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# Resistance and Reinscription: Revitalizing Mi'kmaq Culture in Newfoundland - A Grounded Theory Discursive Analysis of Oppression and Resistance

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UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Resistance and Reinscription: Revitalizing Mi'kmaq Culture in Newfoundland

A Grounded Theory Discursive Analysis of Oppression and Resistance

By

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A THESIS

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## **Abstract**

Keywords:

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Marginalization

This dissertation utilizes a grounded theory methodology to explore the intersection between Indigenous and multi-cultural societies. It focusses on an Indigenous people who have long been framed as fully assimilated into white society. It critiques how Canada purports to be a multi-cultural mosaic in a post-colonial state and argues that these concepts fail to account for the presence of Indigenous peoples, their interactions with the dominant settler society and the fact that the Indian Act represents the ongoing colonization of Indigenous people. Further, it argues that discussions of the place of Indigenous people in Canada often work from the assumption that in order to survive and to prosper, Indigenous people must abandon many of the key cultural practices that differentiate their worldview from that of the settlers. That is, they must choose to be assimilated and to become hyphenated-Canadians. This thesis examines how Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland are revitalizing their Indigenous culture through resistance and reinscription. It problematizes notions of hybridity and challenges the authority of governments, which seek to control Indigenous identity through a legislative framework, oppression, and marginalization. It argues for the legitimacy and authenticity of Indigenous identities that incorporate cultural practices from Pan-Indian sources in order to re-establish holistic Indigenous cultures. Finally, it presents an alternative

understanding of how Indigenous identities can continue to flourish even when immersed in a society, which seeks to erase them.

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always supported me as a non-Indigenous researcher focused on Mi'kmaq cultural revitalization.

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## Chapter 1: Being Outside the Multicultural Lens

### 1.1 Introduction

Identity is often contested and is always in flux (Butler, 2007). In Canada, we are apparently so obsessed with the whole concept of identity that we have enacted specific legislation to lay out a regulatory framework around cultural identities. Through the *Multiculturalism Act of 1985* we “recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage” (Canada, 2013). While the general aspiration of the nation may be to imagine itself to be this diverse multi-ethnic mosaic, that notion is complicated by regional distinctions through which certain cultures remain dominant. Traditionally, at least since 1949, the two provinces which most clearly exemplified this regionalism have been Quebec and Newfoundland and Labrador with their distinctive French and Irish/English cultures.

However, in neither of these models of multiculturalism and regionalism do we begin to account for Indigenous peoples. Instead, we seek to define them through the lens of primordiality (Lawrence, 2004, p. 4), a construct rooted in Rousseau’s (1967) “noble savage”. Palmater argues: “to limit Indigenous people to pre-contact cultural practices not only locks them in a cultural time box, but sentences them to cultural death when change occurs over time (2011, p. 64).” It is a discursive practice that keeps Indigenous people somewhere at the periphery of our white collective consciousness, intruding through occasional headlines, protests and the odd gathering with federal, and sometimes provincial, politicians. We imagine them to be yearning for a return to a distant past –

recovering a primordial state of being. As King (2012) argues, rarely do white Canadians actually engage with Indigenous people in an open dialogue about their true aspirations. Rather, we attempt to define them from the gaze of the colonizer.

Palmater provides an overview of the complexity of language around identity, especially that relating to Indigenous people. “I use the word “Indigenous” to refer to First Peoples, such as Mi’kmaq, Mohawk, and Maliseet. Although “Aboriginal” is a constitutional term, it includes Métis and Inuit (2011, p.33).”

Our choice of language is always already political and is evident in the labels we use to describe non-settler people:

This continuing colonial process pulls Indigenous peoples away from cultural practices and community aspects of ‘being Indigenous’ towards a political-legal construction as ‘aboriginal’ or ‘Native American’, both of which are representative of what we refer to as being ‘incidentally Indigenous’. (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005, p.599)

Thus, if we describe them as Aboriginal we imply that they were here first but this does not negate the possibility that settler people can have exactly the same claim to right of place in Canada. More critically, the word Aboriginal is politicized and loaded with an historical connection to conquest and occupation. In contrast to this, saying Indigenous recognizes that the non-settler people are from here; they arose as human communities out of this land. They are rooted here in ways which no settler people can lay claim to. For these reasons, in this project I give precedence to Indigenous and use Aboriginal only where it already exists in titles and texts that I quote.

The distancing of Indigenous peoples from white consciousness has been particularly evident in Newfoundland and Labrador. Deliberately excluded from official recognition under the *Indian Act* in the *Terms of Union* with Canada, Innu, Inuit and

Mi'kmaq peoples were treated as if they were now fully assimilated; no longer visible. As a child growing up in Newfoundland, I felt great discomfort in knowing that we, collectively and some individually, were responsible for the destruction of a peaceful people, the Beothuk. I read about Mary March or more properly, Shawnadithit<sup>1</sup>. I witnessed the grisly display of a human skeleton in the provincial museum; the fetishization of a whole people laid out in a glass covered case. However, there was an obvious inconsistency in the stories that described Newfoundland as empty of Indigenous people. Many, if not most, of the people in some Bay St. George communities are Mi'kmaq. For example, approximately 95% of students at the Appalachia High School in St. George's are Mi'kmaq (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, July 10, 2011). Denial of the presence of Indigenous peoples remains a key part of a Newfoundland identity, constructed in part from the struggle to survive on a cold island in the North Atlantic and in part to resist being subsumed into neighbouring Canada. At the same time, this identity served to establish control over the resources of the island and Labrador and to inhibit Indigenous land rights claims, long in play across the rest of Canada.

I am of the first generation to be born after confederation with Canada and, as a significant number do today, in my youth many Newfoundlanders clung to what they believed to be the national Newfoundland identity. Largely constructed out of Irish and English traditions, this is the image of the hearty Newfoundlander, proud, fun-loving and

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<sup>1</sup> Shawnadithit is often described as the last living Beothuk and her story is emblematic of the horrific destruction of her people by white colonists intent on exploiting resources particularly timber of Beothuk territory. She died of tuberculosis while in captivity, after being capture during a raid on her family. An article in *The Telegram* dated March 13, 2010 recounted the continuing fascination with her, recently renewed by reported that her gravesite had been located during work on a water and sewer system in St. John's, NL. The same article reported her head, which had been sent to London England, was lost during German bombing raids in World War II.

fiercely independent. Still, in 1967 during my first visit to St. John's, I was acutely aware that I did not really fit into the official model of what it is to be a Newfoundlander. I remember being taken aback when I was asked if I was a *jackatar* – a derogatory name for a person of Mi'kmaq and French heritage. Despite my schooling in all of the traditional Newfoundland folk songs and many of the stories, I had a different sensibility of who I was and this was recognized by people not from my region. Several times, in meeting people from St. John's, I was asked if I was a jackatar? I recall adamantly denying that and feeling offended by the question. At the time, I also assumed this was in part a result of the presence of thousands of American military in my home area, Bay St. George, up until 1966. I was aware that my English dialect did not match the Irish/English one that is often used in stereotyping Newfoundlanders but had had been shaped by a mix of French, Scots and American English. Now after my research, I realize there is also an undertone of the Mi'kmaq language that affects dialect in the Bay St. George region.

That understanding, about where my identity comes from, was altered in part during my work on my first graduate degree for which I researched the social and mental roots of identity through an autoethnographic work. Mi'kmaq elder Calvin White spoke of the actual Mi'kmaq history and Mi'kmaq culture and helped me to understand how Mi'kmaq ways had shaped people in Western Newfoundland. That knowledge has been enriched in the course of this project. I know now that Mi'kmaq people were not assimilated but have sustained many of their traditional ways. These ways have been instrumental in shaping the settler population in Mi'kmaq traditional territory. Informed by that understanding of the impact of the Mi'kmaq in my own life, this project explores

the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture, through the lives of some twenty participants, who share their personal stories and insights.

## **1.2 Framing the Research Problem**

Problems of identity are prominent in the general discourse of Canada. Canadians continue to debate the impact of multiculturalism on our nation. This discussion becomes more complex when we include the presence of Indigenous identities in our “so-called” mosaic. When Indigenous cultures are included they tend to be viewed as homogeneous representations (Newhouse, Voyageur, & Beavon, 2005). This homogenization is problematic in that it fails to recognize the unique ways of knowing that distinguish the many Indigenous nations and it can only inhibit our ability to understand their often divergent issues and concerns. This research project represents a valuable and unique examination of Mi'kmaq culture in transition, in a setting not extensively examined by scholars to date. It records and closely explores how one group of people works to revitalize identity centred on their Indigenous heritage. It demonstrates how issues of equality are markedly similar whether the struggle is for gender rights or for recognition of Indigenous identity and the inherent Indigenous rights enshrined under Section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982. This project problematizes the notion of a homogeneous Indigenous identity by demonstrating that identity linked to the Indian Act is not how Indigenous peoples understand identity. Unlike any other peoples in Canada, they are continually challenged to prove the authenticity of who they are and, as critically, to satisfy notions of primordiality through an uninterrupted connection with the land (Lawrence, 2004, p. 4). There is a critical relationship of Indigenous people to the land.

For them, it is not possible for them to separate their identity from their traditional territory and that essential understanding is readily evident if we simply reflect on the radical differences in Indigenous cultures across Canada. Yet, as fully realized human beings, they must be free to determine how that relationship continues to exist and to evolve over time. The central issue here is who gets to determine the authenticity of an Indigenous identity and how outside agencies such as the government and the courts may seek to impose restrictions on that identity.

Recognizing that identity is both individually practiced and communally shared, this project examines the various dynamics in play that shape the complex relationship between the individual and the Mi'kmaq community in Newfoundland. It seeks to understand how the experiences and actions of the individual help to shape the community and to understand how individual identity is contingent upon the place of the individual within a community.

### **1.3 Historical Context**

Mi'kmaq were first colonized by the French in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and subsequently were subjected to a second colonization by English speaking settlers who became the dominant economic and political presence in Mi'kmaq territory. In Newfoundland, descendants of intermarriage between Mi'kmaq and European peoples have always resisted complete assimilation and have been actively working collectively to revitalize their Indigenous identity for since the late 1960's. However, there has been systemic resistance from the province of Newfoundland and Labrador to efforts to recognize any form of status for these peoples. It must be noted that, while the fiduciary



obligations based on treaties with Indigenous peoples lies with the Federal government, the Terms of Union between Canada and Newfoundland and Labrador deliberately excluded Indigenous people on the island of Newfoundland from the Indian Act (Tompkins & Harris, 1988; Hanrahan, 2003). Though one First Nation in Conne River did gain status and a small reserve in 1985, the majority of Mi'kmaq in the province have until recently been denied status.

Despite this lack of official recognition, many Mi'kmaq maintained their identity both through cultural practice and the maintenance of extended family units that reflected the traditional social structure of their people. As Mi'kmaq elder Calvin White relates (Butler, 2007), while living in small rural communities, Mi'kmaq largely sustained themselves through subsistence living; hunting and fishing, gathering berries and other wild plants. They also took up farming in small plots producing staple foods such as potatoes and turnip. They traded with the settler communities supplying wild game and berries, sometimes for cash but often for barter (Butler, 2007). Still, while they were able to maintain some of the basic aspects of their Indigenous identity, they lost both their language and their traditional spiritual practices. A few individuals and families did cling to these but only in private. Ceremonies and seasonal feasts were largely abandoned, replaced by Christianity, almost exclusively Roman Catholicism.

Following the White Paper of 1969, formally called the Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy, many status and treaty Indigenous people across the country felt compelled to organize into formal groupings because of an increased threat of assimilation (Turner, 2006). Beginning in the early 1970s, Mi'kmaq began setting up local bands as part of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians. These

bands reflected existing communities where Mi'kmaq constituted either the majority or at least a significant portion of the population. These formal organizations allowed Mi'kmaq people to increase their resistance to total assimilation and to begin to more publicly express their identity as an Indigenous people. For the first time in many decades, more Mi'kmaq people began to publicly self-identify. Today, there is a clear resurgence of Mi'kmaq culture.

#### **1.4 Project Goals**

I began this research project by setting a series of broad objectives based on a research problem that focused on the relationship between Indigenous people and the land. Having grown up in Western Newfoundland, I was always aware of the special relationship Mi'kmaq people maintained with the land. Many of the settler population had learned the basic hunting and gathering skills from Mi'kmaq people, who continued to depend largely on available natural sources of food and medicines. The land has always been at the centre of life for the Indigenous peoples of North America. Ovide Mercredi writes:

We have always been here on this land we call Turtle Island, on our homelands given to us by the Creator, and we have a responsibility to care for and live in harmony with all of her creations. We believe that the responsibility to care for this land was given to us by our Creator, the Great Spirit. It is a sacred obligation, which means the First people must care for all of Creation in fulfilling this responsibility. (Mercredi & Turpel, 1993, p.16)

This sense of a sacred relationship to the land is profound and perhaps can help us to understand the determination of so many Indigenous people to continue the struggle for their inherent rights as First Nations and Inuit. Cases such as *Calder et al v. Attorney-General of British Columbia* and *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* have transformed case

law related to land claims in Canada (Foster, Webber, & Raven, 2007). Yet, the struggle continues and a simple perusal of the Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) website confirms that the complex nature of this issue continues to dominate the relationship between the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples (Canada, 2009).<sup>2</sup>

The dialectic that exists at the heart of Indigenous struggles for self-determination is reflected in the necessity to reconcile their traditional ways with a modern world, in which it is not possible to return to life as it was pre-contact. Yet, to suppose that this idea of a return to a distant past reflects the actual aim of Indigenous people is to reify them through a narrow and simplistic understanding of Indigenous culture as being fixed and immutable; frozen in time. It simply ignores the fact that Indigenous cultures like all others, are adaptive and responsive to change. Such framing of Indigenous cultures creates false barriers that inhibit our ability to both understand them and to interact in a constructive dialogue on our relationship with them. Authentic Indigenous approaches may synthesize traditional Indigenous ways of knowing, and adapt some ideas and models from outside their culture. My primary goals were to: (1) investigate how the Mi'kmaq people intend to define, negotiate and achieve a successful outcome for their efforts to revitalize the cultural parts of their identity as Indigenous people, (2) to understand more fully the relationship between individual and communal Mi'kmaq identity and (3) to examine how oppression and resistance shape outcomes both for the

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<sup>2</sup> Even outside the context of direct dealings between AANDC and all Indigenous people, it is evident that the government places little real value on Indigenous rights. A recent example of this attitude is Omnibus Bill C-48, which weakens environmental protection of waterways and infringes on Indigenous rights (AFN, 2012).

oppressed and their oppressors. In order to answer these questions, I had to identify and explore how a complex series of relationships between individuals and groups are constituted through discursive formations and practices.

I also set out to examine the paradox that is created by the existence of the Indian Act, which purportedly legitimates Indigenous identity and according to King and Turner aims to obliterate it (King, 2004; Turner, 2006; Palmater, 2009,2010, 2011). I sought to address how my participants might seek to reconcile being Indigenous as separate from Status under the Indian Act; whether they would take such a critical political stance, which would position them as independent of the power structures that act to extend and perpetuate the colonization of their people. By separating cultural identity from statutory validation, they might independently achieve critical community building goals. This is not intended to imply that identity is only located within culture. As Palmater argues, there are risks inherent in a narrow definition of Indigenous identity. “The danger is that defining Indigenous people solely by their cultural identities – i.e. their practices in pre-contact times – serves to stereotype them and ignores the importance of their current identities (Palmater, 2011, p. 58).” This work then does not suggest that Indigenous identity can be fully understood through culture. Rather it explores how the recovery and revitalization of cultural identity is a critical component of Indigenous people’s resistance to oppression and loss of authority within their traditional territories.

### **1.5 Political and Cultural Divisions**

The revitalization of Mi’kmaq culture will likely be resisted by those who closely cling to notions of a set of Newfoundland identities rooted in only European settler culture. Recent negative reactions from non-Indigenous people to the *Idle No More*

grassroots movement, as represented by a torrent of generally anonymous spamming on comment sites, such as the CBC Community Blog, have raised great concerns about racism in Canada:

Criticism is one thing, (sic) and legitimate and informed criticism is important . . . racism is something completely different. For people trying to understand what Idle No More is from a non-aboriginal perspective, those comments muddy the discussion. For First Nations people, it can be much more damaging than that. (CBC, 2013)

Dominant European-rooted cultures tend to dismiss Indigenous culture and worldviews as primitive or at best quaint. Certainly, many white settlers may even feel threatened by the official recognition of a Mi'kmaq First Nation in Newfoundland. The need to reconcile these potential differences between people who have lived together for centuries represents a critical perspective that I have had to acknowledge and to account for in my work. I have argued (Butler, 2009) for an ontological shift in how non-Indigenous people approach relations with Indigenous people. "Any ontological shift must be one that emerges from the reshaping of the temporal existence in which Indigenous people are denied the ability to fully realize their lives in accordance with lifeworlds constructed out of their ways of knowing" (Butler, 2009, p.9). We can hardly expect to reach any form of common understanding with Indigenous peoples if we begin from a position that not only undermines but actually denies the validity of the lifeworld of our correspondents.

### **1.6 Hybridity and the Construction of Identity**

I began with the notion of hybridity as a primary hypothesis that is present in my work. This position represented a fundamental thesis that a likely outcome for Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland was a group identity that occupies the "third space" described by

Bhabha (1994), a site within which, “they are now free to translate their identities in a discontinuous intertextual temporality of cultural difference” (1994, p. 55). How they might achieve this is a question I set out to explore and at least partially illuminate in my research. Given that this is an ongoing process for the Mi’kmaq, any answer must be both partial and contingent.

The complex ideas embedded within *hybrid identity* resist any simple approach to understanding the topic. The strategies adopted by mixed-blood people may be in themselves problematic for scholars attempting to study them. Peoples of mixed-blood identity often attempt to exclude the non-native, thus relying on an essential notion of identity. Lawrence (2004, p. 134) writes that with many urban mixed-blood people their white family “is not taken into consideration when mixed-blood Native people discuss their identities.” How Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland address this is of some interest since it must inevitably affect relations with settlers, some of whom are relatives.

This focus on cultural purity is important for my research. As AlSayyad (2001, p. ix) writes “hybridity is a very complex notion” and it is one that has met with a great deal of resistance. For AlSayyad (2001, p.5), those who reject hybridity want to privilege the “constructedness” of identity over “rootedness.” This stance reflects resistance to ideas of the constructedness of Indigenous Identity. Lawrence argues:

[The] constructionist viewpoint, while in some ways very useful, is also deeply troubling to many Native people. What is missing, in such a viewpoint is an awareness of how deeply colonialist perspectives have permeated virtually all settler society built on Indigenous peoples’ lands, including the academic institutions that construct these viewpoints. (2004, p.2)

Indigenous people adopt practices from outside their traditional culture (guns, horses, steel knives to name a few). Such acts of selection are radically different than the

acts of imposition. When a people choose to incorporate some outside knowledge or tools, it can be understood to be the exertion of self-determination and adaptation. Paul Chaat Smith gleefully describes the famous Apache warrior Geronimo's possession of a 1905 Locomobile Model C. He "used to drive it to church, where he'd sign autographs" (Smith, 2009, p. 21).

Any communal identity also has to account for the fact that the majority of the Mi'kmaq population lives in a society dominated by a non-Indigenous culture, which may both overtly and covertly resist efforts by Mi'kmaq to forefront their Indigenous identity. This implies the necessity for an ongoing negotiation between Mi'kmaq and the larger populace, in which each side seeks to achieve contested goals or may seek to hinder the aims of the other. This contestation can be understood as ancillary to constructing meaning, in that what is at stake is the legitimacy of claims to a contested identity. This also raises questions of what it means to be Mi'kmaq when the individuals have lived much of their lives as participating members of the dominant society, though from the margins. However, such a relationship cannot be understood as somehow compromising the integrity of one's Indigenous identity. Rather, it is a reflection of the complexity of identity in our society. As one example of how meaning is constructed, the formation of individual identity is determined in part by both the mental and social space into which each of us is born (Butler, 2007). We are born into a specific place, with an established culture complete with language and customs. We do not choose our identity space but we can act to shape and control it. Outcomes are not assured and for some the consequences of resistance to an imposed identity can be devastating.

Still, it is clear to me, from my research, that identity is fluid and subject to a continually changing set of dynamic forces, often emanating from the personal choices we make as individuals. Our identity is also contingent on external factors, over which we may have little, if any, influence. This holds true for groups as much as it does for individuals. In other words, while we are able to participate in the construction of social meanings that produce our identity, we cannot fully control these processes. However, we must be clear in understanding that Indigenous people are increasingly resisting or even subverting those processes that are externally controlled and are actively rejecting such processes as attempts to recolonize them.

It is possible to problematize the conceptual model of hybridity in that such a position serves to continue the colonization of Indigenous people, by imposing external definitions of identity that do not reflect traditional Indigenous models. Palmié (2011) provides support here when he points out that any notion of hybridity must inherently rely on a pre-existing cultural purity, something that is impossible to achieve where cultures interact. Certainly, when we reflect on some of the intertribal alliances and confederacies developed by Indigenous people long before contact with Europeans we must recognize they had developed sophisticated ways of interchange across different cultures. The complex treaty relations of the Wabanaki Confederacy, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, and other alliances throughout North America are ample evidence of this. This undermining of the concept of hybridity is explored more extensively in Chapter 3.



### 1.8 Oppression and Resistance

When I initiated this project, I set as my primary objective the goal of understanding how ordinary people construct individual and communal identities in the presence of formal power structures that may support them but also constrain their everyday lives. I intended to explore the *in-between* places within the structures of power, knowledge and identity described by Foucault (2002) and Said (1978). In these sites people overcome and undo the oppression and colonization that have acted to erase them.

In pursuing these questions of oppression and resistance I recognize that such actions occur simultaneously within different arenas often at the intersections of social worlds. I worked to uncover the processes through which those who resist act and interact within what Clarke describes as their “particular situation” (2005, p. 87) and Friere describes as the “limit-situation” (1970, pp 89-90). This focus on process led me to adopt a grounded theory methodology for my research, in that grounded theory relies on data to produce evidence of emergent actions and categories of behaviour. My primary goal was to develop a better understanding of what it means to be Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland; an understanding that is emergent from my research data and that demonstrates how the Mi’kmaq of Newfoundland act to achieve their self-identified goal to live openly as Indigenous people. This goal is not contingent on the notion of being *Status Indians*, which for most is not at all central to their sense of cultural identity. Most did not choose to relate with Canada through the Indian Act; it was imposed on them. This distinction between cultural and legal identity, which is foundational to my work, is explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

**1.9 Initial Research Phase and Analysis**

I began my fieldwork in February 2010 after receiving formal ethics approval from the Mikmaq Ethics Watch, University of Cape Breton. The initial research phase comprised a series of open-ended interviews with eighteen people from the larger Mi'kmaq population. Some of the initial interviews were conducted with people I know intimately. Others were selected through a process of referral or through casual contact at cultural events in which I was invited to participate. The group, among others, included two members of my extended family, two local band chiefs, two social activists, two university students, and two elders. One participant, who is retired from a successful business career, had only learned of his Mi'kmaq heritage within the past three years. Each participant shared unique insights and experiences that helped to guide my research. In the majority of these interviews I encountered people who are struggling with a legacy of stigma and shame but who were also fiercely proud of their Indigenous heritage. Each of them is in his/her own way working to overcome assimilation and in some cases they are attempting to build capacity within their communities with a focus on healing for the elders and building a sense of pride and honour for their children, teaching them an authentic Mi'kmaq history.

Following grounded theory methodology, I transcribed these interviews in order to complete an initial analysis of my data. The findings are explored in detail in Chapter 5. However, my analysis of the findings cannot be attributed solely to interviews. Over the many months I spent in the field I immersed myself in the Mi'kmaq community as much as I could, both through participation in a weekly cultural gathering, a men's talking circle, as a volunteer resource person assisting in a Mi'kmaq studies course at the

local high school and in working with an anti-violence project sponsored by the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN). On a personal note, during this time my three adult children regained their status and began to self-identify as Mi'kmaq. My daughter was employed by NAWN and she remains active in cultural revitalization.

As a result of my preliminary round of research that I conducted in the winter and spring of 2010, I refocused my work along a more narrow and specific path. I want to make it clear that these emerge from my lived experience on the ground working with those who are participating in my research. In a very strong sense, I followed the model inherent in grounded theory methodology, in that I responded to what I encountered, allowing my participants to directly shape my work through their lives and their priorities.

In seeking to grasp how we might understand the dynamics of relationships within Indigenous communities, it serves to reflect on Friere (2000). Some of the oppressed gain limited power but have been incorporated into the systems of power that dominate them, while those who have the least power continue to resist. This can often be observed in the ways in which individuals align along various socio-political groupings. Competition for resources displaces collaboration and often inhibits attempts to advance the well-being of communities by fostering divisions.

After my initial analysis, I identified and interviewed two other participants, one an artist and the other a teacher, who are actively working in what I describe as the institutional and Indigenous sites of resistance, through which healing and cultural revival are being achieved. I define the institutional site as those which are situated within the framework of an institution such as a high school, within a health care board, or a social

networking organization that works from a defined mandate. The Indigenous sites are situated outside of such institutions and rely on traditional cultural practices and ways of sharing knowledge. These include, but are not limited to, sharing circles, sweat lodges, drumming and singing. For example, there are regular gatherings at a cultural circle in a building purchased from the United Church of Canada. Some of the elders also work with individuals outside of this circle, helping them to develop a traditional spiritual and cultural practice.

One example of an institutional site being used for resistance is the social studies course in Mi'kmaq history now in place in the local high schools in the Bay St. George region of Newfoundland. Darlene Sexton, who is Mi'kmaq and is a local primary school teacher, has been enlisted by the high school to teach the social studies course. During my fieldwork Sexton invited me to attend an Aboriginal culture day that she and her high school students put on for the children in the local primary and elementary schools. She also asked me if I would be willing to work with her as a volunteer resource person in her social studies class in the upcoming school year. This invitation acted as a catalyst in shaping the second phase of my fieldwork, in that through my discussions with Sexton, I began to more fully recognize the sites of resistance in play amongst the Mi'kmaq.

The direction I followed in my work remained true to my original proposal and any modifications reflect the actual conditions I encountered in my fieldwork. My research objectives as described above remained the same in that I observed and worked to understand that liminal space described by Bhabha (1994). Here, the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland struggle to achieve that transition from an assimilated people to an identity that they choose; even where their choices are contingent and partial.

I documented the various ways in which identity is organized within Mi'kmaq communities. This includes an examination of the super-structure of the group identity and the individual roles that are assumed by members of the Mi'kmaq community. I developed a set of categories that clearly describe how identity is constructed and perhaps contested. Additionally these were intended to document the properties or features of *Mi'kmaq* cultural identity. Questions related to gender as well as those regarding the individual versus the collective are explored. I also focused on how the Indigenous and institutional modes of teaching that I encountered act to facilitate the restoration and revival of Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland and help to overcome the legacy of denial, stigma and shame that presently exists here.

I requested and received approval for a modification to my ethics application that permitted me to interview students in the social studies class described above. This included an extension to May of 2011 to complete my fieldwork. In addition, I submitted documents to the local school board and was granted permission to work with the teacher and to interview the students. My objective here was to study how resistance within an institutional site shapes attitudes and perceptions among the young Mi'kmaq students and how this contributes to the revival of Mi'kmaq culture. However, what I encountered within the class was quite disturbing. The majority of students enrolled are clearly at risk and a number of these students who are within two years of completing high school remain woefully below an acceptable level of literacy. This issue is a complex one but these children all demonstrated the social marginalization and the inherent racism that is built into public education systems that had failed to recognize and value Indigenous students before the inception of the Mi'kmaq Social Studies. After working with the

teacher for several weeks, I concluded that I lacked the capacity to productively interview any of the students and instead shifted my focus to helping the teacher to achieve some positive outcomes in the course. The experience was not without value to my research and more importantly it provided me the opportunity to give back to the community, something that is essential for researchers working with Indigenous people. As Smith (1999) notes, Indigenous resistance to being the subject of research in large measure arises from being exploited for their knowledge without anything in return from the researcher.

### **1.10 Dissertation Format**

This dissertation is divided into six chapters. This chapter has introduced the overall rationale for the research project and set out the context for my work. It also explored some of the processes through which my work was transformed by the very act of research.

Chapter 2 presents a review of current relevant literature that explores the complex relationship between the Indigenous peoples of Canada and the Federal Government. I approach the topic through a broad overview of the larger relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada, in particular by examining how this relationship is constructed through the Indian Act. I also explore the particular histories of those non-status Indigenous people who are marginalized both in the dominant culture but also by those traditional groups from which they emerged. The history of Mi'kmaq people and the impact of contact with colonizing powers are examined in detail with a specific examination of the somewhat limited literature related

to Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. Their history echoes throughout this text, as Mi'kmaq celebrate their culture and history while they work to overcome their legacy of genocide, assimilation, oppression, shame and denial of being.

Chapter 3 provides a theoretical grounding for identity construction and explores some of the established theories such as Instrumental Ethnicity while also examining the critical question of liminality as articulated by Bhabha (1994). I argue that the cultural and institutional sites of resistance, which are central to my research, represent the critical ways in which those Mi'kmaq I interviewed work to complete the transition from peoples resisting assimilation to a new identity that they shape and define within the constraints of a multi-cultural milieu. This approach follows Clarke's (2005) admonition that we must study the situation and attempt to understand it in detail while resisting the necessity of developing a formal theory that can be applied across a general populace. Oppression, as a discursive practice is closely examined through Friere's (1970) work on oppression. His argument that oppression produces a prescribed consciousness, thus creating an inauthentic identity, is closely examined as a key factor in identity construction in oppressed and colonized peoples. His work on resistance as critical to overcoming such inauthentic identities is also explored largely through the lens of Indigenous writers. Finally, this chapter problematizes the idea that Canada is a post-colonial state in order to illustrate how oppression remains a factor in shaping Indigenous identities.

Chapter 4 lays out the rationale for using grounded theory methodology along with the specific methods I applied both in my data collection and analysis. In it, I note that I prefer to work from a model based on the lived experiences of my participants, while accounting for my presence within my work. While I follow Charmaz's (2006)

version of grounded theory methodology in my data collection and initial analysis, I also make use of the situational analysis model developed by Clarke (2005). Using Charmaz, together with Clarke, is not inconsistent in that Clarke sees her work as building upon and extending Charmaz's ideas about the constructiveness of data (p. xxiii). Equally critical to my analysis is Clarke's insight that discursive formations "routinely contain contradictory discourses" (2006, p. 54); an idea that reflects the tension between oppression and resistance within the shared Canadian human landscape. Grounded theory provides an excellent opportunity to make sense of these contradictions through discursive analysis.

Chapter 5 provides my findings and analysis. This chapter problematizes the notion of the singular authenticity of an Indigenous identity as being reliant upon or contingent upon a racially and legally prescribed model. It examines the interrelationship inherent in identity whereby the individual exists both apart from and within the shared identity of the group and the tensions that arise from this relationship. In this chapter, I explore the various oppressive discursive practices that act against Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. I then examine how Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland are resisting this oppression by revitalizing their culture and recovering their authentic identities. Chapter 6 comprises the conclusion in which I bring together the key questions that this work addresses and connect them to the theoretical, conceptual and other issues raised in the literature review, as well as the empirical evidence from the findings. Additionally, I reflect on how the tension between oppression and resistance may play out over the next several years. Here, I also discuss possible future work while acknowledging gaps in this research that can be addressed at that time.



## **Chapter 2: The State, Indigenous Communities and Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland**

### **2.1 Situating Identities**

All identities exist as much in opposition to other identities as they do in relation to members of an identifiable group. In a world filled with many peoples, we know who we are and this also tells us who we are not. Thus, in order to examine any identity we must situate it within the larger context within which it functions. An exploration of this context can help us to more fully understand how an identity is achieved, sustained, undermined or even erased. Numerous identities exist and even thrive within Canada's so-called multicultural mosaic. Yet, there are unique circumstances that impinge upon, and in some measure, act to limit how Indigenous identities are understood by the settler population. How these perceptions of Indigenous identity are understood by non-Indigenous people must not be conflated with how Indigenous people understand or live their own identities. These unique circumstances arise in part from our colonial history and the long-term relations between settler people and Indigenous peoples. The contradictions present in conflicting notions of identity must be carefully examined and a clear understanding of particular circumstances is essential to answering the specific research questions raised by this dissertation. Such an understanding can be advanced by a careful examination of the historical relationship between European colonial powers and Indigenous people.

The early relationship between the Mi'kmaq and French colonial powers and an exploration of how Mi'kmaq were drawn into the various conflicts between the French and British is central to understanding the relationship between Indigenous people and

the settler population. By retracing key events from our past, we can achieve some critical insights into the socio-political dynamics that currently shape relations between Indigenous peoples and the dominant settler society in Canada. This also requires exploring that colonial legacy and critically challenging notions of Canada as a post-colonial state.

The marginalization and near extinction of Mi'kmaq under British rule represents a critical set of events that continue to resonate through the lives of these Indigenous people today. A careful exploration of key factors is essential, if we are to understand how Mi'kmaq were decimated through interaction with colonial powers. All estimates of original populations and the rapid collapse of Mi'kmaq make it clear that contact with the colonial invaders was the primary contributing factor (Prins, 1996; Pastore, 1999; Paul, 2000; Robinson, 2005).

Additionally, if we are to reasonably understand the current circumstances under which Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland act to revitalize their culture, we must first map out the socio-political arenas, within which Mi'kmaq are situated. There are a variety of historical, legal, social, and cultural factors in the national and local arenas, which serve to frame the lives and identities of all Indigenous people. Central to all of these is the *Indian Act*.

## **2.2 Pre-Contact Mi'kmaq History**

In reading about Mi'kmaq and their experiences with the settler populations, I have found that one of the challenges arises from the limited amount of historical sources available, in particular for their presence on the island of Newfoundland or as Mi'kmaq

know it, Ktaqamkuk. What is available is written largely by non-Indigenous authors; something that limits perspectives and fails to speak from the viewpoint of Indigenous people (Smith, 1999). There are likely several reasons for this such as the fact that the lack of a commercial fur trade on the island meant limited interaction there with any colonial powers. Newfoundland was the great fishing station, with the commercial activity pursued with limited, if any, interaction with Indigenous people. Another plausible explanation is, given the fact of the near extinction of their families on mainland Canada, most Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland would have avoided contact with colonial powers there. It must be recalled that the scalp bounty remained in place long after Britain wrested control of their territory from the French. (Paul, 2000) Thus, Mi'kmaq most likely lived isolated lives following their traditional ways of harvesting resources for their own subsistence survival. I explore this argument in some detail below.

Despite the limited amount of material available, it is clear that like so many other indigenous peoples, Mi'kmaq were from early contact drawn into the competing military, economic and political struggles between England and France (Upton, 1979; Reid, 1995; Prins, 1996; Paul, 2000; Robinson, 2005). What is also critical to understand here is that the limited written record was produced by the same people who colonized and nearly eradicated Mi'kmaq. The interpretation of historical events in this scant record reflects perspectives deeply rooted in a Euro-centric understanding of history. This interpretation largely serves to support a notion of an inevitability of the outcomes of a set of historical events in which a largely helpless and simple people were unfortunately caught in the middle of a struggle between two powerful forces. In modern terms, the near total

destruction of Mi'kmaq would be described as *collateral damage* [italics added]. What is generally absent from this official history is the Mi'kmaq perspective on the events that most deeply affected them as a people. It fails to recognize that Mi'kmaq were complex and sophisticated thinkers as evidenced by their participation in the Wabanaki Confederacy. Additionally, it fails to recognize that from earliest contact with Europeans Mi'kmaq recognized the threat these people presented to their survival and that they made deliberate choices in aligning with the French, based on their assessment of their compatibility with Mi'kmaq values. Mi'kmaq were fortunate to survive as a people; something only they can take credit for. They were continually betrayed and abused, marginalized in their homelands and purposively pushed towards extinction (Prins, 1999; Paul, 2000; Tompkins and Harris, 1998; Hanrahan, 2003; Robinson, 2005).

Mi'kmaq territory in the Eastern North American region was extensive; stretching from what is now Cape Breton Island across to the Gaspé and southwards into what is now Maine. However, in describing the traditional Mi'kmaq territory, Míkmaq, many scholars are insistent that Newfoundland is also part of the nation (Battiste, 1997; Henderson, 1997; Augustine, 2005; Wallis, 2010).

The inclusion of the island of Newfoundland in this territory has long been described as controversial by academics and the dominant settler population but arguments against this are largely specious and reliant on a lack of physical evidence and are means to repudiate longstanding assertions by the Mi'kmaq. Since *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* (Foster, Webber, & Raven, 2007), oral tradition has been given much greater standing in the courts. Thus, it is possible that Mi'kmaq claims may someday be

accepted as valid proof of their claims to this extended territory. Indeed, for Mi'kmaq, Newfoundland, known to them as Ktaqamkuk, remains unceded territory.

Mi'kmaq are generally recognized as being related to the various Algonquian peoples of Eastern North America. Paul describes his people this way:

Prior to European settlement, the Micmac lived in countries whose culture was based upon three principles: the supremacy of the Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth and the democratic principles of their society. A harmonious relationship with nature was considered to be essential for survival. (2000, p.12)

According to Paul (2000, p. 16) their political organization was based on a series of "Districts" led by a "District Chief and a "Council", in which "a district government had all the powers that are vested in our modern governments. It had the conditional power to make war or peace, settle disputes, and apportion hunting and fishing area to families." Paul's work is polemical and some may question the veracity of his claims. Such claims by an Indigenous person of some stature, however, cannot be simply dismissed out of hand.<sup>3</sup> Certainly, King (2004) forthrightly asserts he is polemical in his own writing for non-Indigenous audiences. That Paul's claims resonate within Mi'kmaq

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<sup>3</sup> Daniel Paul was awarded the Order of Canada in 2005. His introduction at his investment included the following statement: "Daniel N. Paul is a powerful and passionate advocate for social justice and the eradication of racial discrimination. As an author, journalist, consultant and volunteer, he has been an outspoken champion of First Nations communities across Nova Scotia for more than 30 years. The Nova Scotia Human Rights Commission, the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq have all benefitted from his consensus building skills and commitment to the community. Through his newspaper columns and his book, *We Were Not the Savages*, he has helped to restore the proud heritage and history of the Mi'kmaq Nation." Retrieved January 31, 2011 from <http://www.gg.ca/honour.aspx?id=9426&t=12>

communities makes it essential that they be included here if we are to fully understand the critical beliefs that inform Mi'kmaq today.<sup>4</sup>

Davis writes: “Before Europeans colonized the Maritimes, the Micmac peoples possessed a form of self-government. The sagamores, or chiefs, had territories which they effectively controlled.” (1997, p. 61)

Prins (1996, p. 33) notes that the traditional leader was called the *saqmaw* “head of a residential kin-group.” He writes that there was “a loosely structured social organization, participatory decision making, voluntary association, minimalized institutionalization and situational (as-needed) political leadership based on consensus instead of coercion.” This concurs with Paul’s (2000, p. 16) “conditional power.” Upton is quite explicit in his description of the inherent limits of a chief’s power.

