Education and Culture Minister, Wayne Gaudet said today. “Our legislation was developed in partnership with the bands, and we look forward to continuing

a close partnership as we work to improve the quality of education for all Mi'kmaw students.”

This is the first time in Canada that such legislation has been enacted. Nine of the thirteen First Nation communities in Nova Scotia (Esksani, Membertou, Chapel Island, Wagmatcook, Waycobah, Pictou Landing, Shubenacadie, Annapolis Valley and Acadia) have opted to participate in this legislation. The other four First Nation communities may choose to participate in the future.

This arrangement will see the transfer of approximately \$140 million to participating Mi'kmaw First Nations, over a five-year period for education. Programs covered under this agreement include primary, elementary and secondary education on-Reserve and post-secondary education funding to band members on and off-Reserve. The funding will also provide for the operation and maintenance of facilities, band administration and capital.



From the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey publication "Return of Education Jurisdiction to the Mi'kmaq"

The Mi'kmaq always recognized the importance of education to the future of their youth. With young people dropping out of school, they became greatly concerned about the effectiveness of integrated education. During the 1970s and 80s, the Mi'kmaq began to speak out on this subject. They wanted more control over the education of Mi'kmaq youth. During the 1990s, the Mi'kmaq began a movement to take control over on-Reserve Mi'kmaq education in Nova Scotia.

The Department of Indian Affairs began to transfer money to each First Nation community to negotiate their own agreements with the local public school boards. Education Counselors were hired by each community. They were given responsibility for purchasing books and other educational materials. Many communities began to develop their own study areas and resource centers for students. They started to provide tutors as needed. More Mi'kmaq youth were now choosing to finish school, but more work needed to be done.

Gradually, school boards began to invite members of the Mi'kmaq community to sit on their boards. This improved communication between the school boards and Mi'kmaq communities.

In 1996, the Council on Mi'kmaq Education (CME) was established. The Council is made up of 14 Mi'kmaq members who represent

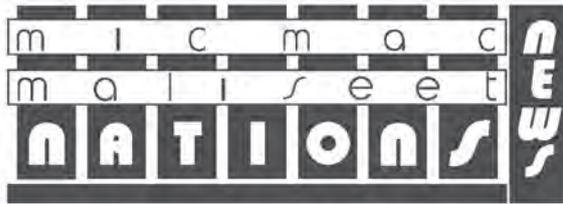
the district school boards and other Mi'kmaq organizations. The CME advises Nova Scotia's Minister of Education on issues relating to Mi'kmaq education, both with the band schools and the provincial schools. These issues include Mi'kmaq Studies at the high-school level, Mi'kmaq Language and adult education. The CME provides direct contact with provincial education authorities.

On April 22, 1999, two new pieces of legislation came into effect. Provincial and federal legislation was passed to enable the transfer of jurisdiction and authority for education to Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. These two pieces of legislation are firsts of their kind in Canada. They mark the final steps of the Government of Canada and the Province of Nova Scotia in returning control for education to First Nations in Nova Scotia.

As of October 2007, there are ten Nova Scotia First Nation Participating Communities who have signed the Jurisdiction Agreement. The agreement is administered through the Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK).

## **Mi'kmaq Education in the 21st Century**

As we move into the 21st century, the future of Mi'kmaq education looks promising. Nowadays, Mi'kmaq children start their education early with the on-Reserve daycare centers, and culturally appropriate preschool programs such as Head Start.



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**QUOTE**

“I don’t want to be dug up in the years to come”

Elder Elsie Paul / 3

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## Education Jurisdiction Transferred to Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia

**CHAPEL ISLAND:** Mi’kmaq Chiefs of Nova Scotia, the Honourable Ronald A. Irwin, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Honourable John Savage, Premier of Nova Scotia signed an historic agreement today transferring jurisdiction for education to the Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia. Minister David C. Dingwall also attended the signing ceremony at Chapel Island.

“I am honored to be participating in this important step in Aboriginal and Canadian history,” said Minister Irwin. “This transfer of jurisdiction will allow the Mi’kmaq to take control of their future through the education of their children, the very leaders of tomorrow. Moreover, this initiative establishes Aboriginal control of education in Nova Scotia and in that sense I believe it is consistent with the Royal

Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ recommendations for more Aboriginal control of education systems and institutions. I am certain all First Nations in Canada will now look to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia for leadership in this direction.”

“As we approach the end of this century, ready to embrace the new millennium, it is fitting that we assume the jurisdiction of our education,” said Chief Lindsay Marshall, Chair of Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti. “For many generations, since the first breath of the Mi’kmaq, we knew how to teach our young. Time has shown that we, the Mi’kmaq, knew best. The essential component that has been missing for so long was control. By virtue of this agreement, control returns to where it rightly belongs, to the Mi’kmaq. As in many first ventures in these modern times, cau-

tion is best, so therefore the speed and change in education will be dictated by the individual First Nations. My vision for the future includes the vision of a people who stand and take charge of their destiny. The future offers the bright aura of optimism, let us bid farewell to this era and embrace the start of another. Taho!”

“Nova Scotia has consistently made clear its solid commitment to making self-government more than just a dream for Aboriginal people,” said Nova Scotia Premier, John Savage. “Today’s historic agreement brings that dream a step closer, by giving the Mi’kmaq community control of their education system on-reserve.”

This is the first agreement in Canada to transfer jurisdiction for education from the federal government of First Nation communities. The agreement



The winner of the title of Little Miss Paqtnkek is Jocelyn Poulette. Jocelyn is the daughter of Janice and Alex Poulette.



allows for the transfer of approximately \$140 million to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia over a five-year period for education.

Programs covered under this agreement include primary, elementary and secondary education on-reserve and post-secondary education funding to band

members on and off-reserve. The funding will also provide for the operation and maintenance of facilities, band administration and capital.

The agreement will now be introduced as legislation by the federal and provincial governments. ☉



After six years of negotiations, Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti (Education), Federal and Provincial governments have transferred the jurisdiction for Education back to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia on February 14, 1997. On hand for the official signing held at the Chapel Island First Nation included from (l to R) MK Lawyer Jamie Campbell, Indian Affairs Joe McNeil, Minister Ron Irwin, MK Financial Controller Lauretta Welsh, Wacohah Chief Morley Googoo, MK Executive Director Majorie Gould and Indian Affairs Gerry Kerr.

In 1997, Mi’kmaw Kina’masuti (Education), Federal and Provincial governments transferred responsibility for the education of their children back to the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia. The agreement they signed was the first of its kind in Canada.

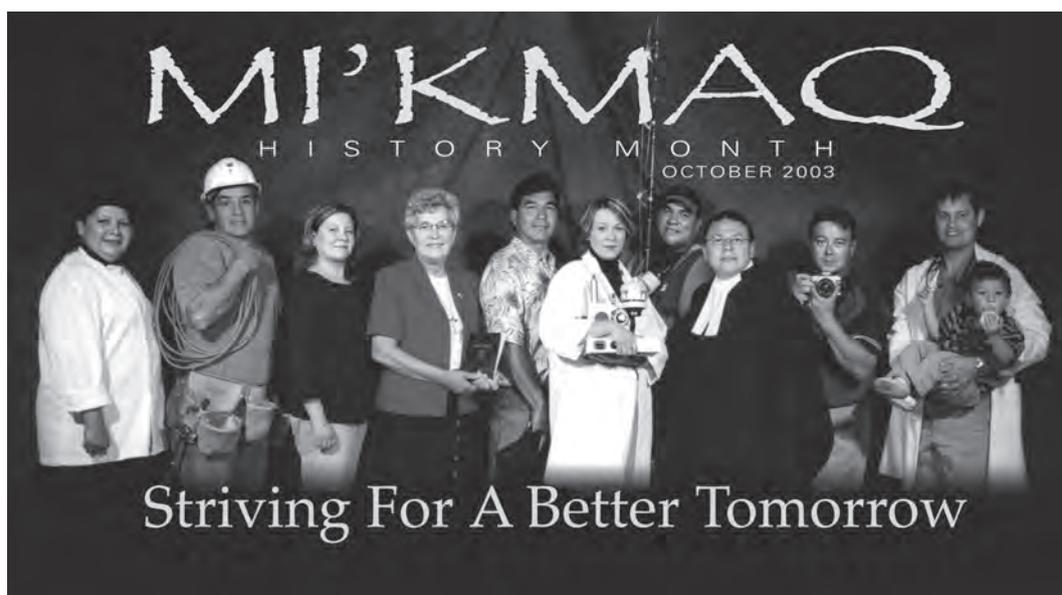
To see a copy of the whole education agreement, visit the Mi’kmaw Kina’matnewey website at [www.kinu.ns.ca](http://www.kinu.ns.ca)

There are 7 elementary, 4 junior high and 4 senior high schools in Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia which provide culturally relevant material and include the Mi'kmaw language in the curriculum. More and more qualified Mi'kmaw teachers are working in these schools.

Many Mi'kmaq today continue to attend regular public schools, although graduation rates are low and drop-out rates high compared to their non-Native counterparts. Early childhood development programs are including more culturally appropriate material in the classroom, helping to change this picture. Today, each Mi'kmaw community enters into an agreement with the local school board to fund education for their students. This gives the community a limited say in the education of their children. Other supports include having Mi'kmaw teaching assistants in the classroom and providing school supplies. Several public schools across the province offer Mi'kmaw language and history courses via video conferencing from Cape Breton.

The Post-Secondary Education Program offers financial support for students who want to continue their education after high school. Numerous organizations and companies offer scholarships and bursaries to encourage young people to continue their education. The result is that more and more Mi'kmaq are pursuing professional careers.

Universities are also reaching out to First Nations to increase the number of Mi'kmaq in their institutions. For example, with the assistance of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Dalhousie University has a post-secondary counseling unit to provide support to Mi'kmaw students attending university in the Halifax area. As well, Dalhousie offers the Transition Year Program (TYP) to help Mi'kmaq make the transition from high school to university life. It is also home to the Dalhousie Law School's Indigenous Black and Mi'kmaq Program. Meanwhile, St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish has a part-time Aboriginal counselor, hosts the bi-annual Mi'kmaw Language Conference, and offers courses in Mi'kmaw language and history.



**2003 Mi'kmaq History Month poster focused on several Mi'kmaw professionals**

The Mi'kmaq are proud of the Mi'kmaq College Institute (MCI), which is located on the campus of Cape Breton University. The MCI offers distance education programs, which means that Mi'kmaq students can have access to university education without leaving their communities.

In 2001, the MCI announced the Integrated Science Program ("Toqwa'tu'kl Kijijitaqnn"). This program, the first of its kind in North America, gives students the opportunity to learn about science from the Mi'kmaq point of view. It brings together the modern sciences and traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge.

Several Mi'kmaq have received Honorary Doctoral Degrees in recognition of their knowledge and community contributions.

## Community Colleges and Customized Training

Mi'kmaq who attend community colleges and other training institutions are supported through the METS (Mi'kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat). METS is the Mi'kmaq "arm" of HRDC (Human Resources Development Canada). It provides funding for Mi'kmaq to attend various institutions, customized training courses, and mentorship/apprenticeship opportunities. The organization also funds summer student employment programming.

The Department of Indian Affairs encourages the development of customized training to meet specific needs of the First Nations communities. Programs are designed to match specific skills to employment opportunities. Examples of this type of training include the EDO (Economic Development Officer) training

offered in the early 1990s, the Mi'kmaq Court Worker training (2004), and the Silviculture (forestry) training offered to several communities throughout the 1980s and 1990s.



**Sister Dorothy Moore, C.M., O.N.S. (right) received an honorary doctorate from Mount Saint Vincent University (2002)**

## 2006 Census Statistical Profile

(School Attendance based on unadjusted 2001 Census, Statistics Canada;  
Education Attendance based on 2006 census, statistics Canada)  
Aboriginal Identity Population

### School Attendance (15 years and over)

	Total Aboriginal Identity Population Nova Scotia		Total Aboriginal Identity Population Canada		Total Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Population Canada	
	Total #	%	Total #	%	Total #	%
Total Reporting	11,605		652,350		23,901,360	
Not attending school	9,365	80.7	516,700	79.2	20,004,485	83.7
Attending school	2,235	19.2	135,655	20.8	3,896,875	16.3
Attending full-time	1,825	15.7	104,335	16.0	2,777,225	11.6
Attending part-time	410	3.5	31,320	4.8	1,119,650	4.7

### Education Attainment: Highest Level of Schooling (15 years & over)

	Total #	%	Total	%	Total	%
Total Reporting	17,870		823,890		25,664,220	
Less than High School Graduation Certificate	6,510	36.4	359,780	43.7	6,098,325	23.8
High School Graduation certificate only	3,800	21.3	179,590	21.8	6,553,420	25.5
Some Post-secondary Education	565	3.1	22,950	2.8	1,136,150	4.4
Trades certificate or diploma	2,425	13.6	93,885	11.4	2,785,420	10.8
College certificate or diploma	2,870	16.1	119,680	14.5	4,435,135	17.3
University certificate, diploma or degree	1,705	9.5	48,015	5.8	4,665,765	18.2

It should be noted that the youngest people counted in this table may not have a high level of education due to their age.

School Attendance Source: Statistics Canada, 2001 Census 97F0011XCB2001043  
Selected Educational Characteristics (29), Aboriginal Identity (8), Age Groups (5A)  
and Sex (3) for Population 15 Years and Over, for Canada, Provinces, Territories and  
Census Metropolitan Areas 1, 2001 Census - 20% Sample Data



**Graduates from the MLSN (Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network) Courtworker and Caseworker training program with Nova Scotia Community College (2003)**

## Resources

### **Aboriginal Healing Foundation**

75 Albert St, Suite 801, Ottawa, ON K1P 5E7  
ph: (613) 237-4441 Toll free: 1-888-725-8886  
fax: (613) 237-4442  
website: [www.ahf.ca](http://www.ahf.ca)

### **The Elder Transcripts:**

#### **History You Can't Get from a Book**

website: [www.municipalities.com/elders/elder\\_charlielabrador.htm](http://www.municipalities.com/elders/elder_charlielabrador.htm)

### **The Learning Path**

National Film Board and Tamarack Productions. 1991. (video)

### **Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)**

A collective voice for Mi'kmaw education  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
ph: (902) 567-0336  
fax: (902) 567-0337  
e-mail: [mkeducation@kinu.ca](mailto:mkeducation@kinu.ca)  
website: [www.kinu.ns.ca](http://www.kinu.ns.ca)

### **Nova Scotia Department of Education**

Provincial government resources for  
Aboriginal education  
website: [www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca](http://www.mikmaq-services.ednet.ns.ca)

### ***Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie***

by Isabelle Knockwood. Roseway Publishing, Lockeport, 1992.

### **SchoolNet (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada)**

website: [www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp](http://www.inac.gc.ca/edu/fnsn/index-eng.asp)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Various methods of delivery have been discussed in this chapter: the original “home schooling,” Indian Day Schools, Residential Schools, Integration into Provincial systems, on-Reserve schools today. With each of these “systems” there are pros and cons—both from the Mi'kmaw perspective and that of the government. Assigning each student one of these delivery systems and a perspective (Mi'kmaw or government), facilitate a group discussion and prepare a chart reflecting the findings.
2. The Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is the body responsible for Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia. Ask the class to prepare interview questions for a MK representative (John Jerome Paul, Lauretta Welsh) to answer at a class presentation. Suggestions:
  - How did the MK come to be? Historical overview
  - How is the MK governed? How are decisions made?
  - What major project has the MK undertaken?
  - What does it mean to have “jurisdictional” control over education?
  - What about the communities who have not signed on to the MK legislation? Under what jurisdiction do they operate?
3. Contact the Healing Foundation for more information on the Residential School movement—the impacts and the healing process. The family unit is the central focus of the Mi'kmaw culture. Focusing on the family, prepare a discussion paper on the effects of the residential school on the family unit of the time, in today's society, and the implications for future generations.

