

**Mi'kmaq**  
Confederacy of  
Prince Edward Island

**“To Boldly Go Where No One Has  
Has Gone Before” —**

**Researching the Mi'kmaq of  
Prince Edward Island**

A Submission for the National Research Directors' Workshop

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Halifax, Nova Scotia

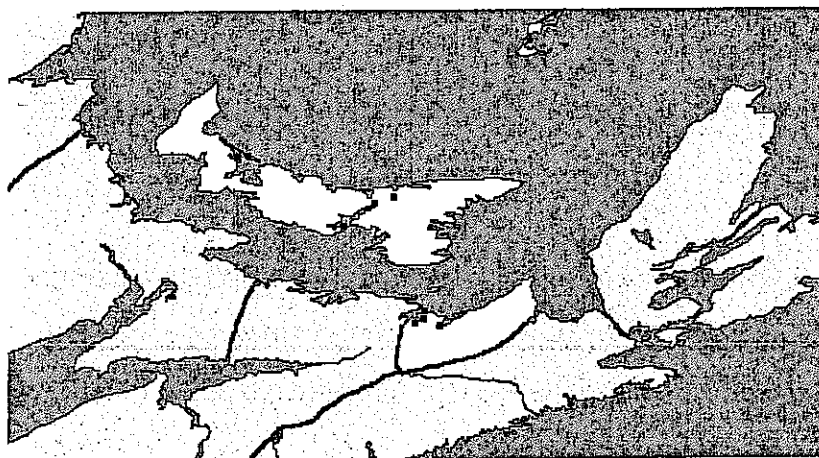
By:

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### **The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island**

The Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island (MCPEI) was established in 2002. The Tribal Council membership is composed of the two Bands on P.E.I. — Lennox Island and Abegweit — consisting of over 1,000 registered Band members living on and off the four reserves on Epekwitk. The MCPEI represents the collective interests of P.E.I. Mi'kmaq to foster a society that respects and sustains their existing aboriginal and treaty rights on P.E.I.. The impetus for the establishment of a shared organization emerged from the recognition that the Mi'kmaq communities have historically worked together, and represented themselves at regional, national and international levels. Today, the entire Lennox Island and Abegweit Band Councils sit as MCPEI board members.



In 2004, the MCPEI received recognition as a Tribal Council (TC) and Provincial Territorial Organization (PTO). With this recognition from the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the MCPEI receives funding to deliver five core Tribal Council programs: economic development; financial management; community planning; technical services; and band governance.

Bearing their unique history, unique culture, and unique rights in mind, the

Mi'kmaq of Epekwitk continue to apply ancestral traditions of communication and decision-making to their every-day lives. Like their ancestors, the P.E.I. Mi'kmaq are representing their unique interests with a Epekwitk voice. The Tribal Council's logo was carefully chosen to represent the unique position of the Epekwitk in Mi'kma'ki: it shows a red drum resting on water surmounted by a blade of sweetgrass. The drum represents Epekwitk, a Mi'kmaq territory surrounded by water. The drum skin is red, representing the colour of P.E.I. soil and the natural rhythm of constant change. The sweetgrass, sacred to the Mi'kmaq, represents new growth and the promise of a better future.

### **The MCPEI Research Programme**

Epekwitk is the least researched and the least understood region of Mi'kma'ki. Unlike Mi'kmaq on the mainland or K'qatmak (Newfoundland) who have been, in the words of one former Sakamaw of Potolek, "studied to death", there is little literature, either contemporary or historical, specifically focussing on the Mi'kmaq people of Epekwitk or the administration of Indian Affairs and Indian policy on the Island.

When the MCPEI was established, Paul J. Prosper was seconded from the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia to establish a research office and to develop a research programme for the Lennox Island and Abegweit Bands. The difficulties occasioned by the dearth of study of the Mi'kmaq of P.E.I. was immediately apparent. Unlike researchers working for the Mi'kmaq Nation in other parts of Mi'kma'ki or engaged in claims or other research for the Wolastoqiyik Nation (Maliseet) in New Brunswick; any researcher engaged by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island was virtually "starting from scratch". Indeed, even with the Nation in P.E.I., few Mi'kmaq knew of or know the history of the Epekwitk Mi'kmaq beyond one or two generations. Discussions between Mr. Prosper, the MCPEI Executive Director, Tracey

Cutcliffe, and the Chiefs and Councils of the Bands led to a consensus that a vital component of any research programme must be a public education campaign to inform Band members of the importance of research to the claims process and to ensure ownership by the Nation of its own history.

As a veteran of the claims research and litigation field, Mr. Prosper was determined that any research programme implemented in Prince Edward Island should have two primary objectives:

- (i) to gather data and file in one place any and all information relating to the Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island, including all information which may relate to their use and occupation of Epekwikt, their history, their relations with colonial, provincial, and federal governments, and any potential Specific and Comprehensive claims relating to the Island; and,
  
- (ii) to build the capacity to conduct historical research and prepare professional research reports within the Nation so that the Mi'kmaq Nation of P.E.I. would not be forced to rely on non-Mi'kmaq researchers to tell them their history and to process their claims for them.

### **Achieving Capacity within the Nation**

To meet the capacity building objectives of the research programme, Mr. Prosper turned to Gillian Allen, then a researcher with the Treaty & Aboriginal Rights Research Centre in Indian Brook, Nova Scotia. Ms. Allen was asked to design and deliver an intensive two week workshop on the mechanics of historical research (focussing on P.E.I.), and on the fundamentals of Aboriginal rights, Aboriginal title and Comprehensive and Specific claims. The workshop,

“Doing Research — The Right Way” was advertised throughout P.E.I. and Aboriginal people from across the Island were invited to apply to attend the workshop. From the dozens of applications received, Mr. Prosper selected seven delegates. The workshop attendees included on-reserve and off-reserve participants. Workshop students took part in sessions on Aboriginal and treaty rights, Aboriginal title and the Comprehensive and Specific claims processes. The students were also exposed to the historical research process. Tours of both the Provincial Archives of P.E.I. and the Robertson Library of University of Prince Edward Island (the only academic library in the province) were conducted and, at the end of each tour, the workshop participants completed research assignments: finding materials in the repository and then reporting on their findings in the workshop seminar. The students also observed the presentation of research results by two academics at a session attended by officials from DINA and Tom Molloy, the Chief Federal Negotiator designated by the federal government as its representative in all Aboriginal title claims in Mi’kma’ki and Wolsotoqk.