The chief received tributes and could share in the produce of the hunt without taking part in it himself, but he could not accumulate an excess of goods over others... In other words, he was a trustee for the welfare of his band. (Upton, 1979, p. 7)

Such a chief would have also been responsible for maintaining relationships with other bands and with other nations, including the Abenaki, the Penobscot, the Maliseet, and the Passamaquoddy, all co-members of the Wabanaki Confederacy. (Paul, 2000, p. 8)

These additional populations within the same territory necessitated a more complex or sophisticated political system supported by councils and treaties, intended in part to resist invasion by Iroquoian tribes. Battiste (1997) and Henderson (1997) each provide detailed descriptions of how interactions between the Wabanaki Confederacy other nations, which

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<sup>4</sup> When I was volunteering as a resource person in a Mi'kmaq Social Studies program at Appalachia High School in St. George's, Newfoundland and Labrador the teacher used Paul's work as a key source material in teaching about the Mi'kmaq people.

firmly established the boundaries of their territory, *Mikmáki*, contributed to the rise of the *sakamow*<sup>5</sup>. Battiste writes:

Wampum belts represented the terms of peace with the Iroquois Confederacy, the Wabanaki Confederacy and the Anishinabe Confederacy of the Great Lakes... To maintain peace among the allied people within their national boundaries, the Holy Gathering of Mikmaq (*Santé Mawiómi wjit Mikmaq*) was organized... Internal peace was maintained by dividing the national territory into seven *sakamowit* (hunting districts), each with a *sakamow* or “chief”. (1997, p. 17)

Wallis also writes of this period noting: “Mi’kmaw tradition maintains that the Grand Council was established six centuries ago after a Mi’kmaw victory over an Iroquois offensive into Mi’kma’ki” (2010, p.37).

Paul (2000, p. 5) argues for a population estimate at 100,000 at the time of first contact with Europeans. Prins (1996, p. 27) acknowledges that this is a commonly repeated estimate used by many Mi’kmaq but he disagrees with its accuracy, noting competing claims of a low number of 3,500 to a high of 35,000. According to both Prins and Paul, Mi’kmaq were a mainly maritime hunter-gatherer people, relying on sea mammals as well as deer and moose, along with small game such as fowl and rabbits. Reflecting on the subsistence needs and available territory, Prins (1996, p. 27) “estimate[s] a precontact population of about 10,000-20,000.” He also notes that Mi’kmaq suffered a dramatic collapse in population, with a decrease of close to 90 percent in the first 100 years of contact. He attributes this to a series of factors including disease and war. Pastore’s reference to Miller supports Prins though the numbers that Pastore offers are higher:

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<sup>5</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text

Virginia Miller argued that Nova Scotia Micmacs declined from a pre-contact population of 26,000 to a low, in 1843, of 1,300. Extrapolation to the rest of Micmac territory resulted in an estimated total Micmac population of about 50,000 on the eve of European contact. (1999, p. 210)

Whatever the true number is, it is evident that contact with Europeans resulted in a rapid collapse of Mi'kmaq population (Robinson, 2005, p. 20).

Mi'kmaq, like many of the other Algonquian tribes, did practice intertribal warfare. Paul (2000, p. 8) describes resistance to Iroquoian tribes as the reason for the Wabanaki confederacy. Prins (1979, p. 38) writes that "as in other tribal societies, powerful reputations were built on success in warfare." According to Upton (1979), such warfare allowed Mi'kmaq to reduce violence among their own people by using limited warfare against other tribes.

There was an element of leisure-time activity in warmaking, for it gave a man an additional opportunity to prove himself to his fellows and to indulge in the satisfaction of a fight victoriously fought; with increased esteem came status and a recognized voice in the councils of his group. The absence of violence within tribes was offset by the frequency of violence towards other tribes. (Upton, 1979, p. 9)

It makes sense that a tightly-knit group of people, entirely dependent on each other for their mutual survival, would find mechanisms to transfer internal tensions that must arise within the group to an external foe. Much of this may well have been ritualized violence. Territory was not the only issue, according to Prins (1996) and Paul (2000). Rather, sustaining their population was also a concern for Mi'kmaq. Upton (1979, p. 9) explicitly states that Mi'kmaq did not use ritual torture on their captives; rather, as with many other tribes, they used intertribal warfare as a way of recruiting new membership, sometimes by marriage of captured women or through adoption of children



captured in raids. Thus, war was a means of ensuring survival, not for inflicting decimation on other tribes. It is quite possible that settlers designed claims of Mi'kmaq savagery to demonize and marginalize Mi'kmaq in the drive to usurp their territory.

### **2.3 Post-Contact Mi'kmaq History**

While there are various claims about when regular contact between Mi'kmaq and Europeans was established, it appears that initial contact began around 1503 with the arrival of fishermen off Cape Breton (Upton, 1979; Prins, 1996; Paul, 2000). Davis writes that “the necessity to dry the fish onshore brought them [Europeans] into contact with the Micmac” (1997, p. 37). However, as long as the Atlantic fishery was the dominant focus of the Europeans, contact remained minimal. There was a small trade in goods between the fishermen and Mi'kmaq. Prins (1996, p. 44) writes that Mi'kmaq “offered them beavers and other precious furs in exchange for hatchets, knives and other metal tools.” According to available interpretations of Mi'kmaq history, this simple beginning established a pattern of trade that would eventually lead to the destruction of Mi'kmaq fur trapping through overhunting and a growing dependence on trade goods, including new foodstuffs such as flour and liquor. Upton writes:

Gradually, the traditional artifacts fell into disuse, along with the knowledge that had produced them. The Indians grew dependent on imported goods that they could not duplicate and so as their dependence grew so the importance of the supplier increased. (1979, p. xi)

That 500 years ago, Mi'kmaq would quickly lose the basic skills simply through the acquisition of goods such as guns and steel knives seems to be an assumption which fails to recognize that any person spending time on the land could not have entirely depended on such items. Despite possession of such items a successful hunter-gatherer

would not have depended on such items.<sup>6</sup> A far more likely scenario is that the decades of European style warfare between the British and the French would have scorched Mi'kmaq territory, leaving it incapable of supporting their former hunter-gatherer lives.

First contact with the colonial powers for Mi'kmaq was with the French, in particular Pierre du Gua and Samuel de Champlain. As with many Indigenous people, they became known as Mi'kmaq [or Micmac] likely through some misunderstanding of the subtleties of their language. While Prins (1996, p. 2) and Robinson (2005, p. 20) report that Mi'kmaq called themselves *L'nu'k* or *L'nu* – people, Paul (2000, p.10) notes that the word Micmac, though incorrect, has been in use for over 350 years and has historic value for many of his people. According to Davis, “the name Micmac comes from the word *nikmaq*<sup>7</sup>, which means ‘my kin-friends’. *Nikmaq* was a form of greeting used by the Micmac in the early seventeenth century” (1997, p. 23). However, according to Henderson, “by 5000 BC the people began calling themselves *Nikmaq*,<sup>8</sup> a possessive form indicating awareness of their spiritual and collective unity. The concept is roughly translated as ‘my kin friends’” (1997, p. 30).

The pre-contact hunter-gatherer society that harvested what was necessary for survival had been a sustainable model for millennia. However, with the arrival of the French colonists a fur trade quickly developed. It is generally assumed by scholars that the movement from the traditional way of life to the fur trade led to the depletion of resources to the point where famine would have been inevitable. The key argument here

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<sup>6</sup> Growing up in a rural wooded area of Newfoundland in the mid-twentieth century, I learned many of these essential skills myself and there were others far more able than I am.

<sup>7</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

<sup>8</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

is that the French had long practiced gift-giving to Mi'kmaq which created a growing reliance on this sole source of now staple goods from the French, (Upton 1979; Prins, 1996; Robinson, 2005; Wallis, 2010). It is assumed that this situation would have created a form of dependency and a loss of self-reliance. For example, Robinson notes that:

The arrival of French trapper, traders and missionaries in the 17<sup>th</sup> century greatly influenced traditional Mi'kmaq subsistence strategies and social organization. The European demand for furs, seal oil and fish transformed band structures and seriously disrupted Mi'kmaq territorial and resource management. (2005, p. 23)

Yet, what this interpretation fails to account for is that the same hunter skills that allowed Mi'kmaq to trap furs could also be utilized to harvest traditional food and support a reversion to subsistence living. There is an inherent assumption that frames Mi'kmaq as subservient to and inescapably dependent on European colonial powers. It does not privilege Mi'kmaq as being capable of adapting to changing circumstances but instead this assumption about Mi'kmaq adaptability privileges the inevitability of European domination of Mi'kmaq. It infantilizes Mi'kmaq people as helpless and automatically dependent on their supposed superiors. In any event, with the impact of imported diseases such as smallpox and the toll of military warfare, the Mi'kmaq population began to collapse and quickly reach the numbers noted above.

These changes accelerated rapidly after Jacques Cartier's exploration of the Gulf of St. Lawrence in 1534. (Upton, 1979; Prins, 1996; Paul, 2000) In 1604 a contingent of French settlers, led by Pierre Du Gua, the Sieur de Monts, attempted to establish a colony in Mi'kmaq territory. Samuel de Champlain was the navigator for the expedition. They survived only through the aid provided by Mi'kmaq under the leadership of Membertou. The second attempt at Port Royal was more successful and it is here that the alliance

between the French and Mi'kmaq has its early beginnings. Paul describes Membertou's considerable political power and influence among Mi'kmaq. Yet, this could have only been exercised through persuasion in council meetings. That Mi'kmaq permitted the French to settle indicates they may have seen a strategic advantage in their presence. Prins (1996, p. 60) claims that Membertou saw them "as a measure of security against traditional enemy raiders such as the Abenaki from southern Maine." However, given that both Mi'kmaq and the Abenaki were members of the Wabanaki Confederacy this claim seems questionable and reflective of a stereotypical labelling of Mi'kmaq as a warlike people.

One primary objective within the French colonial system was to create self-sufficiency through agriculture, and farms were soon established along the shores of the Bay of Fundy. At first these colonies were private fiefdoms under the seigneur system but in time the French government took control, as colonies appeared about to fail, largely through corruption and incompetence (Prins, 1996). The initial expansion of the seigneuries brought many single men from France as the French tried to consolidate and expand their North American colonies. Unlike the Protestant nations, the Catholic French did not frown upon intermarriage between settlers and natives. This may likely reflect more on the influence of Calvinism and Puritanism that shaped Protestant attitudes towards other peoples and moral behaviour than necessarily on the French. Reid (1995) understands the complex social, religious, cultural and economic factors that shaped British attitudes towards the New World and helped to define their place in it. Reid (1995, p. 27) writes, "a great many British settlers were possessed of a sense of identity that had been in some measure disfigured and that they were consequently trying to

recover.” Intermarriage with Indigenous people could have been regarded as a threat to that recovery.

Unlike their British counterparts, the French colonist or Acadians soon developed strong kinship ties with Mi’kmaq. This relationship may help explain the enduring loyalty of Mi’kmaq to the French. Certainly, Mi’kmaq in recognizing that they had to choose sides between two sets of invaders in their territory would have accepted close familial relationships with their allies following traditional strategic practices. While the colony at Port Royal would be abandoned after only two years, the on-going relationship between the French and Mi’kmaq would last until the English eventually drove the French out of the territory. This alliance that was at first profitable for Mi’kmaq, eventually nearly destroyed them. (Reid, 1995; Prins, 1996; Robinson, 2005)

A critical factor that still shapes Mi’kmaq people is their conversion to Christianity. Upton (1979, p. xi) describes conversion as “one of the three horsemen of the European Apocalypse: disease, trade goods and Christianity.” For Upton, conversion to Christianity drew Mi’kmaq deeper into an alliance with the French, one that led to their near total extinction. While intermarriage and trade both played significant roles in consolidating the alliance between Mi’kmaq and the French, the presence of the Roman Catholic priests fed and sustained Mi’kmaq animosity towards the Protestant English. The first missionaries were the Franciscans who were followed by the Capuchins; however, when Champlain returned to Canada in 1632 he brought the Jesuits. Once the Jesuits were established at Miscou, conversion of Mi’kmaq grew rapidly (Prins, 1996). With the return of the Recollets (Franciscan) order in 1673 missions were established across Acadia and the majority of Mi’kmaq converted to Roman Catholicism.

Prins (1996, pp. 80-81) writes of “baptism as alliance ritual” but one that Mi’kmaq may not have fully comprehended. Rather than viewing it as a religious experience, Prins (1996, p. 82) believes that they initially understood it as a “kin-ship custom” intended to consolidate the alliance between Mi’kmaq and the French. Upton (1979, p. 21) shares this view, stating that Mi’kmaq saw “baptism as a pledge of friendship and alliance with the newcomers.” Most likely, Mi’kmaq leaders would have also conducted a pipe ceremony with the French as their equivalent sacred alliance ceremony. In return for accepting Christianity, Mi’kmaq secured their trade relationship with the French and ensured access to the trade goods that were now an important part of their lives.

Mi’kmaq, in what is now Nova Scotia, regularly hunting and fishing along the coastal area, were initially able to dominate the early fur trade. Prins (1996, p. 44) argues that “their strategic coastal position, seafaring skills, and early acquisition of small sailing boats (shallops), placed Mi’kmaq chieftains in the position to become the middlemen in the fur trade.” This perspective is consistent with Upton’s description of the Chief as being responsible for the welfare of his band. So long as the European contact was restricted to coastal areas, this dominance could be maintained. However, the Europeans sought to establish permanent settlements and, in a few short decades, Mi’kmaq were drawn into the conflicts that arose between competing powers, especially the English and the French. Much like the Iroquois Confederacy, Mi’kmaq recognized that they would have to choose sides in a war on their territory. That they chose to align with the French indicates that they felt greater commonality with them than with the British. Wallis writes that “between 1604 and 1713, the dominant European presence in Mi’kma’ki, the French

military, influenced Mi'kmaw politics. Each with their own agenda, the French and Mi'kmaq collaborated to prevent British expansion" (Wallis, 2010, p. 38).

Previous to the fur trade, Mi'kmaq had been hunter-gatherers, reliant only on access to the land, the sea and abundant natural resources. Through the fur trade, they became partly dependent on the European economic systems. However, both Prins (1996) and Paul (2000) argue that the colonial Acadians were also dependent on Mi'kmaq. They describe the relationship between Mi'kmaq and the Acadians as symbiotic. We have to critically question this notion of symbiosis in that it implies a relationship that is willingly entered into by two parties even when one is less powerful than the other. In this situation there are important factors of survival on each side of the relationship that act to neutralize or at least reduce the ability of the more powerful party to exclusively enforce its will on the relationship. It is not apparent that these are the exact circumstances under which Mi'kmaq and the French began their relationship, but we do have to reflect on the fact that the first colonists such as Champlain were ill-prepared for life in the Americas and could not have survived without the co-operation and generosity of the Indigenous people. However, we still need to be careful in our understanding of the true nature of the socio-economic relationship between the French and Mi'kmaq because it is possible that over time the colonial powers did begin to exploit their position to the great disadvantage of Mi'kmaq. (Upton, 1979; Prins, 1996, Paul, 2000, Hanrahan, 2003) Still, such a reading minimizes the ability of Mi'kmaq to reflect on the complex situation in which they had to make key choices and assumes that they lacked ability to develop sophisticated strategies. Of course, such ability does not

ensure success. The British colonial powers eventually defeated the French and yet the French are not historically cast as subalterns or helpless in the face of a superior culture.

The Acadians, who were subsistence farmers, needed the fur trade to supplement their incomes. Mi'kmaq, now dependent on trade goods, needed the fur trade to ensure supply of those goods. This left both of them at the mercy of market fluctuations. Their incomes were tied to the price of fur in Europe as well as the change in styles and the popularity of specific furs such as the beaver. (Prins 1996; Paul, 2000) This did, in part, erode the loyalty of the fur trading Mi'kmaq to their Acadian buyers. Prins (1996, pp. 96-97) writes that part of the English success in breaking the French monopoly was that they paid more for furs and charged less for guns. There was also a thriving illegal trade by unlicensed traders who avoided paying taxes in France and could thus offer better prices for furs.

### *2.3.1 The Fur Trade and the British-French Wars*

The battle for control of the lucrative fur trade was only one of the factors that contributed to the French and English fight for control of eastern North America but it was critical to the future of Mi'kmaq. However, it was an industry that eventually destroyed itself. The relatively small landmass, of what is now the Maritime Provinces, could not sustain the rate of depletion that the fur trade caused. Key populations of fur-bearing animals collapsed as Mi'kmaq were forced to offer more furs in order to obtain the goods they needed. This eventually led to the increased intertribal friction and what is described as the “Beaver Wars” which, according to Prins (1979, p. 106), stretched from “Cape Breton to Chesapeake Bay and as far inland as the Great lakes.” Mi'kmaq were



involved in multiple conflicts with Stadacona, Abenaki, Massachusetts, Montagnais and Iroquois. In attempts to reduce these conflicts, tribes would meet in council and commit to remain at peace with each other for a specified period of time. (Paul, 2000) While Mi'kmaq did eventually establish peaceful relations with all of these tribes through traditional practice, they were soon drawn back into war. The British and French had long relied on their various Indigenous tribes to support them in the wars against each other. Despite their efforts to maintain peace, tribes became engaged in warfare and the treaties between them and others were eventually abrogated.

Prins notes that even when the value of the fur trade declined, the English and the French used it to command the loyalty of Indigenous peoples, knowing their reliance on it. This tactic helps to expose how the Indigenous people, in particular Mi'kmaq, became involved in the larger wars being fought by the French and the English both in North America and Europe. In order to sustain their relationship with Acadians, Mi'kmaq were required to fight on the side of the French in their on-going battles with the English between 1652 and the early 1700's. Paul (2000, p. 61) notes that "the sense of kinship between the Acadians and the Micmac during this period became so pronounced that each side at times took exceptional risks to protect the other from English depredations." The English also had their allies, in particular the Iroquois, who had long been traditional rivals of Mi'kmaq; though prior to contact with Europeans their wars had mainly been brief skirmishes followed by extended periods of peace.

Mi'kmaq participated in the full-scale wars between the French and the English, doing what Prins (1996, p. 118) calls "*ethnic soldiering*"<sup>9</sup>, mainly as a means of survival following the effective collapse of the fur trade. Religion was a decisive factor, as Mi'kmaq were now almost exclusively Roman Catholic and had fully adopted the religious prejudices against the Protestant English, who were the enemies of their French allies. Upton (1979, p. 33) argues that "their attachment to the Catholic Church was no transient affair... and they were to use it to put distance between themselves and the conquering English in the years ahead." This loyalty to the Catholic Church was often used by the "warrior priests" who Prins (1996, p.121) describes as manipulating Mi'kmaq in order to "hold the Indians in [the French] sphere of influence." Prins (1996, p.121) adds that the missionary priests were striving to build a "bulwark against the forces of evil, in particular English heretics." For Prins then, Mi'kmaq were essential to this aim.

Mi'kmaq participation in the wars between the English and the French had also become a matter of survival as, according to Prins (1996, p.103), by now their numbers had fallen to about "2000 souls near the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century." After decades of warfare their land would have been devastated and their traditional sources of food and subsistence living would have been severely diminished. Without access to traditional sources of food, Mi'kmaq were largely dependent on their French allies.

Of course war was not the only cause in the decline in Mi'kmaq population. The attrition caused by exposure to diseases, for which they had no natural resistance, took many more Mi'kmaq lives. According to Prins (1996, p. 103) by 1679, while the French

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<sup>9</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

settler population had risen to nearly “9400 in Canada and 515 in Acadia”, Mi’kmaq declined to their lowest level, estimated by Prins at 2000. This collapse made it nearly impossible to sustain their traditional social structures and bands were forced to consolidate to have sufficient numbers to survive. The other factor that contributed to the near total destruction of Mi’kmaq was the introduction of alcohol. Alcohol was not part of Indigenous culture and there were soon high rates of addiction that led to a breakdown in family and tribal cohesion as people turned to violence against their families and friends. Prins (1996, p. 103) describes alcohol as the “agent of self-destruction.”

Given their reduced numbers, it makes sense that Mi’kmaq should also maintain alliances with other tribes in the region. This would strengthen their numbers for battle, while reducing the risk of being drawn into intertribal warfare. It is likely that none of their allied tribes could anymore sustain such practices. Thus, the Abenaki, the Maliseet, the Penobscot and the Pasamaquoddy all remained part of the Wabanaki Confederacy. This confederacy was in part a non-aggression treaty, through which each tribe agreed to not attack another. In addition, none of the allied tribes would participate in the French-British wars. According to Paul (2000), while this alliance was at first successful, it soon collapsed as the British won key battles against the French.

One outcome of these wars that was particularly puzzling for Paul was the loss of Annapolis (Port Royal). He was dismayed that the French would cede this territory to the British when it was at the heart of traditional Mi’kmaq lands. It was not theirs to cede and is reflective of the underlying premises that informed British and French policies towards Indigenous title.

Near the end only the Maliseet stayed in confederacy with Mi'kmaq. By this time the tribal areas occupied by each was under firm control by the British. Survival for these tribes meant they had to withdraw from war. Paul (2000, p. 99) also credits the Massachusetts Governor, Shirley, with successfully negotiating this neutrality after 1725. Shirley's desire for peace and stability can be readily understood, when we reflect on the growing wealth and prosperity being experienced in the then New England colonies. Continual warfare would have disrupted trade and commerce and diverted essential resources away from economic growth.

A series of Anglo-Wabanaki wars were fought between 1676 to around 1713 pitting Britain, its colonists and the Iroquois Confederacy against France and their Indigenous allies, the Wabanaki. Following this, under the Treaty of Utrecht France, ceded most of Acadia to the English. Port Royal was renamed Annapolis Royal and the French-speaking Acadians were permitted to retain their land and religion. The Wabanaki Confederacy was left to fend for itself and to find some means of negotiating peace with the British. Prins (1996, p. 34) insists that the French never considered "Aboriginal title until after they ceded Acadia to the British." According to Prins, the French followed the doctrine of "right of conquest" which held that in establishing a colony in Mi'kmaq territory and becoming the dominant power there the French effectively took ownership of the land and the resources. The British on the other hand followed a practice of negotiating treaties that explicitly or inherently recognized Indigenous title. For their part, the British soon followed up on their practice of having Indigenous tribes swear loyalty to the crown. Mi'kmaq had never been required to do this by the French and resisted the British demands. According to Upton (1979, p. 38), the subsequent insensitivity by the

British towards Mi'kmaq forced them into a renewed loyalty to the same French who had abandoned them. They continued to meet with the French on Ile Royal (Prince Edward Island) to renew their vows of loyalty but as allies, not subjects. This renewal ritual included presents from the French to Mi'kmaq. The British did not adopt this practice, which they framed as appeasement, since they believed they only needed to negotiate treaties that would cede control of Indigenous lands to the crown. Upton (1979, p. 38) claims "it required more imagination than London possessed" to undertake the kind of more complex and nuanced relationship that the French maintained with Indigenous people.

Paul (2000, p. 65) understands that "the main victims of this peace were the Aboriginal peoples of the Americas." Despite this outcome, Paul's reading of the Treaty of Utrecht leads him to believe that the initial intent was for the British to negotiate a separate peace process with the Eastern tribes. This was never realized as war between the British and French intervened. Through the following years there were a series of small wars or, perhaps more appropriately, skirmishes between the French and British that continued to 1724. With their French allies weakened, Paul (2000, p.67) argues Mi'kmaq eventually "opted to sign treaties they hoped would bring an honourable conclusion to a ruinous war." Despite the treaty signed in Boston in 1726, complete stability in Acadia was not realized until the complete collapse of New France, beginning with the fall of Louisbourg in 1758.

Paul's reading of British intent towards the Wabanaki Confederacy, especially Mi'kmaq seems highly generous given that the scalping bounty that began in war remained in place long after (MacFarlane, 1938; Paul, 2000; Prins, 1996; Robinson,

2005; Upton, 1979). A lifting of such a bounty would seem to have been a basic first step towards initiating negotiations with Mi'kmaq.

### *2.3.2 Life under the British*

British policy up to 1760 towards Mi'kmaq was solely aimed at stabilizing their new territory of Acadia, now Nova Scotia (Wallis, 2010). They were well aware that full peace could not be achieved so long as the threat of attack from the former French Indigenous allies was always possible. Many of the people who had fought bitter wars against the British were now within the territories newly controlled by the British, who also knew that it was in the interest of the French to stir the Wabanaki, in particular Mi'kmaq, to continually harass them in hopes of eventually recapturing Acadia. Macfarlane (1938, pp. 60-61) notes that to counter the tendency of Mi'kmaq to make scattered raids against various areas, the British built a series of small forts, manned by Scottish regiments. Each soldier was given land and those without wives were encouraged to marry within the Indigenous population. It is possible that the British used this as a strategic way of building alliances within the Mi'kmaq community, following upon the previous mainland success of their French enemy. During this time the British had continued expanding their settlements, encouraging migration from their New England colonies. The French had lost control of Canada and Mi'kmaq were without allies. They were in no position to resist this expansion.

The various wars between Mi'kmaq and the British had witnessed the rise of brutal practices; these would carry a long-term legacy in future relations between Mi'kmaq and their oppressors. During war with the French, the British elevated the

practice of scalping to genocidal levels, offering cash rewards for dead, any Mi'kmaq, man, woman or child (MacFarlane, 1938; Upton, 1979; Prins, 1996; Paul, 2000; Robinson, 2005). Robinson notes this practice of scalping continued under British colonial rule.

Continued Mi'kmaw resistance to British rule prompted [Governor] Cornwallis to offer £10 for every Mi'kmaw scalp or prisoner. In 1750 the scalp price was raised to £50. Cornwallis's campaign against the Mi'kmaw was so successful it almost eradicated the entire Mi'kmaw population. (2005, p. 24)

Given this history, it is not surprising that the changes, which followed the collapse of New France, were devastating for Mi'kmaq. Prins (1996, p. 153) notes that "in contrast to the benign rule and symbiotic reciprocity of French colonialism the British introduced a regime of political subordination." Paul describes the difference this way:

During French tenure in Nova Scotia, murder of a Micmac and theft of Micmac property were not tolerated. In contrast, there is no evidence to indicate that by 1761, after forty-eight years of British rule, that any White had ever been held accountable for any crime committed against a Micmac in the province. (2000, p.148)

The outbreak of war in 1776 brought some renewed hope amongst Mi'kmaq that they might rid themselves of their British masters. Upton (1979, p. 61) describes the considerable efforts by the Americans to draw Mi'kmaq in as allies but "the Micmacs preferred to stay neutral." Despite this neutrality, Upton (1979, p. 61) notes that Mi'kmaq recognized the perilous position in which they found themselves and argues "they had to take cautions to remain in favour of whichever side emerged victorious." The ultimate outcome was a bitter ending for Mi'kmaq, despite their general neutrality. Once Loyalists in the rebellious colonies realized their cause was lost, they fled en mass northward. Prins (1996, p.161) estimates "some 32,000 went to Nova Scotia while

another 15,000 settled in the St. John River valley.” By the time peace was achieved in 1783 there was little territory left for Mi’kmaq to reclaim. In the following decades Mi’kmaq were completely marginalized. Prins writes that by the 1860s:

There were only 1,400 Mi’kmaqs in Nova Scotia, where the total population had mushroomed to 400,000... A similar situation existed in New Brunswick, where perhaps 1,200 Mi’kmaqs were surrounded by nearly 300,000 descendants of Loyalists... Just a few hundred Mi’kmaqs lived in Newfoundland, where the total population was 150,000. (p.164)

Upton (1979, p. 71) describes Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia as being conflated with “a recognized segment of white society: the very poor whose maintenance was traditionally a charge on the community.” Prins offers an equally depressing picture. “Outnumbered by hordes of poor immigrants running from cruel exploitation and squalor in Europe, Mi’kmaqs found themselves pressured into misery” (Prins,1996, p. 165). This period marks a clear division between Mi’kmaq of the former Acadia and those who had by now permanently settled in Newfoundland, yet the determination of Mi’kmaq to retain both their language and their religion was of immense importance for those who had moved from the mainland part of their territory.

The system of reserves that were eventually implemented in Nova Scotia did little to alleviate the poverty and economic deprivation for Mi’kmaq; however, they did afford them the isolation that they needed in order to resist being fully assimilated into settler society. Prins (1996, p. 167) notes that “they mastered just enough English to get by, but commitment to their own language held outsiders at arm’s length and provided a shield against insults and cultural imposition.”

In 1763 King George III had proclaimed the “usufructuary rights of the Indians to the lands of British America” (Upton, 1979, p. 62). The colonial powers in Nova Scotia



and New Brunswick simply chose to disregard this declaration and acted as if all lands in the former Acadia had been ceded to them by the French. According to Prins (1979) the French had employed their seigneurial system to divide up their new colony.

Underlying the colony's seigneurial system was a European legal fiction known as the Doctrine of First Discovery. According to this doctrine, the French Crown possessed sovereign title over the vast wilderness of northeast America that it called New France. That these lands had been inhabited was deemed irrelevant, in part (so the reasoning went) because the natives existed outside the Christian world order. (Prins, 1979, p. 57)

Macklem (2008) explains that because Indigenous people were framed by Europeans as not being fully human their lands were thus deemed as being not inhabited, "*terra nullius*", something that has impact still today. "The proposition that indigenous territory constituted *terra nullius*... is an ongoing process of exclusion and inclusion to the extent that it continues to subsume indigenous populations under the sovereign power of States not of their making" (Macklem, 2008, p. 186).

Although the British did not follow the Doctrine of First Discovery, they chose to accept this "legal fiction" described by Prins (1979) to exert ownership of all lands ceded to them by the French. This action by the British colonial authorities left Mi'kmaq with no recourse to seek compensation and barred them from access to the resources necessary for their survival. They remained in large measure a hunter-gatherer society without the capacity to adapt to a life dependent on agriculture or manual labour. (Reid, 1995; Prins, 1996; Robinson, 2005)

Having overwhelmed Mi'kmaq through immigration, the colonial powers assumed they would eventually become extinct or be assimilated. Some limited attempts were made to protect Mi'kmaq. Upton (1979, p. 90) writes that the Nova Scotia Indian

Act of 1842 “provided for the appointment of an Indian commissioner to supervise the reserves, act against squatters, consult with chiefs to encourage settlement, and arrange for the admission of Indians to local schools. No mention was made of relief.” Reid (1995, p. 10) notes “as the fur trade declined and colonization became a priority for incoming Europeans, the native community was regarded as an impediment to settlement and the destruction that followed was a consequence of this.” Thus Mi’kmaq, who could not return to their hunter-gatherer existence and now no longer had the combination of fur trade and gifts from the French to sustain them, were left entirely without the means to survive. This can hardly be read as anything other than an attempt by the new colonial masters to pursue genocide by indirect means. Acts of omission are no less devastating than acts of commission, when the results are the same.

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Mi’kmaq remained victims of deliberate neglect. They were dispossessed of their lands without compensation; pushed onto small reserves without resources. Even where Mi’kmaq held reserves lands, their possession of them was under continual threat. As Reid (1995, p.35) points out “legal recognition of Mi’kmaq presence in any location rarely extended to the settler population. Squatting and various forms of encroachment were endemic and uncontrolled.”

It should not be supposed that the spirit of Mi’kmaq people was entirely broken. Their own words echo with resistance, pride and dismay. They resist by demonstrating their pride in how they had always lived and dismay at the destruction caused by white men. This archival record from 1865 clearly demonstrates this.

That time everything plenty; salmon, trout eels, good many kinds fish. Plenty Moose, Cariboo (sic), Bear, Beaver, Otter, Martin, Foxes, Wildcat and good many more. My father have’em coat – inside beaver, outside otter. That time plenty

fresh fish in summer and dry'em for winter... white man that time... cut down woods... spear'em salmon... all gone now. Eat'em up make country cold- make rivers small; build saw mills, sawdust and milldam send all fish away. That time plenty codfish, white man set line scare'em all. White man burn up all wood for staves, baskets, everything scarce now. That time great many Micmacs; white people learn 'em to drink... many bad things... and great many die; not many Micmacs now. One time this Micmac country, our country; now white people say this their country, take'em from Indian and never pay'em. Indian speak bout (sic) that good many times. (Peter Paul in Whitehead, 1991, p. 267)

The same Mi'kmaq elder offers a critical assessment of white systems of authority.

Me think something wrong with white man's Council. When Micmac used to have Council, *old* men speak and tell'em (sic) young men what to do – Young men listen and do what old men tell'em; white men change that too; now *young* men speak'em, and old men listen; that's reason so many different kinds speak'em. Believe more better, Micmac Council. (Peter Paul in Whitehead, 1991, p. 268)

The genocidal conditions lasted so long as Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island maintained control over the Indigenous peoples under their colonial governments but changed somewhat under the Indian Act of 1876 when power over all Indigenous people was centralized in Ottawa under the new Dominion of Canada. This was not designed to improve the lives of Indigenous people per se but to “discharge the federal government's obligations to aboriginal people at the lowest possible cost” with the primary strategy of assimilation, so as “to make them economically self-sufficient, and reduce government obligations” (Miller, 2004, p. 4-5) However, Mi'kmaq resisted settling on the designated reserves since “sedentary life and education led to ‘enfranchisement’ – assimilation into the white community” (Upton, 1979, p. 175). As Prins (1996) notes, they clung to their own language and learned only enough English for basic communication. Their adopted Roman Catholicism would have been another way

of distinguishing themselves from the predominantly Protestant British settlers. Mi'kmaq clearly understood that unlike the French who beyond converting them to Roman Catholicism had not actively sought to suppress Mi'kmaq culture, the British were determined to transform them into some model of compliant citizen. (Upton, 1979; Reid, 1995; Prins, 1996) Reid (1995, p. 40) writes that "the solution for some was to re-fashion Mi'kmaq in the images of European colonials." Yet, this seems a highly optimistic and benign reading of government intent. A more critical reading would recognize that the long term goal was likely less assimilation and more intent on erasure. The failure of governments to protect Indigenous lands against encroachment by settlers and to assist Mi'kmaq at times of great deprivation clearly indicates their erasure was not an unacceptable outcome for the colonial powers.

Up to this point the previous colonial powers had ignored Mi'kmaq, leaving control over their internal affairs to their traditional leadership. The Indian Act, "denying the quasi-sovereign status of tribal nations decreed that the minister of Indian Affairs possessed managerial prerogatives over Indian reserves and resources" (Bartlett in Prins, 1996, p.184). These policies remain in place to this day and it is against this backdrop that Mi'kmaq have turned to the court system in the modern era in order to recover their rights under the various treaties they signed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

#### **2.4 Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland**

Mi'kmaq people saw their territory in Newfoundland as their best hope of survival through isolation from colonial powers. Initially, colonial settlement in Newfoundland was limited to the East Coast and the Avalon Peninsula. However,

eventually even in the more distant parts of Western Newfoundland they faced decades of marginalization and oppression. Their existence as an indigenous people was denied; made into a supposed lie. (Tompkins and Harris, 1998; Hanrahan, 2003) It was particularly difficult for me to read of their history in Newfoundland. As a descendant of settlers who arrived there at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, I am all too well aware of how Mi'kmaq were treated. There may not have been direct and open warfare against them; yet, they were always kept at the margins of society, not allowed to live in their own world while denied full membership in the settler sphere. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the main settlement in the Bay St. George area was on an island in the bay. There really were two settlements, divided along racial lines. The intercommunal relationship can be described this way:

This division was clear in the existence of two communities on Flat Island. The Europeans lived in Sandy Point on the leeward side of the outer tip of the island while the Mi'kmaq and French who had intermarried with them lived in an area described as "*upalong*". (Butler, 2007, p. 41)

For a brief period in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century those Mi'kmaq living along the West and South coasts of the island were able to sustain their migratory hunter-gatherer subsistence lifestyle, either by deliberately remaining in isolation from the settlers or by developing the same symbiotic relationship they had once achieved with the French in Acadia. (Butler, 2007) Upton (1979, p. 64) places their permanent settlement in Bay St. George at around 1720.

Pastore uses the map shown below to offer an overview of the larger territory that Mi'kmaq traditionally relied on for their subsistence living. He writes:

Historians and archaeologists differ as to when the Mi'kmaq first came to Newfoundland. Newfoundland Mi'kmaq oral tradition holds that the Mi'kmaq

were living in Newfoundland prior to European contact. There is some historical evidence that the Mi'kmaq were living in Newfoundland by the 16th century, and by the 17th century there are increasing references to the Mi'kmaq in the historical record. (1997, para. 1)



The notion that Mi'kmaq are not Indigenous is soundly rejected by Mi'kmaq in Western Newfoundland and there are scholars (Martijn, 2005; Hanrahan, 2003) who do, at least partly, support their position. Historically, Mi'kmaq have largely been made invisible in any official records in Newfoundland. Then FNI President Brendan Sheppard (Tompkins and FNI, 2004) notes the limited mention of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland's colonial records. Jackson (1993) makes a similar acknowledgement. While this can be explained by the isolation of Mi'kmaq well away from the colonial centre on the East coast of the island, another factor weakens this interpretation. Sheppard (Tompkins and FNI, 2004) admits that no archaeological evidence of pre-contact Mi'kmaq activity in

Newfoundland has ever been identified. This might be explained by their migratory hunter-gatherer ways. Davis cautions that “the coasts of the Maritimes provinces have been submerged for the past 6,000 years. This means if people did use the marine resources this evidence is now underwater” (1997, p. 8). Campsites and burial grounds of Archaic Indians situated above the high-tide mark have been found in the same areas frequented by Mi’kmaq. Similarly, several Beothuk sites are actively being worked. Still, the island of Newfoundland comprises a large landmass with a total area of 111,390 sq. km, according to the provincial government website. It is possible to suppose that an extensive archaeological survey might locate evidence of Mi’kmaq occupation prior to contact with European colonists.

That Newfoundland has long been regarded as a traditional extension of their territories is a firmly entrenched position for Mi’kmaq. Henderson, based on his extended time with the traditional knowledge keepers of Míkmaq, is insistent that the island of Newfoundland was always included in this territory. “Míkmaq was surrounded by Níkmaq (allies) and the ocean; its boundaries had remained static for centuries. The Níkmaq of the Míkmaq Nation included the *Beothuk* (upriver people) in Newfoundland (1997, p. 32).”

In discussing the Treaty of 1760 between the Mi’kmaq and the British Wallis writes: “These treaties continued to recognize Mi’kmaw hunting, fishing, and land rights across Mi’kmaq’ki – a territory over which the Mi’kmaq maintained firm control” (2010, p.43). The Marshall Decision of 1999 recognized the continued force of these treaty terms (Wicken, 2002). Given this outcome, one must wonder about the implications this case has for Mi’kmaq claims to Newfoundland as unceded territory. Certainly, that

Newfoundland is part of Míkmaq is asserted by many Indigenous scholars (Battiste, 1997; Henderson, 1997; Augustine, 2005; Wallis, 2010; Palmater, 2013).