# The Challenge of Identity

Addressing the complex question of Mi'kmaw citizenship



- Who is Mi'kmaq?
- North American Citizens—The Jay Treaty
- External Control of Indian Status
- Indians Become Canadian Citizens
- The Indian Registry
- Creation of “Indian Bands”
- The White Paper Policy
- Constitutional Protection
- Bill C31
- Status in the 21st Century
- Whose Rights are They Anyway?

- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

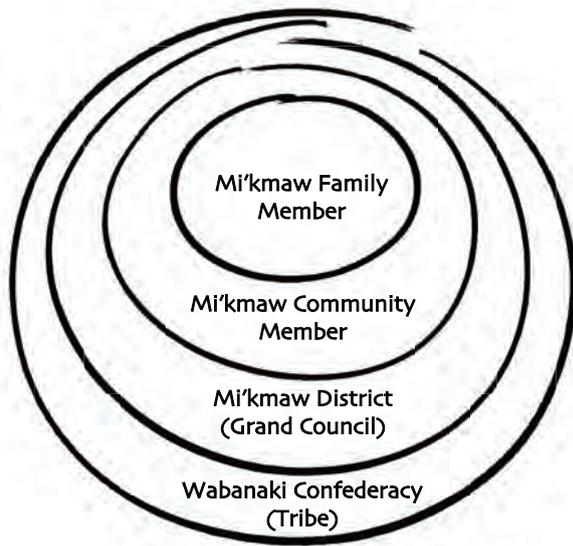
# The Challenge of Identity

Addressing the complex question of Mi'kmaw citizenship



## Who is Mi'kmaq?

Before European contact, the question of who was Mi'kmaq wasn't an issue. Everyone knew his or her place in society. Here's how things used to look in the Mi'kmaw Society:



Each individual knew where he or she belonged in this sophisticated hierarchy—as member of a family, a village, the Grand Council, the tribe. Early settlers were met by a self-governing, proud Mi'kmaw Nation. For example he/she might be a member of the Paul family from the Millbrook community (village) in the district of Sipekni'katik and member of one of the tribes (Mi'kmaq) belonging to the group of tribes making up the Wabanaki Confederacy.

## North American Citizens— The Jay Treaty

In 1794 the Jay Treaty gave Aboriginal peoples the right to trade and travel between the United States and Canada, which was at that time a colony of Great Britain. Aboriginal people were recognized as North American citizens.

Aboriginal people who could prove that they had 50 percent Aboriginal blood quantum were given certain rights under the Jay Treaty. These rights, which are still in effect today, include the right to:

- Cross the U.S./Canadian border freely;
- Live and work in either country;
- Have access to public benefits such as Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Medicare, Unemployment benefits and other benefits; and
- Register for college or university in the United States as a “domestic student” rather than as a “foreign student”

Blood quantum is a unit used to state the amount or degree of Native heritage of a person. For example, if both parents are of First Nations ancestry, the children would have 100% blood quantum. If one parent was First Nations and the other non-Native, the children would have 50% blood quantum.

To be given Aboriginal status in the United States, First Nations people must prove a blood quantum of 50%.

In Canada, however, Aboriginal status is defined in the Indian Act of 1867. Aboriginal people in Canada must also be listed in the Indian Registry. Because of the way that First Nations became recognized in Canada, Aboriginal status (until 1985) was granted to women who married into First Nation communities and who have no Native ancestry. These different methods of recognizing Aboriginal status in Canada and the United States make the Jay Treaty difficult to interpret.

### External Control of Indian Status

The 17th and 18th centuries were busy times in Atlantic Canada as settlers moved into the area. Land ownership quickly became an issue. The Europeans slowly pushed the Mi'kmaq into smaller land areas. They began



to view the Mi'kmaq way of life as interfering with European progress and development. Soon it became important to the British to identify and control the Mi'kmaq.

With the fall of Fortress Louisbourg in 1758, the French settlers surrendered to the British. This allowed the British to take control over life in the colonies. Britain began to offer land to those wishing to settle in the new world. It therefore became important to identify the Mi'kmaq, their numbers, and the lands they occupied.

The Europeans introduced many ideas and laws that were foreign to the Mi'kmaq. For example, European land ownership was contrary to the Mi'kmaq view of Mother Earth. (How could anyone claim to own a piece of Mother Earth?) As a seasonal people, the Mi'kmaq rarely stayed in one place for long periods of time, moving with the seasons to provide for themselves. The European settlers believed it was necessary to identify, count and locate all Native people living in the area in order to carve out their individual parcels of land and estimate the Mi'kmaq population who may be seen as competition for land and resources. The task of identifying just who was an Indian began.

The earliest known definition for the term "Indian" is from 1850—An Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of the Indians in Lower Canada. It states:

“That the following classes of persons are and shall be considered as Indians belonging to the Tribe or Body of Indians interested in such lands:

First – All persons of Indian blood, reputed to belong to the particular Body or Tribe of Indians interested in such lands and their descendants;

Secondly – All persons intermarried with any such Indians and residing amongst them, and the descendants of all such persons;

Thirdly – All persons residing among such Indians whose parents on either side were or are Indians of such Body or Tribe, or entitled to be considered as such; and,

Fourthly – All persons adopted in infancy by any such Indians, and residing in the village or upon the lands of such Tribe or Body of Indians, and their descendants.”

In 1868, the federal government passed a law which finalized the definition of “Indian.” The new definition excluded non-Indian men who married Indian women but included non-Indian women who married Indian men. The new law also described the Indian people as “wards of the Crown.” This meant that Indian people were now dependent on the federal government and had limited rights and privileges.

In an attempt to decrease the number of Indian people dependent on the federal government, the Enfranchisement Act became

law in 1869. If you were enfranchised, you were no longer considered to be an “Indian.” In this way, the Act was designed to integrate the Indians into the non-Native community, but only after they could prove that they were able to reject their way of life.

Here’s how it worked:

- If you passed grade 12 or entered university, you were automatically enfranchised;
- If you received any professional designation, you were enfranchised;
- If you left the country for more than five years, you were enfranchised.

Also in the 1869 Indian Act, Indian women who married non-Native men lost their right to be a Status Indian. Their children from that marriage also lost their status. This discriminatory approach to determining Indian status was an issue for more than 100 years. It was not until 1985 that a new law, Bill C-31, finally gave Indian women back their status and recognized their children as having part status.

No one disputes the fact that the First Nations were the first peoples of Canada. However, they were not considered Canadian citizens at the time of Confederation. (1867) Special laws were considered necessary to identify and define the Indian people, their rights and their “status” in this new country.

## Indians Become Canadian Citizens

Even though they were not considered Canadian citizens, Mi'kmaw men were proud to fight for the freedom of all Canadians during World War I (150 Mi'kmaw men enlisted), World War II (250 enlisted), and the Korean War (60 enlisted).

In fact, it was not until an amendment to the Citizenship Act in 1956 that Indians finally became citizens of Canada. In 1960 they were finally given the right to vote in federal elections.

## The Indian Registry

An amendment to the Indian Act in 1951 clearly defined the word "Indian." Next the Indian Registry was created to keep records. The point of the registry was to determine Indian status and membership. The federal Indian Act defines an Indian as "a person who, pursuant to [according to] this Act, is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian." To be eligible to receive benefits under the Indian Act, individ-



uals must be registered in the Indian Register. The Registry is maintained by the federal Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). People registered by the

**WWII Veteran Noel Abram Smith  
of Glooscap First Nation**

federal government under the Indian Act are referred to as Registered Status Indians. The term "membership" as it pertains to the Indian Registry refers to the First Nation Community (or Band) to which the individual belongs.

Historically, the definition of "Indian" was more inclusive than the definition under the current Indian Act. Today, you can be registered as "Indian" if you meet certain conditions. These include:

"6(1)(f) That person is a person both of whose parents are, or, if no longer living, were at the time of death, entitled to be registered under this section." (This means having two parents with status as of 1985.)

"6(2) Subject to Section 7, a person is entitled to be registered if that person is a person one of whose parents is, or, if no longer living, was at the time of death, entitled to be registered under Subsection 1." (This means having only one parent who has status.)

## Creation of "Indian Bands"

In 1960, eleven Indian Bands (Reserves) were created in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmaq were now classified by Band or community and membership identified accordingly in the Indian Registry. Band lists must be approved by the federal government. Any change in status (marriage, births, etc) or membership (transfers, etc.) also had to be registered and approved by the government.

## The White Paper Policy

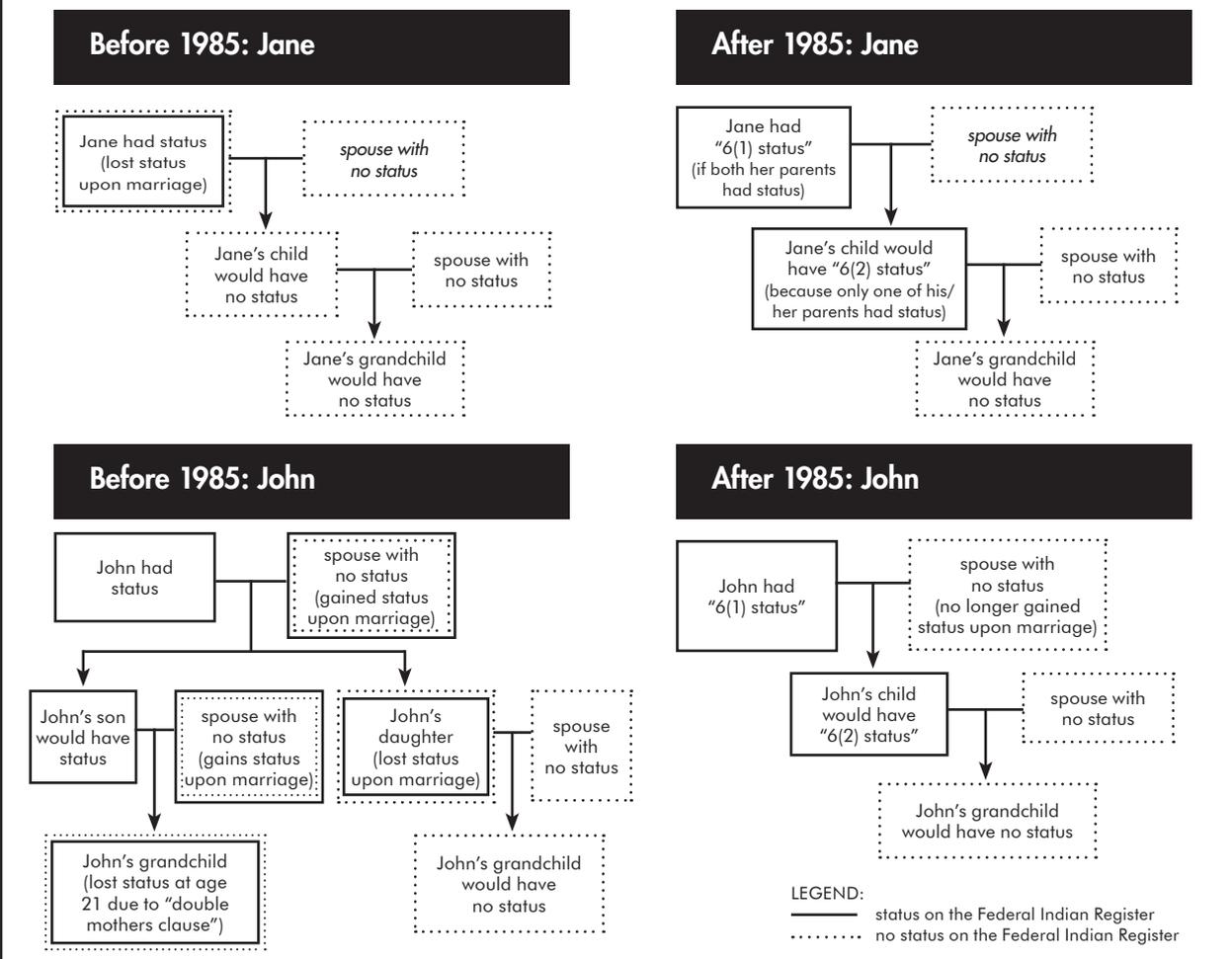
In 1969, the federal government introduced the White Paper Policy. The policy was a new approach to First Nations status. Before 1969, the government practice was to identify all Indians, and where they lived, and control most of their daily life. Systems of Social Assistance, education, health services, social housing programs were all costing the federal government a lot of money. In response, the White paper proposed:

- To assimilate (integrate) First Nations into Canadian society

- To eliminate the Indian Act
- To end federal responsibility for Indians
- To stop giving special status to Native people
- To cancel previous treaties and related land claims

The White Paper Policy was very contentious. After much debate, then-Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau withdrew the policy in 1971. Unfortunately, the policy continues to be a contentious issue. It has left a legacy of mistrust between the federal government and First Nations.

### Bill C-31 (1985) and some impacts to "Indian Status" because of marriage, for men and women



## Constitutional Protection

Following the repatriation of the constitution by Pierre Elliot Trudeau in 1982, First Nations were assured (under Section 35 of the Constitution Act) that their rights and status would be constitutionally protected.



It is this legislation that acknowledges the First Nations—not only as one of the many cultures making up our country—but as a unique nation—with special status and rights stemming from their unique unprecedented connection to and occupation of this land.

### Bill C-31

As previously mentioned, Bill C-31 (1985) was an attempt to fix the part of the Indian Act that deals with status. Unfortunately, many issues still remain.

Bill C-31 gave back status to Indian women who had married non-Native men and lost their status as a result. It also gave partial status to their children. However, these children **cannot** pass on status to their future children unless they marry someone who has status.

Problems arise in situations where Indian men married non-Native women before 1985. The non-Native women were given full Indian status under the Indian act even though their heritage was 100 percent non-Native before they married. Children of these marriages have full status and therefore they can pass it on to the next generation.

Another question not addressed by Bill C-31 is that non-Native women who married into the culture before 1985 did not lose their Indian status. Furthermore, status was not granted to non-Native men who married in before 1985.

While many people welcomed Bill C-31 as long overdue recognition of the unfair treatment of Mi'kmaw women who had lost their status due to marriage, not everyone was happy. For one thing, the reinstatement of these women presented problems. The main problem with Bill C-31 was that the federal government had once again decided who would be considered an Indian in the face of many unsettled inequities.

Bill C-31 greatly increased the number of status Indians in First Nations communities. At the time the bill was passed in 1985, Indian communities were already struggling with a number of problems. These included limited Reserve lands, overcrowded housing, dependence on social programs, and high unemployment rates. The arrival of Bill C-31 members was not always welcome in a stressed and poor community. To help ease this situation the government decided to offer special housing and other supports for the Bill C-31 members. Unfortunately, in some instances this only resulted in long-standing community members (many living in overcrowded, sub-standard conditions) resenting these newcomers to the community. To this day, some communities continue to struggle with these issues.

## Status in the 21st Century

As we move into the 21st century, Mi'kmaq continue to face the big question of Indian status.

As a result of Bill C-31, marriages outside the First Nations culture present the very real possibility that the Mi'kmaq will eventually be assimilated into Canadian society. That's because intermarriages "dilute" status. As well, an increasing number of Mi'kmaq are living off-Reserve. This means that there are even more opportunities for Mi'kmaq to intermarry and be assimilated. Small rural First Nations worry that their communities will have very few status Indians within the next two generations. The future does not look bright for these communities as they receive money from the federal government based on the number of status Indians they have living on-Reserve.

## Whose Rights are They Anyway? The Beneficiary Question

Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq are slowly starting to negotiate the implementation of Treaty Rights and Mi'kmaw Title. Successful negotiation may offer the Mi'kmaq land, access to resources, monetary compensation, etc. The negotiation process and the magnitude of settlement and compensation are unclear at this time.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for the Mi'kmaq will be answering the beneficiary question. That is, who will benefit from these rights and settlements? More specifically, the Mi'kmaq will be in a position to decide (on their own terms) who **is** Mi'kmaw. The answer to this question will define a nation—the Mi'kmaw Nation.