All workshop participants left the programme much more aware of the substance of the Aboriginal title, Aboriginal rights and treaty rights, and the claims process. This knowledge returned with them to their home communities. They are now able to speak knowledgeably of the meaning of Aboriginal title, the evidence necessary to substantiate a Comprehensive or Specific Claims, and how data necessary to substantiate a claim is obtained. This, MCPEI asserts, benefits the entire Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I.. As the communities are advised of the progress on claims issues (as is required to ultimately obtain informed consent), the seven workshop participants are now in a position to share what they learned at the workshop with their friends, neighbours and relatives. They can assist in explaining, for example, why “use and occupation data” is important for asserting Aboriginal title, and what “outstanding lawful obligation” means in relation to Specific Claims. The

workshop was the MCPEI's first step in meeting its goal of achieving capacity – increasing knowledge generally to ensure an informed membership.

### **Resources and Researching the Mi'kmaq**

The Aboriginal Title Project is part of a process to address outstanding issues and concerns relating to the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty Rights within the province of Prince Edward Island. The research project focusses on historical relations between the Mi'kmaq and colonial governments, including reviewing and transcribing written historical records of traditional Mi'kmaq activities on Prince Edward Island. The final report will provide the historical data necessary to inform future negotiations and discussions for the P.E.I. Mi'kmaq. In addition to the MCPEI Aboriginal Title Project, the Research Office is also building a database of all information relevant to or about the Mi'kmaq Nation in P.E.I. This database, together with an archival and library collection will, it is hoped, contain all information that may be necessary not only in support of the Aboriginal Title Project, but also in support of any Specific Claims and outstanding lawful obligations of the federal government.

As the research plans for the MCPEI were being developed, an examination of secondary sources led the Mr. Prosper and Ms. Allen to the uncomfortable conclusion that there were virtually no published materials which discussed in any detail the place of the Mi'kmaq in 18<sup>th</sup> century Epetwikt. Thus, the Research Director and the Research Consultant were unable to prepare a detailed bibliography of potential sources of information or point to particular secondary works which would assist anyone researching the Mi'kmaq Nation in P.E.I. in the early period of British sovereignty.<sup>1</sup> In addition, Mr. Prosper

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<sup>1</sup> A few secondary sources exist dealing with the 19<sup>th</sup> century Mi'kmaq of P.E.I.. Most deal with the question of establishing reserves on the Island or with the various philanthropists, priests, and colonial

conducted an extensive canvas of historians and anthropologists expert in the Mi’kmaq Nation and P.E.I. history, seeking input and advice on how to best approach the MCPEI’s research programme. The results of his questioning reinforced his own conclusions: none of the experts consulted were able to point the MCPEI Research Office at any academic (or, for that matter, non-academic) studies dealing with the 18<sup>th</sup> century P.E.I. Mi’kmaq. Unlike other areas Canada, there is also no central repository in P.E.I. which contains a coherent “Indian Affairs” collection dating back from the inception of British sovereignty or an ethnographic Mi’kmaq collection. This was the situation into which researchers would be placed when the research work began in earnest.

### **Engaging Researchers and Setting Goals**

From the participants in the first two-week workshop, two attendees, Mr. Wendell Labobe and Ms. Rose Matheson, were invited to join the MCPEI research programme and they began work in September of 2003. Neither researcher had a background in historical background before beginning work with the MCPEI research programme. The Confederacy’s Board of Directors and senior staff felt it absolutely essential that the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I. build the capacity to conduct and disseminate its own research. If the Nation is to ever achieve self-government, it must have within itself the skills to effectively conduct and complete all tasks necessary to be self-governing. The Nation feels it vital to own its research and own its own history and to achieve this ownership, it must be capable of not only understanding the research (the goal of the first workshop), but also of doing it.

Given that the Research Director and Research Consultant were unable to provide few concrete references and ‘starting points’ for the neophyte

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Indian Affairs officials dealing with the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I..

researchers, the initial instruction to the new researchers was simple: be omnivorous. If the word “Micmac” appears in a document, read it, copy it, transcribe if necessary, and digest it into a monthly research report. With so little starting information on the place of the Mi’kmaq in P.E.I., it was determined that it would be better to err on the side of caution and gather all material which might later prove relevant even if it did not appear so on its face.

In their first year with MCPEI the new researchers completed a second, advanced workshop conducted by Ms. Allen, this time focussing on the history of the Mi’kmaq and the research needs of the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I.. They also successfully completed courses in pre- and post-Confederation P.E.I. history at University of Prince Edward Island to improve their knowledge of Island history generally. The researchers began the difficult task of sifting through the primary sources held at the Public Archives and the Robertson Library’s P.E.I. Collection. The research programme began with the very late French regime/British assumption of sovereignty period (1740-1800) — the period about which there is very little known about the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I..