Certainly, it is likely Mi'kmaq did travel there seasonally on a regular basis. However, the only written record of their presence appears to be their participation with the French in raids on British settlements (Prins, 1996, p.128). Upton (1979, p. 8) suggests that Mi'kmaq may have been probing the territory of the Beothuk "for additional hunting grounds." This argument by Upton can be understood as emanating from the now debunked framing of Mi'kmaq as aggressors against the Beothuk. Lawrence offers a much more likely reading of Mi'kmaq and Beothuk relations.

Beothuk, Mi'kmaq, and Innu (and presumably also the Maliseet and Passamaquoddy) descended from common ancestors. The Mi'kmaq, then, were no strangers to the Beothuk, and while clearly much of Newfoundland was primary Beothuk territory, the prehistoric Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland would have involved diplomatic connections and a division of primary and shared territories. (2006, p. 12)

Collins (2011) recites a story told by the famous Mi'kmaq guide and trapper, Mattie Mitchell, one that supports the argument that the Mi'kmaq and the Beothuk each had their traditional territory in different parts of the island of Newfoundland. "'Mi'kmaq 'ave saying. Red man's dat way, Mi'kmaq dis way.'" Mattie pointed in a generally eastern direction for the Beothuk, and a westerly one for the Mi'kmaq" (Mattie Mitchell in Collins, 2011, p. 54).

Paul (2000) makes several references to Newfoundland but these only serve to confirm the reading offered by Prins (1996, p. 44) and Upton (1979, pp. 61-62). Jackson (1993, pp. 10-12) is more insistent that Newfoundland was part of traditional hunting territory for Mi'kmaq, pointing to the successful voyage by a group from Baie D'Espoir



who paddled from Port aux Basques to Cape Breton in a traditional Mi'kmaq craft. While the arrival of Vikings across the North Atlantic in a small craft is accepted as fact, the notion that Mi'kmaq could travel some 90 kilometres across the Cabot Strait is treated as highly speculative.

The Euro-centric reading of Mi'kmaq, as post-contact arrivals in Newfoundland, has proven problematic for them in their attempts to gain recognition as an Indigenous people there. The critical question that remains unresolved is: was Newfoundland traditional or modern territory for Mi'kmaq? Bartels and Jantzen clearly illustrate the ambiguity that surrounds this issue.

It is generally conceded that the Micmac of Cape Breton Island were a maritime-adapted people with sufficient seafaring skills to extend their territorial range as far into the Gulf of St. Lawrence as the Magdalen Islands and as far east as St. Pierre and Miquelon. By the eighteenth century, the Micmac were able to maintain a persistent presence in southern and southwestern Newfoundland. Some scholars have concluded from this that southwestern Newfoundland could have been a regular part of the territorial range of the Cape Breton Micmac since prehistoric times. In the absence of archaeological evidence to support such a conclusion, others, such as Marshall (1988) and Upton (1979, p.64) are unwilling to concede more than a seasonal exploitation of Newfoundland. (1990, p. 72)

While they note that the absence of archaeological evidence undermines any claims of prehistoric usage, they are careful to point out that the issue is not settled. Marshall (1988, p. 53) concedes that the Micmac had the ability to venture as far as Newfoundland in their canoes before European technology became available to them. In fact Marshall is careful to note: "Indian remains on the Magdalen Islands — some of them dating back several millennia — show that prehistoric Indians were in the habit of making lengthy sea voyages" (1988, pp. 53-54). The following description of Mi'kmaq

canoes supports the possibility that Mi'kmaq could have regularly travelled across the Cabot Strait from Cape Breton to Newfoundland.

The Micmac canoe that most impressed Europeans was the large 'open water canoe.' This vessel ranged from 18 to 24 feet (6 to 8.5 metres) in length and was used for hunting large sea mammals off the shores of the Maritimes. This type of canoe was seen by Cartier in 1534. (Davis, 1997, p. 40)

Martijn (2003) takes a much firmer stance in supporting Mi'kmaq claims of pre-contact exploitation of Newfoundland. He proposes a different reading of available evidence, an approach I describe as part of an *ontological shift*. (Butler, 2009) Martijn writes:

Restrictive concepts predicated on a narrow definition of sedentary land use must be reconsidered, because they fail to grant any standing to *aboriginal land exploitation practices* [italics added]. Native perceptions of what constitutes land use and land occupancy over a defined territory, in line with Native life styles adapted to local environmental conditions and to specific economic pursuits, need to be acknowledged. (2005, p. 45)

Lawrence (2006) provides some oral evidence that underscores Martijn's point:

Newfoundland, known as Ktaqamkuk in the Mi'kmaq language, has been part of Unamakik (the Foggy Lands), the first territory where the grand chief lived, where the gathering of councils constituting Mi'kmaki, the Mawiomi, met annually at Potlotek (now Chapel Island) in Cape Breton since time immemorial. Newfoundland was part of the traditional hunting territory of Unamakik. The territories constituting Mi'kmaki were recognized by the Great Convention Council which negotiated territorial boundaries with the other nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy as well as with the Iroquois Confederacy and the Aninishinabe Confederacy. (pp. 2-3)

As Martijn (2009) rightly notes, the established practice of devaluing Indigenous ways of being continue to undermine attempts by people who historically were migratory and whose history existed in oral traditions that supported a way of living not contingent on European notions of land ownership and resource exploitation. There is then a critical

gap in accepted evidence, which often leaves Indigenous people stranded on the wrong side of legal arguments framed outside their historical practices.

Regardless of the disputes around the relationship of Mi'kmaq to Newfoundland, it seems fairly certain that permanent settlement on the island began when Mi'kmaq were overrun by colonists in the Maritime provinces (Upton, 1979; Jackson, 1993; Prins, 1996). Upton, Jackson and Prins each make reference to the fact that then Governor Montague Wilmot of Nova Scotia actively encouraged local Mi'kmaq to permanently migrate, even offering them passports and the possibility of a reserve in Bay St. George on the west coast of Newfoundland. That this was done without the approval of Hugh Palliser, the Governor of Newfoundland, led to great consternation. Jackson (1993) describes Palliser as determined to "rid Newfoundland of the Micmac" (p. 27).

Historically, on the west coast of Newfoundland, the issue of ownership of and access to land based resources was not prominent. Land usage was relevant mainly in relation to providing access to the ocean. For Europeans the fishery remained more economically and politically critical. The French and British (through their Newfoundland settler proxies) continued to disagree and negotiate over who should have control. While the French had ceded their claims to the vast majority of their territory in the Americas, they continued to hold the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon off the south coast of Newfoundland. Additionally, they technically maintained control of an area of the west coast of the island, commonly described as the French Shore. The actual area varied over time and the issue of access to fish stocks remained the major topic of discussion between the two colonial powers. Correspondence between the French Admiral of the fleet and the British Governor of Newfoundland indicates the goal of the

French to expand their share of the fishery resources while ridding themselves of British settlers who were establishing communities in Bay St. George. It is quite clear from the British response that they had no intention of forcibly acting against the settlers or allowing the French to expand their fishery. In January 1857 Sir H. Stewart, Vice-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief wrote to the Secretary of the Admiralty:

The objection to the residences of British subjects in St. George's Bay, now insisted on by the French, is alleged to proceed rather from being the wish to have fresh negotiations on the whole subject of the Fishings in order if possible to obtain extended concurrent rights and especially in the Labrador Coast.

This issue was quite politically charged as is clear from later correspondence dated November 2, 1858 between Sir H. Stewart, Vice-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief to the Secretary of the Admiralty.

I found the community [St. John's] in a state of considerable anxiety and excitement occasioned by the notices which had been given by the Officers of the French Cruzers [sic] to the British settlers on that part of Newfoundland which had been called the "French Shore" intimating in the most positive terms that after this season [1858] no British subjects would be permitted to fish on any part thereof, and that next year French vessels of war would strictly enforce this prohibition. (Stewart, Nov. 2, 1858)

In a postscript to his correspondence, Stewart calls for the removal of the British and recognition of the exclusive French rights to fishing in the disputed region. For their part the French were dismayed with what they saw as inappropriate attempts to inflame the Newfoundland public against them. The French Admiral Clement Camille de la Ronciere-Le Noury, Commander-in-Chief of the Naval Division of Newfoundland, writes in a letter to Governor Sir Alexander Bannerman "Certain journalists of St. John's endeavour in vain to obscure and confuse the question of fisheries" (de La Ronciere-le Noury, Oct 4, 1858).

Western Newfoundland is largely made up of river valleys through the Appalachian and Annieupsquotch Mountain ranges leading to the interior where there once were massive caribou herds. As a hunter-gatherer people, Mi'kmaq did not restrict their territory to the West Coast. Dependent on the land both for food and shelter, they would have had to be familiar with a wide ranging territory and to be aware of the seasonal availability of different plants and animals. They would know when various fish such as salmon and eel were plentiful and would have detailed knowledge of the migration patterns of caribou, their main source of sustenance. Marshall (1988) cites evidence of widespread Mi'kmaq presence throughout the island with an extensive knowledge of its geography. "For the Micmac traveller it was a fairly simple proposition to go along to the Bay Despair<sup>10</sup> opposite the French Islands [of St. Pierre and Miquelon]" (Upton, 1979, p. 64). That they had developed such detailed and intimate knowledge of a vast and rugged landscape in a matter of decades seems problematic. It would seem to attribute to Mi'kmaq some astonishing ability to reconnoitre and to acquire geographical knowledge. A more reasonable understanding is that Newfoundland was traditional territory, long familiar to Mi'kmaq people.

In 1776 Palliser informed the British Admiralty "that a party of some 200 had landed [at Bay D'Espoir]" (Jackson, 1993, p. 111). In this location Mi'kmaq were for a time able to retain their connection to the French on St. Pierre and Miquelon, by now their sole colony in North America. Mi'kmaq may have seen the French as their only

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<sup>10</sup> Upton makes two errors in this section. First he places Bay St. George on the *east* coast of Newfoundland. The second is a more common misreading of Baie D'Espoir as Bay Despair. That this turns the name from hope to despair is not lacking in irony given the eventual state of the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland.

protection from annihilation by the British colonists. Even the island of Newfoundland may not have seemed entirely secure for them.

According to Whitely (1969) Palliser, the British Governor of Newfoundland, was passionately determined that the Newfoundland fishery should primarily be a source of trained seaman for the British navy and for the merchants. Maintaining a ship-based fishery was essential to this strategy since a land-based fishery would have made access to well-seasoned seaman a much less viable proposition. It is likely that Palliser would have actively worked against any established population on the island that might serve to undermine his goal and would have been keenly interested in any evidence of such communities. It might have been possible that the presence of Mi'kmaq, in numbers significant to support a fur trade, could have further encouraged settlement in that it would have been a source of additional income for fishermen who lived a marginal existence.

According to Mi'kmaq Elder Calvin White, one outcome of the arrival of English settlers at Bay St. George in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century was that Mi'kmaq could now trade their furs and wild meat locally, without having to travel to Nova Scotia. (Butler, 2007) Prohibitions from Palliser could have simply been ignored locally. Tanner offers some evidence that supports this *laissez faire* reading of the local political dynamic:

In contrast to the rest of Canada, Newfoundland never had a special agency to deal with aboriginal affairs. Until the late 19th century, European settlers were almost exclusively concerned with the coastal fishery. Because the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq on the island and the Innu in Labrador spent most of the year in the interior, contacts with these groups were infrequent, and government actions towards them was conducted on a sporadic and piecemeal basis. (1998, p. 241)

Jackson offers an overview of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, though it largely focuses on the Bay D'Espoir area and the Conne River Band. Why Jackson largely ignores the larger Mi'kmaq population in the Bay St. George region is unclear.<sup>11</sup> In part, it may be that Jackson understood that those Mi'kmaq in the Bay D'Espoir lived in greater isolation and so were able both to retain their language well into the twentieth century and to continue their traditional practices of living as hunter-gatherers and commercial trappers. Jackson (1993, p. 17) also attributes this ability to retain language, culture and Roman Catholic religion to the fact that those Mi'kmaq who lived along the South coast of Newfoundland had ready access to the French on St. Pierre. From their positions along the South coast, Mi'kmaq had access to a vast expanse of territory and were able to maintain their traditional hunter-gatherer existence. "The uninhabited wilderness of the southern interior offered an abundant variety of small game: fox, muskrat and beaver. Thousands of woodland caribou roamed the bush and barrens" (Jackson, 1993, p. 19). Still, those Mi'kmaq living in other areas of the West coast would have had similar access to the central region as there are numerous rivers that flow westward into Bay St. George from this same interior. Likely, many of Mi'kmaq in Bay St. George would have maintained close family ties with the people in the Conne River Band, given that they would have harvested game from the same interior regions.

The situation on the West coast was complicated. There, France remained nominally in the charge of the territory and thus English settlement was technically

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<sup>11</sup> One argument put forward to me by Gertie Mai Muise was that Jackson's work was sponsored in part by INAC and they discouraged Jackson from including the Bay St. George region so as to minimize evidence of Mi'kmaq population numbers, something that might have facilitated the early land claims by the Mi'kmaq when the FNI first began negotiations with Ottawa.

illegal. This played out in an odd set of circumstances, whereby the French maintained nominal control over the region, while the British held de facto power. One descendant of a French merchant family related to me that his grandfather supplied both the British and French fleets with fresh water and farm produce, flying the appropriate flag based on which fleet was in the harbour at the time. (Personal conversation, Bill Ruth, 1978) Thus, for the local Mi'kmaq, negotiating a peaceful relationship with the settler population appears to have been supported by the local *realpolitik* in practice at the time. Over time this led to a degree of assimilation as French family names of the Bay St. George Mi'kmaq were anglicised. Lejeune, LeRoi and LeBlanc became Young, King and White respectively. English eventually displaced French as the dominant language. However, there was a strong Roman Catholic presence and Mi'kmaq were able to retain their adopted Christian religion. (Jackson, 1993; Butler, 2007)

#### 2.4.1 *Mi'kmaq in Twentieth-Century Newfoundland*

Mi'kmaq continued living their traditional lives in relative isolation until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century when, the newly independent Newfoundland moved to consolidate its control over the large landmass. The most damaging action for Mi'kmaq was the construction of a trans-island railway, which cut through the same territory that provided the game they relied on. Jackson (1993, p. 103) writes that “the new route intersected the caribou migration at its most concentrated point... A natural phenomenon previously witnessed by a handful was now accessible to anyone with the price of a train ticket.” In a manner eerily similar to that of the plains buffalo, the caribou were soon devastated. Jackson (1993, p. 103) continues: “the butchered caribou carcasses were loaded on



passing trains for the homeward trip.” Game hunting soon became a major industry, attracting people from outside Newfoundland, in particular retired British military officers.<sup>12</sup> While fur-bearing species were still available, it was the caribou, along with fish, that had been the main source of food for Mi’kmaq. Following their traditional practices Mi’kmaq had divided the interior into family hunting territories, each large enough to sustain them. So long as they did not have direct competition for these resources, they were able to sustain themselves. (Jackson, 1993; Joe, 2009)

By the mid-twentieth century Mi’kmaq, along with many settlers, were reduced to living off support from the then Commission of Government. Like many Newfoundlanders, Mi’kmaq hoped that Confederation would bring relief to their destitution. (Jackson, 1993; Joe 2009) However, unlike their mainland cousins, Mi’kmaq and all other Indigenous people in Newfoundland were deliberately excluded from the Terms of Union with Canada. They were effectively “pencilled out” when a member of the negotiating team from Newfoundland deleted all references to Indigenous people from the documents that contained the Terms of Union between Canada and Newfoundland. (Tompkins and Harris, 1998; Hanrahan, 2003) The official position was that all Indigenous people in Newfoundland had been assimilated (or in the case of the Beothuk wiped out). Any descendants were effectively under the care of the province and thus they did not need to be included under the Indian Act. Another rationale was also offered. According to Jackson (1993, p. 169) “Joey Smallwood explained that under the

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<sup>12</sup> One particular area of concentration for these hunters was the Bay St. George region. One of the most famous of these men was Lieutenant Victor Campbell, who was among the few survivors of Scott’s failed attempt to reach the South Pole. Campbell acquired property along one of the best salmon rivers, the Harry’s, where he lived the remainder of his life. My mother who worked for the Campbells recalled how they annually hosted hunting and fishing parties mostly of British military officers.

Indian Act Indian people did not have the right to vote, their registration in Newfoundland would have automatically disenfranchised them.” The practice of enfranchising Status Indians and thereby stripping them of all of their rights as Indigenous people was a common practice under the Indian Act, though according to Lawrence (2003, p. 31), it remained a failed project with few Indigenous people willingly giving up their status. Yet, the inherent assumption that Smallwood makes is that Mi’kmaq desired to be full citizens in the new province. There is no evidence offered that Mi’kmaq were actually asked to confirm this assumption. Hanrahan writes:

The 1949 Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada made no mention of Aboriginal people in the new province. This deviated from standard practice when a jurisdiction joined the Canadian federation and First Nations people were registered, reserves created, and programs and services delivered. Because there was no mention of First Nations, the Indian Act was not applied in Newfoundland. This meant that the province’s Innu and Mi’kmaq were ineligible for the range of programs and services enjoyed by their counterparts in continental Canada. In fact, they did not exist in law and thus lacked the recognition as previously sovereign nations that their counterparts enjoyed elsewhere in Canada. Thus, their situation is unique in the country. (2003, p. 1)

It is evident that census data on Mi’kmaq from the early to mid-twentieth century is at best ambiguous. While the 1911 and 1929 censuses both contain a column titled “*State whether person is a Micmac Indian*” [italics added], I found only five people in the St. George’s District (an area that once included most of the west coast of the island) who were so identified. This is rather extraordinary in that the Flat Bay, which forms part of the census, was at the time a community exclusively made up of Mi’kmaq and many families throughout the district who are currently identified as Mi’kmaq are not listed in the column. The absence of such indicators is significant to Mi’kmaq claims to being

Indigenous to Newfoundland and the possible reasons for this missing data are explored in Chapter 5.

The question regarding Micmac Indians disappears from the 1935 Newfoundland national census. However, in 1945 a new column titled “Racial Ancestry” is added. In this census, there are literally hundreds of people listed as “French Indian”. This local descriptor for Mi’kmaq is regarded by them as a way of conceding Indigenous ancestry that is historic but not relevant to establishing modern identity as Indigenous people. By the time of this census Mi’kmaq had largely lost their own language and relied on a form of trader French as their new mother-tongue. This is the last generation to do so. They had stopped speaking Mi’kmaq to their children and now they stopped speaking French to them. Such loss of common languages across generations would have contributed to the fragmentation of communities and accelerated the weakening of identity.

#### *2.4.2 The Arrival of the Americans*

In the middle of the Second World War the Americans arrived to build their air force base at Stephenville. Neither being Indian nor speaking French was seen as desirable to those in control of the new wage-based economy. Lawrence (2006, p. 6) describes the almost inevitable outcome when she writes: “Mi’kmaq families began to turn to wage labour, which involved a slow but ongoing suppression of Mi’kmaq identity.” According to Calvin White (Butler, 2007), this loss of identity led to social and cultural disintegration within Mi’kmaq communities. Relationships built up over centuries of interdependence were first undermined and eventually destroyed.

Mi'kmaq elder Calvin White (Butler, 2007) described a symbiotic relationship that developed between Mi'kmaq and the settler population at Sandy Point in Bay St. George, from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century up to the arrival of the Americans. According to White, there had been interdependence between Mi'kmaq and the settlers that worked to the advantage of both. This is not to suggest some idyllic alliance free of tension and conflict. White explicitly recounts how Mi'kmaq were pushed from favourable sites along the coastline where they had traditionally harvested shell fish. The arrival of a wage-based economy quickly eroded this relationship. There were other changes that occurred with the influx of people from all over Newfoundland seeking work at the new American base combined with Confederation with Canada. Local settlers, who had relied on farming and fishing, abandoned these for jobs on the base or in new businesses that were established to service the growing population. After Confederation cheaper vegetables from PEI and Nova Scotia flooded the new province suppressing local farm incomes. My father gave up farming to take a job on the base for the grand sum of \$150 per month. Now less reliant on land based resources, settlers had less reason to trade with Mi'kmaq, who continued their subsistence living.

This then was the state of Mi'kmaq in Western Newfoundland at the time of union with Canada. It did take a few decades but, eventually, leaders such as Mi'sel Joe, Calvin White, the Muise family, and many others began to bring Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland together to begin the long struggle for recognition as Indigenous people.

## 2.6 The Mi'kmaq Struggle for Recognition as Indigenous People

Following the union between Newfoundland and Canada, subsequent economic and industrial developments further eroded Mi'kmaq resource base. In the 1960s a major hydroelectric project in the Bay D'Espoir area “flooded much land, caribou feeding and calving grounds and hunters' campsites” (Jackson, 1993, p.169). This same development also led to the construction of new highways that further “fragmented the caribou” (Jackson, 1993, p. 168). Abandoned by the federal government and facing a hostile and recalcitrant provincial government, which denied their existence as an Indigenous people, Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland moved to form the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) in 1972. Despite the fragmentation of their people, Mi'kmaq had maintained a network of extended family relationships through Western and Southwestern Newfoundland. Through these networks, Mi'kmaq were soon able to establish a formal organization. The FNI website (2009) lists key information related to membership since 1972. Initially there were six affiliated bands: Benois Cove First Nations, (now named Elmastogoeg), Corner Brook Indian Band, Flat Bay Indian Band, Gander Bay Indian Band, Glenwood Mi'kmaq First Nation, and Port au Port Indian Band. The website describes the FNI's primary goal as: “To obtain Government of Canada recognition of Mi'kmaq eligibility for registration under the Indian Act” (FNI, 2009). The FNI describes its mandate as “To promote the social, cultural, economic, and educational well-being of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq” (FNI, 2009) .The website also indicates that over time additional bands were formed as people in other communities saw the revitalization of established bands. After 1989 three new bands joined the original six: Exploits Indian Band (now Sple'tk First Nation), St. George's Indian Band, and

Stephenville/Stephenville Crossing Band (now Indian Head First Nations) (FNI, 2009).

By 1982 the Federation had achieved limited success in negotiations with the Federal government. On its website it notes:

Mi'kmaq of Conne River become eligible for registration under the Indian Act. Mi'kmaq outside Conne River are not eligible because the federal government recognizes only Mi'kmaq that are "resident in designated native communities." (FNI, 2009)

The opportunity for some Mi'kmaq to achieve registration under the Indian Act was not accomplished without considerable delays. For reasons of its own the Provincial government, then under Brian Peckford, appeared determined to obstruct the process. Mi'sel Joe, Chief of the Conne River band recalls how there was an on-going struggle to even access funds awarded to Mi'kmaq by the Federal government. The province went so far as to block the release of interim Federal funds totalling \$800,000, insisting on "taking \$60,000 of [the] funds for administration costs, which was never part of the agreement" (Joe, 2009, p. 49). The province appeared determined to frustrate the efforts of Mi'kmaq, even going so far as to issue the funds only to "put a stop order on transferring any money" (Joe, 2009, p. 50). Resolution was only achieved when Mi'kmaq first occupied Provincial government offices in St. John's and then began a hunger strike. Formal recognition of the Conne River Band was awarded in 1984, and the *Samiajij Miawpukek Indian Reserve* established in 1987.

Upon achieving status, the Conne River Band withdrew from the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, though it does appear that good relations with the other Mi'kmaq have been retained (FNI, 2009; Joe, 2009). This holds some significance for the larger Mi'kmaq community in that the Chief of the Conne River Band sits on the Grand Council

of Chiefs in Atlantic Canada and is designated by the council as Grand Chief for all Mi'kmaq in the province. Unlike many other areas where there are clear divisions between status and non-status Indians (Lawrence, 2004) in Newfoundland the Grand Chief maintains an advisory role with some non-status Mi'kmaq. It is possible to understand this as a refusal to depend on the Indian Act in order to be Indigenous. It also reflects the close extended kinship networks that continue to connect many Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. The sense of a shared identity is not reliant on statutory validation.

The FNI continued efforts to achieve status. Its website describes the period 1983-1992 as “the decade of frustration.” It notes that “David Crombie, Minister of Northern Affairs and Indian Development (DIAND) requests participation of Newfoundland government in tripartite negotiations on financial arrangements for FNI [however the] Newfoundland government reject[ed] Newfoundland participation” (FNI, 2009). No explanation for this rejection is included but given past relations with the provincial government it seems reasonable to understand this as an extension of a general policy of denial of inherent rights of Indigenous people in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

An obstacle that Newfoundland Mi'kmaq face is the Newfoundland government, and the entire colonial history of Newfoundland that has shaped the experiences, needs and desires of its white inhabitants, so that any valid contemporary Indigenous presence can be seen as immensely threatening to the conviction, on the part of Newfoundlanders, that this land, at least, is theirs and no others. (Lawrence 2005, p. 9)

After negotiations failed the FNI attempted to achieve their aims through court action. “FNI and chiefs of six affiliated bands begin a Federal Court Action seeking eligibility for registration under the Indian Act (1989)” (FNI 2009). In its explanation of

its various strategies, the FNI (2009) describes how the following years brought an intermittent range of tactics aimed at achieving registration. In 1999 it placed the court case in abeyance at the request of DIAND and attempted to negotiate with the Federal government. In 2003 the FNI began discussions on an offer of a landless status. An Agreement in Principle (AIP) between the FNI and Indian and Northern Affairs Canada was signed in 2007 and ratified by both parties in 2008.

### *2.6.1 Mi'kmaq and Defining Identity*

The members of Mi'kmaq bands that constitute the FNI mainly have more than one cultural ancestry. That is in addition to Mi'kmaq ancestors they generally also have French, English or some other European ancestors. However, following traditional Indigenous practice, they identify as Mi'kmaq. This choice can be readily understood given the contested nature of Indigenous identity in Canada. Lawrence (2004, p. 1) writes: "Identity, for Native people can never be a neutral issue. With definitions of Indianess deeply embedded within systems of colonial power, Native identity is inevitably political, with ramifications for how contemporary and collective experience is understood." Thus, Mi'kmaq claim to their identity is in part constrained by the legal and political frameworks that colonized them in the first place. Being extensively of mixed-race in Newfoundland complicates the process further. Lawrence (2004, p. 11) claims that "yet even as mixed-blood Native people insist on the primacy of a tribal identity, being legally disqualified from the life of their Indigenous nation through loss of Indian status makes a thorough reclaiming of tribal identity very difficult." This denial of Native identity is not restricted to the larger non-Native world. According to Lawrence (2004, p.



11), “some Native American academics have profoundly rejected mixed-bloodedness as a viable Native identity.” There are several ways in which this can be read. First, there is the pragmatic understanding that the broadening of identity to include multiple cultural sources can act to de-legitimize claims of inherent rights that rest solely with Indigenous people. For these scholars, one can be either Indigenous or not; there is no middle ground. Blood quantum (Giokas and Chartrand, 2002) and ideas of race are not traditionally part of Indigenous identity, rather these are rooted in specific cultural practices and ways of being. In other words, embracing all sources of one’s cultural heritage is understood to decenter and diminish one’s Indigeneity. Second, significant legal obstacles exist for those seeking to situate themselves as mixed-blood. Such a position can lead to loss of band membership, loss of access to reserve land and financial resources; perhaps even loss of status under the Indian Act.

Traditionally, Mi’kmaq did not use the idea of race to define their membership (Upton, 1979; Prins 1996; Robinson, 2005). Captives taken into the tribe became full members through marriage or adoption. Just as critically, Giokas and Chartrand (2002) argue that blood quantum is not seen as *the* basis of establishing Indianess in Canada. “By 1951, it was clear that reliance on an Indian blood requirement had been overtaken by events, as there were by then such large numbers of people of Indian blood who were not officially recognized as being Indian that the logic of the blood requirement had been undermined” (Giokas and Chartrand, 2002, p. 96).

The *Métis* option has been exercised by some, but as Giokas and Chartrand (2002, pp. 83-125) argue, this is hardly a guarantee of success. They illustrate that while the *Métis* are recognized as a people under Section 35 of the Canadian *Charter of Rights and*

*Freedoms* just who is Métis and which rights, if any, flow from this are highly contested. Further, the idea of *Métis* is not a concept that has a long history in Atlantic Canada. The common referent used in Newfoundland for mixed-blood French-Indians, *jackatars*, has always been a pejorative term, hardly something worth reclaiming (Butler, 2007).

Taking control of their identity is essential for Indigenous people since, as Anderson (2008, p. 348) notes, through the national census the Métis “are produced as racialised objects rather than citizens *contra*<sup>13</sup> Canadian citizenship”. Citizens are people but racialized objects are pushed below the line that separates human from non-human. As importantly, identity is inherently used to define who a people are often in opposition or differentiation to others (Butler, 2007) and if control of that definition is lost to those outside the group then identity can be dehumanized.

There are additional reasons, however, why Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland would work from a location as being Indian rather than mixed-race. Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland have continuously maintained their connection with the other Mi’kmaq in Nova Scotia (Marshall, 1988; Bartel and Janzen, 1990; Jackson, 1993; Joe, 2009). Their band chiefs, while elected locally, affiliate themselves with the larger tribal council of chiefs led by a Grand Chief in Nova Scotia (Joe, 2009). Thus they are, at least within a well-established First Nation, accepted as part of Mi’kmaq people. While this does not extend the treaty rights enjoyed by some Mi’kmaq in the Maritime Provinces, it nonetheless adds validity to their claim of being *Indian*. Given the combined logic of these various factors, it

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<sup>13</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

makes little sense that Mi'kmaq should identify other than as Indian exclusively in their negotiations with the Federal government.

Unlike Conne River, where Mi'kmaq have continually lived in general isolation from the settler population (Jackson, 1993; Joe, 2009), members of the FNI-affiliated bands are scattered throughout Central and Western Newfoundland. While there are a few communities in which Mi'kmaq constitute the majority of the residents (e.g.: Flat Bay, St. Theresa, Mattis Point), many more live with non-Indigenous people in larger communities, such as Stephenville, Stephenville Crossing and Corner Brook. Thus, they have been more intensely exposed to assimilation.

Mi'kmaq have survived considerable hardship since their first contact with Europeans and their descendants. That they have is more a testament to their resiliency and adaptability, than to the goodwill of the people Elder Calvin White describes as “visitors” (Butler, 2007).

### **2.7 Moving from History to Theory: Resistance and Identity Construction**

The preceding discussion of the troubled history between Mi'kmaq and the dominant settler population might readily lead to the conclusion that Mi'kmaq must inevitably be subsumed and made invisible as they are further marginalized by the ongoing assimilationist stance that generally informs federal and provincial relations with Indigenous people. The apparent loss of their territory and language and the degradation of their culture might be seen as clear evidence that they have diminished or weakened hopes of revitalizing their identity as Indigenous people, particularly in Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet, the very imposition of boundaries that demarcate the *Other* [italics

added] can also open up a space within which action and resistance become possible. If we understand that identity is not merely the passive product of historical circumstances, then we can begin to ask how identity may in part emerge from acts of resistance. We can query how an Indigenous people who have been oppressed and marginalized for centuries can act from the margins of society to reclaim and restore their sense of self and the integrity of their people. Such questions are the focus of this project and answering them necessitates a thoughtful exploration of some of the prominent theories of identity construction.

### **2.5 State Control and the Struggle for Identity**

While the Indian Act remains the dominant legal device active in the lives of Canada's Indigenous people, other attempts to control their lives through legislation must be considered. Turner (2006, p.12) turns his attention to a failed piece of political action that emerged under Pierre Trudeau, the White Paper of 1969. He writes, "the Canadian federal government's now infamous White Paper of 1969 is often cited as one low point among many in the political relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state." Weaver is equally direct in her criticism of the White paper which she describes as having "the earmarks of deception." (1981, p.3)

For Turner, the White Paper was an attempt to finally complete the assimilation project at the heart of the Indian Act. "Forcing Indians to embrace Canadian citizenship would have two advantages for the state: first, it would eliminate discriminatory (and expensive) Indian policies, and second, Indians as Canadian citizens would be welcomed into the mainstream of Canadian society" (Turner, 2006, p.23). What can be readily observed here is a lack of understanding of how identity is achieved within different

cultures and, additionally, how land itself plays a profoundly different role in shaping various cultures. The dominant culture in Canada arises out of its European roots, whereby land is a resource to be exploited by individuals and communities. They pursue goals that, while of some benefit to the larger community, do not necessarily represent a collective effort. In sharp contrast, as Turner (2006) argues, for Indigenous people, land is communal and identity is shared in part through the land.

Under the White Paper, all Indigenous people would have been subsumed into the emergent Canadian multicultural society, and communal control of Indigenous lands under tribal nations would not have remained untouched. *“There would be no such thing as Indian nationhood. Treaty lands must ultimately be transformed into private property”*<sup>14</sup> (Turner, 2006, p.23). Just as critically, following the recommendations included in the White Paper, the Federal government would, in time, have been relieved of all responsibility for Indigenous people. Turner sees this process as the expected outcome of this “White paper liberalism” (2006, p. 81) that places the individual in a position superior to and separate from the community, since the federal government does not want to continue addressing Indigenous people through their traditional communal systems of governance. “The White Paper avoids this issue [of dealing with traditional communal systems of governance] by making individual citizenship the fundamental unit of political allegiance; thus the problem of recognizing special group rights does not exist” (Turner, 2006, p.31). Weaver concurs with Turner’s reading by arguing that underpinning the paper is Trudeau’s flawed notion of individual freedom entrenched

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<sup>14</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

within his particular model of liberalism. This rational model depends upon “the liberal concept of individual choice [which] is frequently a fallacy” (1981, p. 55).

This elevation of the individual has long been a practice aimed at diminishing the centrality of community within Indigenous peoples. Lawrence (2004, p.32) describes how; “enfranchisement provided a powerful opportunity for Indian agents to control resistance” by severing the individual from the larger community. By dismantling the community one member at a time, the traditional Indigenous relationships with the land are destabilized and it becomes possible to replace communal models with the notion of private ownership. This in turn privileges the idea of land as solely a repository of resources to be harvested. Land as economic resource is at the heart of arguments put forth by Flanagan et al (2010).

After a clear rejection by Indigenous people across Canada, the White Paper was formally withdrawn by the Trudeau government on March 17, 1971. Despite this rejection, its legacy still fuels much of the political discourse around Indigenous rights. One “political effect” described by Turner (2006, p.27) is the creation of groups such as the Native Council of Canada (NCC), now Congress of Aboriginal Peoples (CAP), the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the Métis National Council (MNC). In response to what they regarded as arbitrary action by the Federal government, as proposed through the White Paper, Indigenous leaders recognized that without a national collective effort, they lacked the political power to influence Federal government policies that impacted directly on their people. There is no lack of irony when he points out that these groups, “depend heavily on federal government funding” (Turner, 2007, p.27). If this relationship model between Indigenous peoples and the Federal Government continues, any attempt

to directly disentangle the Indigenous people from the Federal Government seems unlikely to succeed. Yet despite this, “termination remains the unofficial policy of the government and is still being implemented” (Weaver, 1981, p.5). Nothing in current government policy toward Indigenous people serves to change this assessment. For Weaver, the entire set of processes related to the development of the 1969 White Paper was not so much about transforming the relationship between government and Indigenous people, as it was a complex set of contestations within government bureaucracy, driven by the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) on one side and the Privy Council Office (PCO) on the other. In the end the process was a political exercise by which changes to the Indian Act were tactical acts aimed at shifting how government policy was developed. It initiated the modern concentration of power within the PMO and acted to “shape the course of policy development” (Weaver, 1981, p. 190). The needs and rights of Indigenous people were simply a foil for an overarching political strategy, reflecting Trudeau’s vision of federalism.

The subsequent decision to include Indigenous rights under Section 35 of the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* has not made the overall struggle for rights any less complex an undertaking. Yet, according to Turner, Kymlicka sees this as a positive outcome, a natural progression of liberal multiculturalism. Turner (2006) understands Kymlicka as wanting Indigenous people to be dependent on distributive justice. “Aboriginal cultures, as national minorities, can exercise their rights of governance only to the extent that they do not upset the balance of fairness in relation to the remaining cultures in Canada” (Turner, 2006, p.66). He quotes Kymlicka as writing “Justice would then require that the holdings of indigenous peoples be subject to the same redistributive

taxations as the wealth of other advantaged groups, so as to assist the less well off in society” (Kymlicka in Turner, 2006, p.65). Within this model, Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood must be subsidiary to, and exist within, the larger Canadian state. Indigenous people are to join the hyphenated hordes of multi-cultural Canadians. From this understanding, it seems then that Kymlicka would reduce Indigenous sovereignty to a largely symbolic function. There appears to be a failure to clearly define just what Indigenous sovereignty means and this remains a critical issue. This struggle over the true meaning of sovereignty for First Nations people is decried by Alfred when he writes:

But without a fundamental questioning of the assumptions underpinning the state’s approach to power, the counterfactual assumptions of colonialism will continue to structure the relationship between the state and indigenous peoples. Within this framework, any progress made towards justice will be marginal; in fact it will be tolerated by the state only to the extent that it serves, or at least does not oppose, the interests of the state itself. (2006, p. 324)

Alfred insists that to negotiate sovereignty within the colonial model is to effectively abandon indigenous ways of being. “So long as sovereignty remains the goal of indigenous politics, therefore, native communities will occupy a dependent and reactionary position relative to the state”. (2006, p. 325) Alfred argues that Indigenous sovereignty, emergent from a European concept, only exists in relation to a subsidiary role to the dominant settler government and does not imply a fully constituted nation independent of all others. At best, such a model would for him produce something closer to a province.

A reading of Kymlicka’s (2007) work on liberal multiculturalism supports Alfred’s claims. In exploring the state of minority rights throughout much of the world, Kymlicka relies on the central notion of liberalism, with the rights of the individual having primacy. Kymlicka (2007, p.97, p.100) is clear that “multiculturalism is a liberal-



democratic phenomenon... [that] is equally transformative of the identities and practices of minority groups.” He holds up the 1988 *Multiculturalism Act* as placing Canada in the forefront “in shaping international concepts of what multiculturalism is.” (Kymlicka, 2007, p.107) Kymlicka sees the spread of that phenomenon as dependent on the extension of Western liberal-democratic government. “The likelihood that multiculturalist reforms will gain popular support depends heavily, therefore, on confidence that these reforms will not jeopardize human rights and liberal-democratic values” (Kymlicka, 2007, p. 92). Kymlicka seems unable to imagine or to accept that Indigenous people might not embrace this contingency; that they may neither desire nor accept multiculturalism as the path to sovereignty and that they may not necessarily understand liberal-democracy as the ultimate expression of human community. This has to be understood as a major impediment to any advancement for Indigenous sovereignty in that Kymlicka’s stance likely represents the dominant viewpoint of settler society and the Federal government. As Alfred (2006) warns, any imminent attempts at negotiating sovereignty agreements through nation-to-nation relationships would seem impossible or at best highly improbable.