This beneficiaries question is made up of many smaller questions like these:

- What will "citizenship" criteria be?
- Who will be consulted?
- What will be the process?
- Who will decide?
- What about future generations?

The complex history of the Mi'kmaq, and the influence of non-Native identification systems that have been applied to identify and classify "Indian Status" contribute even more confusion to the beneficiaries question.

However, the question will have come full circle—from pre-contact self-identification to imposed identification schemes and now once again the Mi'kmaq will have the opportunity (and challenge) of defining who they are on their own terms.

To sort out the beneficiaries question is an ultimate test for a nation. It defines a nation by drawing a distinction between who is and who is not a Mi'kmaw person.



## References/Resources

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands,  
Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31,  
Indian Status, etc.

INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

### **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)**

#### **Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative**

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
ph: (902) 843-3880  
Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrights.com)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Is it possible for two first cousins whose mothers are sisters to have different status? Explain your answer.

When these cousins marry and have children, what First Nations status (according to the Indian Act) will their children have:

- a. If they marry a status First Nation person?
  - b. If they marry a non-Native person?
2. If, over a number of generations, the percentage of First Nations full status members is reduced, and the number of residents with no status increases, what will be the impact on the economic and social situation of a First Nation community?
  3. The White Paper Policy of 1969, proposed an assimilated and just society-one in which all people had equal rights and privileges. If it had been implemented, how would it have impacted the Mi'kmaq culture?

# Mi'kmaw Spirituality and Organized Religion

The fascinating formation of contemporary  
Mi'kmaw spiritual expression



- Traditional Mi'kmaw Beliefs
  - Sacred Symbols
  - The Introduction of Christianity
- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# Mi'kmaw Spirituality and Organized Religion

The fascinating formation of contemporary Mi'kmaw spiritual expression



The spirituality of a people cannot be described on its own. It's part of what makes up their culture—something that defines who they are. Spirituality is not simply worship of a higher being or holding certain ceremonies. The spirituality of a people is wrapped up in their language and their songs, in their stories and dances, in how they live and interact with each other, and who or what they honor.

## Mi'kmaw Spiritual Beliefs

The spirituality of the Mi'kmaq is very old. It dates back thousands of years and has a deep connection to the land. Like much of Mi'kmaw culture, the beliefs and practices about spirituality are passed from one generation to the next by the stories and teachings of the Elders.

The Mi'kmaq believe that a great spirit called Kisu'lk ("the Creator") made the universe and everyone and everything in it. They believe that all things—plants, animals, people, and Mother Earth herself—all have the Creator's spirit in them and must be respected. And because everything on Earth is connected, no part should be exploited or abused. Each part must work in harmony with the rest.

This does not mean that people cannot cut down trees, or hunt for food, but it does mean that the proper respect must be shown to the Creator for making these resources available to them in the first place.

## Spiritual Practices: How the Mi'kmaq Show their Spirituality

Like other cultures, the Mi'kmaq practice their spirituality through rituals (special things they do) and ceremonies (special events they hold) that acknowledge and give thanks to a higher power.

They pray and give thanks on a daily basis for all creation—for fish, for food, for children, for Elders, for all the Creator has given them.

Like Western culture, the Mi'kmaq pay respect to the dead through certain rituals and ceremonies. The Mi'kmaq believe that death is a part of the cycle of life and that the souls of the dead go to a Spirit World where they are happy. There is no concept of Hell in traditional Mi'kmaw beliefs.



Because they believe all things are part of nature and must be respected, the Mi'kmaq give thanks when they use part of nature for their own needs. For example, when they cut down a tree, or dig up plant roots for medicine, or kill an animal for food, there are certain rituals they must follow to pay the proper respect—to give thanks for things they disturb for their own use. Some animals, like moose, give their lives so the Mi'kmaq may have food. They show respect to the moose by treating the remains with respect. The bones of the moose should never be burned or given to household pets, they should be used to make something or buried.

### The Spirit World

Traditional Mi'kmaw spirituality includes the belief that there is a Spirit World as well as a physical world. The Creator teaches that people can gain knowledge and wisdom from both worlds. The Mi'kmaq believe there are spirits and people among us who can bridge these two worlds. Here are a few examples:

Kinap—a male spirit with special powers that he uses to help the Mi'kmaq

Puowin (male) or Puowini'skw (female)—a sorcerer or witch spirit who has powers which are used against the Mi'kmaq

Keskimsit—a person born with special power, gifts or strengths

Nikaniijijitekewimu—a person who can predict the future

Wiklatmu'j—a spiritual being who lives in the woods. He takes the human form of a man the size of a small child

Mi'kmuesu—a spiritual being who can take human form, and can appear and disappear at will. He can give supernatural powers to humans

Skite'kmuj—a ghost or spirit of someone who died

Skitekmujewawti—Milky Way; a path to the Spirit World



## Sacred Symbols, Customs and Values

The Mi'kmaq expressed their spirituality through many symbols, customs and traditions. The following examples are just some of these ways:

### Dreams

It is one of the Creator's teachings that important knowledge can be learned from dreams. All dreams need to be looked at to find those which contain a message from the Spirit World. While the skill to interpret dreams is disappearing from today's world, there are still some Elders who are able to carry out this practice.

### The Drum

For centuries, Native people have believed that the drum and the human heart share a similar purpose. This purpose is to provide life through its beat. This connection promotes a oneness between humanity and nature. It reinforces the unique relationship between humans and nature and it promotes love and respect for all living things. It is the belief of the Mi'kmaq that the drum is the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

### The Eagle Feather

The eagle is the only creature that is said to have touched the face of the Great Spirit. Because of this, the eagle is highly respected and honored. It represents the way through which Native people can feel the Great Spirit's presence among them. Those who own or carry a feather or



claw of an eagle are also highly respected. The eagle feather is also very important in any talking or healing circle. It is used as a powerful symbol in many cultural activities and ceremonies. To be presented with an eagle feather is the highest honor a Mi'kmaw can receive. Such an honor is only given to someone who has contributed unselfishly to the betterment of his or her community.

### Respect for Elders

In Mi'kmaw culture, all things must learn their place in the world through interaction with it, and through guidance from the Elders. Elders are people who are recognized by the community to have attained knowledge and wisdom through age and experience. Elders are the keepers of the sacred lessons of tribal and global harmony for all living things within the environment.

### Mi'kmaw Language

The Creator gave the Mi'kmaq their language to help them share knowledge and to survive. For this reason, they see their language as holy. The sacred knowledge within the Mi'kmaw language provides wisdom and understanding. It focuses on the processes of gaining knowledge, on the action or verbs, and not on the nouns or collecting material goods.

### Death and Mourning

The Mi'kmaq believe that a dying person should not be alone. All family members are encouraged to be with the dying person during their final hours. A candle is lit in the room to signify the light which was given at birth, and to help the person find the path to the Spirit World. Each family member must seek peace with the dying person so he or she can go to the Spirit World completely at peace. When the time of death is close, the Elders will tell everyone not to cry until the person has passed to the Spirit World. They believe that the person will have an easier passage if tears are not shed. After the person has died, everyone is encouraged to cry freely, because once the tears are gone, people will have an easier time coping with the death.

### Sacred Pipe

The sacred pipe is often called the “peace pipe.” Often used during sweat lodge ceremonies, the pipe is broken into two pieces, symbolizing a man and a woman. When the pieces of the pipe are joined—to symbolize unity—it becomes a sacred part of the ceremony.



### Sweat Lodge



Common to most northern Native peoples, the sweat lodge is a place of spiritual communication and cleansing. The lodge is made of young willow saplings placed in a pattern, with the door always facing toward the east. The sweat lodge has room for four to 12 people. They sit in a circle around a central dugout where preheated rocks create heat and steam for the ceremony. The ceremony is very humbling. It is a time for reflection and prayer. It teaches respect, patience, endurance and free speech.

### Sweet Grass

Sweet grass is a sacred herb associated with love. A sweet-grass ceremony (Pekitne'mank) is a cleansing and purification process. Also referred to as “smudging,” the ceremony is often used to open prayer circles, gatherings and higher ceremonies. When sweet grass is burned, participants fan the smoke over themselves and the areas around them. The smoke gets rid of evil spirits and invites positive energies to enter. Some believe that burning sweet grass carries the prayers to the Great Spirit in its smoke.

### Sage

Sage is also a sacred herb used in smudging ceremonies. It drives out the bad spirits and feelings, and cleanses the area for prayer.

### Talking Circle

The talking circle is a gathering of people sitting in a circle. The leader of the talking circle holds a sacred symbol such as

an eagle feather, a pipe, or sweet grass to symbolize his or her leadership. As long as the speaker is holding the symbol, he/she has the sole right to speak to the members of the circle on any subject. When the leader is finished speaking, the sacred symbol is passed to the next person who then can speak directly to the members of the circle. The circle is a form of societal healing or cleansing. Participants are able to speak openly on matters that otherwise would be private. The talking circle is completely confidential and all participants honor its sacred nature.



The Mi'kmaq lived their spirituality. Mi'kmaq spiritual teachings were passed on orally from generation to generation. Early settlers thought the Mi'kmaq were believers of superstition; they did not understand that the Mi'kmaq were a people of great spirituality and faith. This is why the early settlers tried to convert the Mi'kmaq to more "organized" religious practices. They gave very little credit to the respectful, humble and very complex spirituality of the Mi'kmaq.

### The Introduction of Christianity

The Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had the first known contact with European explorers in 1497 when John Cabot arrived. Soon after, fishing ships from Europe were a regular

sight in Mi'kma'ki. Organized fur trade began in the 1500s. Settlers and Christian missionaries moved here during the 1600s and 1700s.

The Europeans did not understand the ways of the Mi'kmaq and they were inaccurately portrayed as barbarians and savages. For example, the Mi'kmaq belief that animals and trees had a spirit was seen as a sin to Roman Catholics. The Mi'kmaq concept that the land was shared by all and owned by none, was seen as backward to the Europeans.

Bowing to the pressure of the missionaries, the Mi'kmaq began to convert to Christianity. On June 24, 1610 at Port Royal, Grand Chief Membertou was the first Mi'kmaq to be baptized a Roman Catholic. Mi'kmaq began to follow the Grand Chief's example, adopting many of the practices of Catholicism. In the absence of the Missionary Priests, many Mi'kmaq people, especially members of the Grand Council, assumed the role of teachers as well as religious and prayer leaders.

While the Mi'kmaq accepted the teachings of the Catholic Church, they did not give up their own beliefs. In fact, they found that many of the Catholic teachings went well with their traditional teachings. They also continued



**Chief Membertou**

to practice their own Mi'kmaw spirituality. Unfortunately when the Shubenacadie Residential School opened in 1930, Mi'kmaw youth were forced to give up both the Mi'kmaw language and spiritual beliefs in favour of the Catholic religion. Convinced by religious leaders that Mi'kmaw spirituality was evil, more and more Mi'kmaq gradually converted to Catholicism.

In 1628, St. Anne, who had the respected status of grandmother, was adopted as the Patron Saint of the Mi'kmaw people. She is honored each year on the feast of St. Anne on July 26, which is celebrated in Mi'kmaw communities throughout the region. The largest celebration is the St. Anne Mission held in Chapel Island. Many Mi'kmaq retreat to this small island in Cape Breton for several days to honor St. Anne through prayer,

feasting, and celebration. As well, many Mi'kmaw communities work hard all year to raise funds to support seniors' retreats to St. Anne de Beaupré in Quebec.



Throughout history, there have been many challenges and much confusion about Mi'kmaw spirituality. Today it is estimated that 90 percent of Mi'kmaq are Roman Catholic. Most communities have their own Catholic churches. However during the past few decades, the Mi'kmaq have also been showing increasing respect for their traditional beliefs and practices. Today Mi'kmaq are finding their own balance between organized religion and traditional ways to guide their lives.



**Celebration of the Feast of St. Anne, circa 1905, Shubenacadie, NS**

History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax

## Resources

### **Lessons of “The Life Cycle”**

by Murdena Marshall. Cape Breton University. 1990.

### **Mi’kmaq Association of Cultural Studies**

A source of information and speakers on Mi’kmaw culture  
47 Maillard St, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
PO Box 961, Sydney, NS B1P 6J4  
ph: (902) 567-1752 fax: (902) 567-0776  
e-mail: macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca

### **Mi’kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi’kmaw culture and history.  
Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **Values, Customs and Traditions of the Mi’kmaq Nation**

by Murdena Marshall. Cape Breton University. 1988.

### **Validity of Native Spirituality**

by Doctor Dorothy Moore, C.M., O.N.S., c.s.m.  
St. Michael’s College, Vermont.  
September 25 and 26, 2001. (speech)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Define and give example(s) of spirituality, religion, philosophy, superstition.
2. There are many religions: Catholic, Protestant, Hindu, etc. The word “religion” is seldom used to describe Mi’kmaw beliefs. Is/was there a Mi’kmaw religion? Explain your answer.
3. Why do you think Chief Membertou agreed to be baptized Catholic? What changes in the course of Mi’kmaw history would have occurred if he had not converted?

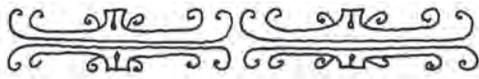
# Entertainment and Recreation



- Early Mi'kmaq Pastimes
- Mi'kmaq Hockey
- Snowshoes
- The Powwow
- Mi'kmaq Treaty Day
- St. Anne's Mission
- Mi'kmaq Sports and Athletics in the 21st Century

- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# Entertainment and Recreation



From storytelling to the sports arena, here's a look at how the Mi'kmaq have succeeded in combining traditional practices with contemporary recreation.

## Early Mi'kmaw Pastimes

For centuries, Mi'kmaw storytelling was a way to entertain people and share information. Mi'kmaw stories were more like story cycles—a storyteller could take parts of one story and insert them into another to highlight certain points. Beating time on a noisemaker, a drum, or even a hollowed-out log, would let everyone know that storytelling was about to begin. Stories often lasted several days and included singing, dancing and feasting. The art of storytelling was a much-admired skill that was passed down from generation to generation.

Mi'kmaq also enjoyed smoking as part of their social life. They made tobacco from red willow bark, bearberry leaves and a native tobacco plant.

The Mi'kmaq loved games of chance and competition. They would play *Waltes*—a traditional Mi'kmaw dice game—for hours. Participants put a great deal of effort and skill into constructing this traditional game, which included a wooden plate of the hardest wood, carefully carved dice from animal bones and a set of “counting sticks” shaped from long thin animal bones.

Some other Mi'kmaw games are:

*Wapnaqn* (a men's game requiring skill with colour, memory, coordination and dexterity);  
*Kunte'juaqn* (a girls' game, requiring eye-hand



**The Game of Waltes**

*Waltes* (WALL-tess) is a very old game played by Mi'kmaq. It is made up of a shallow wooden bowl, six flat, round dice often carved from caribou bone, and sticks used to keep score. Each of the six dice is plain on one side, and has a cross marked on the other. Different styles of sticks are used to represent one or more points earned by the players. Each player takes a turn picking up the bowl and knocking it down with enough force to flip the dice. To earn points, a player must have 5 or 6 of the marked sides showing, or 5 or 6 of the plain sides showing. He gets 5 sticks if all the dice are the same, and 1 stick if only 5 of the 6 dice are the same. If the player earns points on his turn, he goes again. If he does not, then it is the next player's turn. The game continues until one player wins all the counting sticks or both players decide to end the game.

coordination, where rocks are tossed up and caught on the back of the hand); and Koqa'ltimk (a boys' wrestling game).

Mi'kmaq of all ages enjoyed competitions involving running, hunting, archery, canoe racing and many other physical skills. Any community member would take pride in being recognized as the best at any of these skills.

Competitive sport was also an important part of Mi'kmaw life and remains so today. Early writings tell us that by the early 1800s, the Mi'kmaq were already participating in team sports resembling hockey and baseball.