As part of their second year with MCPEI, Ms. Matheson and Mr. Labobe are reviewing historical and contemporary materials on the history of the Mi’kmaq to extract information relevant to and about the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I. in particular. In addition, work with the primary documents, including the Colonial Office material, collections of private papers, legislative papers, etc. is continuing. To date, the researchers have discovered that both official and non-governmental correspondents are virtually silent on the Mi’kmaq of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup>

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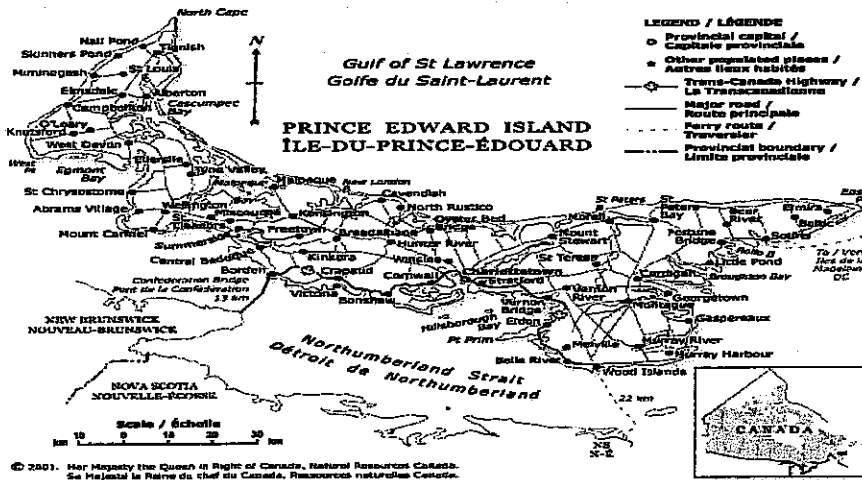
<sup>2</sup> An independent researcher, with a knowledge of 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century written French was engaged to review French colonial materials.



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National Research Directors’ Workshop, 2004**

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We are very proud of two researchers. Their diligence and commitment to a difficult task cannot be overstated. We have invited each researcher to include in this written presentation a section about himself and herself, so that you may meet them and understand from their respective perspectives what being a researcher for the MCPEI Research Office entails. As Mr. Labobe has a personal commitment making it impossible for him to prepare an oral presentation (he will have been married less than twenty-four hours when the Maritimes Showcase is presented!), Ms. Matheson alone will be addressing the gathering of Research Directors from across Canada.



### **Prince Edward Island Reserves**

In order to assist researchers from across Canada, unfamiliar with the situation of the Mi’kmaq Nation in P.E.I., we have included a brief summary of the creation of reserves in Prince Edward Island. As befits an island apart, Prince Edward Island is unique in Canada. The Island passed from French to British control with the Treaty of Paris in 1763 and was annexed to the colony of Nova Scotia. In the same year the Earl of Egmont petitioned George III for all

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Dealing with the archaic 250 year old French requires an expertise not available to MCPEI staff.

of St. John Island (as Prince Edward Island was then called).<sup>3</sup> He proposed dividing the Island into large lots and establishing a feudal tenure regime on the Island. Egmont's petition was denied.

The Royal Proclamation was issued on 7 October 1763. Among other things, the Royal Proclamation, on paper, protects the First Nations people of North America from having their land taken without their informed and general consent. The Proclamation was ignored by both Colonial officials in Charlottetown and London.

In the succeeding four years, Egmont and others presented a number of petitions to the British government, all seeking to divide St. John Island along the lines first proposed in Egmont's 1763 petition. None were acted upon. In 1765, Samuel Holland, a British surveyor, was sent to St. John Island to complete a survey of the Island. Holland divided the land into three counties, with each county seat surrounded by a *royalty* of 6,000 acres, reserved as pasture land for the towns. The remainder of the Island was divided into 67 numbered lots of approximately 20,000 acres each.

In 1767, Lots 40 and 59 were granted to persons who already had fishing stations along the shores of the lots. Lot 66, the "left over land" is reserved for the Crown. The British Government determined to grant the remaining land on the Island and sought offers from people willing to purchase a 20,000 lot and to settle colonists on the land. Sixty-four petitioners were selected to take part in a "lottery" from all those who put their names in for land on St. John Island. The sixty four names were placed in a box and the lots of 20,000 acres were assigned as drawn. All of St. John Island but for lot 66 reserved for the Crown, was now in private hands. Most of the lottery winners never went to St. John

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<sup>3</sup> The name of the Island was changed from St. John Island to Prince Edward Island in 1799.

Island. Inadvertently, Lennox Island, of 1,400 acres, was overlooked and was not granted in the 1767 partition. Finally, in 1772, Lennox Island was attached to Lot 12 and granted to Sir James Montgomery. No land was set aside as an Indian reservation anywhere on the Island.

In 1769, resident land holders on St. John Island requested a separate government for the Island. Halifax, capital of Nova Scotia, too far away. The British government agreed and Walter Patterson, a co-proprietor of Lot 19, was appointed first Governor of St. John Island. In 1784, the Island was again placed under the jurisdiction of Nova Scotia and the Governor became a Lieutenant Governor, answerable to the Governor in Halifax.

Between 1786-1800, several Mi'kmaq families moved to Lennox Island. Abbé de Calonne built a chapel to St. Ann, and attempted to encourage Mi'kmaq to clear land and plant crops. Lennox Island became gathering place for a St. Ann's Day mission. Lieutenant Governor Fanning wrote to James Montgomery, owner of Lennox Island, who agreed to allow the Mi'kmaq to reside on Lennox Island, and offered to sell it to the government for £300. The government refused to purchase the land.

In this same period, Fanning received a number of petitions and requests from Mi'kmaq seeking land of their own, with access to water. Fanning was unable to comply because everything (including Lot 66, initially reserved to the Crown) had been granted to private land holders. The government considered granting an offshore island to the Mi'kmaq.

In 1806 de Calonne petitioned the British government to purchase Lennox Island for the Mi'kmaq. No action was taken. Some Mi'kmaq, mostly members of the Francis family, resided on Lennox Island without title to the land. Many of the white land holders in the area took hay and fuel from Lennox Island,

despite the protests of the Mi'kmaq. The remainder of the Mi'kmaq population continued to move around P.E.I. and back and forth to the mainland, attempting to continue their traditional way of life.

James Yeo, one of the adjacent land holders who took hay and fuel from the Mi'kmaq at Lennox Island, offered to buy Lennox Island from Montgomery in 1827. Mi'kmaq opposition caused the sale to collapse. Yeo never forgave the Mi'kmaq and frequently worked against their interests while posing as a "friend of the Indian".