### *2.5.1 Alternatives to White Paper Liberalism*

For Turner (2006), the place for Indigenous peoples is centred outside of the Canadian mainstream. He argues, however, for a symbiotic, but arm’s length, arrangement. It must remain symbiotic because it is unlikely that Indigenous people can ever entirely disentangle themselves from the dominant settler population. Turner makes this symbiosis clear when he introduces a critical premise that he draws from Kymlicka,

one he describes as “Kymlicka’s constraint” (2004, p 58). This encapsulates Kymlicka’s claim that “it is predominantly non-Aboriginal judges and politicians who have the ultimate power to protect and enforce Aboriginal rights” (Kymlicka in Turner, 2004, p.58). This constraint has been strengthened by the inclusion of Section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as is evident from Chartrand’s (2002, pp.15-17) claim that the inclusion of all Indigenous people under Section 35 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms complicates the limitations created by the Indian Act. Chartrand supports the notion of this constraint when he writes, “The decisions of the courts provide an avenue for some measure of justice and perhaps changes in government policy and practice” (Chartrand, 2002, p.11). Yet, the onerous process of litigation requires access to both financial and legal resources that can be out of reach for marginalized peoples. The possibility of access, as argued by Chartrand (2002), may well be precluded by the reality that is lived by many Indigenous people.

Despite Chartrand’s caution, it is useful to reflect on how Section 35 changed the legal landscape. Chartrand writes:

The doctrine of parliamentary supremacy, which had required the courts to give legitimacy of law to the policy of dismantling Indian nations, has been replaced with a doctrine of the constitutional role of designing a new constitution and Aboriginal rights jurisprudence that is based upon Canadian history, culture and experience. (2002, p.36)

While Chartrand notes the importance of the recognition of Indigenous rights to self-government in Section 35, one bolstered by Canada’s new *constitutional-democracy*, he admits that these rights are not assured and rely on success within the judicial system.

In the wake of the failed White Paper previously discussed, Indigenous people went through a period of political consolidation. The AFN, with its membership having

status under the Indian Act, would have had a firmer legal standing but Section 35 complicated matters by extending a legal framework to potentially include many of the estimated million plus non-status Indigenous people (Lawrence, 2004). In fact, Section 35 threatens a kind of stasis that may well slow realization of Indigenous sovereignty far into any possible future. According to Chartrand, bringing non-status Indians under Section 35 draws them into a legal process that moves negotiation for any self-governance into the overloaded and extremely expensive litigation process since the Federal government can simply refuse to negotiate leaving litigation as the only recourse.

At the time of this writing, it appears that, following an earlier era of direct national discussions on Aboriginal constitutional reform, these significant issues will be resolved by incremental legislative reform, initiated in reaction to case-by-case decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada. (Chartrand, 2002, p.17)

Since the time that Chartrand offered that opinion there is little evidence to suggest that he was too pessimistic. For example, the Federal Court of Appeals ruled that the Canadian government has under Section 5 of the Constitution responsibility for off-reserve Indians and Métis. (CBC, 2013) That decision is being contested by the Federal Government.

There are no simple solutions to the complex issue of Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood. Attempts to achieve change are sometimes complicated by external politics driven by attitude within the dominant culture. Indeed, the Federal government often attempts to shift debate to the application of *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* when negotiating with Indigenous people. As some First Nations resume control over their affairs, they are also being challenged by the government to adopt western-democratic accountability measures such as the Charter. First Nations leaders, within established

territories occupied by Status Indians, have traditionally resisted the application of the Charter to First Nations' jurisdiction. They see the Charter as an imposition of Western liberal values, values that may conflict with their own and which may limit their ability to be self-governing. At the same time, the Government of Canada is urging, perhaps insisting, that the Charter apply to any new self-government initiatives. This insistence has caused some First Nations to re-examine the arguments for and against the application of the Charter within their jurisdiction. ( Gibbins, 1997; Turner 2004; Dempsey, 2005; Fiske, George, & Canada. Status of Women Canada, 2006)

#### *2.5.2 Further Legal Complications of Identity – The Case of Indigenous Women*

The legal framework that impacts the struggle for identity appears further complicated when we consider the special case of the treatment of Indigenous women, particularly in relation to Charter rights. Many Indigenous women, in particular those who lost their Status through marrying a non-Status or non-Indigenous man, continue to struggle with legally-contested identities. According to Fiske (2006, p.38) over, “the past two decades [since 1982], scholars focused discussion on ‘competing’ rights as they were enshrined in the Canadian *Constitution Act of 1982*.” There are a variety of legal issues that non-Status Indigenous women must contend with. For example, while there is a conflicted relationship between Indigenous people and the Indian Act, inclusion under the Act means individuals may be able to live on a reserve and thus have access to band resources.

The complex relationship between Status and band membership, complicates life for many Indigenous women. Legal standing as a Status member of a reserve may mean

having access to treaty rights that provide certain economic benefits. As Palmater notes: “Status also affects one’s ability to be included on treaty beneficiary lists, land claim rolls, and self-government citizenship enrollee lists” (2011, p. 19). Status Indians who are band members can participate in any future land claims settlements, which may mean considerable financial gains for bands and individuals. There is also access to education for band members through programs not available to non-members. Health care, and income and sales tax exemption are two other significant advantages for those registered under the Indian Act. Yet, for many the most important legal issue is their ability to identify with their own people and their own culture. (Gibbins, 1997; Martin-Hill, 2003; Muise 2003; Lawrence, 2004; Turner, 2004; Dempsey, 2005; Fiske, George, & Canada, Status of Women Canada, 2006)

Additionally, the rights of Indigenous women and their children have often been diminished and denied through the Indian Act. Lawrence (2004, p. 46) insists that “In Canada a history of gender discrimination in the Indian Act has created an ongoing conflict within native organizations and reserve communities around notions of individual and collective rights, organized along lines of gender.” Martin-Hill (2003, p. 116) describes the dominant model of the Indigenous woman who has emerged from generations of colonization and marginalization as “She No Speaks”, a muted “ideal traditional woman.” The impact of colonization on Indigenous women is not entirely rooted in the Indian Act. Rather, it is a product of the patriarchal nature of the colonial powers. Long before the Indian Act, Indigenous women were seen as a threat to the colonial agenda. Colonial representatives saw Indigenous women with their practice of careful reflection and counsel as impeding colonial ability to manipulate Indigenous men.

(Martin-Hill, 2003) The traditional division of authority across gender lines within Indigenous communities did not conform to the patriarchal European model. From earliest contact, Indigenous men were pressured by colonial powers to have their women fit the European model of submission and silence. Martin-Hill (2003, p. 110) recalls how Benjamin Franklin was dismayed that “meddling [Iroquois] women demanded neutrality in the War of Independence between Britain and the United States.” The Iroquois Confederacy remained neutral, confirming Franklin’s fears.

Feminist discussions of gendered identity put forward by Judith Butler (1999) serve to illuminate the entanglements that are the legacy of cross-cultural relationships, specifically those that reflect power differentials. The privileging of normative models of identity is directly tied to the “gender hierarchy” (Butler, 1999, p. xii) and in this the fetishized Indigenous male was deemed to be the sole source of legitimate Indian identity. Thus, the Indian Act declared that Indigenous identity was the product of the father; effectively declaring the mother to be irrelevant to the process of creating new Status Indians (Lawrence, 2004, p. 50). While the Indian Act was amended in 1985, the amendment provides limited restoration of matrilineally sourced identity. Even under the restoration of status, descendants of these women still do not have equivalent rights as those of men. According to Palmater, “not only does the *Indian Act, 1985* not eliminate gender discrimination, its residual and new forms of discrimination result in the exclusion of thousands of descendants of Indian women” (2011, p.44).

What it means to be mixed-blood is eventually determined by whether your Indigenous lineage is matrilineal or patrilineal. While the amended Act that restored some limited rights to Status might seem to be a small victory, for many Indigenous

women, access to registration of themselves and their children may be a better alternative than full exclusion from the official Indigenous community.

While it is possible to see the passage of Bill C-31 as a partial victory for women's rights, the overall status of Indigenous peoples within Canada remains troubled and unstable. "After over a century of gender discrimination in the Indian Act, the idea that Native women should lose status for marrying non-status or non-Native men has become a normalized assumption in many communities" (Lawrence, 2004, p. 61). What is also essential here is that we understand the fuller implication of the erosion of the traditional place of women in Indigenous society. It is not simply that these women lost rights and status. The stripping of the traditional roles from women devastated whole communities. Revitalization of Indigenous culture implies restoration of the traditional roles of women within such cultures. Legal and social barriers against Indigenous women fully participating in their communities act against any such revitalization efforts. Martin-Hill illustrates this when she writes:

The traditional respect for women, which was structurally supported through the Great Law and which had established mechanisms of democracy and matrilinealism, was severely undermined. The extended family, which the Clan mother would counsel and guide, became fragmented through the processes of genocide and ethnocide. (2003, p. 111)

Despite the devastation it should not be supposed that Indigenous women remain docile and submissive. Muise offers this insight:

We are dependent on men, the church and welfare like no other group of Aboriginal women in this country, yet we are fiercely independent and cut our own trails. We have next to little political representation, yet no major shifts occur without the will of the women. Violence against us at home remains commonplace and socially accepted, yet there's not a single man who would tempt a Mi'kmaq woman's scorn. (2003, p. 25)





## Chapter 3: Theory and Identity Construction

### 3.1 Identity as Discursive

Identity initially emerges as a product of the tension between the social and mental spaces into which we each are born and is at its beginning “constructed by entirely external factors such as place and culture, family and other relationships” (Butler, 2007, p. i). Identity construction can, in part, be understood as a discursive formation; one acted out through a series of interrelated discursive practices, that are also shaped by external forces, including our physical environment.

The set of discursive practices that comprise culture contribute to identity. Culture is a product of the relationships between its members, which provide the critical social cohesion through both internal and external reinforcement. These types of reinforcement depend upon a complex set of practices and processes. We can understand these phenomena as constitutive of the relationship between our internal and external lifeworlds. Wheeler writes that, “the human inner world (*Innenwelt*)<sup>15</sup> is in constant dialogue (negative and positive feedback in the complex systems sense) with the human outer world (*Umwelt*)” (2006, p. 108). This feedback is essential to the survival of any culture.

It is not as if human beings can simply choose to not be part of some culture. We may generally choose how we participate in the culture of our community or people but not whether we do.<sup>16</sup> To be human is to need culture and the loss of a strong social

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<sup>15</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

<sup>16</sup> Of course this is not to suggest there is no aberrant behaviour by way of which individuals may simply isolate themselves from others.

environment can be devastating. The need to belong to a community of people is inherent. We need social order and a sense of place.

Identity is also subject to ongoing negotiations through the daily rituals of interaction, relationship maintenance and reconciliation. These negotiations help to determine, reinforce and to stabilize our roles within our family, our community and our social world. The discursive practices “are nevertheless not something that the individual invents by himself. They are patterns that he finds in his culture and which are proposed, suggested and imposed on him by his culture, his society and his social group” (Foucault in Clarke, 2006, p. 55). Clarke, arguing from Foucault, describes these as “discursive formations” and notes that this is necessary in that these “contain contradictory discourses [and] it is through this *containment*<sup>17</sup> that some stability is achieved” (2005, p. 54). This limited stability that Clarke describes underpins the notion that identity is not fixed; it is produced and reproduced through discursive practices.

Thus, an exploration of those theories that examine the nature of identity construction through discursive practices can yield data critical for research and analysis. Utilizing formal theories is not inconsistent with focusing on a particular situation. Whether researchers acknowledge the situated nature of research or not, I would argue that their theories have been shaped by the situations within which they worked. Thus, theories represent the perspectives, experiences and analysis of the researchers and, as such, they can provide critical insights from a variety of situations.

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<sup>17</sup> Emphasis present in original text.

Additionally, to validate this approach, it is essential to provide a critical examination of formal theories in order to identify some of their inherent limitations and to test their relevance to my dissertation. For example, theories about instrumental ethnicity (Barth et al, 1969) open up discussions relevant to the interactions between Indigenous people and the dominant settler culture. Bhabha's (1994) concept of liminality also helps me with my strategic approach of balancing theory against methodology. My intent is, as Clarke (2005) cautions, to avoid allowing theory to constrain my work. Bhabha's liminality implies the presence of boundaries that must be overcome; a threshold that must be crossed in order to move past that liminal space to some desired outcome. Indigenous people, such as Mi'kmaq, can be understood as working to emerge from Bhabha's liminal space and cross these boundaries in their revitalization of their culture.

These boundaries of difference are encountered at the intersections between one state of being and another and such boundaries are contested and fortified by those who would participate in Hall's (1980,p. 24) 'theatre of struggle' in that "identities are constructed through, not outside, difference" (Hall and du Gay, 1996, p. 3). For Hall and du Gay (1996, p.3), "identification is, then, a process of articulation, a suturing, an over-determination not a subsumption." This is a critical notion; one that reflects the position taken by non-status urban Indigenous people of mixed heritage who insist they are every bit as Indigenous as those with status under the Indian Act.

In this chapter I explore a range of research that articulates the various ways in which the struggle for mixed-heritage people to be recognized as Indigenous occurs and how difference is navigated. I do so, in part, to illustrate the many challenges to

establishing any single theory of identity, particularly in relation to those who resist domination and assimilation.

The choice of liminality is especially relevant to my participant group, a marginalized Indigenous people working to overcome centuries of colonization, oppression, and assimilation. Even now, many Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland exist within a liminal space separated from their past, not yet realizing their future, striving for control. Many are in transition but what they will achieve remains uncertain. Whether they can cross that threshold and emerge from that liminal space remains undetermined. This chapter examines critical factors, which come into play both in relation to Indigenous people in Canada, in general, and Mi'kmaq, in particular. This examination is accomplished through an exploration of a range of theoretical arguments related to identity construction. Such an exploration of theory related to identity construction provides insights into how Mi'kmaq may navigate that liminal space, while negotiating the conflicting demands and expectations emergent at the overlapping boundaries of possibility. It is at the boundaries where critical choices must be made, where conflicts must be resolved and where identity may be stabilized.

### **3.2 Exploring Hybridity and Liminality**

Bhabha (1994) seeks to illuminate the liminal space from which some form of hybrid identity may be realized in a carefully negotiated pattern of resistance, compliance and subversion. Yet, already he argues that “claims to the inherent original ‘purity’ of cultures are untenable” (1994, p. 55). Thus, it is possible to problematize the notion of hybridity in a manner suggested by Palmié (2010) when he argues that if hybridity of

necessity relies on a presupposed purity then it may stand on an imaginary foundation. As he critically notes, we have come to rely on a system of classification, which demands we accept the existence of some objective truth out there, a risk, I argue, that proceeds from all attempts to construct formal theory within the social sciences. However, there is a distinction to be made between the theoretical reflection on, and the discursive practice of, identity. If we accept the notion of identity as a constructed social practice, then we can hardly choose to ignore the premises from which the practitioners of identity operate. It may serve our purpose to relocate hybridity and its pure progenitors out of an historical act and to situate them in the social myth as argued by Strauss (2001). Nonetheless, to study that myth we rely on the theoretical constructs devised by Bhabha and others.

For Bhabha, a successful outcome in approaching the liminal threshold then is a fully integrated and stable subject, able to navigate the complexities of “the multiculturalist cause” (1994, p.4). While Bhabha (1994, p. 113) argues that an anti-repressionist stance “provides a ‘visibility’ to the exercise of power”, we encounter a very direct limitation as we move from discrimination to assimilation. In this scenario the colonizer acts to diminish the colonized and to render them invisible. In fact, it should not be taken that the goal of assimilation is to make the Indigenous ‘white’ – it is to render them invisible, hidden beneath the social strata that comprise the dominant culture. Thus, assimilation does not aim to elevate so much as to erase. It is a practice that must fail because it requires the continued application of repressive power to maintain the invisibility of the colonized. As Bhabha (1994) notes, skin is the site of difference and thus racism. Making the Other invisible must bring forgetfulness since the past must be forgotten and all sins against the Other expunged. But forgetfulness also implies the loss

of memory of reasons for making the Other invisible. At the heart of the assimilationist project is the need for forgetfulness, an erasure of any memory of the act of oppression. The oppressor is thereby self-absolved of any responsibility for the devastation suffered by the oppressed. Thus, the settler population in Canada can act as if the plight of Indigenous people is unrelated to the continued exploitation and oppression inherent in a relationship mediated by the Indian Act.

While the stable subject may be the ultimate goal, such an identity is the product of a community in that for each of us identity exists within the tension that arises at the intersection of social and mental space into which we are each born (Butler, 2007). Such success may be achieved by a variety of strategies; each adapted to the particular dynamic within which a community operates. When that community is the idyllic homogeneous model presented by Anderson, tensions are reduced through established custom and practice. (Anderson, 1991) Bhabha rejects Anderson, stating that his model does not “provide a foundational frame for those modes of cultural identification and political affect that form around issues of sexuality, race, feminism, the lifeworld of refugees or migrants” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 8). By clear extension, as is argued below, the supposed postcolonial status, claimed by some for Canada, fails Indigenous people. The legacy of colonialism is a central dynamic at play within modern identity construction and is an essential area of exploration that can aid in addressing Bhabha’s critical questions about the relationship between the subaltern and the oppressor. It affords the opportunity to examine the relationship between Indigenous people, and specifically Mi’kmaq, and the dominant settler culture.

However, to fully explore the questions posed by Bhabha (1994), we need first to begin by critically examining the nature of identity itself. We can, at least, agree that identity is neither fixed nor completely unstable (Butler, 2007). Hall (1996) is useful here in allowing us to understand how identity may exist in some such in-between state. A reading of Hall frames identity not so much about being or having been but rather as becoming. According to Hall (1996, p. 4), “identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions.” The instability of identity that Hall describes can be understood to reflect a general sense of the destabilization of the subject in a postmodern world. Constructing identity is about process – the actions that emerge within and are integral to discursive practice, the practice of, identity. If we are to frame identity as discursive practice, then we must also query how meaning is constructed and re-constructed by the participants. In a multi-cultural state such as Canada, meaning may become unstable and the imagined mosaic may be at risk. Thus, even when the liminal state of non-being is overcome, what is achieved is likely to be neither fixed nor final.

Where identity remains highly contested and unstable, and even fragmented, there may be attempts to recover the integrity of the other past but only the imagined other past is at hand and it offers no assurance of success. (Robins, 1996, p. 63) Identity in such an environment may arise from opposition and difference as much as from a shared sense of place and meaning. The “collectivity” described by Robins may represent the construction of barricades that act mainly to exclude rather than protect. Identities achieved under these conditions could atrophy in that they lose access to Hall’s (1996)

“multiplicity” and are unable to survive in the post-modern world. This risk is particularly significant for Indigenous peoples who need access to the larger economy and resource base controlled by the dominant settler culture; yet, desire to preserve the integrity of their communal identity.

Rose offers an alternative history that resists the dominant discourse on identity.

If we use the term `subjectification' to designate all those heterogeneous processes and practices by means of which human beings come to relate to themselves and others as subjects of a certain type, then subjectification has its own history. And the history of subjectification is more practical, more technical and less unified than sociological accounts allow. (1996, pp.130-131)

Rose (1996) wants to privilege the individual by allowing a measure of constructive agency through which identity may, in some measure, be achieved by means of a conscious discursive practice and thus produce control of subjectification. For Rose, there exists the possibility of a level of individual self-awareness and reflection, since we need not be unquestioning vessels entirely shaped and determined by cultural forces.

The heterogeneity that Rose sees within cultural processes must support this resistance, since it avoids a monolithic notion of culture itself. While culture may be unifying, it may still allow for individual identities that are interconnected through culture but not necessarily constrained by the perceived boundaries and norms of the culture. Rose (1996, p. 130), for example, actively seeks to locate identity outside the “domain of culture.” In doing this, he (1996, p. 131) further extends and complicates the notion of identity by drawing attention to its complexity and multiplicity by requiring “an account of the diversity of languages of ‘personhood’ that have taken shape -- character, personality, identity, reputation, honour, citizen, individual, normal, lunatic, patient, client, husband, mother, daughter.” In such a reading, it becomes possible to imagine the



individual constantly negotiating his/her identity to the point of incoherence, eventually paralysed and overwhelmed by a multiplicity of being. There are too many interstices, too many conflicting demands, which must perpetuate the liminal moment, trapping the individual at the threshold.

If we imagine this threshold is represented by Robins' (1996) barricades, then the possible confusion emerging from Rose's model may produce unstable identities. However, Rose (1996, p. 143) manages to avoid Robins' barricades. Arguing from his reading of Deleuze, that it is possible to describe the procession of identity or selfhood as an infolding whereby the lines that mark the boundaries between who we are today and who we are becoming are neutralized and through this act conflict or contestation is muted, perhaps even silenced. Identity can be constructed through the process of infolding without interiorising the dominant discourse.

These infoldings are partially stabilized to the extent that human beings have come to imagine themselves as the subjects of a biography, to utilize certain 'arts of memory' in order to render this biography stable, to employ certain vocabularies and explanations to make this intelligible to themselves. (Rose, 1996, p. 143)

Thus, Rose argues, we are inherently equipped to manage complexity of being and to consolidate our being into a stable whole. It is our ability to manage complexity that makes agency possible. But we are not to imagine that there is fixity to the state of being. Even when passage across that threshold is negotiated, what is achieved for Rose (1996, p. 144) "are rather webs of tension across a space that accord human beings capacities and powers to the extent that they catch them up in hybrid assemblages of knowledges, instruments, vocabularies, systems of judgement and technical artefacts." Still, we must not lose sight that the individual exists as a member of a cultural

community, even if Rose wants to place identity exterior to it. We can reconcile this apparent contradiction, if we accept the notion of culture existing as a unifying force that influences, but does not entirely constrain, identity. The viability of this notion becomes more certain, if we reflect on how cultures are rarely self-contained, given the presence of multiple cultural groups in human society. We can also note that the tensions that Rose describes exist not simply for the individual but inherently because of a communal state of being. While in certain circumstances, these tensions may well threaten to further fragment and isolate groups within the modern multi-cultural state, such an outcome is not a forgone conclusion.

Grossberg (1996, p. 88) wants culture to be transformative. It is helpful here to examine how Grossberg appears to understand the critical differences in subjectivism, subjectivity and the subject. The dynamic he wants to apply is the notion that the subject can be produced and then controlled by a specific application of power. The subject then exists in a state of subjectivity within which the practice of subjectivism can be sustained. Thus, if we shift from difference to other we can move from the limitations of opposition to the possibility of coexistence, even collaboration and complementarity. He presents *subjectivism* as opening up the possibility of subjectivity as a tool of authority. This is especially true when the place of subjectivism is positioned so as to exert power over other subjects. Grossberg wants to understand the articulation of power and agency through this relationship, while avoiding any attempt to conflate the subject and the self. It is his way of addressing the notion of agency.

However, this is agency not of the subject, long decentred by Foucault, but of subjectivation. This allows Grossberg to open up a discussion of identity/subject/agent as

existing in spaces rather than time. These spaces are occupied by the “demobilized with little or no ability to move out of predefined and enclosed spaces” (1996, p. 101). The evident parallel to Bhabha’s (1994) “third space” makes this a useful concept in this discussion. Agency here can be understood in terms of the ability to navigate space, to overcome the limits or boundaries or the ability to transform the space, to reshape it.

Images of *liminality*<sup>18</sup> collapse the geography of the third space into the border itself; the subaltern lives, as it were, on the border. In both of these variants of hybridity, the subaltern is neither one nor the other but is defined by its location in a unique spatial condition, which constitutes it as different from either alternative. Neither colonizer nor precolonial subject, the postcolonial subject exists as a unique hybrid, which may, by definition, constitute the other two as well. (Grossberg, 1996, p. 91)

Of course there will be resistance to transformative work. Claims of tradition and custom are long standing tactics that are deployed by those who feel threatened or perhaps diminished by the rise of the subaltern. This resistance may well be heightened by the rejection of labels such as subaltern, a position taken up by some leaders within Indigenous communities. (Personal Communication, Gertie Mai Muise, February 12, 2011)

### 3.3 Instrumental Ethnicity as a Strategic Choice

In Canada, those Indigenous people who are unable to achieve the normative model of Status Indian may pursue other strategies. Ideas of instrumental ethnicity may be useful here in attempting to explore how efforts to recover or preserve identity through resistance to assimilation can be balanced with the need for interaction, where insulation

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<sup>18</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

from the dominant discourse is either impossible or for other reasons, neither practical nor desirable. Barth (1969, p.11) challenges accepted definitions of ethnicity that “limit the range of factors that we use to explain cultural diversity.” Barth’s (1969, p. 117) description of the Pathan illustrates how a strategy of adapting identities to conditions on the ground can be problematic, in that they are constrained by issues of distance that may inhibit the ability to “disseminate adequate information to maintain a shared body of values and understanding through time.” Those attempting to employ a strategy of fitting in with the dominant culture remain external to that culture and are forced to continually be aware of, and reactive to, the changes and adaptations that inevitably occur within all cultures. The practice of continual attention to the dominant culture may entirely isolate them from their own. Thus, those who adapt to local conditions may have some limited success but may sacrifice more than they had anticipated or intended. However, individuals are often resilient and innovative in the strategies they develop in order to remain connected to their sense of being grounded in their ancestral identities or “trajectory lineage” (Lawrence, 2004, p.197). This approach is clearly evident in Lawrence’s (2004, p. 197) description of Indigenous people who leave their traditional territories and migrate to cities; yet, who “could trace their lineage for several generations within specific communities, even if they no longer had any direct connection to that community, they still felt themselves to be rooted in that place.”

Similarly, Eidheim (1969) describes the pragmatic approaches of Lapps in coastal Norway and attributes some measure of success to them, both in holding on to their language and their identity. However, it is a constrained success, and it is a project that does not seem likely to survive past a few generations. Eidheim (1969, p. 53)

describes coastal Lapps who live the dualistic lives of working and living in public as Norwegian in a “*sphere of interaction*”<sup>19</sup> in which they speak Norwegian and avoid exhibiting any Lappish cultural traits. Here, the ethnic Lapps “do what they can to present themselves as full-fledged participants” (Eidheim, 1969, p. 55). This form of pragmatic assimilation, through instrumental ethnicity, must be contrasted with the possibility of pragmatic resistance to assimilation through which the subaltern is careful to selectively adapt practices that assure both a measure of integration within the dominant culture, while maintaining the integrity of their own. The model that Eidheim describes may lead to the long-term loss of Lappishness. Eidheim (1969, p.54) writes that “there is historical evidence to show that the synchronic situation depicted [in coastal Norway] represents a phase in a long range and directional process of assimilation.” This can be understood as assimilation by attrition. Each succeeding generation is displaced further from its originating identity until all that remains is an amorphous connection to a distant past.

In Canada, one of the best exemplars of instrumental ethnicity can be observed within the history of the fur trade, in which the French *engagé* immersion in Indigenous communities gives rise to the Métis. (Devine, 2004) This does represent a sharply different model than those described previously in that rather than the subaltern adapting to a dominant culture, certain members of the dominant culture adapt to the supposed subaltern. It is important that we remember that fur traders lived entirely cut off from their own culture and from any military force that might have allowed them to dominate the Indigenous people through force of arms. Additionally, the fur traders had to learn the

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<sup>19</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

basic skills necessary for survival on the land. The instrumentality of this choice allowed the fur traders to develop a near kinship relationship with Indigenous people, thus gaining access both to the essential survival skills and the rich resources that might have otherwise been denied to them.

Early after contact with Europeans many Indigenous people became economically dependent on the fur trade. However, as Devine argues, while initially the *Canadien* fur trader adapted to the Indian life and married into the community, over time their relationship with Indigenous people changed:

[With] the outsider male making a conscious decision to go free – to separate himself from the trading establishment, and separate his wife from the Indian band. This enabled the enculturation of the freemen’s children in an environment separate from both the trading establishment and the band. (2004, p. 25)

Thus, economic power held by the fur traders meant that what began as a form of instrumental ethnicity evolved over time into what Devine describes as ethnogenesis. “When these children married amongst themselves and established their own family units apart from Indian and Euro-Canadian communities, the Métis emerged as a distinct people.” (2004, p. 25) These new people further complicate the discourse around Indigenous identity in Canada. By placing themselves outside both of their ethnic heritages and claiming an entirely new place in our cultural landscape, they challenge notions of how people of mixed ancestry are to be defined. Refusing the designation of half-breed allows the Métis to avoid being negatively stereotyped as an aberration; people who are neither white nor Indian. Instead, their existence exemplifies both the possibility of self-determination and an intriguing revelation of how the land may shape a people’s identity. It also becomes clear, from the example of the Métis, that the experiences and

ethnicity choices of people of mixed-heritage in Canada should not be viewed only through the lens of instrumental ethnicity. Unlike the Lapps described by Eidheim (1969), the Métis do not choose to align themselves directly with the dominant culture. Rather, they attempt to negotiate positionality within the liminal space.

### **3.4 Positionality within the Liminal Space**

Giddens (1991) attempts to open up opportunities for subaltern resistance; he argues that the constancy of change, emblematic of modernity, has replaced the certainties of tradition emergent from its fixity and stability. Thus, what might be understood as the promise of the Enlightenment, positivism and certainty, have been overthrown by the seemingly endless possibilities of modern choice. Those of us who are born into modern Western societies, too often described as the developed world, are taught from a very young age that there is an endless array of possibilities of being. We are inculcated with a positivist model that suggests success is up to the individual and can be achieved through diligence and hard work. It is in this imagined dynamic and fluid public space that Giddens wants the subaltern to harness these same forces that are supposedly available to the dominant cultures and to turn them to their own uses. For Giddens (1991), the subaltern has been sequestered from these positivist possibilities, excluded from the normative lives of the modernist society and he wants the subaltern to utilize or adopt the same processes so as to overcome sequestration by the dominant society.

Yet, there are problems with the Giddens model of sequestration in opposition to Foucault's arguments for repression. His construction of a world that relies on trust to

manage risk remains far too instrumental, too deterministic. The subaltern is offered the false hope of becoming a full member of the dominant culture, as if difference can be erased by the simple adoption of the dominant patterns of behaviour and social practice. The subaltern can take little comfort in Giddens' vision while attempting to navigate and negotiate resistance within the dominant discourse. Those seeking to adopt sequestration risk transforming the liminal space into a ghetto, within which the subject merely moves from one liminal moment to the next. The subaltern must create or find other models that will facilitate the subversion of the dominant structures. Rejecting his/her place within those structures and refusing to be positioned as the subaltern is one strategy. Finding alternatives within traditional ways of being in the world can support that strategy.

#### *3.4.1 Positionality and Land in Indigenous Identity*

In this discussion of positionality, we must not limit our examination to the abstract imaginary of liminal space. The concrete relationship of Indigenous people to land is entirely relevant here. How the land participates in the discussion is the focus of Basso's (1996, pp.106-109) study of the Apache in West Texas. While the past may be distant and diminished in value, the land, upon which the past was constructed, remains; not all of it is accessible but perhaps enough is. Basso, in reflecting on the stories of Apache elders, argues that we imbue places with our thoughts and memories. They become reservoirs of meaning from which we are able to renew ourselves. They contain the wisdom of the past, can sustain the present and help to guide us to the future. Of course, assigning a prescriptive meaning to the land has its own problems. Godlewska and Weber (2007) are clear that this can be viewed as both essentializing and oppressing



Indigenous people in that it effectively denies them either the ability or the right to have full control over their cultural identity. Imposing stereotypical or historical relationships between Indigenous people and the land limits their ability to choose for themselves and implies that their cultures must remain frozen in time in order to be perceived as genuine. If Indigenous people are to achieve a full measure of self-determination, then any cultural definitions related to land usage must come from them.

Basso's (1996) writing does accomplish another important task in that it provides a critical contrast with Anderson's 'Imagined Communities', one that underscores how European or modern nationalism represents a form of detachment from the land. For Anderson (1991) community, and thus identity, seems to be a purely human construct. Communities exist in language and ideas. They are discursive formations constructed within cultures through the multiple modes of interaction present in the culture and through external contact. However, the relationship of specific communities to *place* may vary widely. Anderson traces the transformation of culture from the religious or sacred languages that shaped Europe and the Islamic world. Perhaps, this is what separated the peoples of those lands from a conscious physical relationship with the land. The Industrial Revolution extended that distance or perhaps merely appropriated it. According to Basso (1996), that distance does not exist for the Apache. Such proximity of being with the land is common to Indigenous cultures.

### **3.5 Overcoming Cultural Domination and the Inferiorization of the Other**

In exploring identity within Indigenous marginalized peoples, it is essential that we closely examine how oppression impacts identity. Equally, we must then examine

how resistance to such oppression can in turn ameliorate or even overcome the effects of oppression. To begin, we must remember that, within colonial states, position and location for the Other is relative to the dominant. Thus, it is essential that we can begin by exploring notions of the Other from the perspective of the dominant. In this way, we are able to discover how positionality may be contested and negotiated by the Other. Colonial policy and post-colonial theory are critical to this understanding of how the 'other' came to be inferiorized and, as importantly, how Indigenous people may act to reject being framed as subaltern.

One critical factor that shaped colonial policy is the general attitude of superiority adopted by the dominant European culture. When cultures operate from entirely different worldviews, comparisons between cultures must inevitably fail if the purpose is to value one against the other. The incommensurability of European culture, founded on positivist notions fostered by the Enlightenment, with that of Indigenous cultures still tied closely to principles of kinship and interdependence, creates a situation whereby the dominant cultures, finding themselves unable to accept the inherent value of other cultures, reacted by attempting to impose their value systems on those peoples they deemed inferior. The act of comparing cultures along an artificial valuation system has to inevitably fail in that it relies on a form of rationalization that reconciles the incommensurability of the whole enterprise by granting an inherent superiority to European culture. Such a rationalization that demeaned Indigenous people could only result in their purposeful subordination. In the colonial period, the power imbalance created through economic dependence, arising out of the fur trade, reinforced this notion that Indigenous people were inferior. This is particularly evident in how Europeans frame

the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. Europeans had distanced themselves from nature but situated Indigenous people deep within it. For example, while there is a subtle difference in the French word *sauvage* and the corresponding English *savage*, both words attempt to impose a valuation on Indigenous people by denigrating their culture and by framing them as outside the bounds of civilized life. Indigenous people were not the equal of the civilized European and had to be elevated out of their lesser existence. This paternalistic stance called for their transformation to good Christians as the initial step, followed by the erasure of any traces of Indigenous cultural practice, in particular language. The Indigenous was to be both made invisible and silenced. All traces of Indigenous identity and culture were to be either erased or pushed to the margins. This practice reached its pinnacle in the Residential School system. Implicit in this whole stance by the colonial powers and their successors is the understanding that Indigenous people can never be fully equal to those who dominate them. Such an outcome is beyond even the best civilizing efforts of those who would *save* the Indigenous people from their primitive ways.

Said (1979) draws our attention away from the dominant notions of how human society, in particular those of colonial powers, attempt to erase those they dominate. Rather than accepting the notion of a superior civilization, Said reminds us of the inherent incommensurability of competing cultures. Through his model of Orientalism, Said further destabilizes the notion of the meta-narrative that has long dominated Western thought when he initiates the modern debate about the colonization of culture and identity. Thinkers, such as Michel Foucault (Foucault & Sheridan, 2002), extended the process of deconstructing the notion of a consolidated body of knowledge that served as

the foundation for the history of the West and its self-proclaimed superiority over all other cultures. In doing so, they undermined the completion of the great modernist project that began with the Enlightenment. Said (1979, p. 23) recognizes, through Foucault's theory of knowledge emanating from power, that much of the Western scholarship related to the oriental subject reflects the domination of colonized people by European nations, in particular England.

The rationalization for such oppression can be found in how the colonized identity is constructed. Said (1979, p. 207) argues that "the oriental was linked thus to elements in Western society (delinquents, the insane, women, the poor) having in common an identity best described as lamentably alien." They were "problems to be solved" (Said, 1979, p. 207). This paternalistic model strips colonized subjects of a full identity and places them in a perpetual state of childhood, and immaturity. The realization of a full humanity is denied because the colonized subject is not seen as being fully human. Near the end of his text Said writes:

I consider Orientalism's failure to have been a human as much as an intellectual one; for in having to take up a position of irreducible opposition to a region of the world it considered alien to its own, Orientalism failed to identify with human experience, failed to identify it as human experience. (1979, p. 238)

Perhaps colonization and oppression are only possible when those in power are able to disconnect the colonial subject from a fully realized human state. This erasure of humanity then absolves the oppressor from any moral responsibility for the suffering perpetrated upon the colonial subject.

The idea of the Western nation-state with its codified and bounded existence is the supposed standard by which all cultures are to be measured. As such, any people not

internal to this social construct must be, by their very nature, inferior. For Bhabha (1994, p.61), “the civil state is the ultimate expression of the innate ethical and rational bent of the human mind; the social instinct is the progressive destiny of human nature, the necessary transition from nature to culture.” This rational vision – the vision of the colonized – as being somehow less than fully human, certainly at least childlike, reflects how Indigenous people are conceived within the framework of the Canadian confederation.

When examined from the perspective of the colonizers, through the lens of the Indian Act, Indigenous peoples appear subjugated and it appears that within the context of this act, they must remain so until they finally abandon their Indigenous identities and transmute into fully-fledged citizens of Canada. The paradox for Indigenous people is that assimilation does not transform them into fully realized citizens; it simply makes them less visible. Assimilation then is an erasure, not an acceptance, by the dominant culture. It is an attempt to destabilize Indigenous identity so as to render the colonized both mute and invisible; to erase them from the mainstream public consciousness or, at best, to preserve some remnant of an imagined historic “noble savage”.

### *3.5.1 Oppression as a Discursive Practice*

As Friere (1970) argues, oppression is one discursive practice through which the colonial state is established and sustained. Lawrence describes the impact of oppression on Indigenous people.

The legislative and discursive means by which Indigenous identities are assaulted and erased – and the process given a patina of legality – are therefore only the current expression of a vast range of destructive processes that have been used to destroy Native people. (2004, p.17)

Some may wish to claim that colonialism and the attendant oppression are relics of the past. Yet, Alfred and Corntassel entirely reject such a notion.

Contemporary Settlers follow the mandate provided for them by their imperial forefather's colonial legacy, not by trying to eradicate the physical signs of Indigenous peoples as *bodies*,<sup>20</sup> but by trying to eradicate their existence as *peoples*<sup>21</sup> through the erasures of histories and geographies that provide the foundation for Indigenous cultures and sense of self. (2005, p. 598)

Thus, oppression works, in part, by being prescriptive. The oppressor acts as prescriber by imposing a transformed consciousness upon the oppressed, "one that conforms with the prescriber's consciousness" (Freire, 1970, p. 47). Through this imposed consciousness, the oppressed are transformed into "inauthentic beings" (Freire, 1970, p. 48). For the oppressor, the only "live Indians are fallen Indians, not authentic Indians at all, Indians by biological association only" (King, 2012, p. 65).

Oppressed people have to deal with being in a society in which they are devalued and may become complicit in their own oppression, so as to protect their families. Freire (1970) describes how the oppressed imbibe the discursive constructs, emergent from settler action, and adopt some of the practices that reinforce and sustain their oppression.

Oppression is, as Freire (1970, p.77) claims, "necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life." When a culture is destabilized as to be toxic, the oppressed suffer in terrible ways. Lateral violence and self-destruction are products of a toxic culture. Wheeler argues that "the evidence that stress, including social impoverishments, affects health and mortality is overwhelming" (2006, p. 108).