Always ready for a celebration, Mi'kmaq frequently held feasts and celebrations to acknowledge births, to welcome the seasons, to celebrate weddings, or to honor the life of a community member. For music, they used drums, rattles, whistles and chanting sticks. They also performed different dances, depending on the occasion. The most common

one was the friendship dance—a simple dance that everyone could do. Those performing the friendship dance held hands in a circle. They moved in a clockwise direction, taking three steps forward and one step back in time with the rhythm of the drum.

### **Mi'kmaw Hockey**

“Old Joe Cope, a much respected and multi talented Mi'kmaw Elder, was a boxer, musician, and hockey stick carver. As an historian of the Mi'kmaw Nation, he traveled from village to village keeping in touch with the life of the Mi'kmaq. In 1943, when he happened to read that people in Kingston, Ontario were claiming that they were the birthplace of hockey, he wrote this message to the Halifax Herald from his home in Millbrook:

“Long before the pale faces strayed to this country, the Micmacs were playing two ball games, a field game and an ice game.”

(The Puck Starts Here: The Origin of Canada's Great Winter Game: Ice Hockey by Garth Vaughan.)

“Old Joe” set the record straight.

Long before the Europeans arrived, Native craftsmen were making their own “hockey” sticks for their traditional game of Oochamadyk. Later, they gave the name of Alchamadytk to the European game of “Hurley on Ice” which later became known as “Hockey.”

Mi'kmaq also crafted the first form of ice skate. The skates were made of long bones shaped and sharpened into a rough “blade” and strapped to the foot with leather laces.



The early ice hockey sticks were carved from Hornbeam trees that are native to Nova Scotia. One of the tools the Mi'kmaq used to carve the sticks was known as a "crooked knife." Hornbeam is also known as 'ironwood' and 'stinkwood' because of the unpleasant smell it gives off when it is cut. Hornbeam was such a popular wood for hockey sticks that eventually local supplies began to disappear and the Mi'kmaq began to use Yellow Birch instead.

These hand-carved ice hockey sticks were shipped across Canada for decades, ever since the 1870s when Montreal athletes first took up the Nova Scotia winter game of hockey. The first games between Queen's University and the Royal Military College in Kingston in 1886 were played with Mi'kmaq hockey sticks from Nova Scotia.

### **Snowshoes**

During the winter, Mi'kmaq used snowshoes as a useful means of getting around. The Jesuit missionaries referred to the snowshoe as a "broad piece of network." Mi'kmaq called it "aqam"—indicating that the first snowshoes were made from White Ash (Aqamaq). Later, they used Beech to make the snowshoes. The curved ends of the shoes were bound together with leather made

from moose skins. Women wove the shoes together in a crisscross and diagonal design.

### **The Powwow - Mawio'mi**

In Nova Scotia, most Mi'kmaq communities have a yearly Powwow. This is a gathering that brings Mi'kmaq together to celebrate being Mi'kmaq. There is traditional dancing, singing, games of chance, craft displays, storytelling, and more. Because they are outdoor celebrations, Powwows are usually held in the milder months. People attend from other communities and non-Native people are welcome as well.



**Participants at a Powwow**



Before you attend a Powwow, it is wise to know some Powwow etiquette:

1. Powwows are fun events, but they are also sacred events. Ceremonial songs and dances, which are sacred, are performed from time to time throughout the Powwow.
2. People should stand during all ceremonial songs and dances. These include the Grand Entry, Flag Songs, Veteran Songs, Honor Songs and any other songs that the Master of Ceremonies (MC) designates as ceremonial songs.
3. Do not take any photos, videos, or sound recordings of ceremonies without asking permission.
4. It is important to listen to the (MC) because he will announce the different activities and will also let people know when they can dance and when they cannot. He will also give out other information and news.
5. Respect the Elders, drummers, singers, dancers, and the Powwow staff and committee.
6. The dancers wear regalia while they are dancing, not “costumes.” People should not touch the regalia.
7. You must dress and behave in an appropriate manner in the dance area.
8. People should supervise their children at Powwows.
9. Do not hold children while dancing in the dance area. The child may be construed as a gift to the Creator.
10. Do not run around the dance area. Always walk in a clockwise direction when you are in the dance area. Horseplay is not tolerated.
11. Do not bring alcohol or drugs to a Powwow. Do not come to a Powwow while you are intoxicated.
12. Dogs are not allowed around the Powwow area.
13. Bring your own chairs. Do not sit on someone else’s chair unless you have their permission.
14. Remember you are a guest. Have fun, ask questions and meet people.

## Mi'kmaq Treaty Day

In 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada confirmed the validity of the Treaty of 1752. This ruling validated Aboriginal Treaty rights and confirmed the unique relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and the Federal Crown.

In 1986, Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaw Nation, Donald Marshall Sr., invited all Mi'kmaq to "observe October 1, 1986 and every year thereafter as Treaty Day." Treaty Day commemorates the unique and special relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and Her Majesty, the Queen of England.

Every year Treaty Day festivities are held in Halifax. All festivities are planned to reflect the beliefs of the Mi'kmaw people with respect to the obligation of Treaty Rights. All Nova Scotians are welcome to share in the festivities and to learn more about the Mi'kmaw Nation and its history.

## St. Anne's Mission

The Feast of St. Anne is celebrated in every community on July 26th each year to honor St. Anne—the patron Saint for Aboriginal people. This is a religious occasion. It involves a religious and spiritual ceremony, which is usually followed by a feast and celebration.

Many Mi'kmaq from across Atlantic Canada retreat to the traditional location of the St. Anne Mission at Chapel Island, Cape Breton. Here, several days are set aside for prayer, reunion and cultural celebration.

## Mi'kmaw Treaty Day Proclamation

When the English began to make their new homes in our land, our forefathers protected the livelihood and survival of the Mi'kmaq by signing treaties with their Kings. Throughout the seasons the treaties have remained.

On November 21, 1985, the Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that the Treaty of 1752 is still strong. The Mi'kmaq are still protected by its articles and we call upon Her Majesty to honour this Treaty and others made with the Mi'kmaw Nation.

On this 234<sup>th</sup> year of the Treaty of 1752, I, as Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaq, invite every Mi'kmaw to observe October 1 this year and every year thereafter as "Treaty Day" to commemorate the unique and special relationship that exists between the Mi'kmaq and Her Majesty.

PROCLAIMED at Halifax, Nova Scotia, this 1<sup>st</sup> day of October, A.D. 1986.

(signed)  
DONALD MARSHALL  
Grand Chief

## **Mi'kmaw Sports and Athletics in the 21st Century**

Today, Mi'kmaq organize Mi'kmaw ball tournaments and hockey tournaments. They also encourage youth to play on non-Native teams. Participation by Mi'kmaw youth is sometimes limited due to economic circumstances and lack of suitable facilities in the communities. However, over the last 20 years some First Nations communities have constructed new community facilities complete with gymnasiums and rinks.

With more and more Aboriginal youth falling prey to such diseases as obesity and Type II diabetes, it is more important than ever that Mi'kmaw youth are encouraged to follow an active lifestyle. The Mi'kmaw Nation is responding to this concern. In November 2003 the Mi'kmaq, in partnership with the federal and provincial governments, endorsed the Mi'kmaw Youth, Recreation and Active Circle for Living (MYRACL). This program promotes active lifestyles in Mi'kmaw communities. With financial support from its partners, the MYRACL will work to promote healthy choices and lifestyles to youth. It will also help communities to develop the resources for sport and recreation activities.

## Resources

### **Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies**

A source of information and speakers on Mi'kmaw culture  
47 Maillard Street, Membertou, NS B1S 2P5  
PO Box 961, Sydney, NS B1P 6J4  
ph: (902) 567-1752  
fax: (902) 567-0776  
e-mail: macs@mikmaq-assoc.ca

### **Mi'kmaq Resource Centre**

Hosts a library of information on Mi'kmaw culture and history.  
Address: Student Cultural & Heritage Ctr,  
Rm CE268, Cape Breton University  
PO Box 5300, Sydney, NS B1P 6L2  
ph: (902) 563-1660  
fax: (902) 562-8899  
e-mail: patrick-johnson@cbu.ca  
website: <http://mikmawey.uccb.ns.ca>

### **The Nova Scotia Museum's Mi'kmaq Portraits Database**

Collection of portraits and illustrations in various media, of the Mi'kmaq of Atlantic Canada.  
website: [www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq](http://www.museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq)

## Activities/ Discussion Questions

1. You are in charge of the Treaty Day celebrations on October 1<sup>st</sup>. Outline what you would plan for that day and why.
2. Discuss what you think may be the challenges facing a Mi'kmaw youth wishing to enter professional sport as a career. Are these challenges any different than those facing non-Native youth? Explain your answer.
3. List the materials from the natural environment that were used in the past for recreational activities. Can you figure out why these materials were chosen for this purpose?

# A Oneness with Nature

Understanding the connection and interaction  
between the Mi'kmaq and the natural environment



- Traditional Knowledge and the Use of Natural Resources
  - The Fight for Natural Resources
  - Land Occupation
- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# A Oneness with Nature

Understanding the connection and interaction between the Mi'kmaq and the natural environment



Before they encountered the first European settlers over 400 years ago, the Mi'kmaq were seasonally-mobile people. They moved with the seasons, traveling to locations that could provide for their basic needs.

The Mi'kmaq depended entirely on Mother Earth for their survival. Food, clothing, shelter, and medicine—all came from the forest and from the sea. This bonded the Mi'kmaq with the land.

Recognizing the importance and generosity of Mother Earth, Mi'kmaq used her bounty

sparingly and with great reverence. Wildlife was taken for clothing and food. The forest, sea and plant life offered food, shelter, warmth and medicine.

Mi'kmaq made use of the natural environment in every aspect of their life. The depth of the knowledge, understanding, and history among the Mi'kmaw Nation that made up the culture before European contact continues to challenge the scientists of today.

The natural environment also helped Mi'kmaq educate themselves about sciences such as

## Examples of Uses of the Natural Bounty

### Food

- fish, fowl, moose, deer, bear, beaver, etc.
- berries of all kinds, apples, cherries, wild turnip
- eggs from a variety of fowl

### Medicine

- turpentine from balsam fir—used to treat wounds. A broken bone would be re-set and wrapped in pads of moss soaked in turpentine. The break was wrapped in birch bark and splints applied.
- cold remedy—syrup of Black Cherry
- porpoise oil —ear aches, a laxative

### Clothing

- skins of moose, deer, beaver, otter, bear, lynx
- moose hide and deer hide moccasins
- thread for sewing was made by beating the tendon found on either side of the spine of a moose until it separated into strands almost as fine as silk embroidery thread
- babies were swaddled in the softest of furs and skins—fox, swans and wild geese

### Spirituality & Ceremony

- sage and Sweet Grass for cleansing and purification.
- tobacco offering

## Shelter

- fir boughs used on floor of wigwam
- spruce
- birch bark and moose/deer/caribou skin for exterior of wigwam

## Transportation

- birch bark canoes
- cedar slats as ribs for canoes, fir and spruce roots for lacing and binding
- snow shoes were first made of white ash, later of beech

## Tools & Utensils

- wooden tubs and kettles from tree trunks
- birch bark vessels sewn together with cedar roots or black spruce roots and sealed with spruce gum
- moose antlers and bones to make needles for sewing and fasteners
- baskets from rushes, splints of cedar, juniper, spruce and other woods.
- smokehouses were built from poles and birch bark
- fishing weirs from stone, and boughs

## Games

- waltes boards from burls of trees
- dice and Waltes sticks made from bone of animals

## Music

- the drum was made from animal skin stretched taught over a wood rim and sewn with leather laces or sinew

## Ceremony

- pipes of willow wood, and lobster claw were used in many ceremonies
- willow bushes, and birch bark were used to build traditional sweat lodges
- red willow bark was smoked as a tobacco

## Sports

- hockey sticks from hornbeam roots
- skates were made from long thin bones strapped by leather straps to the foot
- sledding, snowshoes from beech and sinew

## Communication

- shells were used to record the stories and history of the Mi'kmaq on Wampum belts—the “official” recording device of the Mi'kmaw Grand Council

## Art & Design

- shells of varying sizes and colors were used for adornment
- porcupine quills were used to decorate many items—dyed and sewn into skins, bark, etc.
- bone, teeth, claws, feathers as decoration on a variety of items
- moose hair weaving on clothing

## Dyes

- the inner bark of the birch tree was used to produce an orange dye
- purple came from red cedar roots, red maple (inner bark)
- brown—acorns, larch, white oak

medicine, biology, botany and meteorology. For example, it was not only important to know how to use birch bark, it was also necessary to know where to find it, what tools to use for harvesting, when to harvest it, how to store it, etc.

Mother Earth also provided content for stories and legends. For example, the legends of Kluskap describe the geography of the area, the attributes of animals. Many spiritual beliefs and practices referred to nature.

Even the structure of the Mi'kmaw language reflects the strong connection with Mother

Earth. For example Mi'kmaw place names offer some physical description of the natural landscape at the time:

- Bras d'Or Lake—Pitu'paq
- Halifax—Jipuktuk—"chief harbour or great, long harbour"
- Shubenacadie—Sipekni'katik—"the place where the *ground nut* or Segubun (Mi'kmaw potato) grows"

The Mi'kmaq only took what they needed from nature. They believed in conservation and sharing and they frowned upon excess and waste. From the Moose, the Mi'kmaq took meat, blood

## Fireflies and Birch Bark

In early spring when the frost comes out of the ground and the buds on the birch trees begin to open, it is also the time when the fireflies emerge in their grey beetle form. Around Truro, this happens around the first of May. When you see these grey firefly beetles, you know that the trees are getting water from the ground. The water travels up under a thick layer of bark to feed the emerging leaves. The Mi'kmaq knew that removing the bark at this time would yield strong sheets—up to 1/4 inch thick. Bark like this could be used for sturdy objects like canoes and coverings for homes.

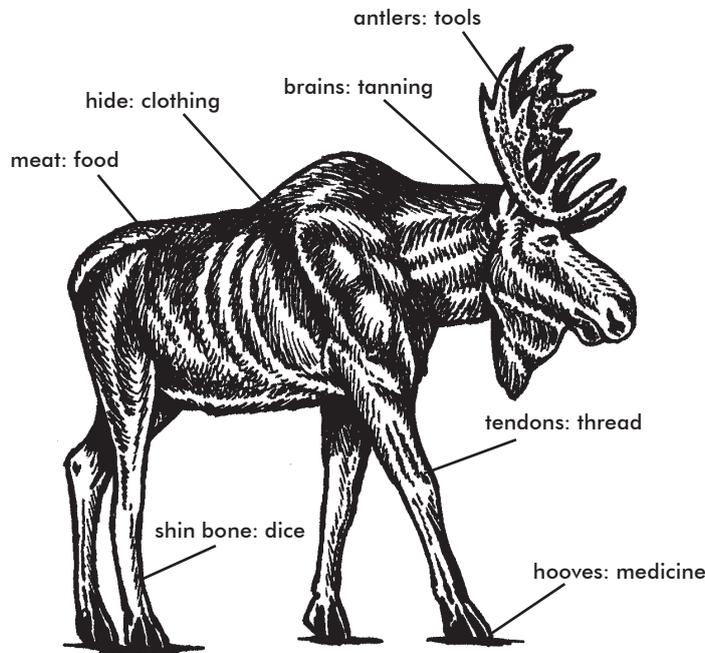
After several weeks, the fireflies begin to fly and light their tails in a mating dance. At this time the birch tree leaves are fully out. The water in the tree now runs between many outer layers of bark. Peeling the birch bark at this time gives paper thin and pliable layers. These are good for making containers like cups and bowls, basket liners, and for decorative items like birch bark biting—a craft where bark is folded into quarters and designs are bitten into it by the eye tooth. Experienced craftpeople can create designs like flowers, butterflies, leaves, or delicate patterns. These bark pieces could be used as artwork, applied to objects like cups or boxes, or sewn onto traditional leather clothing.