Four years later, philanthropist Thomas Irwin presented a petition to the Legislature, seeking education funding for the Mi'kmaq and a grant of land for an Indian reserve. A committee of the Assembly was struck to consider how to best help the Mi'kmaq. In 1832, the Committee made inquiries about purchasing an island for the Mi'kmaq. They considered several areas, and wrote to Montgomery about purchasing Lennox Island. Montgomery advised he had sold the island to David Stewart of London for £400 (although the sale was not completed until 1839). Stewart claimed to have bought Lennox Island for the Mi'kmaq to protect them and to prevent them from being annoyed and driven from place to place. He promised Sakamaw Peter Francis that he would support the Mi'kmaq against white trespassers, Yeo in particular. In the same year, Louis Francis Algimou and 4 other sakamaw presented a petition to the Legislative Assembly, noting they had not received land the Mi'kmaq had been promised.

In the wake of the Rebellion in the Canadas, Lord Durham was sent from England in 1838 to become the Governor General of British North America and High Commissioner to inquire into affairs in British North America. About P.E.I. Durham reported that problems on P.E.I. are a result of the actions of the landlords and their agents, and the system of landholding in general. In

that same year, a petition of Oliver Thomas Le Bone of May, on behalf of Mi’kmaq, stated that there were 500 Mi’kmaq in P.E.I., although the Lieutenant Governor believed only 200 Mi’kmaq were resident on the Island. Le Bone’s petition made its way to the Colonial Office in London where the Colonial Secretary wrote to Lieutenant Governor Fitzroy, requesting his recommendations on the LeBone petition and suggesting that the government purchase Lennox Island. Colonial Office officials also wrote to David Stewart, who stated he was prepared to sell Lennox Island to the government, if the government felt better able to provide for the security and comfort of the Mi’kmaq. His business agents set a price of £1,500. for the Island. As the British Treasury did not intend to spend the money to buy the Island, the information on the purchase price was forwarded to the P.E.I. government. Fitzroy, knowing Stewart had purchased the Island for £400, thought £600 was a reasonable purchase price for Lennox Island. The Legislature ordered a survey of Lennox Island, which valued the land at £200 and, by resolution of the House, refused to vote any money to pay for Lennox Island.

By 1841, Mi’kmaq had cleared 25 acres on Lennox Island, mostly for potatoes, although much of Lennox Island soil is unsuitable for agriculture. Two years later, the Assembly voted £50 to purchase one of the Murray Islands as a reserve for the Mi’kmaq, but no land was actually obtained.

Not all white residents of P.E.I. ignored the landless condition of the Mi’kmaq. In the 1850s, Charles Worrell set aside 204 acres of his land near St. Peters for six Mi’kmaq families. After the Mi’kmaq made improvements, they were bribed and bullied out of their lands by Irish immigrants. The Irish who stole the Mi’kmaq land, and the Indian Commissioners<sup>4</sup> both petitioned the House for

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<sup>4</sup> The first P.E.I. Indian Commissioners were appointed in 1856 to supervise and manage Indian lands. However, there were no reserve lands in P.E.I. to manage.

the land. The Commissioners wanted the lands given to the Mi'kmaq by Worrell returned to them or a equivalent alternative found for the Mi'kmaq. A few acres of poor quality land were set aside for the Mi'kmaq on Lot 55 in the Boughton River area. Land set aside in Lot 15, near Cape Egmont, was better quality and the whites quickly drive the Mi'kmaq off it. In 1859 the Irish who had driven the Mi'kmaq off the Worrell land received title to the land by paying the Crown Lands Office the regular price for the land.

In 1856, Henry Palmer, one of the Indian Commissioners, arranged a loan from the Board of Ordnance of 10 acres on the east side of Charlottetown Harbour for the Mi'kmaq. Eleven Louis and Mitchell families settled there.

Three years later the government purchased 204 acres in Lot 39 on the Morrell River for the Mi'kmaq, and title was transferred to the Indian Commissioners. The land was surveyed and stated to be ready for planting in the following spring — although half the land was unfit for agriculture.

In 1861 the Land Commission appointed by London to investigate and report upon the land problems on the Island reporting, recommending, *inter alia* that the Mi'kmaq be granted Lennox Island as a permanent reserve. The Assembly accepted the Land Commission Report, but it was rejected by London, and nothing was done to correct land holding abuses in P.E.I., either for the tenant farmers or the Mi'kmaq. Robert Bruce Stewart, David Stewart's heir, protested the Commission's recommendations on Lennox Island, rejecting any Mi'kmaq claim to the land. However, he indicated he was willing to sell it for £400.

In the same year, the Assembly received a petition on behalf of Peter Francis seeking permission for the Mi'kmaq to re-occupy Indian Island in Murray Harbour – the island the Legislature had contemplated buying after refusing to bid on Lennox Island. The owner asked £400 for Indian Island and the

Legislature refused buy it. Indian Commissioner Stewart recommended that the lands in Lots 15 and 55 set aside for the Mi'kmaq be sold and the proceeds used to buy more suitable land for the Mi'kmaq. The land was sold, but no further land is purchased for the Mi'kmaq.

In 1862, Theophilus Stewart founded the Micmac Society with the object of assisting the Mi'kmaq in agriculture to supplement their basketry and wood product sales, and to promote education. Stewart wrote to the Aborigines Protection Society in London, describing Mi'kmaq conditions in P.E.I., and seeking assistance. The Society sent Stewart a small sum.