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<sup>20</sup> Emphasis present in original text.

<sup>21</sup> Emphasis present in original text.

The prescribed consciousness produces an inauthentic being – the subject as object. There is an inherent instability in such an existence, an unnatural state, which in destabilizing and displacing the original consciousness of the oppressed, fails to recover the desired equilibrium, a complete docility. This instability of being in turns fosters a hyper-vigilance within the oppressed who are at some deep level always aware of their oppression, even when they cannot articulate it. It cannot be otherwise when they are continually exposed to the discursive practices of oppression.

Hyper-vigilance inevitably leads to violence. Fanon (2004, p. 16) wants the oppressed “to change his role from game for that of hunter” so as to overthrow his oppressor. But far too often, violence emerges laterally where it is projected against other oppressed people. It is not a violence aimed at liberation from oppression. Rather, it is a violence produced by oppression that works to further the agenda of the oppressor. Research clearly indicates that Indigenous women are at a much greater risk of physical and emotional abuse by their husbands and partners. “Canadian Aboriginal women between the ages of 25 and 44 are five times more likely than all other Canadian women in the same age group to die as a result of violence” (NL, 2013).

The over-representation of Indigenous people in the Canadian penal system is another strong indication of how an oppressed people turn to violence and are more likely to be incarcerated.

In addition to being more represented among admissions, Aboriginal adults tend to be admitted more often for violent offences, compared to their non-Aboriginal counterparts. Among the six provinces that reported to the Integrated Correctional Services Survey in 2007/2008, 28% of Aboriginal adults who were admitted to provincial custody had committed violent offences, compared to 25% of non-Aboriginal adults. Admissions for serious violent offences (murder, attempted

murder and major assault) were more prevalent among Aboriginal adults, as were admissions for common assault. (Perreault, 2009)

What is evident is that for those Indigenous communities which exist on the margins, the breakdown and degradation of their traditional way of living produces lateral violence.

### 3.5.2 *Resistance as a Discursive Practice*

For Friere (1970), resistance to oppression is necessary and possible. It requires a comprehension of the “limit-situation... as the frontier between being and being more human” (1970, p.102). Gendered identity provides one such substantive frontier Anderson directly describes how the impact of gendered oppression remains a critical challenge to Indigenous people today.

We can talk about self-government, sovereignty, cultural recovery and the healing path, but we will never achieve any of these things until we take a serious look at the disrespect that characterizes the lives of so many native women. We must have a vision of something better, because our future depends on it. (2000, p. 13)

It is clear that any serious efforts to revitalize Indigenous culture are dependent on the restoration of gender balance based upon the traditional roles that Indigenous women and men once held. The prescriptive gender roles imposed on them have long served to destabilize individuals and communities. As Lawrence argues, these destructive gender models, which lead to “the subordination of Native women”, must be understood “as a *collective* sovereignty issue” (2005, p. 45). For Martin-Hill, the re-inscription of women “must be a collective effort to restore the balance of female energy” (2003, p. 118). Martin-Hill’s notion of re-inscription serves as a reversal of and a recovery from the prescribed consciousness that Freire (1970) sees as the product of oppression. In such a discursive practice of resistance, Indigenous women are called upon by, among others,



NAWN, Anderson (2000), Martin-Hill (2003) and Maracle (2003) to begin the re-inscription of their own gender and to work towards engaging men in a holistic set of discursive practices, which may restore balanced gender relationships across Indigenous communities.

Muise insists “Mi’kmaq women of western Newfoundland live the ultimate contradiction and duality. We are systematically oppressed but, without question, we are altogether strong” (2003, p. 25). Re-inscription of gender can be accomplished only through a transformation of consciousness. While it might seem this transformation emulates the prescriptive discourse of oppression, it differs critically in that it is designed to restore the authentic humanity of the individual. As Alfred and Corntassel (2005) have noted, this is an essential first step for all Indigenous people.

As Anderson notes, “tasks were often divided along gender lines in the past, and in healthy Aboriginal families this exemplified a sense of balance between the male and female roles” (2000, p. 117). The women’s larger goal is to recover this balance between women and men. “It is about creating a vision of a society where everyone has a place, a sense of value, a gift to bring” (Anderson, 2000, p. 13). There is, in this restoration, recognition that women and men are different. “Our traditions tell us that we are not the same as men, nor should we try to use the same approaches they use” (Maracle, 2003, p. 74).

The lateral violence that has been produced by the destabilization of traditional ways of being is the singular greatest obstacle to this vision of balance and equality between Indigenous men and women.

In family-violence interventions, it is clear that a community-controlled and culture –based approach is necessary. Such an approach must be holistic in nature and, therefore, needs to include interventions that provide community education, treatment for the entire family and an alternative to the criminal justice system. (Baskin, 2003, p.215)

It might be expected that resistance to erasure and assimilation can only be initiated at a coherent, communal level and in the end this is a desired and critical part of the process. However, effective action relies upon the participation of individuals.

Decolonization and regeneration are not at root collective and institutional processes. They are shifts in thinking and action that emanate from recommitments and reorientations at the level of the self that, over time and through proper organization, manifest as broad social and political movements to challenge state agendas and authorities. (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005, p.611)

This reasoning aligns with Freire’s argument that those who resist oppression “cannot enter the struggle as objects in order to *later*<sup>22</sup> become human beings” (1970, p. 68). While discursive practices and formations are not created by individuals acting alone, they are acted out by them. Thus, exploring individual action is a legitimate process for better understanding these discursive practices and formations.

Still, this should not be taken to infer that action by individuals within Indigenous cultures is equivalent to the individualism that has become integral with modern Western society. While the autonomy of the individual is respected and honoured within Indigenous cultures, each person remains responsible to their community. Maracle clearly describes how Indigenous women have a communal orientation to their sense of being when she writes about decolonization work done in urban communities. “Women usually developed these community groups and organizations to support the well-being of the

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<sup>22</sup> Emphasis is present in original text.

community before they undertook to develop community resources for themselves (Maracle, 2003, p. 73).” Here, Maracle reflects on how many Indigenous men still deeply suffer from oppression and are “rushing to keep up” with the women. Each Indigenous man must work to recover his authentic self so that he can reclaim his traditional responsibilities within his community.

### **3.6 Challenging the Postcolonial State**

Notions of Canada as a post-colonial nation are often effective in deflecting discussions of the continuation of the assimilationist project that began with the arrival of European settlers. An example of this is provided by modern settler writers, such as Frye (2004, p. 18), who position themselves within the construct of post-colonial literature, imagining Canada to be a “peaceable kingdom”. That the Indian Act remains in force in Canada is a powerful argument against the notion that a post-colonial social reality has been achieved in Canada. King describes the Indian Act this way:

It is a magical piece of legislation that twists and slides through time, transforming itself and the lives of Native people at every turn. And sprinkled throughout the act, which, among other things, paternalistically defines who is an Indian and who is not, are amendments that can make Indians disappear in a twinkle. (2004, p.132)

Once they are made invisible they are also made mute. Unlike any other inhabitants in Canada, Indigenous people remain direct subjects of the original colonization by Europeans. Their legal identity is not their own to define or to choose – it is assigned to them by a distant legal framework that is housed in Ottawa and administered by anonymous bureaucrats. This is equally true for those Indigenous people without status, such as the Métis. In critiquing the historic pattern of court interpretation

of the Indian Act impacting who and who is not Status Indian, McIntosh writes: “The jurisprudence suggests that whatever makes people Aboriginal is so superficial that it can just be turned on or off, and a judge can determine whether that on/off switch has been flipped” (MacIntosh, 2009, p.402).

Rather than being a peaceable kingdom, Canada remains a colonial power, one that still relies on the oppression of its indigenous peoples to legitimize the control of their lives and their land. These circumstances create a complex environment that complicates our efforts to discuss how Indigenous people negotiate identity within Canada. While Frye and other settler writers accept and work closely with the idea of postcolonial literature, King (2004) and Battiste (2004) reject it. The latter insist that it is simply not possible for them to write from a postcolonial standpoint when Indigenous peoples still struggle to regain control of their lives and land. King takes this on directly when he writes:

While post-colonialism purports to be a method by which we can begin to look at those literatures which are formed out of the struggle of the oppressed against the oppressor, the colonized against the colonizer, the term itself assumes that the starting point for that discussion is the advent of Europeans in North America... worst of all the idea of post-colonial writing cuts us off from our traditions, traditions that were in place before colonialism ever became a question... postcolonialism remains a hostage to nationalism. (2004, p.185)

King articulates, but also resists, this oppressive state through two forms of indigenous writing. He describes the first as “tribal” which is internal to Indigenous peoples, generally in a native language (King, 2004, p.186). This writing is not shared outside of Indigenous communities. He calls the second “polemical” which refers to writing that “concerns itself with the clash of Native and non-Native cultures” (King, 2004, p.186). Here, King is purposefully confronting the many injustices that have been

perpetrated against Indigenous peoples by their colonizers. This duality in his writing represents King's attempt to sustain and enhance the place of tradition within Indigenous literature, while overturning notions of post-colonial theory as being factual.

What we must here understand is that King uses language and storytelling in two distinct ways. He resists the efforts to overwrite his Indigenous identity while he is immersed in the dominant culture. He does this by speaking into being his place there. This act of resistance, this external discursive practice, must be understood to be critical to the integrity of his Indigenous identity. He is reminding those in the dominant culture that he is retaining his Indigenous identity while living in a non-Indigenous environment. Rather than blend in, King chooses to call attention to his difference. This internal discursive practice that he reserves for Indigenous peoples assures that the identity he struggles to sustain has a place outside the dominant culture.

Battiste is equally direct in her rejection of postcolonialism as a relevant model for Indigenous peoples. "We recognized that postcolonial societies do not exist. Rather we acknowledged the colonial mentality and structures that still exist in all societies and nations and the neocolonial tendencies that resist decolonization in the contemporary world" (2004, p. 211). This resistive stance by King and Battiste reflects the nature of the relationship, which still exists between the Canadian government, as representative of settler peoples, in their relationships with Indigenous peoples. It is a struggle that occurs at multiple sites and defies a single description. The fragmentation of Indigenous peoples that is realized through the Indian Act ensures that only the government is able to consolidate its position along a single front. It can simply choose to ignore the numerous voices of those who are displaced outside of the legal parameters of Status Indian. At the

interstices of Status and non-Status, those who are further marginalized must begin to construct other frameworks within which to achieve and sustain their Indigenous identities. They are internal refugees with no recognized place as Indigenous people in either the world of Status Indian or the dominant culture.

The critical idea that succinctly captures the states of being for these Indigenous people is subtly embedded in the title of the collected work, *Unhomely States: Theorizing English-Canadian Postcolonialism*. (Battiste, 2008; Frye, 2008; King, 2008) This notion of *Unhomely States* is explored at length by Bhabha when he writes, “The unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence” (1994, p. 15). Thus, the anthology that aims to present a notion of Canada in a postcolonial state actually illuminates the divide that remains between the settler author and the Indigenous. Writers like Frye are so safely ensconced deep within the heart of the dominant culture and far from the boundaries that determine the inscribed world of the colonized that they imagine that Canada has matured and grown free of its colonial past. There is a distance, perhaps a divide both of culture and time, that separates Frye from King and Battiste and within this divide we may encounter some forms of Bhabha’s (1994) *third* space. It is the same space that is described by Robins (1996). Here Indigenous peoples, Status and non-Status Indian, and Métis, struggle to stabilize a sense of being, to relocate themselves in a land that is being made foreign to them.

For Battiste (2004), the source of the instability of identity is at least in part to be found in the education systems that sever Indigenous peoples from their traditional ways of knowing, replacing them with Eurocentric knowledge. Here, the history of the

residential schools stands out as a stark example of how social structures are used to enforce the power of the dominant group. It is clear that “residential schools were constituted as an assault on Indigenous identity and an attempt to remould the First Nations people in the image of Euro-Canadians” (Fiske, 2006, p.47). While much of what has happened to Indigenous people in Canada as a result of assimilation efforts is clear, it is equally important that we try to understand why we create institutions such as the residential schools and why, as we recognize difference, we act to either eradicate or at best to subjugate it.

### **3.7 A Methodological Approach to Positionality: Grounded Theory and Discursive Practice**

While this theoretical exploration of culture emerging through liminality is important, it also reveals some limitations of such cultural models. Cultures that are rooted in entirely different worldviews, cosmologies, and value systems cannot be simply examined through the same lens. The criteria, by which formal theoretical models are developed, are inherently rooted in the same cultures from which they emerged and the researcher is thus limited by those criteria. The assumption that it is then possible to rigidly apply such criteria to other cultures blindly ignores the very incommensurability of such a project. This is not to reject the possibility of arriving at a universal framework through which we can examine and understand diverse cultural identities; rather, it is to argue that we must be vigilant in acknowledging the biases and limitations that are inherent in all models. However, there are more critical and relevant elements within this particular project that influence the choice of methodology and methods. What has

emerged in this preceding discussion is a focus on location/positionality and this introduces concerns with how location and positionality are informed by and in turn shape a discursive practice. The goal here is to understand how a relationship between location/positionality and discursive practice informs action.

While we might simply choose to explore this relationship through Foucault's notions of power Clarke brings Foucault and Strauss together.

If action is at the heart of Strauss's project, and power at the heart of Foucault's, they meet in related conceptualizations of practices as fundamental processes of action and change and in the ways in which their meso-level concepts interrelate. (Clarke, 2005, p. 52)

This dynamic between power and action reflects the relationship between positionality and location and the discursive practices that are acted out by those who populate the social worlds and arenas in which power and action interact. The dominant social arena that is the Canadian state is controlled by various levels of governments – federal, provincial and municipal. These all operate across the traditional territories of Indigenous people who seek to exert their inherent authority as recognized in the Constitution Act of 1982. The earlier discussion of the White Paper of 1969 illustrates some of the oppressive discursive practices that Indigenous people confront when they attempt to navigate the socio-political and economic arena that is settler Canada.

Grounded theory, in particular as argued by Clarke (2005), provides the appropriate framework to more fully analyze this discursivity because we can account for the specific situations within which such discourse is practiced. This is not to suggest that other discursive frameworks are entirely unsuited to such a project, and it may well be



possible to employ other methodologies so as to develop a rich understanding of how identity may be achieved, of how the boundaries of the liminal space may be crossed.

A constructivist model of grounded theory methodology, as articulated by Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006, 2009), provides a clear focus on process and action and recognizes the situatedness of positionality and location. As Charmaz (2009, p. 131) states, “constructivists enter participants’ liminal world of meaning and action in ways classic grounded theorists do not.” Not all approaches accommodate the notion of the constructedness of a discursive practice as well as others. A constructivist model of grounded theory methodology, however, offers a set of solutions and provides a framework that is both robust and flexible. Here, I also seek to situate Friere’s (1970) work on oppression and resistance, in particular his explication of the limit-situation deep inside the same grounded theory, situational analysis model offered by Clarke. His insights into the myriad ways the interplay between oppression and resistance act to shape and reshape identity are invaluable to this project. Additionally, I also understand Martin-Hill’s (2003) arguments for re-inscription as informing how I can effectively remain grounded within my situational analysis from a grounded theory model.

In the following chapter I provide a more detailed discussion of how grounded theory may be employed to provide a sound basis for data collection and analysis.

## **Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design**

### **4.1 Addressing Indigenous Concerns in Research**

In this chapter I offer a rationale for my research design, which seeks to honour and respect the Aboriginal people who agreed to participate in this work. This approach reflects my determination to be guided by concerns expressed by Indigenous scholars regarding research involving Indigenous people. There is a long history of exploitation and colonization of Indigenous peoples by the academy, whereby research models that do not reflect Indigenous ways of knowing are imposed from the outside. Smith (1999, p. 3) describes the cynicism towards researchers that “ought to have been enough to deter any self-respecting indigenous person from being associated with research.” It is essential then that any research design that focuses on Indigenous people must strive to avoid the abuses of the past and must begin by acknowledging the primacy of Indigenous concerns and perspectives in relation to how research is conducted and how knowledge is shared.

Indigenous scholars reflect many of the concerns expressed to me by some of my participants. Of particular concern is the notion of ownership of knowledge and the far too prevalent experiences whereby researchers are seen to appropriate Indigenous knowledge for their own uses without properly crediting sources or providing any benefit back to the participants whose engagement has been essential to the completion of research projects. I was told that elders were instructing their people to avoid such work since they had become weary of being exploited (Personal Conversation, Paula Cutler, February 23, 2011).

Indigenous people are not unwilling to share with those who respect and honour their ways of being in the world. Sharing is central to Indigenous ways of being. Smith writes:

To be able to share, to have something worth sharing, gives dignity to the giver. To accept a gift and to reciprocate gives dignity to the receiver. To create something new through that process of sharing is to recreate the old, to reconnect relationships and to recreate our humanness. (1999, p. 105)

This notion of sharing may be absent from academic research designs involving Indigenous people, when it must in fact be central to it. I have in my work aimed to actively share with Mi'kmaq through my choice of methods, both formal and informal, and through my active participation in the Mi'kmaq community in Bay St. George.

Despite her constructive vision of ethical research models, Smith cautions that there are risks for Indigenous people when they agree to participate in research, noting “the underlying examples of protocols broken, values negated, small test failed and key people ignored” (1999, p. 3). She adds “the greater danger, however, was in the creeping politics that intruded into every aspect of our lives, legitimated by research, informed more often by ideology” (Smith, 1999, p. 3). Smith is not rejecting research per se; rather, she is seeking to have Indigenous people wrest control of it away from those who seek to exploit and colonize. She argues that “to resist is to retrench in the margins, retrieve what we were and remake ourselves” (1999, p. 4). This does not preclude the inclusion of non-Indigenous academics but it becomes essential that the researcher, who seeks to participate in this journey to the margins, acts in such a manner as to honour and respect the needs and values of Indigenous participants. A necessary part of such an approach resides in the choice of methodology and methods. This may be an emergent trend. As

Mihesuah (2004, p. x) notes, “native intellectuals and our non-Native allies are speaking up, challenging methodologies used to write about Natives.”

While accepting that we have an obligation to work from Indigenous ways of understanding how knowledge is to be shared, we also must not forget that research involving Indigenous people is inherently political and careful attention must be also paid to concerns expressed by Indigenous scholars in this regard. (Mihesuah, 2004; Mihesuah and Wilson, 2004; Battiste, 2008; Denizen and Lincoln, 2008; Smith, 2009) People at the margins continue to be exploited by those at the centres of power and the academy is fully complicit in this. Mihesuah and Wilson argue:

The academy has much invested in maintaining control over who defines knowledge, who has access to knowledge, and who produces knowledge. As Indigenous intellectuals committed to our Indigenous nations, we threaten the power and authority claimed by institutions, disciplines, and peoples created, in part from the oppression of our people. (2004, p. 5)

Thus, my larger obligation to my participants is that, through my work, I act to diminish and even to reverse the exploitation and oppression that underpins much of the academic record. At the very least I must not sustain it or add to it. Wilson (2004, p. 69) pointedly argues that research that helps to Indigenize the academy “will contribute to bettering circumstances for Indigenous people.” This is reflected in the arguments I made (Butler, 2009) for an “ontological shift” in the academy.

The critical point I seek to make is that negative societal attitudes towards Indigenous worldviews are unlikely to be changed through the political system, given the electoral cycle that underpins government policy making. Rather, I argue, positive changes in societal attitudes can be more effectively shaped through education and research within the academy. A key example of this is found in the use of language.

Sensitivity to language is critical, and how researchers use language to position themselves, in relation to their participants, can inhibit and diminish the willingness of participants to engage in the project. For example, many Indigenous leaders reject what they describe as academic language that limits and erroneously defines their people. Indigenous leaders may rightly argue that language, such as *subaltern*, while descriptive, can also serve to perpetuate power imbalances.

Given that I am a non-Indigenous outsider seeking to engage Indigenous participants in my research, I had to establish a level of credibility and trust as the outsider within. My status as an outsider was moderated in that I have a kinship relationship with a number of my participants. Yet, this relationship both aided and further complicated my work. Being related gave me ready access to certain participants while also introducing issues of families that are often complex and sometimes conflicted. The selection of a methodological approach then was a key factor in ensuring a successful and productive project. It was for this reason among others that I chose to work from a grounded theory methodology.

#### **4.2 Grounded Theory as a Framework for Discursive Analysis**

This project focuses on the discursive formations that are produced and reproduced within the social worlds of the participants. As such, it is essential that an appropriate methodology be selected so as to provide a framework for the necessary analysis. In the following section, I illustrate why grounded theory is an appropriate choice for this work.

For Glaser (1978, 1998), grounded theory begins from inductive reasoning through which data emerges and is allowed to produce theory. The researcher works from the initial theory, applying deductive reasoning in order to extend theoretical sampling so as to reach saturation. A critical goal is to identify and work with a “core concept” which in turn will lead to a substantive grounded theory. Glaser argues that the one inherent strength of grounded theory is its openness and its avoidance of “predetermined ideas” (1978, p. 3). “The analyst is able to remain sensitive to the data by being able to record events and detect happenings without first having them filtered through and squared with pre-existing hypotheses and biases.” This emphasis on sensitivity is also present in Straus and Corbin. “Sensitivity means having insight, being tuned in to, being able to pick up on relevant issues, events and happenings in data” (2008, p. 32). This understanding is particularly relevant to my research into Mi’kmaq, in that I had to continually be aware of my preconceptions and to be sensitive to my own biases. At times during my research I was confronted by my resistance to statements from my participants and in each case I had to reflect on how my skepticism was rooted in my own biases and preconceptions.

What is essential for Glaser (and one of his primary criticisms of Strauss’s later work), is that the data must not be *forced* to match some hypotheses. “Data should not be forced or selected to fit some pre-conceived or pre-existent categories or discarded in favor of keeping an extant theory intact” (1978, p. 4). According to Glaser (1978, p. 5), the way to establish valid categories is in identifying the “Basic Social Process” around which all data, and as such categories, are aligned. He writes: “the generation of theory

occurs around a *core*<sup>23</sup> category... only variables that are related to the core will be included in the theory” (1978, p. 91). This normalization of data gives rise to some of the criticisms levelled at Glaser. (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005, 2009)

However, grounded theory is not the homogeneous methodology originally “discovered” by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The variety of researchers who have adopted grounded theory have also adapted it, broadening its scope and shifting its centre even further away from its roots at the intersection of quantitative (Glaser) and qualitative (Strauss) research.

The notion of *emergent* data is at the heart of critical disagreements between Glaser and other grounded theorists. (Charmaz, 2006, 2009; Clarke, 2005, 2009) That Glaser wants data to emerge from the process of research implies that such data must always already exist in some objective form. This thinking illuminates Glaser’s positivist stance. This is further illustrated in his arguments for a *formal* grounded theory (Glaser, 1998, p. 6), something Clarke (2005, p. xxxviii) describes as being a “high-modern” project. However, Glaser (1978, p. 146) remains insistent that “substantive theories have important general relevance and become, almost automatically, springboards or stepping stones to the development of a grounded formal theory.”

Strauss developed a new research partnership with Juliet Corbin and it is the third edition of their co-authored text from which I draw my information on how his grounded theory practice has evolved since he first collaborated with Glaser. It is a reasonable reading to see a shared ownership for this version of grounded theory, given the duration

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<sup>23</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

of their joint research. Corbin (2008, p. 2) pointedly places the roots of Strauss's grounded theory in Meade's symbolic interactionism and Dewey's pragmatism. This places action at the centre of their research, but action that occurs in social worlds, and for Corbin (2008, p. 3), the "envisioned end of action affects whatever action is actually taken." *Action* runs throughout the set of assumptions that Corbin lists as underpinning their model of grounded theory. (2008, pp. 6-7)

There must also be a conscious awareness of the underlying ontology that both determine knowledge and shape the work done by the researcher (Corbin, 2008, p. 6). Thus, for Corbin and Strauss, humans are actors and have agency but operate within an already existing worldview. This does not mean that humans cannot effect change in the world. There are contingencies but these may be overcome or ameliorated through actions and interaction. The social worlds are not rigid but are navigable and negotiable.

For Strauss and Corbin, understanding how social worlds may be negotiated requires a clear understanding of the contextual nature of all action. They define context as: "The sets of conditions that give rise to problems or circumstances to which individuals respond by means of action/interaction/emotions. Context arises out of sets of conditions ranging from the most macro to the micro" (2008, p. 229). This is a useful concept in that it moves the researcher beyond the excessive reliance on data as argued by Glaser, to approaching the possibility that data does not so much emerge as it is constructed by those who operate within the defined context. Thus, data itself becomes contingent since the processes that may be enacted can only evolve within the context. How the context gives rise to process is revealed through the application of a paradigm, "a perspective, a set of questions that can be applied to data" (Corbin and Strauss, 2008,



p. 89). Thus it becomes possible to study how the actor adapts or establishes process in response to the context within which he/she operates and is operated upon.

There are significant implications for this approach, which places the actor at the centre of all possible social worlds. For one thing, it reinforces the notions of hierarchy, evident in the representation of the conditional/consequential matrix since there are inherent dependencies that shape outcomes. Strauss and Corbin see “process as integral” and acknowledge that actions and interactions may be “transformed as a response to consequence and contingency” (2008, p. 8). They state: “we do not believe that every possible condition must be brought into the research” (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p. 91). However, the narrowed window of study of process and context that they recommend may limit any ability to analyze the larger situation within which the actor operates. This is not to claim that Corbin and Strauss entirely avoid examining the larger social worlds, within which actors operate. The difficulty is found in the loss of the fuller dynamics of action and process in their conditional/consequential matrix. They inhibit the researcher from revealing some of the complex interrelationships that are to be found in the social worlds articulated by Meade’s symbolic interactionism.

It would seem that their aim is to produce a normative model that may be useful in moving beyond the substantive theory to a formal grounded theory (Corbin and Strauss, 2008, p.102). To this end, as with Glaser (1978, p. 104), they place great emphasis on identifying a “central or core category” upon which to build up their theory. Yet, Glaser is highly critical of Strauss and Corbin. He pointedly rejects their strategy of labeling, describing it “as having the failing result of ending up with hundreds of conceptual labels, and then not knowing which are relevant and then having to engage in

the laborious task of grouping them into patterns” (Glaser, 1992, pp. 42-43). Glaser wants finding the Basic Social Process to be the centre of grounded theory research, something he claims “becomes harder and harder in the tedious effort to categorize labels” (p. 44). Rather than read Strauss and Corbin as introducing the complexity and richness of Meade’s social worlds to grounded theory research, Glaser argues: “[it] forces preconceived, full conceptual description” (1992, p. 46). In these criticisms we begin to see the beginnings of the continuum that has evolved over the decades since Glaser and Strauss first formulated grounded theory.

Charmaz (2006) represents another version of grounded theory, one closer to Strauss and Corbin’s. According to Charmaz (2006), one critical feature of grounded theory is its focus on agency. Grounded theory, as argued by Charmaz, assumes that process produces structure. Thus, grounded theory provides the means to closely examine the dynamics of social and cultural change. Actions must occur within the formal and informal groupings and what is explored here includes the adaptability to negotiate all of these spaces. For Charmaz (2006, p. 131), “analysis is contextually situated in time, place, culture, and situation.” Charmaz (2006) finds that Glaser’s Basic Social Process is insufficient and argues that understanding context is critical.

A constructivist approach does not adhere to positivist notions of variable analysis or finding a single basic process or core category...[Instead] a contextual grounded theory can start with sensitizing concepts that address such concepts as power, global reach and difference with inductive analyses that theorize connections between local worlds and larger social structures. (pp. 132,133)

Charmaz (2006, p.7) follows along in the general direction set by Strauss and Corbin, placing process and action at the centre of her work. In contrast, however, she deliberately distances herself from Glaser when she refers to Glaser’s criticism that

“Strauss and Corbin’s procedures force data and analysis into preconceived categories”, noting that Glaser relies on “often narrow empiricism” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8). The centeredness of data is at the heart of grounded theory and if it is constructed rather than merely emergent then any concepts or categories that come into play must also be understood as being constructed rather than emergent. In presenting her constructivist model, Charmaz sees Glaser’s version as tainted by his positivist past and as such must be understood as objectivist. “Objectivist grounded theory resides in the positivist tradition and thus attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the processes of their production” (2006, p. 131).

Still for Charmaz (2006, p. 9), there is a need to “move grounded theory away from the positivism in both Glaser’s and Strauss and Corbin’s versions of the method.” She seeks to incorporate “twenty-first century methodological assumptions and approaches” (2006, p. 9) into grounded theory research. Charmaz (2006, p. 10) firmly situates herself as a constructivist, assuming that “any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world.... advancing interpretive analyses that acknowledge these constructions [of reality].” For Charmaz, this constructedness is achieved through process, which lasts so long as people interact with one another.

If we accept that process produces structure, then we must entertain the notion that process can subvert, undermine or transform structure. This understanding of the dynamics of process introduces the possibility that context may be less stable than may be implied by Corbin and Strauss and also supports Charmaz’s (2006, p. 3) claim that “we construct data” in collaboration with our participants and, as such, “both data and analyses are social constructions that reflect what their constructions entailed” (Charmaz,

2006, p. 131). Despite this constructedness, she is careful about the manipulation of data. For example, Charmaz (2006, pp. 118-119) warns that Strauss and Corbin's conditional/consequential matrix "may force moving your data and analysis in a pre-established direction." The matrix represents a tendency towards positivism, something Charmaz works to overcome. On the other hand, she is more comfortable with Clarke's situational analysis, which she describes as "provisional, flexible, interpretive theorizing" (2006, p. 118). In this it can be understood that Charmaz supports Clarke's intention "to push grounded theory more fully around the postmodern turn through a new approach to analysis" (Clarke, 2005, p. xxi). What Clarke seeks to do is not so much to remake grounded theory as modeled by Charmaz as to extend it further by facilitating both the research design and the ongoing analysis of data.

Clarke (2005, p. xxvii) works to overcome the final remnants of positivism she detects in both Glaser and Strauss and Corbin. For her, research must take "situatedness, differences of all kinds, and positionality/relationality very seriously in all their complexities, multiplicities, instabilities, and contradictions." Clarke is quite clear in her intention to transform grounded theory research when she writes:

What I propose is to supplement basic grounded theory with a situation-centered approach that in addition to studying action (Charmaz) also explicitly includes the analysis of the full situation, including discourses – narrative, visual, and historical. (2005, p. xxxii)

Instead of the limiting positivism of Glaser's Basic Social Process, Clarke (2005, p. xxxiv) proposes that "heterogeneous positions and relations can be explicitly sought out, analyzed and discussed." Clarke wants to embrace the messy dynamics and relationships already out there in the social worlds. While process, action and agency all

participate in her research; they cannot be removed or sanitized from the situation within which they function. Nor is context (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 2008) sufficient for Clarke (2005, pp. 30, 71) in that the “important so-called contextual elements are actually *inside the situation itself*...there is no such thing as ‘context’.”<sup>24</sup> Clarke rejects the exteriority of conditions as creating contingency within the situation, insisting that conditions matter because they are interior to and co-constitutive of the situation to be studied. These do not cause the situation; they are integral to it. What is to be studied then is how these conditions appear and how they continue to be reconstituted by the situation. Here, the researcher is also internal – an active condition that participates in the situation and whom is acted upon by other actors present (Clarke, 2005, p. 72). In this Clarke (2005, p. 3) demonstrates her different reading of the argument that “grounded theory methodology is itself grounded epistemologically and ontologically in symbolic interactionism theory.” She insists “analysis centers on social phenomena” which must be studied within the ecology of a “more fluidly bounded, discourse-based framing of collective action” (Clarke, 2005, pp. 9-10). And the researcher is expected to acknowledge their participation in this action. For Clarke, Glaser’s “researcher as *tabula rasa*” does not exist in that “*we are, through the very act of research itself, directly in the situation we are studying.*”<sup>25</sup> (Clarke, 2005, p. 12)

There seems to be a need for certainty in many of the criticisms of grounded theory when the world is in fact so much more contingent. Some of the criticisms of grounded theory appear to understand it to be fixed and perhaps trapped in earlier

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<sup>24</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

<sup>25</sup> Emphasis is present in the original text.

iterations. Glaser (2007, p. 7) acknowledges “our lack of clarity at the start” that gives rise to questions about the ability to generate formal grounded theory. Given that formal theory is central to so much research, this is a serious concern. Again, however, this can be rebutted, if we recognize that critics often still work from the original text published in 1967. According to Charmaz (2004) the use of “pure induction” in the earliest stages of grounded theory is a primary target for critics such as Burawoy (2000) and Dey (1999). This clearly reflects a bias towards their positivist leanings that rely more on deductive reasoning applied to existing theory where, according to Charmaz (2006, p. 126), “*explanation and prediction*”<sup>26</sup> are the desired outcomes. However, for Charmaz, the reliance on deductive reasoning “can result in narrow, reductionist explanations with simplistic models of action” (2006, p. 126). Grounded theory does not preclude the use of deductive reasoning. Rather, it argues for beginning from inductive reason in that grounded theory emerges from the data. Using inductive reasoning from the beginning ensures that the research is not constrained by the theoretical limitations inherent in deductive reasoning.

We must, as Clarke (2005) cautions us, avoid trying to make our data fit some pre-existing theory. Once we have begun to construct our data and to develop categories and concepts, it becomes feasible and necessary to apply deductive reasoning to facilitate theoretical sampling. Thus, deductive reasoning that proceeds from an initial theory constructed within the current work helps the researcher to both test and enrich concepts by achieving theoretical saturation. According to Glaser (2007, pp. 6, 43), the initial

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<sup>26</sup> The emphasis is presenting the original text.

theory based on core concepts can lead to a substantive grounded theory. From here, Glaser proposes it is possible to eventually develop a grand formal theory.

While Clarke accepts the utility of introducing deductive reasoning for theoretical saturation, she rejects Glaser's key component of earlier versions of grounded theory, *formal* grounded theory (Glaser, 1992, 1998; Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 2008). "The idea of generating formal grounded theory through grounded theory was a *high modernist project* [italics added], itself situated in an elaborate set of assumptions about the making of sociology as a science parallel to natural sciences" (Clarke, 2005, p. 28). What she appears to caution against is a clear risk of grounded theory regressing into the positivist model it seeks to escape. For Clarke, seeking to generate formal grounded theory is a return to the core concepts of positivist thinking, including concepts of objective and generalized truths. She understands that social sciences must not be founded on the same principles as the natural sciences.

Rather than imagine her work extending into some greater generalized and universal set of truth-claims, Clarke wants to remain immersed in the particular. "Here we embrace the limitations of analyzing a particular situation rather than attempt to overcome them through the generation of formal theory" (Clarke, 2005, p. 22). For Clarke, any truths are local and contingent, existing in the situation under study. Any effort to extend such findings is an attempt to restore the meta-narrative displaced by Foucault and, in her reading, by Meade's symbolic interactionism. Instead, she intends to bring together Strauss's action and Foucault's power "in related conceptualizations of practices as fundamental processes of action and change" (2005, p. 52). Clarke acknowledges these are not to be understood as equivalences but help to produce "sites of

articulation” (2005, p. 52). These sites are the situations within which Clarke locates her research.

Clarke (2005) wants Foucault to be understood as focused on outcomes of opportunities present within the discursive practice. In contrast, she understands Strauss as seeking to explicate how possibilities will be realized through process. These are not contradictory for Clarke; rather, she frames these as complementary analyses of discursive practices. She brings these together in her construct of the situation. Here recognized and articulated possibilities and opportunities are realized through negotiations that produce an ordered outcome. There are *n*- possibilities and *n*- negotiations. Contingency is at the heart of all situations. Analyses do not predict outcomes; they deconstruct them.

Through my research questions, I seek to understand how participants contribute to the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture in Western Newfoundland. To this end, I have selected a specific subset of my participants with the goal of documenting and analysing the situations, social worlds and arenas within which they operate. Most specifically, I aimed to critically focus on the tension between oppression and resistance and to locate the primary sites where Mi'kmaq act. The grounded theory framework I have discussed above is well suited to this approach. It supports me in my critical goal of achieving an understanding of how my participants interact in the situations that I identify and document. The framework provides the critical parameters that direct me in my primary responsibility, which is to be attentive to what they share with me in order that I may enter their social worlds and be guided towards a critical understanding of the situations



they navigate and also shape. In this project, then, I rely on Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006) to guide my work, recognizing that they both direct me towards my participants.

#### *4.2.1 Ethical Consideration for Grounded Theory as a Methodology*

As noted above, there were a number of key factors that shaped my selection and application of a methodological framework for this project. First, there was the clear necessity to design a research project that recognized the pertinent concerns of Indigenous scholars and elders regarding the exploitation and colonization of Indigenous knowledge, a practice that serves to perpetuate the colonization of Indigenous people. Having designed such a project, it is equally essential that any methodology utilized must avoid a tendency to be exploitive by giving primacy to the worldview of the participants. Qualitative methodologies, which reject notions of the objective and detached researcher, working from a position of authority, offer the most viable path here.

Grounded theory provides a methodology that locates the researcher more deeply inside qualitative research. (Clarke, 2005; Charmaz, 2006) There is a continuum in grounded theory that extends from Glaser through to Clarke. What distinguishes each position from the other is its degree of messiness. Glaser (1992), with his Basic Social Process, wants a very sparse and perhaps sanitized representation of a research area. Strauss and Corbin (2008) introduce a richer picture through their focus on social worlds captured and organized within their matrix. Yet, this matrix, while representational, is also limiting in its implied fixity of social structures. They still attempt to normalize data into categories too early in the process. While Charmaz (2006) gets around this potential rigidity by avoiding the matrix, she reduces her scope of research into process by her

focus on context, something Clarke (2006) denies even exists as a separate object of study but describes as only available to the researcher within the situation. In this, Clarke introduces the greatest degree of messiness through her situational analysis. Her version allows for a greater appreciation, and thus examination, of the full dynamic range at play. As such, Clarke's version is invaluable to the study of the complex social and political ecology within which the Indigenous people in Canada operate.

Indigenous people in Canada have in recent decades taken back ownership of their cultural and social realms and this explicitly includes any research conducted by non-indigenous academics. Clear criteria for acceptable methodologies have been developed.

[Academic inquiry] must be ethical, performative, healing, transformative, decolonizing and participatory. It must be committed to dialogue, community, self-determination, and cultural autonomy. It must meet people's perceived needs. It must resist efforts to confine inquiry to a single paradigm or interpretive strategy. It must be unruly, disruptive, critical, and dedicated to the goals of justice and equity (Denizen and Lincoln, 2008, p. 2).

It is not their intention to exclude non-Indigenous academics, but rather, there is recognition that these academics are "learning how to dismantle, deconstruct, and decolonize traditional ways of doing science, learning that research is always already both moral and political" (Denizen and Lincoln, 2008, p. 3). In this regard, and of particular significance for my research, Mi'kmaq in Atlantic Canada have established their own ethics review board through which ethics approval must be secured in advance of beginning any indigenous research in the region. Their ethics guidelines establish clear requirements that the researcher must understand:

Indigenous people's epistemology is derived from the immediate ecology; from peoples' experiences, perceptions, thoughts and memory, including experiences

shared with others; and from the spiritual world discovered in dreams, visions, inspirations, and signs interpreted with the guidance of healers or elders (Battiste, 2008, p. 499).