## Song of the Crickets

At the end of the summer, the Mi'kmaq knew they must wait to hear the chirp of the crickets in the evenings before it would be safe to dry their meat for the winter. If the meat was dried too soon, it might rot because the air was still too humid. The song of the crickets starts when that humidity is gone, sometimes in late August, sometimes in early September.



## Some Uses for the Moose



and bone marrow for food, and hides and fur for clothing. Rawhide strips became woven snowshoe filling. Moose brains were used in tanning, antlers were worked into tools, dew-claws became rattles, the shin bones were carved into dice, the hair used in embroidery, and the tendons became sewing thread. Even the hooves were important—as an ingredient in a remedy for epilepsy.

Each of the seven Mi'kmaw districts of Atlantic Canada had its own traditional hunting areas. The Mi'kmaw Grand Council oversaw these territories and made sure that everyone knew their place. However, the idea of “owning” land was not possible—after all, who could claim to “own” a piece of Mother Earth? The natural environment was for sharing. The philosophy was simple—use

what you need and save the rest for those who come after you.

All living things were believed to have a spirit, including animals and plants. Mi'kmaq believed that animals and plants sacrificed their lives for the survival of the community. For this gift, the Mi'kmaq were grateful and humble.

It was not until European contact that the Mi'kmaq were introduced to the concept of land ownership. At this time they were also introduced to the idea of trading their resources for European goods—the beginning of commercial trade for the Mi'kmaq. Before long, Mi'kmaq were restricted to smaller areas where they continued to practice their traditional ways. Today, Mi'kmaq occupy small “Reserve” parcels of land throughout Atlantic Canada that were set aside for them by the federal government.

As the King of England approved land grants, the European settlers began to “own” specific areas of land. Slowly, the Mi'kmaq began to change their traditional ways. They traded animal fur for food, blankets, clothing, and other items. Meanwhile, the settlers started using the forest resources to build things like barrels and containers for export. They also cut down trees for the construction of villages and fortresses for the settlers. Mi'kmaq baskets, porcupine quillwork, beading and other crafts were sold or traded.

The consumption of the natural resources by the new settlers slowly eroded many traditional ways. One example is the depletion of the Black Ash tree species in the province. The physical characteristics of the Black Ash tree made it perfect for creating baskets and other containers. Mi'kmaw basketmakers took great pride in their basket designs. Many of them are considered works of art today. However, the pliability of Black Ash soon became known to the settlers who used large amounts of it for shipping containers for export. Today the Black Ash species is almost depleted. Consequently the art of Mi'kmaw basket making has also declined.

### **Traditional Knowledge and the Use of Natural Resources**

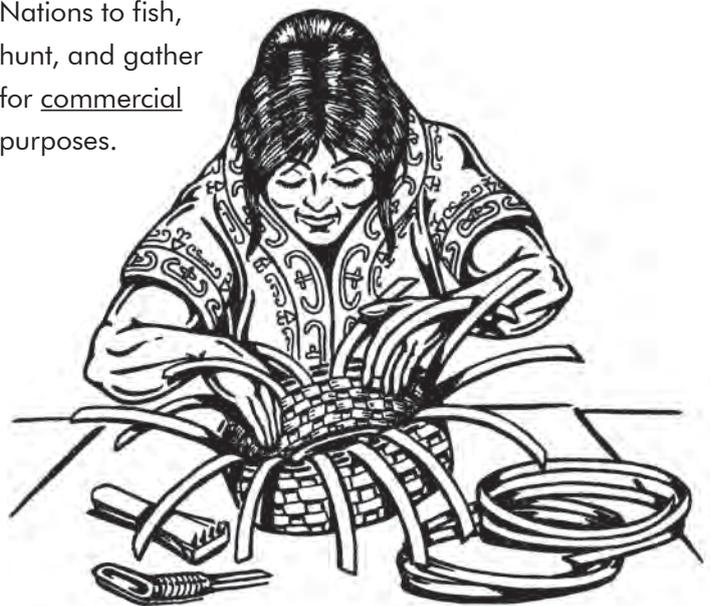
In order to survive on the land, the Mi'kmaq had extensive knowledge of the natural environment and the way that all living things are connected. Much of this knowledge remains sacred to the Mi'kmaw culture and we must respect that fact. However, the Mi'kmaq have shared some of their knowledge over the generations.

### **The Fight for Natural Resources**

New inventions, industrial development, modern transportation and technology have all helped to create the society and lifestyle we know today. Sadly, big industry is taking its toll on the environment, and forests and wildlife are slowly disappearing. Mi'kmaq no

longer depend directly on nature for survival. Instead, factors like government regulations, licensing schemes, and the introduction of land ownership have excluded the Mi'kmaq from their natural environment. Today, the use of natural resources has little to do with basic survival. It has become a commercial activity with little or no participation by Mi'kmaq. For example, the forest resource is used by the pulp and paper industry, sawmills, as well as for exports. The fishery is regulated by the province through licensing. The resource is processed with much of it being exported. Native peoples have had to stand by and watch as non-Natives prosper from the rich resources of the land and the sea.

In order to protect their right to participate in the fishery, the Mi'kmaq turned to the courts to have their treaty rights recognized. In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada issued the Marshall decision. This legal decision recognizes the treaty right of First Nations to fish, hunt, and gather for commercial purposes.



And while this decision has opened up many commercial opportunities for the Mi'kmaq it has also presented many challenges, both for the Mi'kmaw and for non-Mi'kmaw communities. On the positive side however, today there are many Mi'kmaq who earn their living from the fishery. Many Mi'kmaw communities own communal licenses to harvest various species of fish.

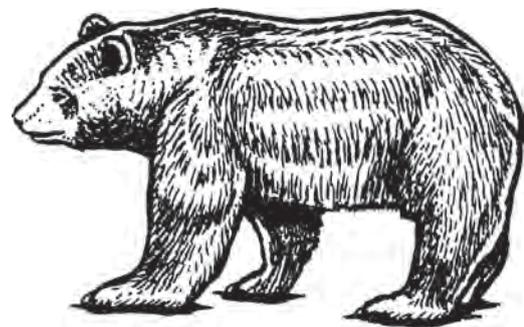
In 2003, Mi'kmaq were back in court to confirm their treaty right to commercial logging. In 2005, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that commercial logging was not a treaty right. The ruling was based on the fact that logging was not a traditional practice at the time the treaties were negotiated. Even though they lost this legal battle, the Mi'kmaq did make some progress. Recognizing that First Nations do not have equitable access to the forestry, the provincial government is working with the Mi'kmaq to fix the situation. Both groups are negotiating to ensure that the Mi'kmaq get greater access to the forest resource for commercial purposes.

### **Land Occupation**

Before contact, Mi'kmaq enjoyed the land, living in harmony with nature and sharing the bounty among community members. They had no concept of land ownership, property deeds, or boundary lines. The land belonged to all living things and Mother Nature was her keeper.

European contact and settlement brought new concepts of land tenure, carving out individual pieces of land that would be owned by individuals. Soon, properties were passed from generation to generation and this makes up the land ownership system we have today in Nova Scotia.

Today, many Mi'kmaq own property and live away from the Reserve community. However, those who choose to live with their own communities are confined to federal Reserves. Mi'kmaq living on the federal Reserve lands share equal use and occupation of the land with all community residents. Reserve lands are owned by the federal government (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs) and therefore cannot be bought or sold by individual occupants. As the "landlord," the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs has control of the land and is responsible for any activity that takes place on the Reserve lands. For example, community residents are required to apply to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for a permit if they wish to harvest any natural resources located on Reserve lands. If trees are cut from Reserve property, community members



must pay a fee to the federal government. This money is held in a trust for the benefit of the community.

There are many fundamental differences between federal Reserve land and the provincial system of private ownership. For example:

- People living on Reserve lands owned by the federal government do not have to pay provincial property tax.
- A private landowner can buy and sell private property. The landowner can also use the land to get bank loans. Indian Reserves are held in trust by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs for the use and benefit of the Aboriginal community. Individuals who live on Reserve lands are like tenants. The federal government is their landlord. Therefore their land and anything located on their land cannot be used as collateral for a bank loan.
- A private landowner can pass on/transfer property to his/her family. Reserve land belongs to the community as a whole.

After death, family members cannot inherit land as it belongs to the whole community. Nevertheless, homes and land on the Reserves are “unofficially” passed on, preserving the family unit.

- Land use on Reserves is a community decision subject to the approval and authority of the federal government. Individual landowners, off-Reserve, can use their land as they wish, subject to provincial land laws.
- An individual landowner can add to his or her lands by simply buying more. Reserve land base is limited. Communities must get special permission from the federal government to add land to the Reserves. This is no easy task. There have been very few Reserve land additions in Atlantic Canada.
- A private landowner can decide who lives on his/her property. The situation is much more complicated on Reserve lands. Native peoples come and go, depending on their financial situations.

Mi'kmaq must often choose between the traditional communal concept of ownership and individual ownership for personal gain.

## Resources

**Awakening: Living with today's forest** by First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), NS, in cooperation with The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. Eastern Woodland Print Communications, Truro, NS, 2006. (Mi'kmaw perspective on forest management today)

### **First Nations Forestry Program (FNFP), NS**

ph: (902) 895-6385 fax: (902) 893-1920  
e-mail: forestry@cmmns.com

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands, Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31, Indian Status, etc. INAC Atlantic Regional Office, 40 Havelock St PO Box 160, Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200 fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: www.inac.gc.ca

### **Micmac Medicines: Remedies and Recollections**

by Laurie Lacey. Nimbus, Halifax, NS, 1993.

### **Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre**

PO Box 341, Shubenacadie, NS, B0N 2H0  
ph: (902) 758-1953 For researching historical information on the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.

### **Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources**

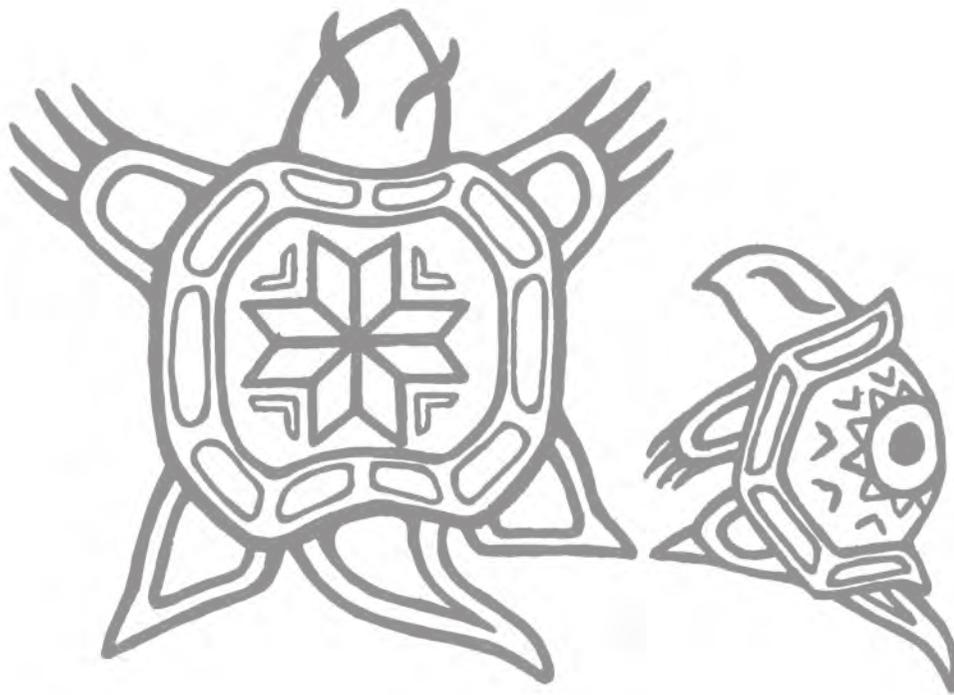
Represents five Cape Breton Mi'kmaw communities to address concerns regarding natural resources and their sustainability. Produces a series of Newsletters.  
ph: (902) 379-2024 fax: (902) 379-2195  
e-mail: info@uinr.ca website: www.uinr.ca

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. You own 100 acres of land and live there with your relatives and friends. All of a sudden the government passes a law that says you must share the same amount of land with some long lost relatives and the number of people living on your land will now be 125 people. These people come from various places and may also have extended families that will someday want to live with them. They could be great people with good education and many skills or they could be "undesirables." To add to this situation, there are many cultural and language differences. In any case, you have no choice. You now have 25 extra people living on your land. Explain your thoughts as the land owner. List the positive and negative possibilities of this change. How would you feel as one of the newcomers?
2. Many Nova Scotians make their living from the natural resource sector. Why do the Mi'kmaq not work in these industries as well? What is keeping them away? Explain your answer.
3. Land "ownership" off-Reserve is very different from land "occupation" on-Reserve. Discuss the pros and cons of each of these relationships with the land:
  - a. From the Mi'kmaw perspective; or
  - b. From the non-Native perspective.

# Governing a Nation

Overview of the traditional Mi'kmaw system of government  
and the challenges faced by native peoples today

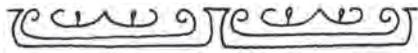


- The Traditional Mi'kmaw System of Government
- The Role of the Chief in the Mi'kmaw Society
- European Contact and the Transition Period
- Mi'kmaw Leadership and Governance Today
- Governance and Policing

- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# Governing a Nation

Overview of the traditional Mi'kmaw system of government and the challenges faced by Native peoples today



## The Traditional Mi'kmaw System of Government

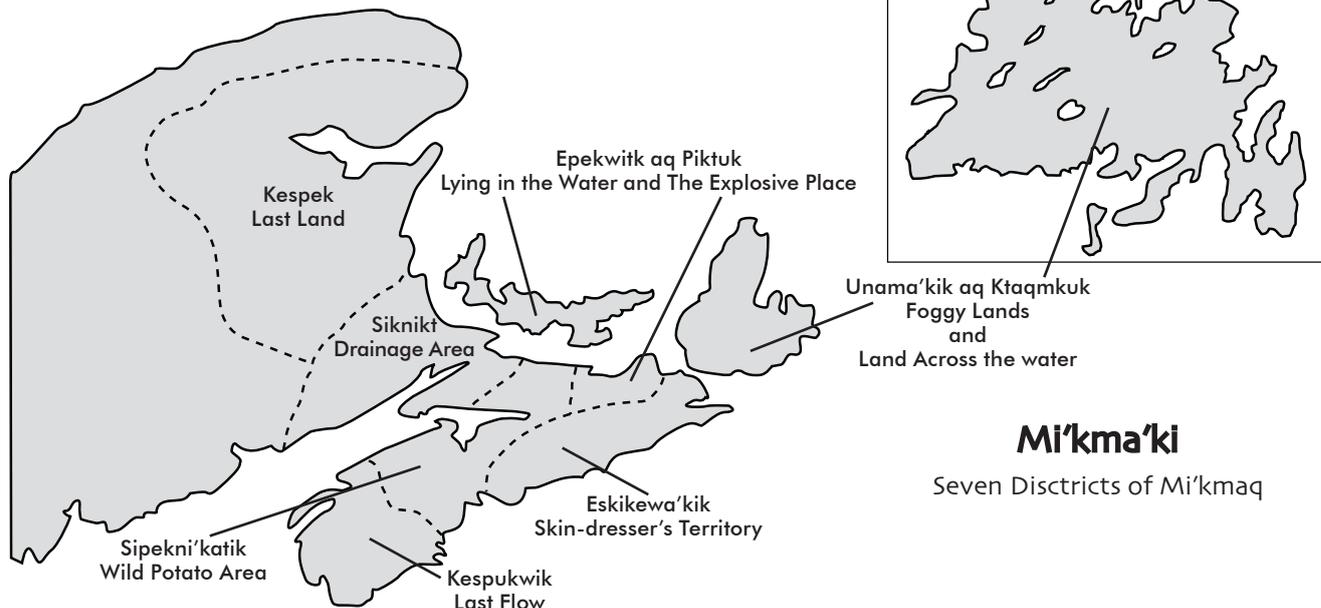
When European settlers came here in the 1600s, the Mi'kmaw Nation belonged to the Wabanaki Confederacy. This Confederacy included the Mikmaq, the Maliseet, the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, and the Abenaki tribes. The tribes were all members of the Algonquin family which occupied lands east of the St. Lawrence River, the Adirondacks and the Appalachians.