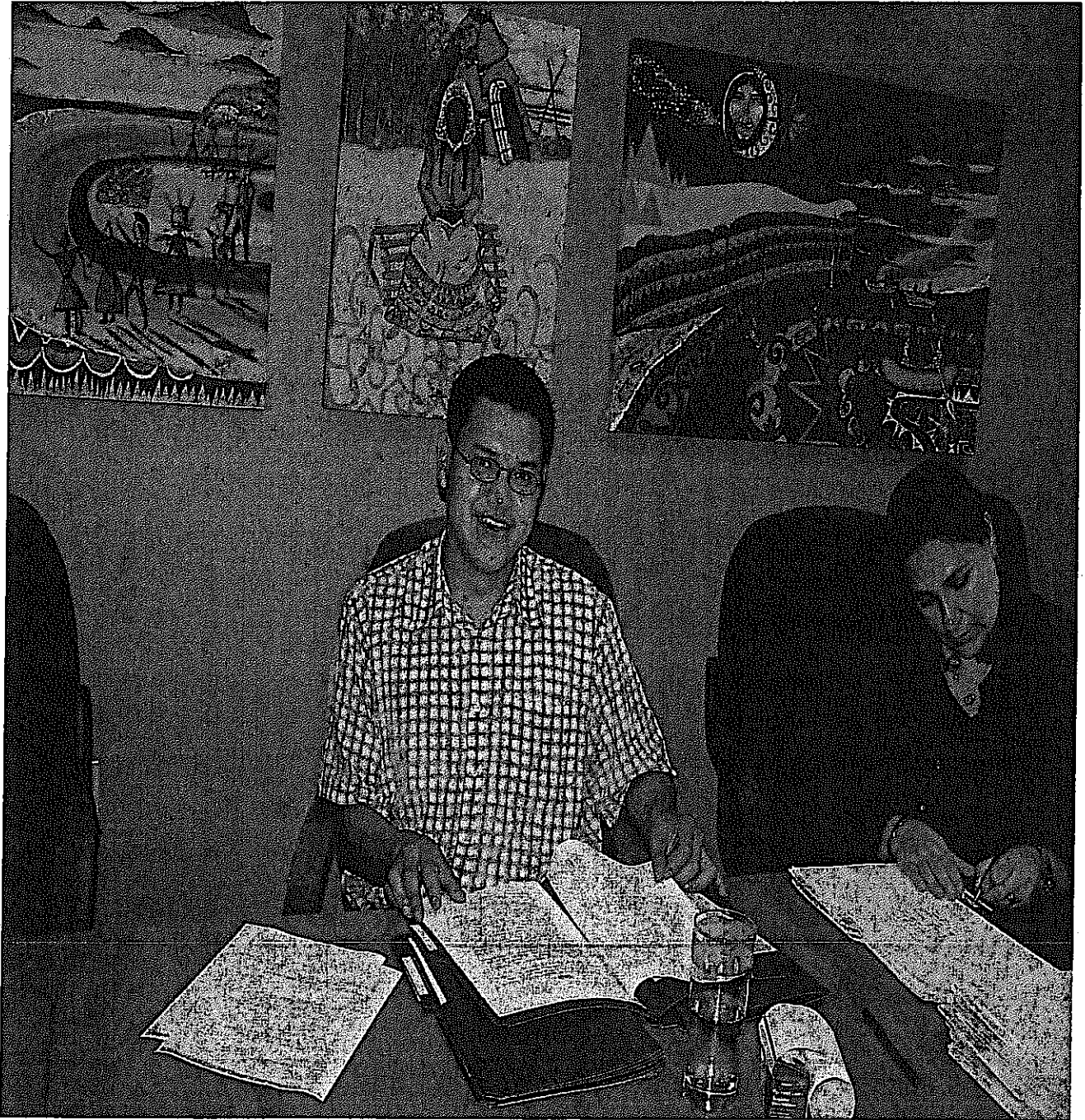
As Prince Edward Island did not join Confederation in 1867, Indian Affairs remained the responsibility of Charlottetown. Stewart and the other Indian Commissioner continued to agitate for an Indian reserve on P.E.I. and finally, in 1870, negotiations for the sale of Lennox Island were completed. All purchase moneys were raised in Britain, and the Aborigines Protection Society decided that title to the land would be held through a board of trustees headquartered in London. The Micmac Society was advised of the negotiations and sent a draft copy of the conveyance and asked to nominate a local committee to supervise the settlement. The Lieutenant Governor, the Chief Justice and the Indian Commissioner served *ex officio*, along with 5 others as local supervisors of the reserve. In 1871, the local committee of the Aborigines Protection Society took control of Lennox Island. That same year, the Legislature passed a bill allowing the sale of exclusive rights to oyster farming in Lennox Channel. A petition of behalf of the Lennox Island Mi'kmaq opposed the provision, pointing out it would deprive them of a significant resource. The government postponed the sale of the oyster bed rights for 3 months upon the presentation of the petition. The Aborigines Protection Society, alerted by Stewart, took up the cause of the Lennox Island Mi'kmaq, writing to the Colonial Secretary. Ultimately, the Legislature repealed the provision.

In 1873, Prince Edward Island joined Confederation and responsibility for Indians and Indian lands passed from Charlottetown to Ottawa. Theophilus Stewart was appointed Visiting Superintendent in charge of the Mi'kmaq of P.E.I. Finally, in 1912, Lennox Island was transferred to the federal Crown and officially designated as a reserve within the meaning of the *Indian Act*. Other lands set aside for the Mi'kmaq, such as the Morrell Reserve was transferred to the Indian Commissioner in 1859 (there is no transfer to the federal Crown recorded on the Reserve General Abstract Report). Rocky Point Reserve was purchased from private owners by the federal government in 1913, but no OCPC was recorded designating the reserve. The fourth and final reserve, Scotchfort, is simply noted on its Reserve General Abstract as "recognized as a reserve prior to Confederation." The Morrell, Rocky Point, and Scotchfort Reserves are the successors to the private properties set aside for the Mi'kmaq in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Worrell and others.

Thus, unlike the rest of Canada, all reserves in P.E.I. were created not by a reservation of Crown lands within traditional territories of the Band receiving the reservation, or by a reservation of Crown land in an area selected by the Band. All reserves in P.E.I. were created from private lands — without the assistance of either the colonial or federal government. The locations of the reserves was not selected by the Bands, but by individual land holders or philanthropists.