This is not a vision of such knowledge being fixed or historical; rather, it is “a dynamic knowledge constantly in use as well as in flux or change” (Battiste, 2008, p. 500). Any understanding of this knowledge is perspectival and its “unifying concept lies in its diversity” (Battiste, 2008, p. 501). It is *situated knowledge* emergent, yet constructed, within the social worlds and arenas inhabited by indigenous people. To study such knowledge requires, as Clarke (2005, p. 71) insists, that the researcher be consciously within the situation. This demands much of the researcher and underscores the critical importance of research methods.

Although a methodology provides the epistemological and ontological framework that guides the researcher, research is operationalized through a set of methods. While Mi’kmaq have established ethical guidelines, Battiste (2008, p. 505) points out that “because of the pervasiveness of Eurocentric knowledge, Indigenous peoples today have at their disposal few, if any, valid or balanced methods to search for truth.” There is considerable risk here that in using an inappropriate set of methods the researcher may wrest control of the research away from the Indigenous participants. Once this happens, trust is lost and any attempt to rectify an initial error may indeed only exacerbate the problem. While grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Clarke, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 2008) is replete with methods, these remain firmly in the control of the researcher. Additionally, the majority of methods articulated through various versions of grounded theory focus on data analysis more than data collection. In order to select methods that

also aid data collection as a collaborative act, the researcher must consciously forefront the participant.

Whether there is a lingering allusion of the objective researcher closely engaged with the subject (Harper, 2002) or a more realistic reading of research as participatory (Buchanan, 2001; Radley and Taylor, 2003; Clark-Ibáñez 2004), there is also a muted expectation of political action arising out of increased awareness of social worlds. Yet, research is always already political (Clarke, 2005) and the researcher must decide whether he/she will actively embrace the politics or attempt to distance himself/herself from it. This choice does not begin with methodology; it begins with the research area and topic. Certainly, any research that includes Indigenous people implicates the researcher as a political agent, an actor within the social worlds and arenas that bound the research. The researcher may attempt to insulate herself/himself by barricading his/her work within the well-worn walls of quantitative research, securely defending his/her findings with well-defined statistical data and representative samples. However, in doing so he/she forgoes a much more significant opportunity to “address the needs and desires for empirical understandings of the complex and heterogeneous worlds emerging through new world orderings” (Clarke, 2008, p. xxvii). My research endeavours to engage in the work with Mi’kmaq so as to realize such a “new world ordering”.

### **4.3 Research Design**

This dissertation research is a complex undertaking focusing on a topic that is highly political and has important cultural implications locally and nationally. Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland, whose existence has been denied, or at best resisted, by the Provincial

government, are in the process of revitalizing their culture. They are acting towards this goal while living mainly within communities that also are home to many non-Indigenous people. This undertaking represents a complex social dynamic that requires a particular sensitivity to the political, social, and economic implications inherent in it and as such necessitated considerable reflection on the appropriate methodological approach.

In order to conduct my research I immersed myself in their world, and sought their willing collaboration for my research. I approached my research with considerable caution and, following Potter (1996), I understood that when constructing a representation based on immersions within the participant's world I could have lost sight of the constructedness of my own work. There was a danger that I might have understood my own work to be factual rather than representational. As Potter (1996, p. 4) notes, we produce or re-produce facts for the current audience "on this occasion, for this occasion." All representational constructions are constituted by facts and it is the initial construction of the facts that opens up a place where it may be possible to critically query the ontology and the epistemology that not only underpin the reality that will be represented but also produce the tools that are employed in fact construction. This is not intended to imply that I was suspicious of the veracity of any statements or claims made by my research participants; rather, that I had to be careful in my own readings of such statements and claims. I had to, as Potter (1996, pp. 44-45) directs, avoid the erroneous construct by selecting a lens through which I could observe the "factual discourse". The most effective response to Potter's (1996) cautionary advice then is to be found in the selection of both methodology and methods. Not all approaches accommodate the notion of the constructedness of a discursive practice as well as others. A grounded theory

methodology, however, offers the best set of solutions and provides a framework that is both robust and flexible.

My primary approach in my research design was to achieve a clear sense of the nature of the current state of Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland and to gain an understanding of how individuals sought to participate in the culture while actively working to more fully revitalize it from within.

#### *4.3.1 Research Context: The Mi'kmaq Community in Western Newfoundland*

The Mi'kmaq community in Newfoundland that I worked with in my research must not be understood or imagined through what might be described as standard terms for a specific group of people residing within the geographic boundaries of a village, a town or a reserve. Rather, at present they represent what can be described as an emergent community. This is not in any way to suggest their ties of communal life are any less real or any weaker than those of people who live in visibly represented or concrete models of community life. As Clarke (2009, p. 199) notes, geography is less relevant than “*shared discourses* as boundary-making and marking.”<sup>27</sup> The various participants in this project reside in five different physical communities: Stephenville Crossing, Flat Bay, Stephenville, St. John's, and St. George's. Of these five communities, Flat Bay is almost entirely populated by Mi'kmaq people. Mi'kmaq comprise over half of the population of St. George's and Stephenville Crossing. Stephenville has smaller but significant number of Mi'kmaq. The relative locations for these communities are shown on the map below. Only St. John's is outside of the region that contains the majority of the members of

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<sup>27</sup>Emphasis is present in original text.

Mi'kmaq First Nation. Other than St. John's, all of the communities are in Bay St. George, which is home to the largest numbers of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland.



As such, other than the Miawpukek First Nation in Conne River, this region represents the heart of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation. Additionally, Bay St. George is my home area and I maintain a direct relationship with the place through family and kinship networks. I am intimately familiar with the socio-political and economic dynamics of the region and keenly aware of how the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture may impact the lives of many people there.

The participants are active members of Mi'kmaq cultural community that is the focus of this work. Their relationship with the larger cultural community can best be understood through Clarke's (2005) ideas of situations existing within social worlds and

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<sup>28</sup> This map was prepared utilizing Google Maps.

arenas. Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland have survived centuries of marginalization and the denial and suppression of their Indigenous heritage. Historically, they were described as invaders and were denied access to Status under the Indian Act when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949. They soundly reject this labeling and it has been thoroughly debunked. Still, the negative stereotype is still referenced by many settlers in Newfoundland.

#### *4.3.2 Scope of the Research*

One of the critical challenges for this research was to define and control the scope of the research. The scope of this project is limited to achieving a clear understanding of how key individuals act to shape and support the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland through their lived experiences and through their public activities that have a direct or indirect impact on Mi'kmaq communities as a whole. The project documents Mi'kmaq social worlds and arenas and identifies particular situations and other discursive constructs to support the analysis of data constructed utilizing grounded theory methods.

While multiple participants were interviewed, a specific subset of them was selected for detailed analysis in order to provide a more defined focus on cultural revitalization. Each such participant fulfils a unique role with Mi'kmaq communities and as such each represents a key element in cultural revitalization. Methods and rationale used to select this sample are discussed below.



*4.3.3 Ethics*

I travelled to Newfoundland in December of 2009 with the intention of beginning my fieldwork through an initial set of interviews. My plan was to contact key individuals with whom I was already acquainted. I intended to then ask members of this first group of participants to recommend other individuals who might be interested in talking with me. However, I had to delay my start as in the course of preparing my formal research proposal I had become aware of the Mikmaw Ethics Watch, at the University of Cape Breton. While I had received formal approval for my work from the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFERB), I recognized that I also had an obligation to obtain approval for my research from this Indigenous group. While they follow many of the standard practices used by CFERB, the second board also requires the researcher to establish how such work may be of benefit to Indigenous participants. I received formal approval from the Mikmaw Ethics Watch in February, 2010. Each participant was provided with standard consent forms and in each instance written consent was provided to the researcher prior to any interviews being conducted. [See Appendix A] The option provided to participants was to use their own name, select a pseudonym, or to be listed as Anonymous. Their individual selections are evident in quotations used in this work.

*4.3.4 Sampling Methods and Rationale*

As noted in the discussion of scope above, this project does not represent an exhaustive study and as such the sample size is not intended to meet the criteria for the population model normally utilized in statistical analysis associated with some forms of

research. There are no normal curves or correlation models included in this project. Rather, as Clarke (2005) so trenchantly notes, “it is the boundaries/margins that *produce* the center, the peripheries/colonies that constitute the core/metropole” (p. 24). This research was conducted at the margins of Newfoundland society and as such the sample size is necessarily small in relation to the actual population of Mi’kmaq in the province. The sample comprises nineteen individuals; each holds a distinct place within Mi’kmaq population in Newfoundland. This sample clearly reflects the standards established for grounded methodology research in which the individual actor and actant are studied in close detail as they operate within a given situation. (Clarke, 2005) I was closely acquainted with eight of the participants, while I met the remaining eleven through the course of my research. Two are members of my extended family while four are friends. This proximity to my participants represents, in part, my immersion in the lives of the people I chose to research. By selecting people, with whom I already had a personal relationship, I explicitly placed myself in a more direct relationship with Mi’kmaq culture I sought to explore and to understand more fully.

The choice of participants was also determined, in part, by the research questions and objectives. I am seeking to understand how a group of individuals each contribute to the revitalization of Mi’kmaq culture and identity in Newfoundland. This is not to say that they entirely control the outcomes, but rather, reflects the notion that they do have agency and understanding how they enact that agency is a critical objective for this research. Agency here is seen as contributing to an organic system of being in which actors contribute to a socio-cultural model both directly and indirectly. Some participants are cognizant of their contribution while others may act from a limited perspective in that

they have limited insights into the larger social worlds they encounter. Yet, their contributions are in no way less valuable or critical. In order to identify the appropriate participants, they were selected through a purposive sampling framework. That is, they were selected based on a set of criteria that support the research question and objectives and facilitate in-depth analysis of the critical issues relevant to the project. Each participant displayed two or more of the following characteristics:

- Participant was, or had recently been, actively researching his/her Mi'kmaq ancestry
- Participant actively and publicly participates in Mi'kmaq culture and/or politics
- Participant self-identifies as Mi'kmaq not simply as someone of Mi'kmaq heritage
- Participant actively engaged in leadership role within Mi'kmaq community
- Participant strongly recommended by another participant

These attributes each carries significance in relationship to my research and the value of each participant chosen. People, who demonstrated interest in cultural identity and who were actively involved in its revitalization had greater potential to contribute to this project. Such individuals could offer key insights from their experiences. Those who fulfil leadership roles will by default have formed opinions as to the role of culture and the nature of Mi'kmaq identity in Newfoundland. Opinions and insights sometimes differed amongst individuals, thus enriching my understanding of the complexity of relationships within the Mi'kmaq community. By electing to speak with people who have been recommended by others, I actively demonstrated my respect for their opinion of the person making the suggestion and was afforded a positive introduction to a new participant. This relationship building was central to my research and to my position as the outsider within. This follows the snowball sampling method, an approach that is

effective when identifying a smaller sample group not necessarily representative of a larger population.

There are some limitations inherent in this sample size and in the participants. This research is not exhaustive and attempts to generalize about the entire Mi'kmaq population may be constrained. Some bias may be perceived, in that I worked with people with whom I have a close personal relationship prior to beginning my research. However, grounded theory methodology, as I am using it, rejects the notion of objective observer. That I would build a close, perhaps intimate, relationship with my participants should not be considered a shortcoming, but rather, a natural outcome of this model of research. What I am seeking is a close understanding of how individuals contribute to the fabric of a culture; how they have agency within the social worlds and arenas they inhabit. This small group of participants affords the opportunity to achieve that key goal, something more difficult to achieve with a larger group.

#### *4.3.5 Data Collection Methods*

Both Clarke (2005) and Charmaz (2006; 2009) provide specific methods that guide the researcher through grounded theory. Any methodology must be operationalized through a suitable set of methods. Charmaz (2006, p. 15) is very direct when she writes “methods *are* merely tools.”<sup>29</sup> Yet, we each may use such tools in different ways and we must be ever conscious of how the tool we select must inevitably influence and shape how we do our work and what we produce through our efforts. Later in the same passage, Charmaz (2006, p. 15) cautions: “Researchers and research participants make

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<sup>29</sup> Emphasis present in original text.

assumptions about what is real, possess stocks of knowledge, occupy social statuses, and pursue purposes that influence respective views and actions in the presence of each other.”

Methods used in this project comprise informal interviews, which were recorded with selected portions transcribed for analysis following Charmaz (2006) and Clarke (2005). Informal interviews create a less structured environment in which the participant is more able to shape and guide the conversation. In contrast, a formally structured interview may artificially impose a more narrow focus, inhibiting the willingness of the participant to actively engage in shaping the direction of the conversation and thus, the research. An explanation of how Charmaz and Clarke’s specific methods were used is provided below in the section *Constructing Data through Analysis*.

Additionally, as an observer/participant, I actively took part in a number of cultural events such as cultural circles and a social studies program at a local high school. I participated in training and education workshops sponsored by the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women’s Network (NAWN). The first of these was facilitated by Mi’sel Joe, Chief of the Miawpukek First Nation and Maggie Paul a Passamaquoddy elder and traditional healer from St. Mary’s Reserve in Fredericton. Out of this experience I began working with a group of Mi’kmaq men towards establishing a men’s sharing circle.

I also acted as a participant/observer in powwows. Unlike the previous events, my role at the powwows was similar to that of other attendees in that I participated in events open to the general public, such as feasting. These experiences allowed me to observe my participants as they acted within the social worlds and arenas that are the focus of this project, while sharing in their experiences.

As I commented at a conference on hybridity in Toronto, researchers must never lose sight of the fact that the lived experience of identity often sharply differs from the theoretical models and assumptions that we bring to our work. If we are to develop a rich understanding of the experiences and lives of our participants, we can neither maintain an artificial distance from them nor work solely from our own gaze. My decision to engage in this way reflects my strong belief that experiential learning is an essential path to deeper knowledge and understanding for the outsider within. Yet, even more important than this, I believe that I have an obligation to give back to the people who share their knowledge and insights with me and whose contributions make my work possible. Being active within the Mi'kmaq community was essential to my research which relied on closely engaging my participants within their social worlds and arenas.

Finally, I conducted research into relevant historic documents at the Provincial Archives in St. John's. In Chapter 2, I suggested that the limited historical data related to Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland can be reflective of the general lack of interest on the part of the colonial powers in land-based resources in the first centuries of colonization. The fishery was the singular focus of exploitation and use of land-based resources was generally limited to supporting that endeavour. The documents I researched set the stage for the modern period in that they illustrate the general lack of reference to matters not related to the fishery. This changed with the construction of the Newfoundland Railway when, perhaps for the first time, the British could no longer ignore the presence of Mi'kmaq. Fortunately, the archives in St. John's are organized in such a way that my search was made relatively simple. Relevant correspondence and documents are catalogued under the topic of the French Shore. I read correspondence from the 19<sup>th</sup>

century that pertained directly to French and British relationship in Newfoundland. The documents described provided some critical insights into the socio-political dynamic in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in the region. Following this, I examined census rolls for the St. George's District to determine whether there was data indicating the presence of Mi'kmaq in the region.

Following my initial round of interviews in March of 2011, I began transcribing selected passages. After an initial review and high level analysis of all interviews, I determined that I could more effectively construct my data from a select subset of six participants. My decision was informed by my understanding of the nature and meaning of culture. This understanding is foundational to my work and needs to be examined at this point in order to clearly illustrate how and why I arrived at my decision to focus on six primary participants. In some measure this decision does reflect Wheeler's (2006, p.86) claim that "the truth is that the closer we can bring our research questions to our own lived experience, the more likely these are to yield good results." In other words, in part I relied on my own instincts to guide me; something Wheeler (2006, p.86) describes as "skilful and lived experience [which] is tacit... We simply *don't know* [italics added] all the complex particulars via which new strata emerge." Yet, decisions are, in part, arrived at through factors we are consciously aware of as well. Wheeler (2006, p.97) writes, "human subjectivity [...] is intersubjective; it is the result of our social nature and our social being. It is, in other words, the result of communicative *processes* [italics added] and other minds, and bodies." If then, being is process and the subject is intersubjective, culture can be understood as emergent from and sustained by a series of

processes that facilitate intersubjectivity. The processes are numerous and may differ from culture to culture but certain key processes are readily observable.

The sacred is commonly present in most, if not all, cultures and religious or spiritual leaders play key roles in shaping and sustaining cultural practices. One common attribute of all human culture and a uniquely human creation is found in the arts, whether dance, music or painting. Artists have long held unique positions of influence in human societies. Where cultures have developed trade and commerce, business leaders direct key economic processes. Knowledge is shared within cultures, whether basic life skills or complex cultural practices unique to a given community. Thus, teachers hold unique places of influence and, in some cultures, places of great honour and respect. While individuals of various ages may be responsible for any of these key processes, the elder holds a complex place of honour and respect in many cultures, something that remains prominent within many Indigenous communities.

In order to identify the appropriate candidates for my subset, I first developed a list of characteristics I had encountered in several of my participants who demonstrated rich insights into their own efforts to both embrace their identities as Mi'kmaq and who through their cultural practices helped to provide some positive contribution to the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture. To achieve this I relied on my own judgement and my reflections on my experiences within the larger community. I then selected those who filled one or more of the key roles described in the previous paragraph and who demonstrated the highest number of these same characteristics:

- Participant was, or had recently been, actively researching his/her Mi'kmaq ancestry



- Participant actively and publicly participates in Mi'kmaq culture and/or politics
- Participant self-identifies as Mi'kmaq not simply as someone of Mi'kmaq heritage
- Participant actively engaged in leadership role within Mi'kmaq community

Knowing that I would be utilizing abductive reasoning in my analysis, I understood candidates with at least four of these characteristics to be representative of efforts to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland. In fact, the only attribute that did not apply to all candidates was the first one, in that one had always been fully aware of his ancestry and had no need to conduct research. The subset comprised the following participants:

- Maude, a community activist I have known for over thirty-five years and with whom I had done community based work in the past<sup>30</sup>
- Annie, a community activist and business leader who is one of the founders of the Bay St. George Cultural Circle<sup>31</sup>
- Calvin White, a Mi'kmaq elder and former President of FNI I have known for over thirty years
- Perry Young, a member of Bay St. George Cultural Circle who has an intimate knowledge of the land and who is attempting to recover some measure of the Mi'kmaq language

Two others who were interviewed after this initial selection process were added on the basis of my personal knowledge of them and the unique positions they hold in the Mi'kmaq community.

- Darlene Sexton ,a Mi'kmaq Social Studies teacher I met at the Bay St. George Cultural Circle
- Jerry Evans, a visual artist and traditional dancer who I met while taking a film studies course in 2006.

The goal in working with a smaller sample was to achieve a richer understanding of how each specific participant acts within his/her shared social worlds and how

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<sup>30</sup> Maude is a pseudonym chosen by this participant.

<sup>31</sup> Annie is a pseudonym chosen by this participant.

collectively they contribute to the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland. Each participant in the subset is actively engaged in some capacity in revitalizing Mi'kmaq culture, and thus, provides unique insights into the critical issues related to identity construction this project explores. Four of the six are members of the Bay St. George Cultural Circle while the other two fulfil key roles in other communities.

In several instances, I was in extended contact with these participants and able to interact with them through my volunteer work with the Mi'kmaq community. For example, I worked as a volunteer resource person during the months from January to April, 2011 with a Mi'kmaq teacher in a Social Studies program at a local high school. Thus, my research does not solely rely on the sample data from the interviews but is also informed by my experiences within the Mi'kmaq community.

#### *4.3.6 Constructing Data through Analysis*

While researchers often write about data collection, following the constructionist model of grounded theory methodology, it is more appropriate to reflect on constructing data. Charmaz (2009, p. 127) pointedly notes that “all variants of grounded theory offer helpful strategies for collecting, managing, and analysing qualitative data.” Yet, as noted above in Chapter 3, her framing of a constructivist version of grounded theory allows the researcher to more fully understand that data is not to be discovered or collected but must be constructed through careful analysis and reflection with “analysis as interpretive renderings not as objective reports” (Charmaz, 2009, p. 131). Construction of data is achieved in part through coding to uncover processes and actions within the participant's own language.

The choice of syntax and language are critical in the coding practice. Charmaz (2006, p. 49) points to the use of gerunds as critical to uncovering the processes in play in the participant's language. "We gain a strong sense of actions and sequence with gerunds." Charmaz directs the researcher to structure the transcribed interview so as to be able to closely read the words of the participant and to code, initially at a high level, and then to identify those processes each participant relies on to navigate and act within the specific situation.

Charmaz (2006) provides explicit advice and direction on how to extract data from transcribed interviews illustrating her methods through clear diagrams. Following Charmaz's (2006, p. 51) direction, I coded "to separate data into categories and to see processes." This coding method brings the researcher closer to the concerns and experiences of each participant. As Charmaz (2006, p.40) notes, this process allows you "to place your emerging analysis in its social context." Of course, that social context is the lifeworld of the participant. It is also essential, wherever possible, to use the actual words of the participant; otherwise you may "reflect an outsider's view" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 49). Coding is not a single pass through process but an iterative one. Careful re-reading of transcripts after the initial coding leads to a richer analysis and the possibility of a more nuanced understanding of the experiences and insights of the participant. This also includes comparative readings of multiple transcripts. This practice can yield vital insights and lead to the key concepts built upon categories common across the lives of participants. Additionally, the ability to observe and examine actions and process is integral to the use of coding and analysis as described by Charmaz (2006).

Coding alone is not sufficient, and an integral part of the reflexivity that must accompany a constructivist approach to grounded theory is achieved through memo writing. Charmaz (2006, p. 3) describes this as developing “tentative analytic categories.” I wrote memos after each interview so as to immediately capture my perceptions of each participant. As I began to listen to each recorded conversation I reflected on whether my initial insights were reflected in the details that the participant provided. Coding from transcribed interviews allowed me to further develop these early thoughts into analytic categories and helped me to narrow the focus of my work as described above. These memos provided core material for my analysis and are incorporated into my findings in Chapter 5. Collectively, they provided a coherent and compelling narrative representation of my interactions with the participants and their personal stories.

#### *4.3.7 Using Situational Analysis to Enrich Data Construction*

Clarke (2005, p. 4) also argues for methods as integral to grounded theory in that grounded theory “constitutes a theory/methods package.” As discussed in Chapter 3 above, Clarke’s distinguishing contribution to grounded theory is her focus on the situation and her development of situational analysis. What Clarke is drawing our attention to is that processes and actions are not to be viewed as random disconnected acts but rather to be understood as integral to situations. This means we must be attentive to the “*interactions* of collective actors and discourses” (Clarke, 2009, p. 199).<sup>32</sup> We must seek to understand how social world boundaries are both made and navigated by actors through process and actions. Through situational analysis then, I move my work

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<sup>32</sup> Emphasis is present in original text.

from “social process/action to social ecology/situation” (Clarke, 2009, p. 199). While I construct my data in part utilizing Charmaz (2006), I extend my analysis following Clarke so as to recognize the situatedness of my participants.

Further, Clarke’s description of context helps us to avoid displacing processes or elements from within a situation by grasping for some external context that shapes and proscribes the limits for action and change. She insists “the so-called contextual elements are actually *inside the situation itself*. They are *constitutive* of it including structural and power elements, and we can map and analyze them as such<sup>33</sup>” (Clarke, 2005, p. 30). It is essential, at this point then, to consider how her stance supports the location of the researcher within the situation under study but more critically how it affords the opportunity to transform our understanding of the dichotomy of authority/subaltern relationship. Here, we can recognize the possibility of agency, as argued by Freire (1970); that is, we can transform our understanding of how the imagined subaltern transforms his/her way of being by effectively liberating himself/herself.

Clarke (2005) destabilizes the more general notion of how power exists in situations through her inversion of context. In doing so, she also opens up a space where specific notions such as subaltern may also be challenged. The implications that emerge from this challenge to the dominant sites of power will be explored further in Chapter 5.

#### *4.3.8 Data Analysis through Abductive Reasoning*

Data analysis within constructivist grounded theory sharply distinguishes itself from corresponding approaches in objectivist versions. Charmaz sees analysis “as

problematic, relativistic, situational and partial” (2009, p. 138). However, this must not be read as implying the use of random or indiscriminate methods. Charmaz (2006, 2009) is quite clear that analysis is achieved through a specific set of methods and continual reflection on the part of the researcher. She also cautions that unlike objectivist researchers, constructivists acknowledge that data is never complete but always “conditional, contingent and partial” (Charmaz, 2009, p. 140). This does not imply any lack of rigour in data analysis but underscores how critical it remains that the researcher understands and acknowledges that such analysis will not produce some generalized objective truth. Rather, the goal of constructivist analysis is to reach an abstract understanding of the situation under study and to achieve rich insights into the social worlds and arenas populated by the actors and actants encountered.

I initially analyzed interviews by identifying key themes and issues. The pattern of themes guided me in my selection of the subset of interviews that are the focus of my findings. These themes are directly related to the individual characteristics listed above. Discussions of family history and the repression of Mi'kmaq language and identity, along with social stigma, were some of the prominent themes I identified early on. As I noted these themes, I paid attention to their recurrence in subsequent interviews.

After reviewing the recording and identifying key sections, I transcribed these sections into a document that I could later print and analyse. This process allowed me to reflect on my research plan and to further refine and more closely plan my subsequent research. It is useful here to note that by attending to emergent themes early in my fieldwork I was able to reflect on the situations that Clarke (2005) calls us to identify and to explore. Previous to this, I felt overwhelmed by the sheer scope of the information that

I was encountering. By careful and painful reflection on the words of my participants I was able to move from the immense and unfocused vista of the entire effort of Mi'kmaq to revitalize their lives and culture to a more specific examination of how a select group of participants were endeavouring to transform themselves as individuals. Further, I sought to understand how their individual actions could act to transform the lives of their people through Indigenous and institutional modes of resistance. Through this process, I was able to move from what felt like intellectual paralysis to a more thoughtful exploration of what I had witnessed in my fieldwork. I was able to remain firmly within the scope and vision of my dissertation proposal, while refining and more narrowly focussing my approach to operationalizing my research methodology and methods. I stepped away from the broad general questions of identity construction and shifted my attention to the specifics of how certain individuals embody what it is to be Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland today.

My early analysis and coding follow Charmaz (2005, 2009) and represents an application of the inductive reasoning that is inherent to grounded theory methodology (Clarke, 2005, 2009; Charmaz 2006, 2009). However, I was faced with a challenge in trying to move from my focus on individual experience and action to understanding how each participant contributed to the revitalization of Mi'kmaq and how this could be interpreted so as to illustrate the revitalization of their culture in Newfoundland. Here, I relied on abductive reasoning to move beyond the process/action to the situation and so as to provide a reasonable explanation from the limited data constructed from my research. A reasonable explanation is not speculative if the data presented supports conclusions drawn as logically following from what is known at the current time. As

Charmaz notes, “abductive reasoning arises from experience, leads to logical but creative inferences, and invokes testing these inferences with hypothesis to arrive at a plausible explanation of experience” (2009, p. 137). This explanation reflects what I understand from my analysis of my data and from my reflections on my experiences in the course of my research.

In this way, I was able to develop an understanding as to how my participants interact within the social worlds and arenas in which I encountered them, using “logical but creative inferences to arrive at a plausible theoretical explanation of experience” (Charmaz, 2009, p. 137). In part, these inferences rely on my own sense of place within Newfoundland. As Wheeler (2006) would have it, the island is my *Umwelt*. This is the place in which I was born and raised and I have lived within the complex relationships for both my formative years and for substantial parts of my adult life. I too am an actor within these same social worlds and arenas and this standing helps to legitimate my interpretation of the situation based on the stories of my participants. I am fully implicated within my own work and my critical responsibility is not to excise my presence but rather to attend to how this shapes my findings. My relationship to Bay St. George and Mi’kmaq people there contribute to the tacit knowledge that Wheeler (2006) describes.

Clarke (2006) explicitly includes the messy elements other researchers may seek to excise from their data. Yet, Clarke demonstrates that there is an order to these relationships. Here, she locates the critical relationships that may act and interact within any social world. Each actor in a social world can be affected by interaction with non-human elements. Human actors do not only interact with other human actors; they are



also acted upon by corresponding non-human actants. An Indigenous hunter who uses a rifle to shoot a moose has been distanced in some ways from his ancestor who hunted with a bow and arrow. Human actors occupying the same social world and participating in a situation may have sharply contrasting experiences and understanding directly shaped by the relationships in which they participate.

In my work, I must be cognizant of how my participants are both aided and perhaps constrained by such actants. For example, one example of the sociocultural/symbolic is religion. Mi'kmaq, having adopted Roman Catholicism in part through loyalty to the French, were later repressed by the dominant Protestant British who gained control of the Atlantic region through war. Thus, religion, which I place within discursive constructions, is one actant that shapes the Mi'kmaq social world.

By identifying the myriad elements in play within the research, it becomes possible to grasp the specific situations that must be navigated by the participants. Careful attention to and interpretation of the situations allows the researcher to recognize and document how participants negotiate positionality within their social worlds and arena and at times to witness moments when liminal boundaries are encountered and even crossed. The key to this process is “relational analysis” (Clarke, 2005, p. 104) that documents the complex network of relationships encountered by the researcher. Through this process we often discover how not all actants and/or actors may have relationships with the actant under study.

The situation under study is reflective of social action and interaction which take place within social worlds and arenas. Through careful examination of these spaces we are able to uncover the collective actions through which “individuals become social

beings” (Clarke, 2005, p. 110). Only through studying these spaces can we understand the context within which our participants operate. Through this further analysis, we can begin to more fully understand how actors represent their social worlds as they operate within an arena.

My project does not simply focus on the situation but explores the key discourses related to the situation. Clarke (2005, pp. 184-186) provides clear direction in this area, illustrating how this facilitates the incorporation of textual materials into the discourse analysis. Thus, the situation itself can be understood to be a discursive construct.

#### *4.3.9 Examining Positionality*

Clarke also provides a method for analysing issues so that it is possible to reflect on how participants position themselves in relation to the issues that arise within the situation under study. The challenge for the researcher is not to simply examine positions taken but to also reflect on alternative positions that are not taken by actors within the specific situation. For Clarke (2005), “absences of issues where they might be expected” are just as critical as positions taken (p. 126). Positions taken are relative to available choices and, as such, help in understanding the various alternatives that an actor might have chosen. The changing or alternative positions taken in the course of a situation illuminate how the actors navigate the liminal spaces that manifest from the situations they encounter.

#### **4.4 Final Comments on Methods**

I did not expect to find definitive answers to the questions I posed within my work. Such an expectation would presume some objective truth *out there*. Rather, I

sought to overcome my own preconceptions about what it means to be Mi'kmaq in twenty-first century Newfoundland. I was able to achieve this only because my participants were incredibly open and supportive. They not only allowed me into their lives; they welcomed me, once I gained their trust, by demonstrating respect for their ways of being and a genuine interest in their lives and aspirations.

In my work I have utilized the methods designed by Charmaz (2006, 2009) and Clarke (2005, 2009) to help me to develop a rich understanding of the lives of my participants. This set of tools have allowed me to narrow the focus of my work in such a way that I have better come to appreciate the complexity of their lives and how in the choices they make and through the challenges they face they pierce the boundaries of the liminal spaces that might deny them their fuller humanity.

#### **4.5 Limitations of the Research**

This project did not seek to be an exhaustive study of all Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. There are specific constraints that, in part, emerge from resistance within any Indigenous community to being researched. Smith (1999) addresses many of these issues. A history of abuse and exploitation by non-Indigenous people has left many quite suspicious of researchers. There was a clear reluctance by the political leadership to engage with me, and even individuals with whom I had a longstanding personal relationship were unwilling to take part without approval from their senior political leaders. For example, one local band chief only agreed to be interviewed after he gained approval from the president of the FNI. The reasons for this are complex and nuanced and in part emanate from power struggles within the larger Mi'kmaq community. I

encountered some evidence of this friction through casual remarks made by people representing both the FNI and those who act through cultural and social organizations such as the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN) and the Bay St. George Cultural Circle.

The central focus of my research was always on questions of cultural revitalization and given the complex dynamics of local political relationships between various groups such as NAWN and the FNI, the political dimensions of this are minimal. Thus, the relationship of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland to the larger Mi'kmaq nation, Míkmaq is also not closely explored in this work. However, I do want to acknowledge that such an exploration is essential for a more complete understanding of Mi'kmaq identity. As discussed previously, Newfoundland has for Mi'kmaq always been part of traditional unceded territory and thereby part of the Mi'kmaq nation. Yet, as both Lawrence (2005) and Palmater (2011) clearly demonstrate, membership in Indigenous nations is a complex issue. Additionally, it is not likely that any self-government negotiations will lead to a restoration of Míkmaq as constituted within the Wabanaki Confederacy. Just who will be able to participate in such an undertaking and who will be excluded is outside the scope of this work.

This is not to minimize the critical importance of this area. Future research that undertakes a closer examination of the politics around Mi'kmaq communities is strongly warranted.

While I aimed to situate my research deep inside cultural arenas, this does not mean there are no political elements present in it. Culture is inherently political and this clearly shapes the analysis of the data in this project. Critically, my primary objective to

explore how Indigenous people, immersed in Canada's multi-cultural society, work to retain and revitalize their Indigenous identities is the focus of my research.

It was also not feasible to assess the attitudes of the non-Indigenous population in Newfoundland towards their neighbours and sometimes relatives achieving a social, economic and political status that differed from their own. This would have required that I further amend my ethics approvals to include interviews with non-Indigenous participants and additionally, I would have had to design a secondary research model to facilitate acquiring data on local non-Indigenous attitudes towards Mi'kmaq. Such a model would have had to compare perceived attitudes and actual experiences, as described by my participants, with those I discovered within the non-Indigenous community. In order to control the scope of my research, I elected to not follow this course. It would seem self-evident that this emergent difference could result in a level of resentment towards what might be perceived as a form of preferential treatment by those who do not accept that Indigenous people in Canada have inherent rights that are different from those rights to the non-Indigenous majority. While it seems likely that participants in this project were aware of such attitudes, it does not explicitly form a part of this research. Since my major focus is on how a group of key individuals are acting to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland, the integrity of my project remain intact, despite this exclusion.

## Chapter 5: Revitalizing Mi'kmaq Culture in Newfoundland

### 5.1 Background to Analysis

All research begins from certain premises and preconceptions. This is not inherently wrong; it is simply reflective of the intellectual landscape within which such research must be conducted. I began my project from a standpoint that positioned me at the boundary between my participants and the academy. Through the process of engaging with the Mi'kmaq community in Newfoundland, I found myself drawn deeper inside that imagined boundary. As I reflected upon what I had experienced and how it had transformed me, I became acutely aware that I have moved a critical distance in my perspective and in my understanding. The outcomes from my research powerfully illustrate the distance I travelled with my Mi'kmaq family, for that is what they became. In an earlier time this would have been negatively described as *going native*; something seen as undermining the credibility of any academic research. I prefer to describe it as coming home. There is a truth to this since my research was conducted in a place where I was born and raised. The many people who took part in this project are connected to me through kinship both by blood and by extended social relationships that still exist in Newfoundland and Labrador.

I set out to focus on the efforts to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture in Western Newfoundland, mainly my home area of Bay St. George, and began by re-establishing connections with people I had known all of my life. These people were not all directly involved in the cultural revival but nonetheless they all had stories to tell that were important to my work. Most importantly, their stories served to further sensitize me to the

aspirations of Mi'kmaq; they helped me to become accepted within the Mi'kmaq community, not as one of them but as a respected outsider.

Though I act as the narrator who tells the stories of others, I must allow their voices to come through as much as possible, while recognizing that what is written remains my voice and my understanding of what I encountered. This is particularly critical in that I am a settler in Canada, writing about Indigenous people and, as Smith (2009) notes, far too much of the critical literature involving Indigenous people has been authored from a settler perspective. Thus, while I may speak of them, it would be inappropriate for me to try to speak for them. To do so would only serve to further silence their voices.

In order to avoid superimposing a previously selected theoretical model upon my data, I elected to begin from an inductive analysis. Through the particular experiences and stories of my participants, I sought to arrive at a general understanding of what it means to be Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland today and how a people may revitalize their culture through collective and individual action. From their words, I constructed a representational model that illustrates the processes they rely on to accomplish their goal of relearning cultural practices and recovering traditional knowledge. To achieve this, I also applied abductive logic in order to construct a reasonable understanding of the place of Indigenous identity, separate from, but immersed in a multi-cultural society. Here, I understand reasonable to mean that, based on the available data, we draw the best possible conclusions. Informed by the researcher's knowledge and understanding of the data, these conclusions are presented as interpretive and intuitive rather than definitive.

In my research the particular comprises the individual stories and experiences of my participants. The broader understanding, I sought then, was achieved through reflection upon the data that I constructed through my analysis. I repeatedly use this word *construct* because I understand my findings not to be objective truths I have discovered, but rather representative of a worldview constructed through language and process; for as Charmaz (2009, p. 128) notes, through its roots in pragmatism, grounded theory “views reality as consisting of fluid, somewhat indeterminate processes.” These processes are the discursive practices that are necessary to produce and sustain a revitalized Mi'kmaq culture.

Social patterns emerge by means of the actions or discursive practices through which they respond to the various situations they must navigate in their daily lives. While some might want to challenge the authenticity of modern Indigenous cultures, we must remember that culture is produced and reproduced through a deliberative set of choices and actions that occur within specific dynamics. An inherent risk in a singular focus on culture, as the key source of identity, is that it perpetuates the practice McIntosh critiques, one that when dealing with cases relating to Indigenous identity, which included “assessments of an Aboriginal person's "mode of life," courts developed tests to measure whether an Aboriginal person practised "Aboriginal culture," or otherwise displayed signs of "Indianness" (McIntosh, 2009, p. 404). In recognizing this risk, I have attempted in my writing to avoid essentializing Mi'kmaq as simply defined by culture.

Unlike many other people, Indigenous people do not generally see themselves as hyphenated Canadians. There are exceptions to this rejection of multi-culturalism; however, this serves to illuminate the two dominant positions that I encountered amongst



individuals who are active within the Mi'kmaq community in Newfoundland. Those who situate their Indigenous identity outside the multi-cultural model are most deeply involved in socio-cultural work; striving to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture. Those who are willing to accept a hyphenated identity tend to be disengaged from overt cultural activities and describe themselves as political leaders.<sup>34</sup>

In some cases, the cultural activists have been engaged in political work but have withdrawn from direct political action. In other cases, they speak as outsiders who have been excluded from the overtly political processes. In contrast, those who clearly frame themselves as political tend to be skeptical or even disapproving of cultural activists. However, it is actually not possible to separate politics and culture. Revitalizing Indigenous culture in resistance to assimilation is an inherently political act. Political action is both informed by and founded upon cultural modes of being. Distinctions between the two are sometimes simply tactics used to strategically position the actor within the arena of power in which a situation arises.