All these tribes respected the territory occupied by the Mi'kmaq, who divided it into seven hunting and fishing districts. This region, known as Mi'kma'ki, included all of what is today Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, the eastern part of New Brunswick, Newfoundland and southern Gaspé.

## The Role of the Chief in the Mi'kmaw Society

The early Mi'kmaq had a complex system of government. The political structure was made up of a hierarchy of chiefs, including the Local Chief, the District Chief and the Grand Chief.

The Local Chief looked after the affairs of the village community. He presided (ruled) over the "Council of Elders" which was the governing body of the village. This group was made up of family heads or representatives. The Local Chief provided dogs for the chase, canoes for transportation, and supplies for hunting expeditions. He also provided emergency food supplies in times of need.



### Mi'kma'ki

Seven Districts of Mi'kmaq



Each of the seven Mi'kmaq districts had a chief known as the Saqamaw. The Saqamaw, like all Chiefs, was usually the eldest son of a powerful family group. The District Chief presided over the Council of Local Chiefs in his area. The Council met usually in the spring or autumn to resolve such issues as peace, truce and war. The Council made decisions by means of consensus.

When issues affecting the whole Mi'kmaq Nation arose, a Grand Council meeting was called by the Grand Chief. This meeting was attended by all District Chiefs and their families. A Grand Chief was a District Chief who was appointed by his peers as the chief spokesperson. Grand Chief Membertou was the spokesperson for the Mi'kmaq at the time of European contact. The Grand Council also assigned hunting and fishing territories to the Chiefs and their families. They agreed on treaties of friendship with other tribes, and later they approved treaties with the Colonial Government of Nova Scotia.

Choosing Mi'kmaq leaders was a very serious matter. This is how it was structured:

- A Council of Elders chose Local Chiefs
- The Local Chiefs chose District Chiefs
- The District Chiefs, who made up the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, appointed the Grand Chief

In many cases these appointments may have only been a formality, as the position of Chief was normally passed on to the eldest son of the former Chief. The eldest son, however, had to be worthy. Otherwise, some other male in the same family group would get the job.

The Mi'kmaq Nation was governed by well-defined laws and procedures. Territories were clearly identified and local, district and national jurisdictions were well understood by all. The Mi'kmaq also understood and respected tribal affiliation and local village citizenship. Their leaders were well-respected and exceptional individuals who took their responsibilities very seriously. Meetings of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council were recorded by the Pu'tus, who was the keeper of the records and stories.

The traditional Mi'kmaq style of governing included the following features:

- They used consensus-building to make decisions.
- They discussed issues in the form of a talking circle, where every individual there had lots of time to express his or her opinions and views.
- They respected the wisdom and knowledge of community Elders when it came to making decisions.
- The Mi'kmaq did not keep a written record of how their government operated. Instead, policies and procedures were understood and passed on from generation to generation through the teachings of

the Elders. As well, the wampum belt kept by the Pu'tus recorded the history of the Mi'kmaq and the decisions of the Grand Council.

- There was opportunity for nationhood and strength on a tribal basis. i.e. The process allowed tribes to unite against common threats. Tribes could agree to unite and work together in times of war or natural disaster.

## European Contact and the Transition Period

European contact and their eventual takeover forever changed the way the Mi'kmaq governed themselves. This happened because the colonists imposed their own system of government on the "citizens" of the Colonies.

Several factors contributed to the fall of the traditional Mi'kmaw style of government. They include:

- European settlers quickly began to outnumber the Mi'kmaq and dominate the area.
- The settlers implemented a private land tenure system. They received grants of land from the British Crown and they began to take over the hunting territories traditionally used by the Mi'kmaq. The idea that one individual could own a

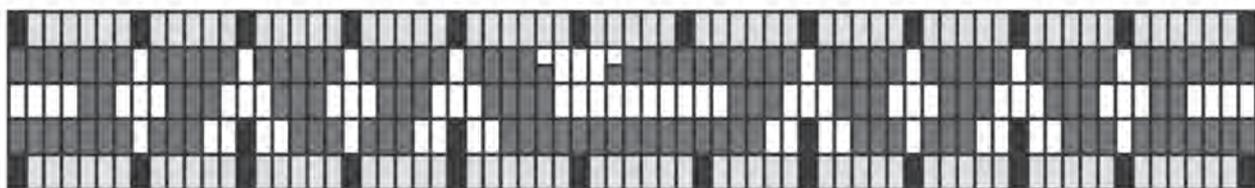
piece of land was completely foreign to the Mi'kmaq who were a communal people.

- The Europeans were diligent record-keepers. They wrote everything down, including information about land ownership, trade practices and population statistics. Soon the Mi'kmaq were kept from their traditional lands. The settlers counted them regularly to make sure the number of Native people was not growing too quickly. The early settlers worried that the Mi'kmaq could threaten their newfound home.

During the 1700s, the Mi'kmaq and the colonists signed a series of treaties. These treaties recognized the Mi'kmaq as a nation living in peace and friendship with the colonists. They also set out rules about trade and economic relations between the two peoples. However, the Mi'kmaq were gradually pushed into smaller and smaller areas. The colonists were exerting more and more control over their lives.

In 1867 the Constitution Act came into being. This act established provincial boundaries. It also established federal and provincial jurisdictions in the European style. The Constitution Act did not consider the needs of Aboriginal peoples. Instead, the colonists were more concerned with developing plans to keep the Mi'kmaq under control.

### A "Protocol Belt" sent to the Chiefs of the Wabanki Confederacy to request a meeting



Then, in 1876 the Indian Act was passed. This act referred to the Mi'kmaw people as "wards" (dependents) of the federal government." Now the Mi'kmaq could not move about freely. They had no say in government issues that affected their traditional territory and they had little chance of being self-sufficient. The federal government had all the power and the Mi'kmaw Nation was forced to become a dependent people. The proud, self-sufficient, self-governing nation that greeted the early settlers was no longer visible.

By the early 20th century, the Mi'kmaq were truly disadvantaged. Anything the federal government did seemed to make things worse for the Mi'kmaq. First, the government decided to create Indian Reserves, which grouped Native peoples together in small communities. Later (1942), the federal government imposed centralization. The aim of centralization was to relocate all of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to reserves in Shubenacadie and Eskasoni. Next the Indian Registry was created, forcing Native peoples to record their Indian status. The Indian Act gave the federal government complete control over the Mi'kmaq—deciding which lands they could live on, telling them how to elect their community leaders, and even defining their Native status and membership. The traditional Mi'kmaw system of government was destroyed.

## Mi'kmaw Leadership and Governance Today

In Nova Scotia today, there are 13 Mi'kmaw communities. Each community has its own elected leadership which is made up of a chief and councilors. Mi'kmaw communities hold elections every two years and follow the regulations set out by the Indian Act. One council member is elected for every 100 members.

Until recently, only those members living on the Indian Reserve were eligible to vote in community leadership elections. In 1999 the Supreme Court ruled in the case of *Corbiere vs. Canada* that band members living off-Reserve were eligible to vote in community leadership elections. The result of this decision is that community elections are now a complicated, expensive and drawn-out process. This is because community members may be living all over North America and beyond. The First Nations community election process takes 90 days—considerably longer than the Canadian Federal election process.

The Government of Canada recognizes the autonomy of each First Nation. This means that each community has the right to make its own decisions on some local matters. However, each community must also present Band Council Resolutions (BCRs) to the federal government in order to get

### Wabanaki Confederacy Wampum Belt



money for housing and other programs, for the implementation of local by-laws, land administration, and other community needs. The Minister of Indian Affairs has the power to accept or reject the BCR.

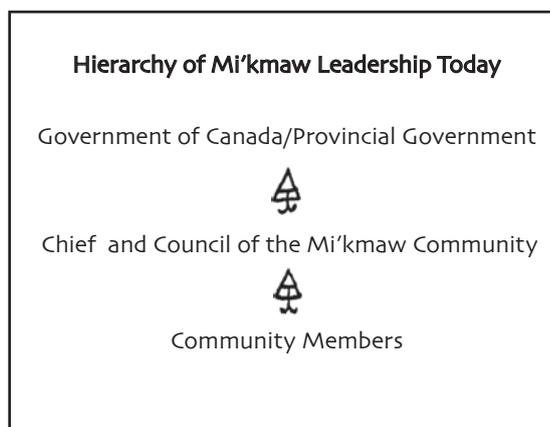
The local band office in each community oversees programs such as Social Assistance, Economic Development, Housing and Health. However, all these programs are subject to the policies and rules of the federal government. Mi'kmaq continue to have little say in the policies that affect them directly.

In an effort to come together to discuss matters that affect all First Nations, the Mi'kmaq have taken a couple of steps. First, in 1970, they formed the Union of Nova Scotia Indians (UNSI). The UNSI was formed to bring together all Nova Scotia Chiefs to discuss issues that concern them all and to advocate for change.

In 1986, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) was formed as a Tribal Council. The CMM represents six Mi'kmaq Bands located on mainland Nova Scotia—Bear River, Annapolis Valley, Glooscap, Millbrook, Pictou Landing and Paqtnkek. These bands withdrew from UNSI to become members of the Confederacy.

Today, both UNSI and CMM provide advocacy and advisory services to their respective communities. The governing board of these tribal organizations is made up of the chiefs of member communities. In addition to the two tribal organizations, several other Mi'kmaq organizations have been formed to provide specific services to Mi'kmaq communities across Nova Scotia. Some of these include:

- Mi'kmaq Family & Children's Services (MFCS)
- Mi'kmaq Association of Cultural Studies (MACS)
- Mi'kmaq Employment and Training Secretariat (METS)
- Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK)



All of these organizations are non-profit, and each of them has a board of directors who are Mi'kmaw chiefs. The boards have decision-making powers over the programs and services offered by these organizations. However, funding for programs is provided by the federal government to make sure that federal rules and regulations are followed. At an even broader level, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs meets regularly to discuss matters concerning all 13 Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw communities.

### Governance and Policing

Governance involves creating laws, rules and policies that are needed to organize, operate and protect a community. But how are these laws monitored and enforced? Traditionally, Mi'kmaw settlements lived according to established oral laws and traditions. The laws were enforced by the community working together. The situation is much different today.

All Nova Scotians are subject to local, federal and provincial authorities/jurisdictions to monitor and enforce the rules.

However, as First Nations communities occupy federal lands and are subject to the Indian Act, jurisdiction on some matters is unclear. Some provincial rules do not even apply to First Nations, for example:

- regulation of gaming on-Reserve is different from regulation in non-Native communities. Gaming agreements are negotiated between the provincial government and each Mi'kmaw community, and do not necessarily follow the same rules and distribution as in non-Native communities.
- First Nations are exempt from provincial land tax because the federal government is viewed as the owner of federal land.
- Provincial licensing schemes do not apply on federal land, etc.

Often provincial laws conflict with Treaty Rights—many of which have been interpreted and upheld by the court system. The recognition by the courts of the Mi'kmaw right to fish commercially for a moderate livelihood (the Donald Marshall Decision, 1999) upset provincial fishing quota and licensing regimes. As a result the federal/provincial authorities began to negotiate communal fishing agreements with the First Nations communities as a method of responding to this significant Supreme Court decision.

Once the rules are understood and the jurisdiction is clear, there is still a question of who then polices the First Nations? Community bylaws on local matters are often monitored by local community bylaw officers. Enforcement is usually the responsibility of the RCMP.

### Six Nations Wampum Belt



Today, each Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw community has negotiated a community policing agreement with the RCMP which is cost-shared by the federal and provincial governments. The RCMP officers must know about the special jurisdictional circumstances of the communities in order to be effective.

Mi'kmaq are subject to laws, enforcement and court systems that are far-removed from traditional Mi'kmaw justice practices. Unfortunately, a much larger percentage of Aboriginal people experience conflict with the law than do other Canadians. Many believe that this is due to the huge difference between traditional Mi'kmaw justice and the justice system of today. As a result, Mi'kmaq are creating culturally appropriate programming to support those Aboriginal people facing conflict with the law. And they are encouraging community involvement in their sentencing and rehabilitation.

In 2000, the Mi'kmaw Legal Support Network (MLSN) was developed to build a bridge between the justice system and

the Mi'kmaw communities. MLSN programs include:

- The Mi'kmaw Court Worker Program (MCWP) which provides assistance, support services, translation (as needed) to Aboriginal people charged with an offence.
- The Mi'kmaw Customary Law Program (MCLP) that supports youth facing the justice system.
- The delivery of traditional Sentencing Circles as an alternative to court sentencing. This involves the Mi'kmaw community in decision-making on how youth may make amends for their offence(s) and what, if any, rehabilitative measures will be taken.

The MLSN is working with the federal and provincial justice departments to enhance today's justice system by bringing in traditional practices and culturally appropriate activities whenever possible.

#### Peace Wampum Belt



## Resources

### **The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq**

Information and/or speakers about Mi'kmaw governance today. (See also "KMK" for info)  
57 Martin Cres, Truro, NS B2N 6N7  
ph: (902) 895-6385  
Toll free: 1-877-892-2424  
website: [www.cmmns.com](http://www.cmmns.com)

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands, Centralization/Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31, Indian Status info, etc.  
INAC Atlantic Regional Office  
PO Box 160, 40 Havelock St  
Amherst, NS B4H 3Z3  
ph: (902) 661-6200  
fax: (902) 661-6237  
website: [www.inac.gc.ca](http://www.inac.gc.ca)

### **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)**

#### **Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative**

851 Willow Street, Truro, NS B2N 6N8  
ph: (902) 843-3880  
Toll free: 1-888-803-3880  
fax: (902) 843 3882  
e-mail: [info@mikmaqrightrights.com](mailto:info@mikmaqrightrights.com)  
website: [www.mikmaqrightrights.com](http://www.mikmaqrightrights.com)

### **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

INAC website contains excerpts from the Royal Commission Reports  
website: [www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ap/pubs/rpt/rpt-eng.asp)

### **RCMP First Nations Community Policing Service**

Local RCMP detachments also may have staff to give presentations on Aboriginal policing.  
website: [www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/fncps-spcpn-eng.htm](http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/pubs/abo-aut/fncps-spcpn-eng.htm)

## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. In 1942, the government decided to centralize all Mi'kmaq by relocating them to two large reserves: Eskasoni and Shubenacadie. Centralization was not successful. Many families did not want to leave their homes and friends to move to another place not knowing what would face them. Imagine yourself in this position. What would be your feelings and thoughts if you were the head of the household?
2. Traditional governance made decisions by reaching consensus. Today's governments make decisions based on a majority of the representatives agreeing and supporting the decision. What would be the pros and cons of each of these systems of decision making? This might be a good topic for a class debate.
3. What barriers/challenges do you see to the Mi'kmaw Nation becoming a free and self governing nation? In your opinion will the Mi'kmaq ever become an independent, self-governing nation as it was at the time of European contact. Why or why not?



# Freedom, Dependence and Nation Building

Tracking the ever-changing relationship  
between Mi'kmaq and Canadian governments

- In the Beginning—a proud and free nation
  - The Treaty Relationship
  - From Freedom to Dependence
  - Re-Building a Nation
  - Policies and Legislation
  - Mi'kmaq Administrative and Program Delivery Organizations
  - The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
  - Recent Court Decisions
  - Political Infrastructure
  - Moving Ahead in the 21st Century
- 
- Resources
  - Activities/Discussion Questions

# Freedom, Dependence and Nation Building

Tracking the ever-changing relationship between Mi'kmaq and Canadian governments



## In the Beginning— a proud and free nation

Prior to European contact, the Mi'kmaq were an independent Nation with a sophisticated (complex) system of government. They used diplomacy with other First Nations and they were skilled negotiators. As members of the Wabanaki Confederacy (which included the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and Abenaki tribes), they worked together to resolve various issues.