[See L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists Indian-White Relations 1713-1867*, Vancouver: UBC Press, 1979; Erroll Sharpe, *People's History of Prince Edward Island*, Toronto: Steel Rail Publications, 1976, Jack Bumsted, *Land, settlement and politics on eighteenth-century Prince Edward Island*, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987.]





**Wendell Labobe & Rose Matheson, MCPEI Land Claims Researchers**

**September 2004**

The following pages are their reports on their first year as Land Claims Researchers for the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of PEI.

## **Wendell Labobe – Researcher:**

My name is Wendell LaBobe and I belong to the Lennox Island Band. I currently live in Charlottetown with my wife (of less than 24hours), Michelle, and our two children, Bradley and Kiara. I lived on Lennox Island for the first five years of my life but spent most of my life in Charlottetown, so my knowledge of the Mi'kmaq culture was limited. I graduated from Charlottetown Rural High School in 1998. That fall I attended Holland College, taking Business Management. When I took the research position with the Mi'kmaq confederacy of PEI, I attended University of Prince Edward Island, taking two courses on Pre-Confederation and Post Confederation history of Prince Edward Island. These courses have given me a better understanding of what life was like on Prince Edward Island for the past three centuries. But, more importantly, they helped me a lot with my research for use and occupation for the Mi'kmaq on PEI.

Before obtaining my position with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island I had a number of different occupations. I had a job as a laborer, a counter attendant, and one of the things people hate most, a telemarketer, at Watt's Communication. I really enjoyed my time at Watt's Communication because when I left the job I had gained a lot of insight and experience to help me with future employment. I believe working there has helped me with my current position as a researcher. I gained computer experience and also experience with communications skills, organizing, and working unsupervised. These skills that I have gained from my past experiences have helped my a lot with my research position.

### **How I became interested**

When I heard that Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island was having a two week program on Aboriginal Title Research, I was very interested. As a

Mi'kmaq who has primarily live off-reserve, I knew very little about the history of the Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island. No one ever really taught me anything of who I am and where I come from. In all my years in school, the history of the Mi'kmaq was never a prime part of the curriculum. I am a true believer that part of being who you are is know where you've come from. Just to have the opportunity to learn something, even if only for two weeks meant so much to me — not to mention how much the research of the land claims might mean to the people of Lennox Island and Abeqwiet bands.

After the training of Phase One project was over, I was even more intrigued to find out more about the Mi'kmaq and their lands. So when I was offered this position, I was over-joyed and even a little over-whelmed at the same time for, as great as it was, it was nerve racking. Rose and I were about to be the first to do something no one ever did. Doing research was something I had never done before but at the same time had found I had quite an interest in.

### **What I am doing**

I have been busy for the last year gathering information for Mi'kmaq use and occupation on Prince Edward Island between the dates of 1750-1800. I have been using the resources both at the Public Archives in Charlottetown and Robertson Library at the University of Prince Edward Island. I have attended two courses at the University of Prince Edward Island, taking History 331 Pre-Confederation and History 332 Post Confederation, which I successfully completed this past April. I have spent a lot of time at the Robertson Library, using and obtaining information from the university archives and library catalogs to help me with my research.

At the Public Archives I have been reading correspondence letters on microfilm. I have looked through the index card files. This type of research has been difficult. Due to the lack of information, my research has been a slow process

because there has never been anyone to do this type of research before.

I am preparing a draft of the information I have gathered for the past year. Within this draft I am preparing an outline of the Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island between the dates of 1750 – 1800. The draft includes a chronological ordering of times and dates of the use and occupation of the Mi'kmaq. I have included both primary and secondary resources that I have examined in my research. I prepared a database on my computer that helps me keep all my research organized. From documents that I have looked at, from material that was immediately useful to documents which are not useful to me at the moment but later on may prove useful, everything is order and at my fingertips if I ever need to find information.

To help us better with writing reports and other letters, we have been reading materials and writing reports on each one and passing them into Gillian Allan who is our research consultant who reads them and gives us feedback on our reports. This has been very success with my writing skills for now I have better confidence in my writing abilities.

### **Problems with being the first researcher for the Mi'kmaq**

The problem that I have found during my research is that we are the first ones to do intense, focused research on the Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island. Being the first researcher for the Mi'kmaq and being Mi'kmaq myself is exciting. I am able to learn for myself and for my children. I am doing this research for them in the future and my main goal is to have a better future for my children and for other Mi'kmaq of Prince Edward Island.<sup>5</sup>

The problems with being the first Researcher is starting from the beginning, not having anything to follow up from other researcher's documents. Although

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<sup>5</sup> Professor LFS Upton researched Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island but focused primarily on 19<sup>th</sup> century.

difficult, I find this is the better way, as I am not influenced by other researcher's interpretations. The information that I have gathered and what I am learning from my research, is helping me develop a sense of what evidence is going to be sufficient for a successful land claim. I am also learning how to decide what information is relevant and what is not. From the secondary resources that I have examined, such books about the Island, and from taking the history courses, I am developing a good understanding of the place of the Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island.

**My goals: What I wish to accomplish out of the work I am doing**

My goals for the future while doing this research is to help build the Aboriginal Title for the Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island and eventually build a foundation to get Aboriginal title. To be part of this research is very important to me as a Mi'kmaq person for this gives me an opportunity to get involved in something that is very important to the Mi'kmaq on Prince Edward Island. My research will help others learn about themselves as Mi'kmaq people. It may also have other uses. Others like myself who grew up not knowing who they really are, my research that I do will help them get a better understanding of who they are. Communication skills that I have learned through previous employment will help me in giving a better understanding and providing information about the Mi'kmaq so I can teach others of where they come from.

