

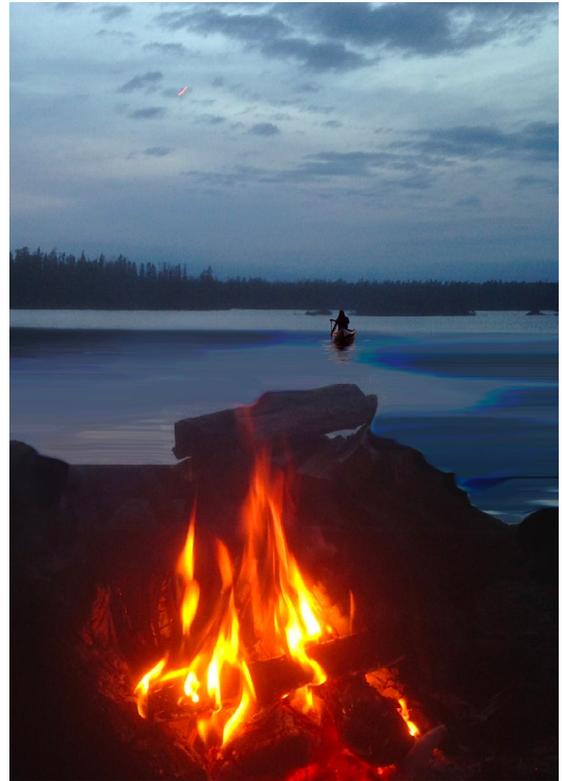
Mi'kmaw Decision-Making

A'se'k (Boat Harbour)

Scenario

It's the 1970s and it has become clear that a nearby plant that makes paper has been polluting a harbour and its shoreline that your community uses for fishing and harvesting as well as for swimming and playing. It is an ancestral place as well as a place used by the community today.

An environmental study released in 1969 shows that twelve kilometers of coast have been impacted from the pollution. Local physicians have noted increased respiratory illnesses and higher cancer rates within your community and those nearby. People can no longer fish, hunt, swim or play along the shoreline or in the water itself.



Group Resolution

Within your groups, you must decide what steps you should take to address this situation.

Use Mi'kmaw values as you make decisions: work together to reach a decision, honour humility, respect each other and include everyone. Remember that in Mi'kmaw worldview, decisions consider all living beings and the land, not just people.

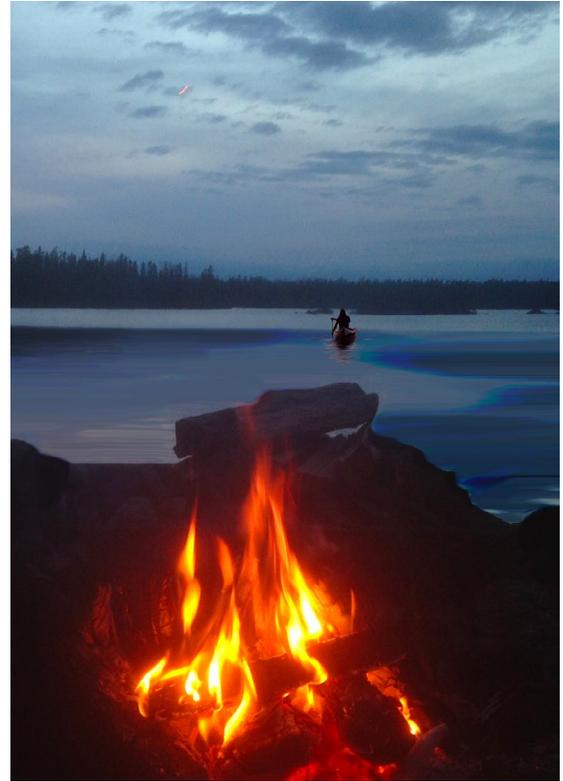


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Historical Notes

This scenario is created from the history of environmental pollution and discrimination at A'sek (also known as Boat Harbour) first started by Scott Paper. Mill operations commenced in 1967 and the negative impacts quickly became evident. Boat Harbour could no longer offer a safe haven to the Mi'kmaw community in terms of fishing, hunting, gathering, trapping, and recreation.

Local physicians noted increased respiratory illnesses and high cancer rates amongst locals. An environmental study, known as the Delaney Report, was released in 1969 indicating that, in addition to Boat Harbour, over twelve kilometers of coastline had been impacted from effluent disposal. Pictou Landing First Nation advocated for decades, voicing both health and environmental concerns.



How did the Mi'kmaq respond?

In 1986, Pictou Landing First Nation sued the federal government for failing to protect their rights and a settlement was reached. But effluent continued to be pumped into Boat Harbour. Following a pipeline break in 2014, the province agreed to establish a date for the closure of the Boat Harbour effluent treatment facility and the Boat Harbour Act was created. On January 31, 2020—over half a century since the Mill began disposing effluent in Boat Harbour—the facility was shut down. Since the Mill did not have an alternative place to dump its effluent, it too, ceased operations.

By 2022, fish were being caught in Boat Harbour again—a hopeful sign that perhaps one day it may return to the safe haven that it was. Meanwhile, the community must continue to protect this very important place.