The Mi'kmaq and the other members of the Wabanaki Confederacy often held meetings. They recorded their agreements on a series of Wampum Belts. The Wampum Belts were made of shells arranged in a special pattern. These belts told the story of the Mi'kmaq and the treaty agreements they had with other First Nations. The Wampum belt was the responsibility of the Pu'tus who knew how to record and read the messages of the belt.

First Nations peoples believed that everything was interconnected—meaning, connected to everything else. Their goal was to create and maintain harmony among all living things and to avoid conflict. This worldview was reflected in the Wampum Belts, which were used to record the treaties between First Nations and the European settlers.

## The Treaty Relationship

Prior to Confederation in 1867, a number of treaties were signed between the Mi'kmaq and the Colonial government.

In the 1700s the Mi'kmaq signed a series of “Peace and Friendship” treaties called the Covenant Chain of Treaties. These agreements recognized friendly and respectful relations between the Mi'kmaq and the Europeans. They were based on a shared understanding of mutual independence and trade. In exchange for their loyalty to the Europeans, the treaties guaranteed that the Mi'kmaq would be able to continue hunting and fishing in their territory. These treaties have been recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada as legal and binding documents and have been referenced in many recent court decisions.

**Andrew Alex holding  
a Wampum belt**



History Collection, Nova Scotia Museum, Halifax

# 1752

Enclosure in letter of Governor Hopson  
to the  
Right Honourable The Earl of Holderness 6th of Dec. 1752  
Treaty or  
Articles of Peace and Friendship Renewed

BETWEEN

His Excellency Peregrine Thomas Hopson Esquire Captain General and Governor in Chief in and over His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia or Acadie Vice Admiral of the same & Colonel of One of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot, and His Majesty's Council on behalf of His Majesty.

AND

Major Jean Baptiste Cope Chief Sacham of the Tribe of Mick Mack Indians, Inhabiting the Eastern Coast of the said Province, and Andrew Hadley Martin, Gabriel Martin and Francis Jeremiah members & Delegates of the said Tribe, for themselves and their said Tribe their heirs and the heirs of their heirs forever. Begun made and Concluded in the manner form & Tenor following, viz.

1. It is agreed that the Articles of Submission & Agreements made at Boston in New England by the Delegates of the Penobscot Norridgewolk & St. John's Indians in the Year 1725 Ratified and Confirmed by all the Nova Scotia Tribes at Annapolis Royal in the Month of June 1726 and lately Renewed with Governor Cornwallis at Halifax and Ratified at St. John's River, now read over Explained & Interpreted shall be and are hereby from this time forward renewed, reiterated and forever Confirmed by them and their Tribe, and the said Indians for themselves and their Tribe, and their Heirs aforesaid do make and renew the same Solemn Submissions and promises for the strict Observance of all the Articles therein Contained as at any time heretofore hath been done.
2. That all Transactions during the Late War shall on both sides be buried in Oblivion with the Hatchet, And that the said Indians shall have all favour, Friendship & Protection shewn them from this His Majesty's Government.
3. That the said Tribe shall use their utmost Endeavours to bring in the other Indians to Renew and Ratify this Peace, and shall discover and make known any attempts or designs of any other Indians or any Enemy whatever against his Majesty's Subjects within this Province so soon as they shall know thereof and shall also hinder and Obstruct the same to the utmost of their power, and on the other hand if any of the Indians refusing to ratify this Peace shall make War upon the Tribe who have now Confirmed the same; they shall upon Application have such aid and Assistance from the Government for their defence as the Case may require.
4. It is agreed that the said Tribe of Indians shall not be hindered from, but have free liberty of Hunting and Fishing as usual and that if they shall think a Truck house needful at the River Chibenaccadie, or any other place of their resort they shall have the same built and proper Merchandize, lodged therein to be exchanged for what the Indians shall have to dispose of and that in the mean time the Indians shall have free liberty to being to Sale to Halifax or any other Settlement within this Province, Skins, feathers, fowl, fish or any other thing they shall have to sell, where they shall have liberty to dispose thereof to the best Advantage.
5. That a Quantity of bread, flour, and such other Provisions, as can be procured, necessary for the Familys and proportionable to the Numbers of the said Indians, shall be given them half Yearly for the time to come; and the same regard shall be had to the other Tribes that shall hereafter Agree to Renew and Ratify the Peace upon the Terms and Conditions now Stipulated.
6. That to Cherish a good harmony and mutual Correspondence between the said Indians and this Government His Excellency Peregrine Thomas Hopson Esq. Capt. General & Governor in Chief in & over His Majesty's Province of Nova Scotia or Acadie Vice Admiral of the same & Colonel of One of His Majesty's Regiments of Foot hereby promises on the part of His Majesty that the said Indians shall upon the First Day of October Yearly, so long as they shall Continue in Friendship, Receive Presents of Blankets, Tobacco, some Powder & Shot, and the said Indians promise once every year, upon the first of October, to come by themselves or their Delegates and Receive the said Presents and Renew their Friendship and Submissions.
7. That the Indians shall use their best Endeavours to save the Lives & Goods of any People Shipwrecked on this Coast where they resort and shall Conduct the People saved to Halifax with their Goods, and a Reward adequate to the Salvage shall be given them.
8. That all Disputes whatsoever that may happen to arise between the Indians now at Peace and others His Majesty's Subjects in this Province shall be tryed in His Majesty's Courts of Civil Judicature, where the Indians shall have the same benefits, Advantages & Priviledges an any others of His Majesty's Subjects.

In Faith & Testimony whereof the Great Seal of the Province is hereunto appended, and the Partys to these Presents have hereunto interchangeably Set their Hands in the Council Chamber at Halifax this 22nd day of Nov. 1752 in the 26th Year of His Majesty's Reign.

P. T. Hopson  
Chas. Lawrence  
Benj. Green  
Jno. Salusbury  
Willm. Steele  
Jno. Collier

Jean Baptiste Cope, his Mark  
Andrew Hodley, his Mark  
Francois Jeremie, his Mark  
Gabriel Martin, his Mark

Some of the well-known treaties include:

1725—Treaty with the Mi'kmaq and Maliseet signed in Boston. It was the first of several treaties to be signed between the British and the Mi'kmaq to establish a peaceful alliance.

1726—The 1725 Treaty was ratified and confirmed by all the Mi'kmaw tribes in NS during talks at Port Royal. This was the first of what is now known as the Treaties of Peace and Friendship.

1728—Further ratification of the 1725 Treaty.

1749—Treaty signed with the Aboriginal peoples at Chebucto and St. Johns River renewing the Treaty of 1725.

1752—The Treaty of 1752, signed by Jean Baptiste Cope and Governor Hopson of Nova Scotia, made peace and promised hunting, fishing and trading rights.

1753—Ratification of the Treaty of 1752.

1760/61—Treaties of Peace and Friendship were made by the Governor of Nova Scotia with Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy communities. They include the rights to harvest fish, wildlife, wild fruit and berries to support a moderate livelihood.

1762—Belcher's Proclamation described the British intention to protect the just rights of the Mi'kmaq to their land.

1763—The Royal Proclamation of 1763 is a complicated document that reserved large areas of land in North America as Indian hunting grounds and set out a process for cession and purchase of Indian lands.

It should be noted that the treaties were written in English and the Mi'kmaq were not fluent in that language at the time they signed them. This meant that they were open to interpretation.

Many Mi'kmaq recalled other spoken agreements and ceremonies with the Europeans. They also considered these agreements to be like treaties. However, there are very few records of these ceremonies and spoken agreements in existence today.

### **From Freedom to Dependence— How did it happen?**

The first European settlements began to spring up around Nova Scotia in the late 1700s. Large British settlements included a fort at Annapolis and a fishing station at Canso. The French settled in Port Royal. Early relationships and treaties between the Mi'kmaq and the Europeans were mostly about trade. The City of Halifax was founded in 1749 and by the 1780s the British Loyalists began to arrive in Nova Scotia. The population of Europeans in Nova Scotia grew quickly as they settled on the land and began to establish their own economies.

With the arrival of large numbers of settlers, the Mi'kmaq soon became dispossessed. Land grants were given to the newcomers by the British crown to encourage them to settle in the "new world." The newcomers set up their own Colonial government and took control of the area.

Over the years, the newcomers made many attempts to assimilate the Mi'kmaq and control their lands. By the 1830s, the Colonial Government tried to relocate the Mi'kmaq on small areas of land throughout Nova Scotia known as Indian Reserves. However, the Mi'kmaq did not want to move to reserves because it didn't suit their traditional seasonal lifestyle. The lands set aside for Indian Reserves were inadequate and isolated.

Following the Confederation of Canada in 1867, many further government acts and policies to control the Mi'kmaq were enacted. They included:

**The Indian Act (1876)**—This act made Native peoples the wards (dependents) of the federal government. The point of the Indian Act was to train the Mi'kmaw people to abandon their language, culture and religion and force them to assimilate into Canadian society.

**The Centralization Movement**—The policy began in the 1910s. In the 1940s Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia were forced to move to two large reserves—in Shubenacadie and Eskasoni. Although the Centralization policy was not completely successful, many Mi'kmaq did move to these reserves. Today these two First Nations have the largest Mi'kmaw population in Nova Scotia.

**Indian Status and Registration**—From the 1850s onward, the Mi'kmaq continued to lose their identity. It became the job of the

federal government to decide who was and who was not Indian. The Mi'kmaq could no longer even decide who they were on their own terms. There was a ban on all cultural activities between 1884 to 1951.

**Residential Schools**—With the Residential School movement of the 1930s, many Mi'kmaq had their language and cultural practices taken away from them.

Left with poor-quality land reserves, community membership decided by the federal government, and the Indian Act dictating all aspects of their life, the Mi'kmaq of the 19th and 20th centuries became almost totally dependent on the federal government. From total independence to complete government dependence—the Mi'kmaq became a broken nation.

## **Re-building a Nation**

During the last part of the 20th century, the relationship between the government and the Mi'kmaq slowly began to change.

## **Policies and Legislation**

In 1969, the Liberal government, under the leadership of Pierre Elliot Trudeau introduced the White Paper Policy. This policy proposed complete assimilation so that the Aboriginal people would be treated and viewed as all other Canadians. This would mean the loss of status, community and culture.

It was this policy that gave the Mi'kmaw Nation a wake-up call. Realizing that they were in very real danger of being assimilated, the Mi'kmaq began to work together to get back their independence. Their goal was to preserve their culture and their communities. Fortunately, the White Paper Policy was withdrawn and never became law. However, to this day, First Nations continue to believe that the government may still be working to assimilate the Aboriginal culture.

The Constitution Act of 1982 added Section 35(1) to the Constitution of Canada. For the first time, existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights were affirmed as constitutionally protected rights. This secured the position of all Aboriginal people in Canada, stating their special position as Canada's first peoples.

In 1985, the federal government passed Bill C-31 to reinstate Native women who had, in accordance with the Indian Act (pre-1985), lost Indian status by marrying non-Native men. Although many welcomed the opportunity to regain their status, Bill C-31 had several negative impacts.

- There were now four different "classifications" imposed on First Nations, which has sometimes led to lack of unity within communities:
  - Mi'kmaq, who had status even before Bill C-31

- Mi'kmaq who have had status restored under Bill C-31
- Mi'kmaq who are descendants of those who were reinstated, and
- Non-status Mi'kmaw persons of Mi'kmaw ancestry who are not eligible for Indian Status.

- This resulted in an immediate increase in First Nations population with no corresponding increase in land and resources. The First Nations population increased by 100,000 across Canada.
- While the population ballooned shortly after Bill C-31, the provisions under this legislation have the potential, over time, to dramatically decrease the number of people who have Mi'kmaw status. This is seen as a threat to the future of the culture. It limited the ability of children with one Native and one non-Native parent to pass on status to their children if they marry outside of the culture. If the Mi'kmaq continue to marry outside the culture, assimilation may happen within the next two generations. The future may see Reserve lands occupied by people with no Indian status. This threat of assimilation has motivated the Mi'kmaq to work toward building a nation that defines "status" on its own terms.



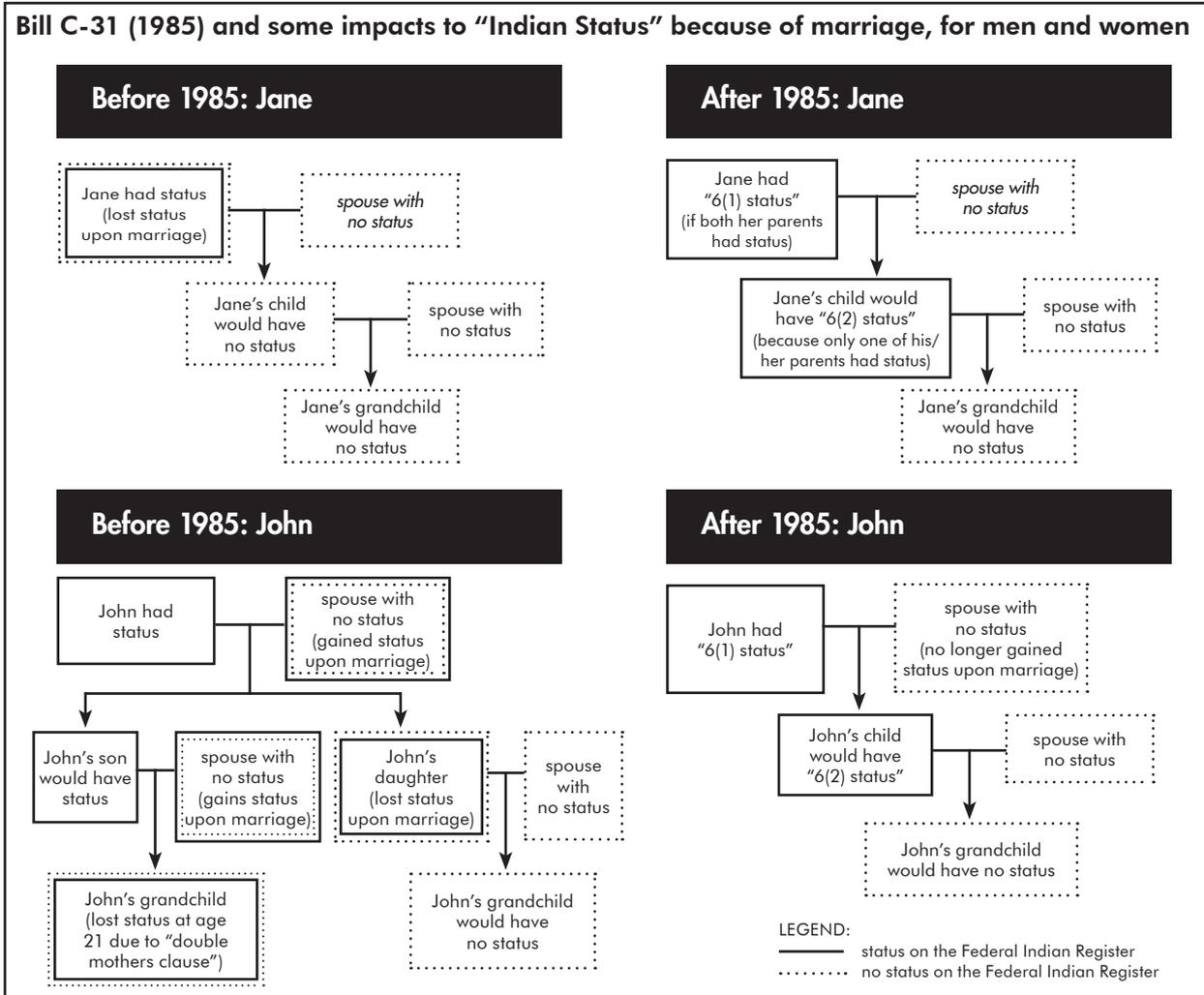
Bill C-31 further divided status into two classifications:

Members whose parents are both Mi'kmaw status Indians were given the classification of 6(1) and those who only have one parent with Indian status were classified as 6(2).