**Rose Matheson - Researcher:**

My name is Rosemarie T. Matheson. I am an Aboriginal woman, born in Sioux Lookout, Ontario. I was raised in Sioux Lookout for the first part of my life with my half sister and brother. Our biological mother had to give us up for adoption, and we were chosen for a legal adoption by a wonderful couple from Ontario in 1976. I still remember the trip to the Toronto airport with the social worker. Mr. Kerri Fair said at the time, "You're going to meet you new family." The three of us could hardly wait. We lived in Ontario with our new family until 1978. My adopted family thought at the time that Prince Edward Island would be the best, and safest, place to raise their three children. I have been living on Prince Edward Island now for the last 26 years.

I married Darren K Matheson on the 7<sup>th</sup> day of October in 1989. He is an Islander, born and raised with his biological family on Prince Edward Island. I am a proud mother of three children who were born and raised on Prince Edward Island.

I am trying to learn more about my identity as a First Nations woman in my spare time. Shortly after discovering that I was a real "statistic" a First Nations woman, that was when my passion drove me to search for identity. I really wanted to learn more about my culture. My half brother and sister have their status. I am still hoping to someday meet my biological father. My biological mother died at a young age. I have recently found two other half brothers and an aunt. This is in addition to my half brother and sister mentioned earlier. That drove me to search more for my aboriginal roots, and strengthen my connections with the Mi'kmaq people of Prince Edward Island.

I really wanted to learn more about my culture, and about the culture of the Mi'kmaq people from Prince Edward Island. I joined the Aboriginal Women's

Association of Prince Edward Island to meet other Aboriginal women on the Island to get more involved with the Mi'kmaq people, both on and off reserve. I first got involved with the Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island in the month of February 2002. I was chosen to act as a scrutineer at the Annual General Assembly in the election of the new executive Board of Directors for the Aboriginal Women's Association of PEI.

The Aboriginal Women's Association of Prince Edward Island have summer training programs and jobs for the youth. Their main focus is helping improve children and women's lives. I volunteered at the weekend Women's Conference hosted by the AWAPEI held at the Camp Gencheff, (on the outskirts of Charlottetown). As part of the retreat, I participated in focus groups and presentations on issues affecting Aboriginal women on the Island (March 2004). I took part in the AWAPEI Governance meeting held in Summerside, PEI, helping with the group discussions with women about important issues and programs that we would like to see happen for the First Nations people of Prince Edward Island. We also heard presentations from guest speakers on issues relating to First Nations governance, relations with Ottawa, programs for women.

I am so grateful and honored that I was able to meet these important women who welcomed me with open arms as if they knew I was searching for something that is very important to our First Nations peoples families. I am so thankful to have made some very special and memorable friendships with these special women.

I have also been active with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island. I attended a meeting on First Nations Governance hosted by the Mi'kmaq Confederacy at the Mi'kmaq Family resource center in Charlottetown. In March 2004, I took part in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Assembly of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of

Prince Edward Island.

It was there that I was introduced to the Mi'kmaq people of PEI as one of the Aboriginal Title researchers of Prince Edward Island with the team of researchers of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island.

It has always been a dream of mine to someday make a difference in this world that we live in. I was always very interested in searching more about my culture. I know it is in my heart to know where I came from.

### **How I became interested**

It was through the Native Council of Prince Edward Island that I learned about the research job with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island. In the spring of 2003, I was called to attend the Phase I workshop conducted by a researcher from the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre of Nova Scotia.

In the two week session of the first workshop course, the chosen candidates learned how to develop a capacity to conduct historical research in PEI and to create awareness of Mi'kmaq rights and Aboriginal and treaty rights of Prince Edward Island. We also observed the presentation of research results by two academics at a session attended by officials from DINA and Mr. Tom Molloy, the Chief Federal Negotiator designated by the federal government as its representative in all Aboriginal title claims in the Atlantic Region.

We had a tour with the staff of the Public Archives and Records Office (PARO) in Charlottetown. We all met again and had another tour with Mr. Simon Lloyd of the Robertson Library of the University of Prince Edward Island. At the end of each tour, we completed assignments for the workshop.



Later on in the summer of 2003, two candidates who had attended the Phase I workshop were invited back by Mr. PJ Prosper of the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island to join the research team and start full time work in September 2003. I was one of the fortunate chosen for the historical research program on the use & occupation of the Mi'kmaq First Nation people of Prince Edward Island.

### **What I am doing**

Our work with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island began with the Phase II workshop conducted again by the researcher of the Treaty & Aboriginal Rights Centre of Nova Scotia. In the Phase II workshop we learned that land claims research involves three critical skills: 1) research skills- being able to develop the ability to pick out information which may be relevant to the presentation of the Mi'kmaq Nation in Prince Edward Island; 2) comprehensive skills- being able to understand what it is you are actually reading and the ability to understand how and why the information may be relevant to the presentation of a successful land claim; and 3) writing and presentation skills- the ability to convey the information from the primary and secondary sources into a written report.

In September 2003, the researchers also had to successfully complete a history class of the Pre-Confederation history course at the University of Prince Edward Island. The upper level history class at the UPEI gave us the necessary background to understand the Mi'kmaq history & use & occupation in Prince Edward Island in a larger societal context. In January, we were enrolled in and had to successfully complete the Post-Confederation history course at the University of Prince Edward Island. It has been a challenge just to be able to find the information that may or may not be useful for the use and occupation program with MCPEI and the Mi'kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island.

As one of the researchers with the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, we have been asked to conduct historical research on Aboriginal-Colonial government relations in the time period of 1750 –1800. The research program focusses on historical relations between the Mi’kmaq and Colonial Governments, including reviewing and transcribing written historical records of the Mi’kmaq on Prince Edward Island engaged in traditional activities such as fishing, hunting, and gathering. This includes reviewing official documents of government records of the JLA (Journals of the Legislative Assembly) at PARO.

It is generally impossible to find any detailed descriptions of the Mi’kmaq traditional use and occupation of Prince Edward Island during the mid to late eighteenth century as requested for the workplan with the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island and the Mi’kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island. The records of the Pre-Confederation administration of Indian Affairs are scattered at the PARO. Government policy before and after Confederation encouraged the Mi’kmaq to renounce their traditional way of life and instead pursue agriculture. The government was not interested in the Mi’kmaq traditional harvesting activities. The government wished to turn the Mi’kmaq away from traditional harvesting activities, and from their way of life and to settle the Mi’kmaq on farms.