Examples of these various positions are provided below and are explored through the experiences and insights of my participants. While I do include quotations from some nine participants, I mainly focus on three women and three men in a selected subset. This was a deliberate choice, aimed at providing a degree of gender balance, while providing a variety of experience and insight. Though there are many commonalities to their experiences, each participant offers a unique perspective on what it means to be Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland today. Additionally, each person is representative of key cultural

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<sup>34</sup> One local band chief I spoke with described himself this way. This same chief also described himself as an Aboriginal-Canadian.

leaders and each contributes in different ways to the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture. Each participant displayed at least four of the key personal characteristics that I had identified. An explication of my reasons for this selection process is included in Chapter 4 above.

*5.1.1 Situating Discourses: Being Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland*

The stories shared by the participants demonstrate how these individuals have overcome their past so as to more fully embrace their Mi'kmaq identities. None of this happened in isolation from the communities that they live in since identity is inherently a shared phenomenon; one that is irrelevant in the absence of other people. Identity is both a belonging to and a separation from.

If we are to more fully understand how identity is sustained, shaped and revitalized, we must more closely examine the various processes in play and how these participants navigate the situations, social worlds and arenas they encounter. We must, as Clarke (2005) insists, seek to understand the contextual nature inherent within the situation. Clarke's situational analysis allows us to identify the constraints that may act against Mi'kmaq. These include: (1) immersion in a settler dominated society, (2) being on their traditional territory but not recognized as Indigenous, (3) pressure to assimilate into the dominant cultural discourse, and (4) the legal constraints that limit access to resources on their territory. Having mapped out the situation, we must seek to understand how Mi'kmaq operationalize their resistance and how such actions serve to revitalize their culture. Just as importantly, we need to explore the implications that cultural revitalization has in relation to the fuller restoration of *Mikmáki*. Friere (1970) provides the concepts and language to both understand how these oppressive discourses act upon

Mi'kmaq. His description of prescribed consciousness is particularly useful. While Friere insists that the oppressed must free themselves, it is Martin-Hill's (2003) concept of reinscription that helps us to understand the ways in which Mi'kmaq seek to overcome their oppression.

While resistance to assimilation and oppression is essential to recovering authentic Indigenous identities, to frame all action through that lens is to perpetuate the polarity that Bhabha (1994) critiques. Resistance must produce a cleaving of Indigenous identity from that of the oppressor. This is not to suggest that the cleaving means total isolation from external influences but rather freedom from external definition and control. Authentic Indigenous identities and cultures exist as holistic communities of being no longer produced and controlled by their oppressors. Further, what counts as an authentic Indigenous culture today cannot be strictly limited to some past version rooted in pre-contact time. "Native cultures aren't static. They're dynamic, adaptive, and flexible, and for many of us the modern variations of older tribal traditions continue to provide order, satisfactions, identity, and value in our lives" (King, 2012, p. 265). Authenticity is not dependent upon the replication of some past state of being nor is it tied to the primordial state which would have Indigenous people limited to a fixed relationship with the past (Lawrence, 2004, pp. 1-4).

The problem in determining what authenticity actually means can be resolved if we accept Freire's (1970) description of the prescribed consciousness producing an imposed and, thus, inauthentic identity; we can then accept that authenticity is achieved when an oppressed people erase the prescribed consciousness and re-inscribe themselves by drawing upon traditional ways of being. In this way they can revitalize their culture

with a modern context. Such a culture must be accepted as authentic when it is emergent from and, rooted in, the core values of an Indigenous people. For many, including Mi'kmaq, these values come from the seven sacred gifts: love, honesty, humility, respect, truth, patience, and wisdom. These gifts must not be understood in the facile manner of popular culture. They are deeply held values that reflect the intersubjectivity of Indigenous ways of being in the world.

## **5.2 The Discourse of Oppression and Resistance**

Freire's (1970) arguments about oppression are particularly relevant when we attempt to articulate the socio-political arena within which Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland act to revitalize their culture. By utilizing this critical lens to identify and examine the various oppressive discourses that produce a prescriptive consciousness, we can begin to understand how Mi'kmaq may act to resist.

Denial is one such oppressive discourse; the refusal to accept the existence of Mi'kmaq as Indigenous to the island. Mi'kmaq are described as invaders, allies of the French in their war with the British for control of the fishery. This myth continues to be repeated even today as received truth. "Should give thanks to their French allies for bringing them to this Fair Island" (CBC, 2011). Clearly, those who feel resentful or even threatened by the revitalization of Mi'kmaq rely on reinforcing their complaints through denial. Lawrence (2006, p. 2) describes the "institutions that have denigrated or denied Mi'kmaq existence and through a body of pejorative names and negative mythology that for many years has denied Mi'kmaqs their place as Aboriginal people in Newfoundland."

Confederation with Canada brought more regulation and systems of control such as regular policing by the RCMP. It also brought road construction that ended the longstanding isolation that White describes as protective of his people and their traditional ways. According to White, the arrival of these outside forces, who did not understand that traditional hunting and fishing practices were normal to Mi'kmaq, further fragmented his community, outlawing traditional ways and often pitting community members against one another.

They took away the freedom that I talked to you earlier about where you could come home with packsack on your back and you'd go to Sandy Point or St. George's and you'd sell caribou meat. Well that freedom was eroded because what happened was part of their education process not understanding a people, a culture and a way of life. They looked... looked at people who practiced that kind of culture as radicals, as poachers. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Unlike other Indigenous people in Canada, Mi'kmaq (along with other Indigenous people in Labrador) were denied any inherent land or resource rights. Regulation and codification, as noted above, reinforced this denial of access to resources. Newly formalized hunting and fishing control practices limited the ability of Mi'kmaq to harvest wild game. Those who continued to live in isolation from the general population were still able to hunt and fish as needed, though they were in violation of Newfoundland conservation and hunting laws. Calvin White speaks pointedly of this.

Because you had ...you had families... and here in Flat Bay we we're in an isolated area bordered by two rivers, Fishell's on the west and Flat Bay on the east, with no access to the outside world other than if you crossed the river by boat or if you went winter time on the ice. So there never was an intrusion ... in the way of life by ... by we say conservation officers or by RCMP or whatever the case may be. So people very much practiced and lived their own laws and... and managed their own affairs. (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Mi'kmaq who lived with the settler population in or near larger communities could not follow the same practices with equal impunity.

It may have cost them some hardship because there have been penalties for some for the things that they did but they could not... they could not resist you know hunting... wintertime they could not resist rabbit catching. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

This criminalization of previously normal ways of life created divisions within the community. "You had people reporting cause they lost... they were more overcome by the influence of the authorities than they were by the necessity of living as a group of people who protected each other" (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010). Through regulation and codification of resource usage, "the oppressor consciousness tends to transform everything around it into an object of domination" (Freire, 1970, p.58). Those who reported others reflect Freire's (1970) description of how some oppressed people become complicit in their own oppression. Such people become even more isolated; they have rejected their own people but are never accepted as equals by their oppressors.

Mi'kmaq were denied access to harvesting of fish and game as a traditional way of living and the related cultural practices attendant to this were lost. Men who had been providing food and sustenance to their families were stripped of this key role. Their authority and value to their communities was diminished and devalued. The resources that had been a source of life for them were commodified, turned into a resource that was controlled by their oppressors and exploited for profit. Any resistance by Mi'kmaq was regarded as subversive and criminal, again a discursive practice that further dehumanized them.

The poverty and deprivation that follows such denial is described by the oppressor as a failure on the part of the oppressed to be productive members of society. Any aid or reparations given to the Indigenous people is described as a burden to the tax payers of the country. This discourse of denial dehumanizes those Indigenous people who are described by their oppressors as having an “unjustifiable ingratitude towards... the dominant class” (Freire, 1970, p. 59).

*5.2.1 Oppressive Discursive Practices in Settler-Mi'kmaq Socio-Economic Relations*

The power imbalance between settler and Mi'kmaq is evident in that Mi'kmaq were forced from the more favourable locations such as Seal Rocks, into more remote areas such as Flat Bay. (White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010) In all parts of the region, Mi'kmaq and settlers lived in very different conditions. Mi'kmaq communities were without services and housing was substandard at best. While some settlers lived in poverty, these conditions were generalized for Mi'kmaq. Even in communities where settlers and Mi'kmaq both lived, neighbourhoods were sharply divided by family and social standing. Maude recalls:

So I mean it was ironic but even then back in the 50's there was still that stigma and in the communities... And you don't realize it until you get and adult...to be an adult. Like, I can remember in Stephenville Crossing that we would say “Let's go to the Crossing.” Like I lived over across the Prairie by the church on the hill and “go to the Crossing” meant we were leaving the security of our families on the hill and we were going downtown down to Stephenville Crossing where the money was. (Personal Interview, March 5, 2010)

That Mi'kmaq had been constructed as the *other*, through the power imbalance between them and the settlers, is evident in Maude's words. Security was found within a tightknit community and leaving that community implied a sense of risk.<sup>35</sup>

Maude asked her mother about these divisions and was told: "We stick to our own" (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010). With the perspective of time, Maude is able to more fully articulate what that actually meant.

There was a cultural distinction like the people who lived on the hill. Ninety-nine percent of the people where my mother was born were French first language and now we find that ninety-nine percent of those families were related and they do have an Aboriginal connection. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

It is evident from Maude's insights and similar remarks from other participants that when their parents and grandparents tried to shield them from the clearly negative consequences of being Mi'kmaq, they unintentionally contributed to tensions between people and groups divided along socio-cultural and economic lines. Maude describes a level of confusion and misapprehension that clearly informed her own identity issues.

And you know we've heard stories like I've heard stories from older people in the community saying: "Well my parents always said or my grandparents always said don't ask any questions. Something bad happened in the family and nobody wants to talk about it." Indeed in my own family that happened and we all believed that some black sheep back in the family did something but they didn't know any better because they were told as young children we don't talk about our past and they assumed it was something bad and not thinking for a second that it was something with who they actually were who their ancestors were. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

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<sup>35</sup> As a child, I clearly recall being warned by my family to not go to Mattis Point, a Mi'kmaq community situated between my home and the town where I attended school, Stephenville Crossing. Mi'kmaq there were fetishized as being unknown, dangerous, even violent. This representation of Mi'kmaq served to undermine their humanity and to construct them as not fully human; certainly, not civilized by European standards.



The dichotomy in the new dynamic was that, while their Indigenous identity was perceived as an impediment to their well-being, the social fragmentation that emerged created a host of new and more complex problems for their children and grandchildren.

Mi'kmaq were almost exclusively Roman Catholic.<sup>36</sup> Once they were settled into more permanent communities where there were churches and schools, they were prohibited from continuing to speak their language and forced to learn English. Not all Roman Catholic people in the region were Mi'kmaq; some were settlers but, unlike Mi'kmaq, many of them had access to a greater share of local resources, in particular those who were English speaking. What distinguished them from Mi'kmaq was that they were of European ancestry. There was a clear social hierarchy, which placed British settlers in a superior position to all others, with Mi'kmaq at the bottom of the order.

This social ordering consolidated control over resources and it concentrated power in the settler population. Institutions, such as the churches and the education systems, served to reinforce the status quo by acting to assimilate Mi'kmaq. The abolition of traditional Mi'kmaq cultural practices and ways of self-organizing also effectively fragmented their communities through the breakdown in traditional spirituality, relations between women and men, loss of cultural practices, loss of language and socio-economic deprivation.

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<sup>36</sup>The only exception to this I encountered was Perry Young. His family had converted to Anglicanism because the people in Burgeo were all Anglican. They did so to fit in; yet, Young graphically recounts being stigmatized. (Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

*5.2.2 How Oppression Helps to Produce Stigma and Shaming*

Shame and stigma, powerful tools of social control, are most effective and devastating when they are adopted by the oppressed and turned inward. They help to produce the “docile bodies” Foucault (1995, p. 138) describes. The roots of this stigma and shaming are to be found in the early relationships between Mi'kmaq and the European explorers and settlers who came to be dominant socially and economically in Western Newfoundland.

Some of the older participants I interviewed recalled a history of being stigmatized and shamed by settlers. Eddy Sheppard relates:

Well actually where we lived up towards Shallop Cove in St. George's... they... called us jackatars up there. They didn't have the right terminology for that because jackatars supposed to be... some kind of a sailor on a ship. (Personal Interview, March 1, 2010)

This pejorative identity of the *jackatar* was clearly intended to undermine any notion of Mi'kmaq identity being accepted by settlers. The degree of identity suppression and denial is evident in a statement by another participant (Anonymous, Personal Interview, March 9, 2010). When asked whether earlier she was always aware of her native ancestry she replied, “No not really. It was only I guess when we started to do more research. And the Indian movement started being more pronounced more open. We researched the roots and found out we were native.” This type of ambivalent recall of past experiences appears in comments from several participants. They seemed simultaneously aware of how they were discriminated against for being of Mi'kmaq heritage but would at other times deny being aware they were Mi'kmaq.

There was a social atmosphere in which adults began to conceal their Indigenous heritage from their families. Even seemingly ordinary events became difficult. Maude describes an incident from her childhood.

One of children in school said “Why have your grandparents got those gypsies in their field?” Because to the kids like they you know they said gypsies steal children. And I went to my grandmother and said like “Nanny you know those people are gypsies and they steal kids.” And my grandmother took me aside and said “No they’re not gypsies. They’re Indian women and they don’t steal children. They’re selling their baskets. That’s how they buy their food and that’s how they take care of their children.” So I didn’t ask any other questions. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Years later, Maude learned that these women were her grandmother’s cousins from Nova Scotia. Only then did she learn she was Mi’kmaq.

It was shortly before she died she looked at me she said “When you were a young child you asked about questions about Indian people and I didn’t tell you the whole answer.” And I didn’t remember what she was talking about and she reminded me and then like it came back to me. “ Well really those people were my cousins but we would never tell anybody that.” Because people already looked down on them because they were French.<sup>37</sup> (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

The pairing of French and Indian was a common practice in Newfoundland. The 1945 Newfoundland census has a category of Racial Heritage, which includes French-Indian. Many of the local Mi’kmaq people are listed under that category in this document. It is equally important to note that an earlier census, which contained a column “Is this person a Micmac Indian”, was almost entirely blank. For example, many local people trace their Indigenous heritage to one Pascal Alexander. He appears on the 1911

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<sup>37</sup> For some Mi’kmaq, self-identifying as French was seen as a degree of protection for their families. It allowed them to achieve a different social standing in the local communities and most spoke a form of that language. Additionally, being known as French allayed their fears of residential schools.

Census for the community of Mattis Point but the column next to his name, which should have identified him as Mi'kmaq, is blank. This can be read in different ways. Mi'kmaq people were fearful of being identified as Indigenous due to oppression and marginalization. Maude attributes fear of the residential school system as a possible reason for not self-identifying as Mi'kmaq. “[If] you’re native person and English is not your first language the last thing you’re going to do if you don’t want your children taken from you is say like you know ‘I’m native’ (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010).” That there were no residential schools in Newfoundland does not diminish the fear families clearly felt that they might lose their children. Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland had to be aware of the rise of residential schools in nearby Nova Scotia and would have known that their relatives there were losing their children to that brutal system.

When Aboriginal people in Newfoundland stopped saying I’m an Aboriginal person was at the very same time in Nova Scotia, Quebec, PEI, New Brunswick that residential schools had begun. Indian families, their children were being taken from them and put in residential schools. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Under pressure from religious authorities, and faced by an official representative of the Newfoundland government collecting census information, Mi'kmaq may have refrained from self-identifying. It is possible the census clerk may have deliberately refrained from indicating that families were Mi'kmaq. The Newfoundland government, from the time of Palliser, had never desired to acknowledge or accept the presence of a significant population of Mi'kmaq on the island. Implicit in the government attitude towards Indigenous people is that they are not to be made more visible. Rather, bureaucratic systems are to be enlisted in their erasure.

For Perry Young, growing up in Burgeo on the southwest coast of Newfoundland ingrained a conflicted sense of his identity. Reflecting on his life, Young tried to reconcile the facts of his existence with the deliberate denial by his family that they were Mi'kmaq.

I used to kinda you know “I’m not Indian.” “Am I Indian?” Well you know as children grew up we were outdoors all the time. Well spending.. we didn’t have no TV or anything like that. We didn’t have the luxuries of life we got now this day and age. So we spent a lot of time outdoors. And during the spring summer time well right up to the fall gee we were half naked for the biggest part and we were black. Well I wouldn’t call it black but well “A dirty little Indian” {laughs ironically} if I could use the terminology and well that stuck on me. (Perry Young, Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

### *5.2.3 Oppression, the Wage Economy, and Containment*

By the early twentieth century, Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland were being drawn into the periphery of the emergent wage economy. This made them much more vulnerable to assimilation since, according to MacIntosh, “participation in the waged economy and the cash marketplace supposedly signaled that ‘complete’ assimilation had either taken place or was inevitable, and so the person no longer needed to be recognized and distinguished legally as an ‘Indian’” (2009, p. 404).

Trapping was now supplemented or replaced by logging but this was not done through formal employment. Instead, it was incorporated into the existing routines. A logger was paid for product, not hours of labour, and was thus still able to take advantage of the intermittent availability of game.

It was ... it was a contractual agreement so... so it wasn't wages. So if you...people and what happened was that people build their... they'd build little shacks on the jobsite and they moved into those little shacks. And in a lot of cases they even took their families with them. They moved into those places took their families with them... and ... And if they got in the morning and wanted to go tend

20 or 25 rabbit snares before they started their day's works they could do so. If they were doing their day's work and if they saw a moose track in snow they put their power saw away or their bucksaw whatever they were using. They went and got their rifle and they pursued the animal and they shot it and they brought it... They did that and that's the kind of thing. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Mi'kmaq supplied a critical need for cheap labour in a way that allowed them to maintain their direct connection with the land. This same practice also kept them at the margins of that same wage economy. They supplied raw materials from their territory, at the margins, to the industrial centre where wealth was being generated. As Giddens (1991) argues, the full benefits of a wage economy were sequestered from Mi'kmaq.

This sequestration became more pronounced with the arrival of the American military, during the Second World War. Prior to this period, the majority of people in Western Newfoundland lived lives of seasonal work, either through logging or fishing. Most were self-employed, and while there was regularity to their work pattern, this was largely determined by the natural forces and patterns of weather and tide. The Americans brought an entirely different model that became the dominant economic force in the region. In order to fully participate in this model Mi'kmaq were forced to entirely suppress their identities. They were directly discriminated against for being Indigenous. The opening of the base also brought an influx of people from other parts of Newfoundland. These people, who had no historic relationship with the local Mi'kmaq, sharply shifted the socio-economic dynamic in local communities. Along with the Americans, they solidified the social strata, further isolating and marginalizing Mi'kmaq.

Though the Americans left in 1966, to this day people still refer to the area they controlled as the Base. The key factor here was the introduction of a wage economy; one

that excluded Mi'kmaq on the basis of race and local French settlers on the basis of language. Maude describes the ambivalent attitudes towards these changes.

There's people who think that the American base coming here was the best thing that ever happened. There's people that think the American coming here was the worst thing that ever happened. Inside my own family like my mother's mother and father their people lived here in Stephenville. They lived on this land. Actually they lived right almost where the end of the airport is where the new hospital is to. That was their land. Their land was confiscated from them just like all the other Acadian Mi'kmaq people that lived here. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Maude is careful to note that there were economic and social benefits for some people in the region but also states: "But that's when we started to lose a lot of who we were" (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010). She provides a clear example of how her family both suffered and benefited from the Base. While her mother's family lost their farmland, her father gained employment, though not without first encountering the discrimination experienced by those who were excluded by the Americans. She describes what happened when her father first applied for work on the Base.

When he came here they went to the Gate looking for work and the two questions they were asked "Are you French? Or are you Indian?" And my father being a young person said "Well what difference does it make" They said "We don't hire French people because we can't understand them and we don't hire Indians because they live on Indian time and they come and go as they please... They're not dependable." So... I mean my father ended up working on the Base practically his whole [life] .. well till the Base closed. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

The intensified marginalization that Mi'kmaq in Western Newfoundland experienced in the mid to late twentieth century was not limited to being excluded from working on the American Air Force base in Stephenville. Mi'kmaq living in other

communities also had similar experiences. Pike retells a story about her uncle seeking employment in Corner Brook.

But I know my uncle years ago tried to get in the [Bowater] mill. And he must have known he was Indian but we didn't know it at the time. But he must have known he was Indian and couldn't say cause at first they wouldn't hire him on. But he fought and he fought and he fought and kept nagging them for a job you know I guess. (Bernadette Pike, Personal Interview, March 17, 2010)

Pike's story also reveals evidence of the degree of repression of identity that appears within the life stories of older Mi'kmaq. Clarke (2005, p. 54) describes these kinds of discursive formations as containment, which provides some "stability, however elusive, or conditional." What is not acknowledged in that notion is the cost to those who are negatively affected by such formations. Containment in this way produces oppression but it may also produce a collectivity. Those contained encounter barriers that may be understood to delimit their world. However, piercing or dismantling such barriers may transform containment into the liminal space that Bhabha (1994) describes.

#### *5.2.4 The Oppressive Discourse in Gender Roles*

Traditionally, Indigenous women and men each had clearly delineated roles through which each was assigned areas of authority. For women, this generally meant the home and all matters pertaining to it. This included authority in major family and community decisions and included primary roles in spiritual teaching and responsibility. (Fiske, 2006; Muise, 2003; Anderson, 2000) Assimilation and Christianization eroded this authority for women while the loss of traditional ways of living left men with a sense of powerlessness. Martin-Hill writes that "the perversion of traditional beliefs strips women of their historical roles and authority, transforming their status from leaders into servants" (2003, p. 107). High levels of poverty and marginalization contributed to the



intense social fragmentation. The long term impact of lateral violence is significant and difficult to overcome.

Not surprisingly, participants reported that violence negatively impacts on the victim's self-esteem and sense of security. They also felt that victims often blame themselves and conceal the violence from others as best they can to avoid the stigma that is attached to being a victim of intimate partner abuse. (Canada, 2008, p. 17)

As discussed above, lateral violence, in particular spousal abuse, is far too common in Indigenous communities across Canada. The erasure of an Indigenous past and its replacement by an ahistorical record disseminated through a popular culture that constructs Indigenous people as primitive and violent (King, 2006) can be understood as being contributing factors to this violence. Research confirms how traditional gender roles in Indigenous communities have been erased and that this loss contributes to domestic violence.

A domineering attitude toward women is also common. Finally, a lack of self-esteem (seen to stem from the *loss of traditional roles and identity* [italics added], and sometimes from direct or indirect experience with the residential school system) was mentioned as a characteristic of abusers. (Canada, 2008, p. 10)

Statistics Canada Reported the rate of domestic violence nationally was 294 incidents per 100,000 people (Canada, 2010). This number is much higher in Newfoundland and Labrador where the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary reports that 50% of females over the age of 15 “will experience at least one incident of sexual or physical violence throughout their lifetime” (NL, 2006).

The seriousness of this problem is starkly evident in one other statistic. In 2009 there were 10,704 shelter beds for women and children registered in Newfoundland and Labrador, more than double the number of beds in Ontario (Canada, 2009, p. 17). I was

not able to find specific data related to bed usage by Indigenous women in Newfoundland; yet, there is little reason to suppose that patterns of violence in Newfoundland do not reflect national trends. Thus, given the following statistic it can be reasonably expected that the number is quite substantial.

As noted on the Newfoundland government website, “aboriginal women are 3.5 times more likely than non-Aboriginal women to be victims of violence (343/1,000 versus 96/1,000 respectively)” (NL, 2013). This violence involves people in Bay St. George, where my research is largely focused. In the past several years, two women were murdered by estranged husbands. In one incident, the woman was shot at her office in front of her co-workers. Again there is a lack of statistical data for violence involving Indigenous women, specific to the region or even the province. However, I was able to secure information from the Project Coordinator at the Bay St. George Women’s Centre. Below are the number of REPORTED offences against women and girls in the Bay St. George area for 2012. On average, only 10% of crime is reported<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, to get an idea of the true rate of crime, multiply these numbers by 10. (Tianna Butler, Personal Email, July 17, 2013)

If we extrapolate the data listed below, as is suggested by the centre, then the level of domestic violence in the Bay St. George Region, which is already disturbing, appears of epidemic proportions. The regional population for Bay St. George was 20,840 in 2012 (Census Canada, 2013).

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<sup>38</sup> Very often, particularly in cases of assault by a partner, the victim has been assaulted numerous times before finally reporting it. Therefore, though one report was placed, many assaults occurred. (Original source attributed RCMP, Stephenville, NL Detachment)

Number of Offences	Type of Offence
24	sexual assaults
3	sexual interference
4	incest
3	voyeurism
21	assault with a weapon or causing bodily harm
112	assaults
1	pointing a firearm
4	forcible confinement
8	criminal harassment
2	indecent phone calls
12	harassing phone calls
54	uttering threats against a person

Based on this data and the numbers extrapolated we have 240 sexual assaults in a population of 20,840 or a rate of 1100.52 sexual assaults per 100,000 of population as compared to the 294 incidents per 100,000 people (Canada, 2010) noted previously. That represents a rate over four times the national average.

While these local numbers do not specify either domestic abuse cases or those involving Indigenous people, a large percentage of individuals in the Bay St. George

Region self- identify as Mi'kmaq and the available national research indicates Indigenous women are more likely to be affected by domestic abuse. Given these factors, there is a need to assess the level of risk to local Mi'kmaq women and to collect demographic data that identifies how many of them have been victims of domestic violence.

The exclusion of research data, which identifies violence involving Indigenous people, reflects the prevalent perception in mainstream society that there are no Indigenous people in Newfoundland. Linda Wells, Executive Director with NAWN confirms this absence of data and notes the challenges this creates for her organization:

Unfortunately, there are no stats for Aboriginal women specifically in the Bay St. George area. We are currently seeking funding to do an assessment of women across the island. The only stats that exist have identified Aboriginal women living in Labrador and those in Conne River... We just had to back away from a three year project because we didn't have the stats to back up what we were saying about the needs of Aboriginal women on the island portion of NL. (Personal Email, July 11, 2013)

Even when data may be available, accessing it can be difficult.

It is extremely difficult to get stats from Labrador. Different groups have different requirements for the sharing of their stats, no doubt driven by government and funding agencies processes for obtaining project funding. They want to work with other groups but are afraid it will impact on their overall ability to compete and be successful with proposals. (Linda Wells, Personal Email, July 11, 2013)

This series of discursive practices utilized by settlers are deliberate and prescriptive and aimed at assimilating Mi'kmaq into the dominant culture by stripping them of their own consciousness. Their relationship to the settler population is no longer as trading partners, in a somewhat mutually beneficial, though unequal relationship, but as a people forced to the margins of a dominant society where they could be controlled and eventually made to entirely disappear.

**5.3 Resistance and Reinscription: Finding the Good Life**

It is possible, at this juncture, to only view Mi'kmaq in a polarized relationship with settlers. We see them as oppressed and marginalized; pushed to the bottom of the social strata. Yet, this reading of them as defeated and assimilated is an oversimplified understanding of how they respond to oppression and colonization. It imagines Mi'kmaq to exist and to function only in a binary relationship with their oppressors. This understanding is constructed from the gaze of the oppressor and fails to account for how Mi'kmaq understand their own state of being.

It is important that everyone learn the simple fact that the social ills within our communities are not because of who we are but because of what has been done to us. (Muise, 2003, p. 36)

These words can help us to understand how many of Mi'kmaq resisted assimilation and how this resistance positions Mi'kmaq to revitalize their culture. The possibility of deliberate positionality in relation to their oppressors further undermines any narrow casting of the oppressed as subaltern.

Alfred and Corntassel (2005) describe how Indigenous history has been erased. This erasure has acted to colonize the past and to enforce a prescriptive consciousness, which for Indigenous people constructs the past as a place of shame and loss. As Fanon explains, "reclaiming the past does not only rehabilitate or justify the promise of a national culture. It triggers a change of fundamental importance in the colonized's psycho-affective equilibrium" (2004, p.148). Reclaiming the past is essential to inscribing a liberated consciousness in which the past is a source of pride instead of sorrow.

All of my participants reflect on the past in their conversations. They clearly are aware of the oppression and suffering experienced by their parents and grandparents. Yet, they are also aware that it is possible for them to reclaim the past and to move beyond viewing it as something to be mourned. Rather, those who are actively engaged in revitalizing Mi'kmaq culture and fully embracing their Mi'kmaq identity understand that there is much to be proud of in the history of their people. Sexton works with young people to help them understand the true story of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. (Personal Interview, June 14, 2011)

Maude has rejected political power early in her active participation in Mi'kmaq leadership. She held a variety of positions on her local band council over a ten year period, excluding chief. In explaining this choice she simply states that she “never wanted it.” (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010) Instead she has filled critical support roles. She often refers to her maternal grandparents and it is evident from her description of them that it is her grandmother who serves as a role model for her; one of quiet leadership through example.<sup>39</sup>

One of the early challenges for Maude was to rebuild a community that had been fragmented and lost by decades of denial and oppression. Culture is one defining component of identity; it provides specific practices through which identity can be acted out. Cultural practices help to build and sustain social cohesion, something essential in overcoming the fragmentation that is inherent in groups of oppressed peoples. Maude

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<sup>39</sup> This is not to suggest that Maude is reticent to speak her mind. I have been friends with Maude for almost forty years, and in that time I have witnessed her ability to take articulate and critical stances on local political and social issues.

describes some of the ways in which she and others began to recover and reimagine Mi'kmaq culture.

Our first experience we took a group of youth to Conne River and it was quite an eye opener for me because not understanding the cultural part of who the people are in Conne River I assumed that the people in Conne River had a culture that was rich and alive and active. I was blown away to find out that their culture... their cultural... what they manifest to the outside now... like to the outside population basically like only started ten to fifteen years ago. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Many Indigenous communities that have lost much of their cultural practices have turned to adopting those of other First Nations as a way of healing their people and helping them to restore and revitalize their own ceremonies and events.

It's not part of the traditions and customs of ancient times. Its Pan-Indian .. it's a new thing. It's a way... It's a way to draw people together you know like... It works. People use them to bring Aboriginal people together so they meet each other and maybe people will marry. You know it's a way to celebrate who you are. It's a fun time and it manifest in this two-day thing that people attend. And people love it because you know you do the sweat lodge. There are spiritual parts to the Powwow. In our times people recognize the Powwow. They look at it as that's the culture of Indian people. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Key kinship networks that were still intact despite decades of fragmentation, provided essential connections between Mi'kmaq across great geographical distances. Traditional singers and drummers were invited from Nova Scotia to help re-teach the old ways to young people in Bay St. George. Some local families had always clung to these teachings and Maude makes special mention of the Muise family who "were the only family that were practising any type of you know like drumming, singing like that." (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

The people who wanted to revitalize the culture were determined to move ahead and through collaboration with Conne River hosted their first Powwow at Flat Bay July

15 and 16 2006. This was a critical turning point for Maude one that still informs her today.

I never realized there was something missing out of my life until I got involved in the cultural part.. the spiritual part like sweat lodge. You know...Like getting together as groups of women, supporting each other. That's a component of our lives that we're not all lucky enough to ever experience? And I mean I had to be in my late forties before I experience that. And initially I didn't even know what it was. I just knew I was a different person (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

It is evident that, for Maude, her Mi'kmaq identity has become internalized. It is, as Maude claims, something that:

Comes back to you're making a personal decision what are you going to embrace as a person. Because I don't believe that being native has anything to do with somebody signing a piece of paper in Ottawa and saying I'm Indian. It doesn't. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Calvin White has been witness both to the fragmentation of his community through the influx of outside forces in the mid-twentieth century and to the ongoing efforts to revitalize the Mi'kmaq nation in Newfoundland. He is able to articulate the critical division between political agendas and the essential place of a strong and vibrant set of cultural practices for the well-being of his people. White is now retired from politics but remains active in helping to develop social and economic capacity in his community.<sup>40</sup> He was active very early in the development of the FNI. While White decries how his people were oppressed and damaged by the imposition of foreign models of power and control he also speaks with considerable pride about his grandfather

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<sup>40</sup> I have known Calvin White for over thirty years, since working with him in a local economic development organization in the Bay St. George region. He served on the board as a representative from Flat Bay and in his capacity as the President of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI).



(Personal Interview, March 8, 2010). It was from his grandfather that White learned to follow the traditional cultural practices of respect and humility, to honour his elders, and to resist being assimilated by white society.

White has lived his entire life in Flat Bay, a community that has always been strongly identified with Mi'kmaq in the Bay St. George region. Its physical isolation from other communities in the region helped residents to maintain their traditional ways more readily than others. When he became involved in Aboriginal politics and travelled to other parts of Atlantic Canada he quickly realized that his region was unique.

And one of the things that I learned in the later years of my life before I got involved into the organizing and the politics of the Aboriginal movement is that Mi'kmaq culture as such was alive in Newfoundland .. alive and well in Newfoundland in the Aboriginal communities long after its existence in mainland Canada. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

White is quite aware that this may seem a contradiction to those who believe that only people living on designated reserves maintain their Indigenous identities.

It was amazing that it's only in the last probably it's only 10 15 years that the Aboriginal way of life has been threatened in communities like Flat Bay and Gander Bay and Conne River...But you can go in a larger areas like St. George's and Stephenville Crossing and even Stephenville and even those centres are not large centres but they were centre with populations you know in the 3000 and up range but still ...you could find families who were.. who were very traditional and lived in most part off the land as much as was allowed to do so. So while we never had that legal identity and while there were never any reserves set up in Newfoundland and while the language had been threatened from probably a hundred years prior to (sic) any knowledge that I would have the way of life was intact. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

White is cognizant of the irony that a people, not legally recognized as being Indigenous, and not living on a reserve, should have managed to sustain their traditional ways longer than their mainland kin. Yet, he fully understands how this is possible and

that recent changes, especially the loss of isolation, have undermined Mi'kmaq capacity to avoid assimilation without direct political and social action.

White (2010) also insists that when someone fails to act from the collective needs of the larger community “there’s no Indian there.” Sharing is central to Mi'kmaq culture and those, who are unwilling to live collaboratively, cannot honestly claim to be Indian. For White, cultural revitalization is essential to the full restoration of the Mi'kmaq First Nation. For example, when asked how important spiritual leaders are to his people, he responded:

If you lose sight of that [the role of spirituality] and that don't become the motivator (sic) for the revival of the nation you'll certainly lose sight of everything else other than the gimme gimme gimme. Because that's what holds people together.... That's what inspires you to care for your neighbour and to care for your neighbour's children and for everybody else you know. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

White argues that revitalization of the culture will come from the people actively embracing it both in their individual lives and in communal ways. “The biggest event in their lifetime on a yearly basis, other than their own personal developments, will be to partake in the Powwow” (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010). The powwow is a site where community gathers are can be understood to be a point of access for Mi'kmaq seeking to connect with teacher and others who can help them to begin healing through ceremony.

There are challenges of course and one of these is the distinction between religion and spirituality. The vast majority of Mi'kmaq have been Roman Catholic following the conversion of Grand Chief Membertou around 1610. But the scandals around physical and sexual abuse that have come to light in the past several decades have impacted the

relationship between many Mi'kmaq and Christianity in general. Many are turning to traditional ways to help fill the void in their lives caused by this rift. "People get great comfort in partaking in a sweat – going to a sweat lodge. People have opened their hearts and minds into gathering s that provide talking circles. People need something." (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010) There is a yearning for a system of belief that can be relied upon and one that does not present the possibility of the kind of betrayal, so many feel because of the abuses they and their families have experienced.

They [the Mi'kmaq] are looking at ancient beliefs and ancient worships. They don't let you down. If you respect the land... if you respect the animals...if you respect the trees... if you respect all of those things, they were put here for your survival and they're not going to let you down. You're the only one who can let them down. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

White draws another critical distinction between Christian religion and Indigenous spirituality and this has to do with notions of guilt and penance. Finding peace is central to Indigenous spirituality. Many Indigenous spiritual leaders I have encountered describe this as having a *good mind*. White describes it as:

To not necessarily do penance because penance is not really a sacrifice but it's an escape from guilt that's all it is. It satisfies the mind but what people are looking for is ... they're looking for that healing and that healing comes practicing a culture together. There is a big difference. (Calvin White, March 8, 2010)

This need for healing is crucial for White given the legacy of abuse and oppression that produces that lateral violence which plagues Mi'kmaq communities even today. It is a complex set of issues that cannot be simply understood through the lens of physical and sexual abuse. These are key issues that are rooted in more systemic social problems prevalent in Mi'kmaq territory since colonization.

The thing that stands out most is the social and economic disparities that I've seen over the years... in communities right across this country and in communities in Newfoundland. The other thing that keeps haunting me is the amount of abuse that we have among elders and women and even among children that society has a blind eye to. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Young clearly believes that there are inherent aspects of Mi'kmaq identity that have stubbornly resisted assimilation. This reflects comments made by White (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010) and by Evans (Personal Interview, July 10, 2010). Young attributes this in part to “genetic memory” (Personal Interview, March 19, 2010) a concept that has been described to me by elders in other Indigenous communities as *blood memory*. For many Indigenous people, blood memory protects them from being entirely assimilated into white society and manifests in a variety of behaviours including a return to traditional spirituality and other cultural practices.

They start being creative. They start carving things and stuff. They never ask the question “Why am I doing this?” “Why am I researching all this information?” “Why am I so interested in archeology?” Or “Why am I so interested in crafts in general – making ..?” I've took on so much stuff in my lifetime it amazed me before I even answered that myself. (Perry Young, Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

Additionally, the stories of his people, have always kept Young connected to his cultural heritage. Though Young's father may have denied that he was Mi'kmaq, he still recounted many family stories to him.

Sitting down as a kid when I'd go off with my father hunting he sat down telling the stories about those old Mi'kmaq people that were in Grandie's Brook telling their moose hunting stories. And they were great-grandfathers at their age and my being sixteen, fifteen, thirteen year old listening to their stories and their talking from their grandfathers and great-grandfathers. (Perry Young, Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

*5.3.1 Challenging the Discourse of the Subaltern*

It is critical to begin by first exploring how the subaltern is constructed from the gaze of the oppressor. This dominant model, which relies in large measure upon Foucault's notion of power, does not place the subaltern in a position entirely absent of power in relation to the oppressor. Rather, it understands the subaltern to exist in a dependant relationship with the oppressor. The subaltern's world is bounded by that space controlled by the oppressor. Pushed to the margins of that larger arena, the subaltern may act to subvert, and perhaps, to overthrow the oppressor but never escapes or overcomes the limitations of a circumscribed existence.