The following chart compares Indian Act status inheritance before and after Bill C-31. We can see from this chart the potential of decreasing status population.

### Mi'kmaw Administrative and Program Delivery Organizations

Not satisfied with services from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, and concerned over the White Paper Policy, the Mi'kmaq started to be more involved in looking after their own affairs at the local community level across Nova Scotia. Social programs were soon managed and administered by the local community. Gradually other programming was shifted from government to community in areas like housing, infrastructure and membership. At the same



time, organizations led by Mi'kmaq were set up to provide services to their members. Many of these organizations continue to operate today.

## **The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples**

In the summer of 1990, the Oka crisis brought worldwide attention to Native rights in Canada. The town of Oka, in the province of Quebec, announced its intention to develop a golf course on lands that had been claimed for many years as traditional burial ground for the Mohawk of the Kanehsatake First Nation. This clash turned into a 78-day armed standoff between Native warriors, the Quebec provincial police, and eventually the Canadian army. What began as a disagreement over land, was expanded to bring attention to the living conditions of Aboriginal Canadians and their relationship with the government.

Immediately following the Oka crisis, the Canadian government initiated the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP).

The mandate of the Commission was to study the evolution of the relationship of the Aboriginal peoples, the government of Canada, and Canadian society as a whole. Four of the seven individuals appointed to the Commission were Aboriginal.

The RCAP visited Native communities across the country, heard briefs from over 2000 people and commissioned over 350 research studies. A five-volume report was released on November 21, 1996. The main conclusion of the report was the need for a complete restructuring of the relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The RCAP Report provides an Aboriginal perspective on Canadian history and the role Aboriginal peoples should play in modern society.

In response, federal and provincial governments began to support practical initiatives to address Aboriginal social and economic issues raised by the report.

It was not until 1997 that the Canadian Government purchased the land in dispute on behalf of the Native community. In 1999, Kanehsatake signed a land management agreement with the federal government giving the community management authority over the land. Today the land has been used to extend the community's burial ground.

## Recent Court Decisions

Several issues have been brought before the courts that have significantly changed the lives of First Nations and contributed to the relationship with government that is unfolding today.

1985—The Supreme Court of Canada held that the Treaty of 1752 was an existing treaty in *R.v.Simon*.

1990—The Supreme Court of Canada, in the *Sparrow* decision, set out the way in which Aboriginal and treaty rights are protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution, and indicated that the government and First Nations should negotiate the details of implementation.

1990—The Nova Scotia Court of Appeal held that the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia had Aboriginal rights to fish for food, protected by section 35(1) of the Constitution in the case of *Denny, Paul and Sylliboy*.

1997—The Supreme Court of Canada provided guidance on the question of Aboriginal title in the *Delgamuukw* case, stating how rights to land, and not just rights to fish or hunt on the land, were to be determined. The Supreme Court of Canada also directed that governments and First Nations should try to negotiate how these rights should be recognized and implemented.

1999—The Supreme Court of Canada released the *Donald Marshall* decision recognizing the treaties of 1760 and 1761 and the right to hunt, fish and gather for a moderate livelihood.

1999—The Supreme Court of Canada released the *Marshall II* decision, explaining in more detail the rights identified in the first *Marshall* decision, and the power of the government to justify infringing the rights.

These decisions gave support and momentum to the negotiation of Aboriginal and treaty rights.

## Political Infrastructure

In the 1990s as a result of the wrongful conviction of Donald Marshall Junior for the murder of Sandy Seale, the Government of Nova Scotia launched an investigation and inquiry. A Royal Commission appointed by the Government of Nova Scotia examined the events and presented its findings and recommendations for change in support of fair and equitable treatment for Aboriginal people interacting with the Justice System.

With federal, provincial and local support, many of these recommendations have come to life:

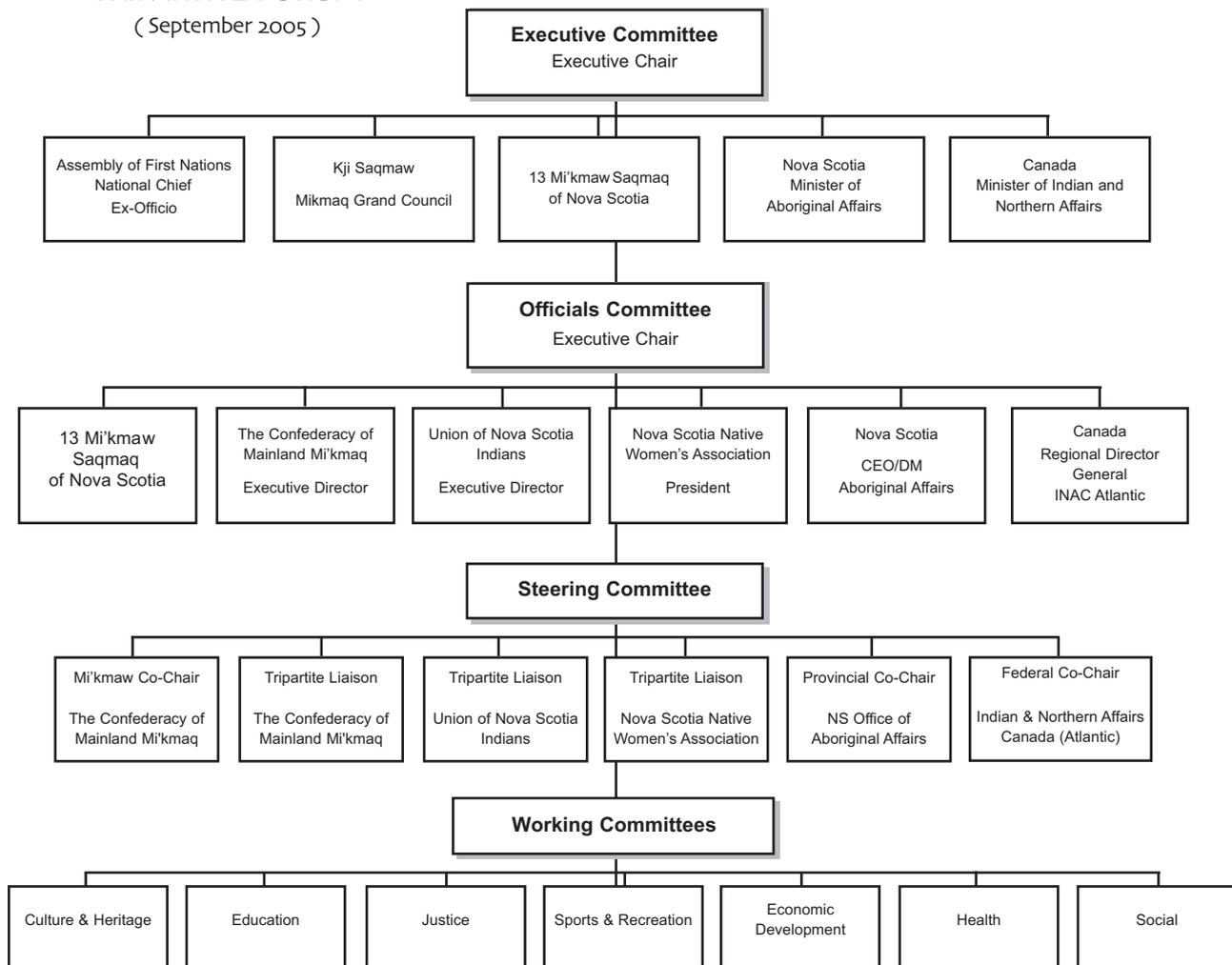
- More Mi'kmaw students are entering and graduating from law school.
- There are RCMP detachments in many First Nations.

- The Mi'kmaq Legal Support Network (MLSN) was established to help Aboriginal people dealing with the legal system in Nova Scotia.
- The Mi'kmaq Court Worker Program was established.
- Mi'kmaw-speaking clients are now offered translation services.
- The MCLP (Mi'kmaw Customary Law Program) was launched to assist Aboriginal young offenders.

**Mi'kmaq • Nova Scotia • Canada**  
**TRIPARTITE FORUM**

[www.tripartiteforum.com](http://www.tripartiteforum.com)

( September 2005 )



**KEY**

**ACOA:** Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency  
**APC:** Atlantic Policy Congress  
**CMM:** Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (The)  
**EEDC:** Eskasoni Economic Development Corp.  
**Fed DOJ:** Federal Dept of Justice

**FN&IHB:** First Nations & Inuit Health Branch  
**INAC:** Indian & Northern Affairs Canada  
**MHC:** Membertou Health Centre  
**MK:** Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey  
**NS DCS:** NS Dept of Community Services  
**NS DOE:** NS Dept of Education

**NS ED:** Nova Scotia Economic Development  
**NS CS:** Nova Scotia Correctional Services  
**NS DOH:** Nova Scotia Dept of Health  
**NS TCH:** Nova Scotia Tourism, Culture & Heritage  
**NS OHP:** Nova Scotia Office of Health Promotion  
**RCAP:** Royal Commission on Aboriginal People

Another of the recommendations of the Donald Marshall Inquiry was to establish a discussion table where the Mi'kmaq, the federal government and the provincial government could meet on a regular basis to resolve issues of mutual concern. It was this recommendation that gave birth to the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum.

The Tripartite Forum provides a mechanism where problems can be solved through mutual discussion and agreement.

The Forum has three levels:

1. The Working Committees—These committees bring issues to the discussion table. Each of the three parties of the Forum assigns representatives to the committees to initiate the discussion process. If the issue is not resolved at this level, it moves to the Officials Committee.

2. The Officials Committee—This committee is made up of the regional directors of the government departments involved and the

Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. It is at this table that decisions are made regarding the work plan and budgets of the Forum.

3. The Executive of the Tripartite—The Executive of the Tripartite meets on an annual basis to review the progress of the Forum. At this level, Mi'kmaq leaders meet with government ministers to resolve issues that could not be resolved at the other levels of the Forum. The Executive can also make changes to the tripartite process as needed. In 2000, the Executive revised the tripartite process to accommodate room for the negotiation of Mi'kmaq treaty rights.

## Moving Ahead in the 21st Century

### The Umbrella Agreement

On June 7, 2002, the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Umbrella Agreement was signed. This was an important day in Mi'kmaq history. This agreement:

- (1) Reaffirmed the commitment of all parties to the Tripartite Process
- (2) Committed the parties to enter into good-faith negotiations to address Aboriginal Title and the implementation of Treaty rights.
- (3) Committed all parties to developing terms of reference for a consultation process to support the negotiation process.



**Signing of the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Umbrella Agreement, Halifax, NS, June 7, 2002**

## **The Mi'kmaw "Made-in-Nova Scotia" Process**

The "Made in Nova Scotia Process" refers to the negotiations process referred to under the Umbrella Agreement of 2002. For the Mi'kmaq, the purpose of this process is to negotiate the definition, recognition and implementation of Mi'kmaw, Aboriginal and treaty rights. As the name implies, the process is unique and designed to address Aboriginal rights of the Mi'kmaw treaties. It is designed to put these rights into operation. It is not about re-negotiating the treaties. In essence, the process will bring about an understanding of what is included in these rights and what the Mi'kmaq may do under these rights. Under this process, Mi'kmaw legal rights will not be surrendered or given up.

The Made in Nova Scotia process also includes a Consultation Table to determine when and how Canada and Nova Scotia should consult with the Mi'kmaq over issues that might affect their rights. Other issues

with Nova Scotia and Canada that do not immediately concern Aboriginal land or treaty rights will be dealt with through the Tripartite Forum. However, the Tripartite Forum and the "Made in Nova Scotia Process" may work together on related issues in the future.

By 2003, all three parties had named their Lead Negotiators and began discussion on the Framework Agreement—the blueprint that sets out the process to be followed in negotiating Mi'kmaw rights.

## **Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMKNO)- "Searching for Consensus"**

In 2004, a non-profit society was incorporated to administer and manage the Mi'kmaw participation in the negotiation process. The "Made in Nova Scotia Process" began to be referred to as the KMKNO. The KMKNO conducts research and facilitates community discussion on matters to be negotiated.



(left to right)  
Chief Lawrence Paul  
(Millbrook), The Hon.  
Michael Baker Q.C.,  
(Nova Scotia Office  
of Aboriginal Affairs),  
The Hon. Robert Nault  
(Indian and Northern  
Affairs Canada) and  
Chief Terrance Paul  
(Membertou) during the  
signing of the Mi'kmaq-  
Nova Scotia-Canada  
Umbrella Agreement,  
Halifax, NS, June 7, 2002

The Mi'kmaq have also begun to formalize the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, which meets monthly to discuss matters of concern to all Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Decisions of the Assembly must be supported by Band Council Resolutions from each community before being legally binding. The Assembly provides the venue for Mi'kmaq leaders to meet and discuss issues of mutual concern as a "nation."

Negotiating Mi'kmaq rights will take many years of extensive research, consultation and negotiation among the three parties. As well, the negotiation of Mi'kmaq title will proceed slowly. In both instances the beneficiaries question must be addressed. The answer to this question will decide who will be eligible to receive the benefits of these negotiation processes. This is a challenging question that will see the Mi'kmaq Nation redefine its membership on its own terms.

With programs administered through Mi'kmaq organizations and Band Councils, a structure is in place to foster a negotiation process, the Supreme Court decision to uphold the treaties, and a more educated population, the Mi'kmaq are well on their way toward once again governing themselves as a Nation.



## References

### **Indian and Northern Affairs Canada**

Information on First Nation lands,  
Royal Commission Reports, Bill C-31,  
Indian Status, etc.

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## Activities/Discussion Questions

1. Prepare a short essay explaining the role played by government and the Courts to motivate the Mi'kmaq toward nation building.
2. Do you think the Mi'kmaq will ever become a self-governing and independent nation again? Why or why not?
3. You are a status Mi'kmaw adult living on-Reserve. You are told that the Mi'kmaq will soon become a Nation. How will this affect your life and that of future generations? Do you have any concerns about this development? What questions would you ask your Band Council about this change?

# KEKINA'MUEK

Learning about the Mi'kmaq  
of Nova Scotia



The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

# Kekina'muek (learning)

Learning about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia



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Wela'lioq

Dr. Donald M. Julien, ONS

Executive Director, The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq

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# Introduction



There is so much to say and so many stories to tell about the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia. This manual by no means presumes to tell it all. Rather we have tried to tell a little about a variety of aspects of Mi'kmaw life and history—past and present—and hope to instill an interest that will leave the reader wanting to explore the story of the Mi'kmaq a little further. It is a story of a people who have survived challenges and hardships and managed to maintain pride in their history and strong cultural values. It is a testament to the numerous contributions the Mi'kmaq have made to support and enhance the cultural mosaic we now call Nova Scotia.

The Mi'kmaq have always been here, are here today, and will continue to be here for millennia to come, sharing their stories and experiences. The title “Kekina'muek” is a Mi'kmaw word for “study” or “learn.” We hope all readers will enjoy our legacy, learn of our present day life, and look forward to sharing a prosperous future with us.

Wela'lioq

# How to use this manual



This manual is comprised of ten chapters; each formatted in a similar manner.

Each chapter begins with a statement of the theme or key message followed by a brief text.

Several resources/references are available to reinforce and elaborate on the content.

Suggestions for activities are also included for further discussion to inspire interpretation, interaction and sometimes debate in the classroom.

As vocabulary is one of the cornerstones of literacy, several words are underlined in each chapter that are defined in a glossary at the end of the manual. Readers are expected to familiarize themselves with the words and use them in the discussion groups and learning activities.

A bibliography of resources and references used to compile this publication is also included that will lead interested readers to learn more about the Mi'kmaq.

For quick reference, a historical timeline has been reproduced from the Mi'kmaw Resource Guide (Fourth Edition) and other sources to assist the student.