Therefore, the harvesting or “use” information from official documents tends to be in the form of generalized complaints that the Mi’kmaq continue to “roam” and move freely and keep their “usual pursuits” instead of settling in happily as full time farmers during the time period of 1750 - 1800. As official policy promoted the settlement of the Mi’kmaq on reserves and encouraging the agriculture and discouraging the important traditional harvesting for subsistence, the discussions of harvesting activities in official documents are usually brief and disparaging.

In the history courses that the researchers successfully completed at the University of Prince Edward Island, I completed a research paper for the History 331, History of Prince Edward Island Pre-Confederation entitled "Island Mi'kmaq in the Early Nineteenth Century." I found it very interesting to find some more information that may be useful in land claims work. I discovered material at the Robertson Memorial Library at the University of Prince Edward Island that may be relevant for the Mi'kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island for their historical use and occupation research program with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island.

Before the 1800's, the Mi'kmaq had been able to continue to live their traditional lifestyle by selling baskets as their primary means of livelihood because there were not that many white settlers. By 1800, the number of white settlers was rapidly increasing due to immigration and the forest was being cleared for settlement.<sup>6</sup> For the Mi'kmaq to survive in a white society was a concern of some philanthropists. White Islanders believed in a superiority of European culture and saw the Mi'kmaq as "that fading race" of people who were slowly disappearing<sup>7</sup> instead of settling in happily as full time farmers in the colonial mode.

The Mi'kmaq were suffering from a society that could not understand them, and the effects were becoming fully visible. Something had to be done. They suffered from the effects of alcoholism and homelessness and being expected to farm to keep up with the new culture and society that was being introduced. The Indians wandered across the colony trying to sell their baskets and handicrafts glutted by goods imported cheaply as a result of free trade. When the Indians were unable to make a sale whole families faced immediate

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<sup>6</sup> Baldwin, Douglas. Land of the Red Soil: A Popular History of Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown: Ragweed Press, 1998. p.23.

<sup>7</sup> Islander, Charlottetown, 10 December 1858, p.2.

starvation.<sup>8</sup>

By 1800, the Mi'kmaq people had been living on Prince Edward Island for about 2,000 years. Their life was a difficult and daily challenge. A people that moved freely and lived a somewhat nomadic life, their lifestyle as far as we know was very difficult, and simple, but they tried to live in a harmonious society that took pride in caring for one another. They adored their children and taught them survival skills at a young age because it is an important lesson and daily process of life. Story time provided another opportunity to learn the very important lessons taught by the elders. It was a time to share and teach the children. The elders were greatly respected for their knowledge and wisdom that was passed on to them through their relatives. The women worked very hard with what they had to work with at the time. The Mi'kmaq always made time to dance and sing, and organize frequent feasts for a time of celebration or a special occasion. The most important activity, of course, was earning a living, which meant hunting, fishing, and gathering.<sup>9</sup>

For example, to catch beavers in the winter, hunters used a stone chisel to cut holes in the ice covering the beaver ponds and stood quietly nearby, waiting to harpoon or spear the beavers as they emerged from the holes.<sup>10</sup> The Mi'kmaq continued to hunt moose during hunting on snowshoes.<sup>11</sup> During the summer, they relied on aquatic life for sustenance.<sup>12</sup>

### **Problems with being the first researcher for the Mi'kmaq**

In the year I have been working as an Aboriginal title researcher, I have found there is very little primary material on Prince Edward Island which discussed in any detail the place of the Mi'kmaq in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The research

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<sup>8</sup> Upton, LFS, Micmacs and Colonists Indian- White Relations in the Maritimes 1713-1867.

<sup>9</sup> Baldwin, p.23.

<sup>10</sup> Baldwin, p.23-24.

<sup>11</sup> Baldwin, p.24.

<sup>12</sup> Baldwin, p.24.

program began with the very late French regime/ British assumption of sovereignty period (1740-1800) – the period about which there is very little known about the Mi'kmaq Nation in Prince Edward Island. We did find a great amount of secondary materials about the Mi'kmaq that is essential to the research work program with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island. To date, the researchers have discovered that both official and non governmental correspondents are virtually silent on the Mi'kmaq of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Problems with being the first researcher for the Mi'kmaq**

As researchers, we need to be able to set up an account with the PARO. The researchers need to be respected equally as the researchers off island. We spoke to another researcher off island and they have more access to setting up accounts. The Robertson Memorial Library at the University of Prince Edward Island must give the researchers more access to the information that will be helpful for their work. We were very busy trying to keep up with our history courses with the University of Prince Edward Island. The time frame for the research work to be completed took more time than expected. Research work takes a great amount of time. The researchers would like more time to successfully complete that research work with the research programs with the Mi'kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island.

Another factor of the research work that I found difficult was trying to find a mentor or another academic researcher to discuss the common interests in the work of research of historical use and occupation of Prince Edward Island that may be useful for the research program with the MCPEI and the Mi'kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island.

It would be good to have a research consultant on Prince Edward Island to help the researchers with their job to successfully complete the research work with

the MCPEI. The researchers had a difficult time absorbing the rushed allowed time of training with the research training programs with MCPEI and UPEI in order to successfully complete the researched work. The researchers need more time.

Research work is a vital part of the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, and affects the entire Mi’kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island. We need to be able to continue this very important research work in order to keep this program going.

Research is a vital part of the Mi’kmaq Confederacy of Prince Edward Island, and affects the entire Mi’kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island. We need to be able to continue this very important research work in order to keep this program going. It is extremely important that the work continue. I can only express it with my heart that you will continue this program for the researchers of the Mi’kmaq Confederacy team of Prince Edward Island and the Mi’kmaq Nation of Prince Edward Island. Thank you.