Certainly, it is a construct that has great currency in the academy. Yet, Bhabha challenges the simplistic duality of this construct. "Polarities come to be replaced with truths that are only partial, limited and unstable" (1994, p.278). The relationship between the settler as oppressor and Mi'kmaq as subaltern is far more complex and does not smoothly fit within the accepted notion of the subaltern. For many Indigenous scholars, subaltern represents a discursive construct intended to lock them into the prescribed consciousness Freire (1970) decries and to eventually obliterate them. Resistance to being framed as subaltern is seen by the dominant society as a subversive act. As King writes:

What remains distressing is that much of what passes for public and political discourse on the future of Native people is a discourse of anger, anger that the Native people are still here and still a "problem" for White North America, anger that we have something non-Natives don't have, anger that after all the years of training, after all the years of having assimilation beaten into us, we still prefer to remain Cree and Comanche, Seminole and Salish, Haida and Hopi, Blackfoot and Belacoola. (2012, p. 213)

Thus, Indigenous people complicate the simplistic duality of oppressor and subaltern. They reject the limitations of the relationship between oppressors and

oppressed through a resistance, which is achieved through multiple discursive practices and formations. Of course, labels such as subaltern are not generally found outside of academic work. This is not to suppose that all of the attendant prescriptive notions inherent in the word cannot be found in other languages. The label *Status Indian* is a clear example of how Indigenous people are effectively framed through the Indian Act. An identity that relies upon legislation created by and for the management and control of Indigenous people, is inherently prescriptive. From that perspective, the only authentic Indigenous people are those who have status. Yet, seeking status and carrying the Status Card should not be understood as an acceptance of a subaltern role.

Don't get me wrong I'm the first one to say I want my card but I want what goes with that card. Our ancestors were robbed of it. Our parents, our grandparents our children shouldn't be robbed of it. We have rights and I want those rights but do I want them at any cost. No – I don't need anybody from Ottawa to tell me what my family heritage is. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Rather than acquiescing to being framed as a subaltern, Maude insists that she is seeking what is due to her. She does not accept that this defines her Indigenous identity or the entirety of her relationship with non-Indigenous people. To be defined only as *Status Indian* [italics added] is to be objectified; made a thing. To accept this is to accept her destruction. (Freire, 1970, p. 68)

A critical step in taking back personal power is the shift in the locus of control. People who situate that locus as being external remain oppressed. Those who are able to situate the locus of control internally are able to understand that it is possible to take back power over their lives. For Maude, this must begin with a clear understanding that authentic identity is not solely determined by external agency. This begins with recognizing that, if you are an Indigenous person, “the government is not your friend.”

(Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010) Instead, Maude advocates for the Mi'kmaq finding their own voice; representing their own identity through community.

Once you have a voice you realize that you have... you do have the ability to make affective change within your own family I guess and within your community if you only learn that nobody is any better than you. (Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Young has found ways to alter his perceptions about who he is and where he comes from. Researching his family genealogy made his identity more concrete and has helped him to overcome the ambivalence he expresses above.

I did a little bit of footwork into one book that stuck out in my head for some reason or another and that was Frank... Frank G. Speck. His book on the Beothuk and the Mi'kmaq ethnography that he wrote back in the 1900's early 1900's. I thumbed through the book one day. There's a map fall out. Fairly large map that he had published and here's Steven Stevens my great-great-grandfather. (Perry Young, Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

### *5.3.2 Kinship and the Discourse of Resistance*

Identity within any community is tied to the place of the individual within that community; a place defined and prescribed by a set of relationships, roles and responsibilities involving family, friends and the larger socio-political superstructure. In Indigenous cultures, those relationships exist within a tightly integrated kinship network. In this discursive formation, Indigenous identity is defined by nation, clan, and family. While colonization and oppression have destabilized and diminished those kinship networks, critical remnants remain intact and in some places are being restored through “self to family, clan, community and into all of the broader relationships that form an Indigenous existence” (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005).

Kinship, perhaps more than any discursive formations that I have identified in this work, represents the essence of being Mi'kmaq. We can reflect here on one common understanding of the word *Mi'kmaq*; that it is descriptive of the extended kinship networks through which the *Ln'uk* thrived as a people before contact with settlers and by means of which they have survived the invasion and colonization of their territory. As Anderson notes, “ties to community are as significant as ties to family in terms of bolstering a positive identity” (2000, p. 116).

All of my participants spoke of family and kinship in their conversations with me. Often, their words revealed the damage done by the oppression their parents and grandparents tried to shield them from. Despite such stories, it was quite evident that these kinship networks also have made it possible for many of my participants to choose to work towards overcoming this oppression in their own lives (Annie, 2010; Evans, 2010; Maude, 2010; Sexton, 2011; White, 2010).

Maude (2010) clearly described how her family, while marginalized within a larger community and displaced from their land, withdrew into a tightly knit kinship populated neighbourhood.

Sexton (Personal Interview, June 14, 2011) was in part motivated by her sense of her extended kinship network, when she began exploring her Mi'kmaq heritage. She is forthright in admitting that she initially became involved when she was seeking financial aid for her children's education. However, through that experience she found a connection to her Mi'kmaq heritage that she had not previously considered.

My main reason for it was my children were getting ready to go to university and I knew there was funding out there and I'm not ashamed to admit it and I know



that a lot of people this is how they first get started out... they're looking for financial help. (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011)

But that instrumental approach changed once Sexton realized she “wanted to know a little more about” what it meant to be Mi'kmaq. “I wanted to know where I came from” (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011). After accepting her Mi'kmaq identity as her authentic self, Sexton engaged in teaching a Mi'kmaq social studies course at the local high school. She also became active in the Newfoundland Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN). As Alfred and Corntassel (2005) argue, initial realization of the authentic self can lead to recovery of place and a transfer of focus to the community that Maracle (2005) describes. The objectified identity, imposed through oppression, is displaced and the intersubjectivity of the authentic identity is restored. (Wheeler, 2006)

White describes how people collaborated within these complex set of kinship networks to sustain their communities and their culture.

There were certain people in certain areas Mi'kmaq people who took on certain responsibility. So the person who tend to your wound was not necessarily the person who build your casket. Okay... So there were different people had different responsibilities and whenever called upon they took those responsibilities and they executed them. And so that's how we had lived before. (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

With the loss of isolation, these systems of support and collaboration were undermined.

Because of the intrusion of the outside influences who had no understanding whatsoever of the dependency and the need for a community to work as a community. They disrupted [communities] and that's when the political structures became in place. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Leaders within many of these communities realized that they had to take political action if they were to heal and restore their fragmented communities. According to White, despite the fragmentation of communities, many kinship networks remained intact enough to sustain a level of social cohesion that would allow for eventual political action. White (2010) describes his community of Flat Bay as being at the centre of an extended kinship network, involving Mattis Point, Corner Brook and Stephenville Crossing. These networks sometimes presented themselves in adaptive ways, even where Mi'kmaq people might have appeared to be assimilated into Western society. White speaks of his mother's experience while staying at a boarding house in Corner Brook.

When my mom went there she helped to cook supper. She did the dishes after supper. She did the floors. She helped make the bed in the rooms. Things like that. When I got older and started to understand, the lady who owned that house was from the Flat Bay area and this is what she did for people from her home community. Like she... I mean she could never afford to give people home and board free but there was never an exchange of money. It was always a barter system. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010).

While the kinship networks remained connected across considerable distances in southwestern and central Newfoundland, White credits one particular community as providing early leadership.

Conne River<sup>41</sup> was the initiators. They started the process but what happened was because of their knowledge of Aboriginal people and where those Aboriginal people lived they reached out. So it was Conne River that went to Glenwood. Conne River people went to Gander Bay. The Conne River people came to Flat Bay. They're the people who reached out. And they reached out to the areas that they were aware of such as Flat Bay. (Calvin White, March 8, 2010)

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<sup>41</sup> Conne River is the commonly used name for the Miawpukek Mi'kmaq First Nation which was granted a small reserve in 1985.

Because people like his mother and the woman who owned the boarding house had maintained a kinship relationship rooted in traditional ways of being, White argues that “when Conne River reached out to Flat Bay to get involved in an organized movement Flat Bay in turn reached out to its people wherever they were” (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010).<sup>42</sup>

### *5.3.3 Re-inscribing Gender to Restore Authentic Identities*

One critical response has been a concerted effort to address the primary sources of high levels of lateral violence in Western Newfoundland. Initially, efforts focused on working with women to help them both recover from the violence and to educate them in ways to reduce violence. While Mi'kmaq women intend to help heal their whole communities, including the men, no one can help another to their feet until they first stand on their own. The Newfoundland and Labrador Aboriginal Women's Network (NAWN) was established, in part, for this purpose – to give women some measure of control over their lives.

One of NAWN's most effective strategies has been the anti-violence workshops that educate women and men about the sources and impact of domestic violence.<sup>43</sup> Through the workshops women and men are reconnected to a language of mutual respect, and violence is reframed as something that is not inherent to Indigenous cultures but is shown to be a product of oppression and dehumanization. The workshops rely on

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<sup>42</sup> Other communities, in particular St. George's, have similar strong kinship networks. Many of my participants made special reference to the Muise family there. They are attributed with providing early, critical leadership, something that continues to this day.

<sup>43</sup> I attended one of the NAWN anti-violence workshops February 12-13, 2011. The two key leaders were Mi'sel Joe and Maggie Paul. Subsequently, I attended follow up sessions during which a men's circle was established to actively participate in violence reduction through community engagement and education.

reintroducing traditional gender roles for both men and women so as to restore the integrity of the family unit, while re-establishing healthy communities.

Once you have a voice you realize that you have... you do have the ability to make effective change within your own family I guess and ... and within your community if you only learn that nobody is any better than you. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

The negative stereotypes that have been imposed on Indigenous people acted to pervert and corrupt their relationships with one another. Bhabha (1994, p.96) speaks of “an ambivalence” that is produced by sexual and racial epithets. Displacing those stereotypes is an essential discursive practice that can, over time, act to re-inscribe the consciousness of Mi'kmaq women and men. Replacing the epithets with positive constructive language in the workshops helps to establish a set of new discursive practices within Mi'kmaq communities. These practices in turn serve to restore and revitalize a whole people. As Anderson writes, women do much more than help to reduce the violence in their communities.

Aboriginal women also incorporate a division of labour that reflects traditional division of responsibilities. Not only can women manage differently because they are more attentive to relationships in their work, but they also bring strength to our communities and organizations through innovative approaches that re-establish balanced gendered responsibilities. (Anderson, 2000, p. 216)

#### *5.3.4 Indigenous Art as a Discursive Practice*

For many Indigenous people, art has become both an economic resource and integral to the revitalization of their culture in a modern context. Smith describes the critical role of Indigenous art this way.

The process of incorporating traditional methods and worldviews into a form of expression that simply didn't exist a few centuries ago, a few lifetimes really, is a monumental task that requires the greatest honesty and focused intelligence about

our history as a people...It is nothing less than a reclamation of our common history of surviving the unparalleled disaster of European contact and the creation of something new and dynamic from the ashes. (2009, pp. 26, 27)

The visual representation of any people is often stereotypical and can be used as yet another prescriptive discursive practice to impose a fetishized vision of who they are. Indigenous men in western movies are either the fierce bloodthirsty warrior, face painted for battle or the compliant scout, dressed in a modified uniform, hair braided, feather in Stetson – neither fully Indigenous nor fully white. Indigenous women are represented as sexualized and submissive, dressed in long buckskin dresses designed to show off their feminine attributes. Both men and women are also commercially enlisted to sell cigars or butter or to adorn the uniforms of professional athletes in Cleveland and Chicago. Sometimes they show up on currency such as the American nickel or paddling a canoe on the old Canadian twenty dollar bill (King, 2012). Cast in bronze and wearing full leather regalia with eagle-feather bonnet, Sitting Eagle adorns the heart of the business district in downtown Calgary. The plaque notes his business acumen. The statue was commissioned by the Calgary Stampede. Reclaiming and recasting Indigenous imagery and iconography are not simply acts of resistance; they are essential discursive practices that help to produce an authentic Indigenous culture in a modern context.

Evans is a visual artist who has worked extensively in a variety of media including painting, sculpture, printmaking, and film. His artwork helped him to reconnect with his Mi'kmaq heritage over time and now he sees it as a critical expression of his Indigenous identity. Evans acknowledges that he has a responsibility to his audience. He describes himself as a storyteller in that he employs the iconography and traditional symbols of Mi'kmaq in his work.

Evans realized that he now “had this passion to find out who we [the Mi'kmaq] were and where we came from” (Personal Interview, July 10, 2010). What Evans understood reshaped his art since it was not:

Just text and history; it was material culture and iconography, you know and legends and stories and myths and songs and music and you know I soaked it up, you know whatever I could. I was a sponge. It did creep into my art work. I started putting iconography and personal things, photographs and things like that into my art work. (Personal Interview, July 10, 2010).

Art is often generative and while Evans was initially focused on his own family and his personal identity as being Mi'kmaq, his art has become a catalyst for a much larger conversation involving many more people.

I can't remember if it was the visual media or an interview in the Telegram something... but I was getting phone calls from people. They tracked me down you know either through the telephone book or friends of friends you know and were interested in what I was doing and telling me their story which was basically mirroring my own. (Jerry Evans, Personal Interview, July 10, 2010)

In the process of discovering more about his own identity, Evans produces art that affords a space for others to also explore their shared heritage; a space within which Mi'kmaq people can share identity through common history and experiences. Sharing identity in this way is a critical discursive practice that helps to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture. It produces art as a discursive formation within which complex ideas about identity and place can be explored and understood by those who encounter it. Traditional symbols and icons are restored to places of honour and power. They are re-inscribed in Mi'kmaq consciousness, overwriting the negative messages once prescribed by their oppressors.

For Evans then, the process of creating art is also a process of rebuilding communal identity. “I'm saying if you understand me better as an artist you'll understand

yourself better” (Jerry Evans, Personal Interview, July 10, 2010). This relationship between Evans and his audience should not be understood as uni-directional. When asked if he could practice his art elsewhere, he replied, “I don’t know cause I’d be away from my people then wouldn’t I?” (Personal Interview, July 10, 2010) It is clear that for Evans, there is a strong relationship between his art and his engagement with his Mi’kmaq community.

### *5.3.5 Indigenous Ceremony as a Discursive Practice*

It is important to understand that for Indigenous people, knowledge is often a gift from spirit and much is to be learned through ceremony. This understanding can complicate arguments about knowledge being constructed, but not necessarily so if we reflect on Bachelard’s (1964) poetics or Wheeler’s (2006) description of tacit knowledge. There are many ways of knowing and many ways of gaining knowledge. The “phenomenology of the soul” (Bachelard, 1964, p. xx) has a correspondence with “relational understandings and experiential and tacit knowledge” (Wheeler, 2006, p. 42). Knowledge gained through ceremony is equally valid. Ceremony is also part of the “constant dialogue” between our *Innenwelt* and the *Umwelt* that we share with others (Wheeler, 2006, p. 108). In this way we, as social creatures, profoundly connect to those with whom we share those discursive formations that constitute our social world. Ceremony provides some of the discursive practices through which that connection can both be articulated and strengthened.

Maude strongly believes in the transformative power of traditional ceremony as a path to healing. To achieve this she argues for the adoption of the Pan-Indian strategy of

introducing traditional ways that may not have been part of Mi'kmaq culture in the past. Yet, these ceremonies can help produce the reinscription of consciousness needed to overwrite the prescribed consciousness imposed by oppression.

And if you look at the disrespect that happened to our people here when you realize that priests and ministers had the ability to change your name without telling you because you didn't know how to read and write and all you believed your name was a certain thing and you get old enough for an Old Age Pension and you go to try to get your old age pension and you look for a birth certificate and you realize "Hey. Like who is this person? This is not me. Like where did this name come from?" I've seen and heard so many stories with this registration process from families. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

It is not an easy process for those who decide to engage in traditional ceremony and cultural practices.

And I can remember the second day of the Powwow on the Powwow ground looking at like who was standing around the arbour. And looking at people that I knew from the communities and stuff... watching people and some people were kind of snickering and you know what I mean? Like you see everything right. So I'm thinking "Geeze I don't know about this." The second year I go there and I'm in a different capacity and I have a little more time on the grounds and I see some of the people who were there year before outside snickering guess what? They're inside the fence with they're kids and they're taking part. And the third Powwow like it just blew me away. Because there were people I had dealt with initially when we were trying to get the Powwow of the ground the first year who were not nice. (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Despite such challenges, change is possible and reinscriptive experiences do happen.

I see kids that I worked with now that I worked with as a student assistant who really had nothing in their lives that they felt that they could be proud of. They are now proud that they can state, "You know like my ancestors were native people. They came here. They lived off the land that was one of the harshest..." (Maude, Personal Interview, March 4, 2010)

Restoration of cultural practice is critical to Annie in her efforts to help revitalize the Mi'kmaq First Nation. And these efforts begin in her daily life.



I practice my culture every day. I get up and I pray to the Creator. I smudge every day. I play my drum every day. Whether I'm going to an event or not it doesn't matter. That's part of my day. (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010)

Showing respect and being grateful are essential to Annie's Mi'kmaq identity and spirituality. "It's not about the dollars. It's not about a card in my wallet. It's about who I know I am." (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010)

Like Maude, Annie argues that adapting traditions from other First Nations bands outside the Mi'kmaq is a legitimate practice in that these help the Mi'kmaq to restore a sense of connection to being Indigenous and allow them to recover an identity distinguished from non-Indigenous culture. "There's a lot of teachings we receive from other cultures and I'm talking about like you know the Metis, the Ojibway, the Mohawk. We've had teaching from those people as well" (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010). Bringing healing ceremonies in from other Indigenous cultures is seen as essential since, as Annie notes:

Our community is going through an awful lot of healing right now... And we have two elders who come into our community quite often. We invite them and one is Maggie Paul – she's from New Brunswick. And Deana Francis, she's from Maine. And whenever the women call from this community they're prepared to get on a plane and come to us. We've got of our teaching around medicines from them. (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010)

Restoring the traditional ceremonial roles of women and men is critical. "The men are working very closely with the women in the community because it's the women who brought the drum to the men originally" (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010). The drum is not simply a musical instrument for Mi'kmaq. The drum gives voice to the sacred relationship between men and women and brings healing. That women should

have given the drum to men, illustrates how women have always been key spiritual leaders along with men.

Other teachings related to ceremony underscore the traditional balance between Mi'kmaq women and men. For Annie, restoring this traditional balance is one of the greatest challenges, which those who work for Mi'kmaq cultural revitalization, must confront “because there’s a purpose. Men are considered to be the caretakers of the fire where we [women] take care of the water” (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010). In this way, women and men hold equal but different responsibilities for two sacred gifts from Creator.

For some, this recovery of past knowledge creates a link to their past. Annie (Personal Interview, March 22, 2010) is able to look back on her childhood memories differently recalling her grandmother speaking to her and her siblings in what she now knows was Mi'kmaq language. Annie became aware of this when she began to learn some Mi'kmaq songs where she “realized that she [her grandmother] was actually singing in Mi'kmaq.” (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010) That the songs had survived at all, Annie credits to the Muise family, “because they have continued to share all of this culture with the community; whoever is willing to learn” (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010).

While Young always knew he was Indigenous, overcoming the damage of oppression only began for him through ceremony. Being given a spirit name was particularly transformative for him.

I don't know I think it took a long time for the name to become a name... cause it got no meaning. In Aboriginal society names got meaning. It got a purpose. You like...since I been coming back and forth there they gave me a spirit name .. a

spirit name ..a name that identifies you.. who you are .. your character. So my name became *Nin gjiga'qaquj*.... Ancient Raven. I'm Ancient Raven. That's what they gave me. Why? Because I've been digging up all this history. From archeological information to.. I love the history. (Perry Young, Personal Interview, March 19, 2010)

Spirit names are never simply assumed by a person; they are given to that person by an elder. This giving of a name involves ceremony and is not done lightly. Sometimes, names are sought by the individual and this requires giving tobacco to an elder and requesting the elder pray and do ceremony.

The lady that gave me is an elder. [When she] gave me that name I said “what was the purpose behind it?” And once she laid it back to me I said “okay” She didn't even know me. She didn't know me but she knew my character. She knew what made me tick. She knew what made me think or whatever. (Perry Young, March 19, 2010)

Traditional ceremony acknowledges interdependence with all creation and the intersubjectivity of human beings. The inauthentic identities, produced through the prescribed consciousness that colonizers imposed on Indigenous people relies, in part, on notions of individualism. This individualism is for Wheeler an “historical category mistake” (2006, p. 141) that separates people from nature and in the case of Indigenous people has been used to sever them from their traditional territories (Freire, 1970). Since all “exist as co-dependant and co-arising in nature and culture” (Wheeler, 2006, p.135), we cannot be fully authentic human beings when we separate the two. Traditional ceremony helps to re-inscribe the relationship with all of nature. It fosters the reflexivity necessary to achieve the praxis through which the consciousness, and thus the world, can be transformed. For Indigenous communities, the prescribed consciousness, and resultant individualism, also acts to displace them from their communally oriented positionality.

Recovering this orientation is no easy task. Traditional ceremony, as practiced by Mi'kmaq, acts to re-orient participants, to restore their awareness of their intersubjectivity.

The Bay St. George Cultural Circle is an Indigenous site for resistance. here, local Mi'kmaq women and men have created a safe place where they can gather together in healing circles. Annie describes how such gathering offer a unique opportunity for women to share with other women.

It's an opportunity for women to kind of come and share whether it's good news or bad news or whatever but when they walk out it's not just they're carrying it. Every women in there takes a part of it... takes a piece of it. So then the load is not as heavy. That's the teaching that we give in that circle. (Annie, March 22, 2012)

While there is much focus on helping women to heal, Annie and those with her, also reach out to the youth in the region. She sees the young people in the region as central to the future of the Mi'kmaq.

Right now what they're doing is looking for a location they can call their own so they will be free. They will have a safe sanctuary to go to. We will go out provide them with them with the teachings on the smudging, the medicines; all of that. Teach them the songs and then let them take it from there. And then invite their community in to share. (Annie, Personal Interview, March 22, 2010)

Annie's notion of sharing pain and suffering, so as to help a person heal, illustrates a more nuanced understanding of sharing within Aboriginal communities. Sharing is not simply an equitable distribution of resources; rather it is an integrated way of living in a sacralised world. Spiritual and emotional healing are achieved when a community creates a sacred space within which this healing is possible. For Annie, it is essential to have a sanctuary for Mi'kmaq people struggling with identity in order to

achieve “the healing from finally admitting who they are. It takes a while for them to recognize that” (Personal Interview, March 22, 2010).

*5.3.6 Indigenous Teaching and Education: Reclaiming Knowledge*

Mainstream education systems have long been designed to produce citizens as passive objects within a consumer oriented society. Freire describes such a system as “an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is the depositor... Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects” (Freire, 1970, pp. 72, 77). It is a banking model of education, whereby students are empty vessels and teachers are the owners of all knowledge. When students, particularly children fail to conform to this model they are framed as problems to be solved through various forms of intervention.

These same education systems have long viewed Indigenous children through the lens of the problem. For these children, education has always been a site for assimilation and oppression. While the residential school system stands a particularly egregious example of education as a tool of oppression, all public and religious schools have been complicit in acts of erasure against Indigenous people. While some claim there were no residential schools in Newfoundland, all schools were run by churches who worked diligently to strip Indigenous children of their authentic identities. This process relied, in part, on the teaching of a false history about relationships between settlers and Indigenous people. The journey of one white man, Cormack, across the island to Bay St. George, has long been celebrated as an extraordinary feat. With absolutely no sense of irony, this story does note that Cormack was guided by one Mi'kmaq, Sylvester Joe (Peyton, 2005,

p.117). Elevating the white man to a heroic place is the kind of story which is foundational to the prescribed consciousness that Freire (1970) seeks to overthrow. In contrast, Mi'kmaq were described as invaders who supported French incursions into British territory and attacked the Beothuk. One thing that gets lost in that discourse is the question of how Mi'kmaq could have so quickly developed an intimate knowledge of the geography of Newfoundland, if they were not Indigenous to the island.

For Lawrence and Anderson taking ownership of the education system is “part of the internal organic process of decolonization” (2003, p.19). Teaching from an Indigenous perspective is not aimed at producing compliant citizens. Instead, it is meant to help everyone to fully realize their humanity through understanding how every person has a place within their community. That they are responsible to their community for the way in which they choose to live their lives does not exclude their inherent right to have a good life. For Deloria, a recovery of Indigenous teaching practices requires a rejection of Western metaphysics and a return to a Native one.

The best description of Indian metaphysics was the realization that the world, and all its possible experiences, constituted a social reality, a fabric of life in which everything had the possibility of intimate knowing relationships because, ultimately, everything was related. (Deloria, 2001, p. 2)

It is not enough that oppressive and false histories about Indigenous people and their oppressors should be removed from school curricula. The fundamental principles that underpin the education of Indigenous students must be drawn from “traditional experiential knowledge, or what has recently been called traditional ecological knowledge... knowledge at once ecological, moral, practical, and most certainly philosophical” (Wildcat, 2001, p.8). This model does not institutionalize teaching and

learning, an approach which isolates students from their communities. Instead, teaching from an Indigenous metaphysics closely integrates community and learning.

The community based model implemented at Indianbrook First Nation in Nova Scotia, in its original structure, reflected principles of Indigenous models of teaching and learning. Parents were not just made welcome in the school, “parents had full involvement in their children’s education” (Knockwood, 2003, p.191). Community engagement was not limited to parents. “We knew that we couldn’t operate the school without elders” (Knockwood, 2003, p. 197). Another key Indigenous principle was an approach to discipline, which “was to promote responsibility in students” (2003, p.197). Individual freedom of choice, based on personal responsibility, is a key concept of Indigenous teaching.

While changing the education system is an essential part of producing a re-inscribed consciousness for Indigenous people, efforts to actually achieve this are complicated by conditions on the ground. Reserve communities such as Indianbrook have the possibility of creating separate education systems. This is also the case for the Miawpukek First Nation at Conne River in Newfoundland, which operates its own school, independent of the provincial system. Mi’kmaq students living in other communities do not have access to that option. They remain inside the public education system.

Around 2008 the FNI approached the Department of Education about creating a Mi’kmaq Studies course for senior high school students. Initially the program was available in four schools in communities with a significant Mi’kmaq population. There were challenges from the outset.

The main problem that [first] year was that the teacher who was teaching it even though he followed the outcomes and did a fantastic job with the children was not of Mi'kmaq ancestry and had no experience or knowledge in the spirituality or the customs of the Mi'kmaq. (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011)

Today, Sexton teaches the only Mi'kmaq Social Studies course in any public high school in Newfoundland. According to Sexton, the most evident reason that the program is offered at Appalachia High School, but not in others, is regional demographics.

St. George's is very unique in that we service students from Flat Bay, St. George's, Stephenville Crossing and that's the three most populated areas of Mi'kmaq outside of Conne River that I would say for percentage. We are probably ninety-five to ninety-eight percent Mi'kmaq here in this school, Appalachia and Our Lady of Mercy School. (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, July 10, 2011)

Another significant reason is the lack of qualified teachers who advocate for the course to be taught in their local high school. "If a teacher is not delved into the culture like I am and not actively involved in it they won't fight to have it" (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011). According to Sexton, the course continues at her school only because she agrees to teach it. While she understands that there may be well-qualified teachers who can teach courses not part of their own culture, there is a unique dynamic that presents itself in teaching an Indigenous studies program to students who are Indigenous. "Aboriginal Mi'kmaq studies course should be taught by a Mi'kmaq person and an elder and somebody who has the enthusiasm and the knowledge to bring to the students what needs to be brought" (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011).

Sexton does acknowledge that there are very limited resources made available to her for teaching the program. She had to draw on her personal resources in order to create a curriculum that could both achieve specified pedagogical goals set out by the provincial



Department of Education and necessarily, to satisfy the spiritual and cultural goals she knows to be critical for her students.

Despite any limitations inherent in how the course is both set up and delivered, Sexton is adamant that it fulfills a critical social need for young people who are the first generation to experience the revitalization of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation in Newfoundland, outside of Conne River. Unlike their parents, they are growing up in a time when people are acknowledging their Mi'kmaq identities in a positive way. "Everyone in my Mi'kmaq Studies class is Mi'kmaq. They're learning a little bit about themselves about their family and they're putting it into perspective as to who they are" (Darlene Sexton, June 14, 2011). There is also a sense of community building that happens in the classroom. The students are not limited to working within their own group but also engage younger students through cultural activities. According to Sexton, the students "could see what they were doing was making a difference to someone else. It gave them a lot of confidence and they were really proud of it" (Personal Interview, June 14, 2011). These extended relationships between older and younger students are reflective of principles of sharing inherent in Mi'kmaq culture.

Sexton has concerns with some of her students since "some are at risk students" (Personal Interview, June 14, 2011). Yet, despite an early pattern that saw mainly students who "are very weak academically" registering for the course, Sexton has seen a growth in interest whereby many students with better academic standing are registering for the course (Personal Interview, June 14, 2011).

There is some evidence to suggest this growth in enrollment reflects a stronger connection with their Mi'kmaq heritage. In part this has been achieved by Sexton and

other teachers through their work in elementary grades. Thus, there is a reshaping of public perceptions of Mi'kmaq through the education system; a trend that reflects the *ontological shift* (Butler, 2009) needed to overcome centuries of oppression and rejection of Indigenous worldviews and experiences in our education systems. Sexton sees this having lasting impact as the current students become adults. She attributes much of this to students actively participating in cultural events at the school; doing not just learning. Their enthusiasm clearly affects Sexton when she recalls:

Four years ago when I had cultural day at the school, there was no enthusiasm for it.... But now the grade sevens and eights because they've had it throughout the school year... had it throughout say from kindergarten on up through they were really excited about cultural day. And they couldn't wait to help out with it... So I can see it in the next ten years, fifteen years the young adults are going to be more involved in the Mi'kmaq culture in the community. (Darlene Sexton, June 14, 2011)

Of course, this expected outcome largely depends on the continued inclusion of Mi'kmaq culture and teaching in the public school system. Sexton is confident this will happen since she expects there will be other qualified Mi'kmaq teachers able to continue teaching in the future.

I know one young girl well three as a matter of fact who are in post-secondary now studying education to be teachers. And the three of these young ladies are Mi'kmaq and they're involved in their culture. (Darlene Sexton, Personal Interview, June 14, 2011)

While Sexton is decidedly optimistic, there are some issues that act to limit outcomes from this current model. The Mi'kmaq Social Studies course relies on a mainstream pedagogy and expected outcomes remain contingent upon standardized testing. Such an approach simply situates the knowledge within the mainstream rather than imbedding it within Mi'kmaq culture. Using this approach sustains the distancing

and isolation of Indigenous students from their culture. It keeps knowledge of Mi'kmaq history *out there* rather than presenting it as something integral to a sense of being Indigenous for the students. Further, while Sexton does try to work from an Indigenous model of teaching, she is constrained by the inherent limitations of teaching in a public school environment. Certainly, Deloria and Wildcat (2003) would not accept the course as one founded upon an Indigenous metaphysics. Efforts have been made to involve the larger Mi'kmaq community through guest speakers and through an annual Cultural Day. However, that scarcely reflects the community-based model Knockwood (2003) advocates.

Despite such limitations, the course does have critical value for the larger community and does provide the possibility for what Freire (1970) and Alfred and Cornthassel (2005) insist is the essential initial catalyst for resistance, for the individual to recognize that he/she is oppressed. When Mi'kmaq students learn even a part of the true history of their people they also may understand that, while they have been victims of oppression, they need not remain so.

### *5.3.7 Resistance and Land*

Mi'kmaq relationship with land was complicated from the very first point of contact with colonial powers and the settlers they brought with them. For Mi'kmaq, land and territory are sources of life and security. Many of them maintain a reverence for land and all that it contains. Peter Paul painfully describes the horror of seeing the land nearly destroyed by white settlers (Peter Paul in Whitehead, 1991). While Mi'kmaq defended their territory from other Indigenous people such as the Iroquois Confederacy, they did not do so from a sense of ownership of the land. Intertribal wars were fought for the

security of their people and the integrity of their territory. Drawn into wars between different colonial powers, Mi'kmaq participated in colonial attempts to take ownership of the land in ways that made no sense to them. In the end they lost control of their territory.

Even today, for King (2012), the single motivation that feeds both settler animosity and indifference to Indigenous people is land. "Whites want land" (King, 2012, p.216); more fully, they want the resources that come with the land and the wealth that can be generated from those resources.

Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, like all Indigenous people, do not separate their sense of being from the land. Despite the loss of control of their territory, they did not abandon their understanding of their relationship to the land. A critical part of Mi'kmaq history and cultural identity is their essential relationship with the land and the contestation around both control of it and access to the resources present in and on it. Mi'kmaq were sequestered from fully participating in the wage-based economy in Newfoundland. In the burgeoning pulp and paper industry they were kept at the periphery, supplying wood through contract work. As White (Personal Conversation, March 8, 2010) relates, the imposed hunting and fishing controls that really only came into effect after Newfoundland joined Canada, were both resisted and ignored by many Mi'kmaq, in that the new systems of control interfered with their traditional practices of gathering food. Economic marginalization kept them in a close traditional relationship to the land, in that they continued to harvest fish, game and berries as staple goods. They did this not unscathed as tactics used to enforce hunting and fishing regulations caused divisions and strife within Mi'kmaq communities. Despite the attendant risks, according to White:

You had families, very, very strongly connected Aboriginal families, who continued to practice a way of life even though sometimes it may have cost them some hardship because there have been penalties for some for the things that they did but they could not... they could not resist you know hunting... wintertime they could not resist rabbit catching....Up to fifteen years ago it was regularly practiced. (Calvin White, Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

White also noted that he found Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland remained closer to their traditional ways than those in mainland Canada. White clearly describes how this remains intact to this day:

So the way of life the connection with the land and the way of life... and the... and the gathering ... the hunting fishing and gathering never died here in Newfoundland. It was... it was something that was in existence right up through and still in some existence today. (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010)

Muise eloquently writes: "I am the bog, the cold black river, the wind-swept stunted trees, the ocean the ice-packs and the crooked pine. I am a Mi'kmaq Egit and there are many like me" (2003, p.30).

Traditional Mi'kmaq gender roles very much reflected relationship to the land, with their specific areas of authority in part shaped by their differing roles in food collection and sacred responsibility for water (women) and fire (men) (Annie, Personal Conversation, March 22, 2010). Today, as they act to revitalize their culture these traditional relationships are also being renewed.

Mi'kmaq still rely on the land as a major source of sustenance. They still gather sacred medicines from the land for ceremony and for healing. They are still a people of the river and the forest and they celebrate that relationship, despite the imposition of an oppressive regime of regulation and control that acts to sever them from their traditional lives. The disruption and division that White (2010) attributes to these systems of control

corroded the integrity of Mi'kmaq communities, such as Flat Bay. The sharing of resources from the land for the greater good of all community members is central to Indigenous identity. Restoration of Indigenous rights to gather food and medicines, as part of the fuller restoration of their relationship to the land, is essential to healing these communities.

However, while Mi'kmaq relationship with land is integral to their identity, it must not be presumed, as Lawrence (2004) and Palmater (2011) argue, that any Indigenous relationship with land must be limited to a form of primordiality. Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, as with all Indigenous people must be free to define how their relationship with land evolves in the years ahead.

#### **5.4 Resistance, Reinscription, and Revitalization: Towards Reconciliation**

In this work, I have focused on a better understanding of how a specific group of people may, both individually and communally, resist oppression and contribute to the revitalization of their Indigenous culture. What I have learned and what I report here reflects my understanding of how Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland are doing that. Many of the situations they encounter are strikingly similar to those experienced by other Indigenous people in Canada. Perhaps, then oppression and resistance can best be understood by examining them as a set of binary systems that exist in a negative relationship. Oppression produces resistance and each responds to the other. Oppressors seldom simply acquiesce to those who would resist them. They most often react brutally and forcefully to destroy any resistance. In contrast, successful resistance is not simply destructive of systems of oppression. Rather resistance must be transformative for, as

Friere (1970) tells us, only the oppressed can free themselves and in doing so they may also free their oppressors.

It is critical to acknowledge that the small sample size must not be seen as fully representative of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. Yet, this in no way diminishes the value of what can be understood from reflecting on the lived experiences of this select group of individuals. Each of them is in key positions of influence and leadership among local Mi'kmaq. Their specific roles, and the close interrelationships that they maintain through organizations such as NAWN, afford them the atypical ability to influence and to shape the revitalization of Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland. Collectively, through their lives and work, they offer a counter-narrative to the dominant discourse that still seeks to erase Indigenous people. The counter-narrative may act against the "common law concept of 'Indian', which, through its pedigree, grants both life and legitimacy to assimilation discourse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries" (MacIntosh, 2009, p. 404).

It is a counter-narrative that follows the teachings of many Indigenous peoples.

Almost every tribe has a concept and often a word that describes "being in a good way" through traditional values. In Ojibwe or Anishnabe the word is *Bimadziwin*, roughly translated as "the good life path." In Cree it's *Miyowichehtowin*, or "having good relations." In Iroquois it's *Shen-nen Kowa*, or "maintaining peace between parties." (PBS, 2014)

Palmater speaks to this when she writes: "Every time my children identify as Mi'kmaq, speak of current issues in the context of our belief system, or participate in our traditions and customs, I feel like I have helped turn this battle [for Mi'kmaw identity] around" (2013, p. 148).

This counter-narrative is critical to the survival of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland and can contribute to the fuller recovery of their nation, for as Friere argues: “it is in speaking their word [counter-narrative] that people, by naming the world, transform it” (1970, p. 88). We can position this counter-narrative as a coherent response to what Friere describes as the “limit-situation” (1970, p. 99). And it is through this counter-narrative that Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland can move from discourse to dialog, for as Friere (1970, p. 89) cautions, discourse in the absence of dialog is in of itself oppressive. Such a dialog is essential if Mi'kmaq are to fully recover their Nation. While, cultural revitalization is essential, to fully recover they must also restore their authority within their traditional territory. That can, perhaps, be most effectively achieved through reconciliation, not only with the dominant settler population but just as critically, within the larger Mi'kmaq Nation, Míkmaq. Moving towards reconciliation requires great courage and “commitment to their cause – the cause of liberation” (Friere, 1970, p. 89).

Yet, just as cultural revitalization acts to produce a counter-narrative to the assimilationist project, there are other counter-narratives that also aim to better the lives of Indigenous people. Palmater (2009, 2010, 2011) explores some of the many legal undertakings whereby Indigenous people seek redress and restoration of their rights and their land. Many First Nations, including Mi'kmaq in Atlantic Canada, are attempting to negotiate forms of self-government through the modern treaty making process. At the same time, Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland have signed a modern treaty, through the AIP. That this is a landless agreement is clearly problematic for efforts to recover all of Míkmaq. And it is also problematic that these should be regarded as competing counter-narratives, which act to sustain the fragmentation of the larger Mi'kmaq nation. The



language that can enter conversations at such time is corrosive and clearly reflective of the lateral violence too common in Indigenous communities and First Nations. Labels such as “born again Indian” and “apple – red on the outside but white on the inside” often emerge at such times. Rather than positioning these various counter-narratives as competing, it is essential that Indigenous leaders find ways to align them as tactical action in a larger strategic project that aims for the restoration of all Indigenous people.

The dynamics of oppression and resistance are complex and nuanced. Attempts to theorize along the models of formal theory may inhibit our understanding of localized and unique conditions. As Clarke (2006) warns us, in our desire to formulate formal theory we risk returning to an objectivist stance that reflects a yearning for some fixed truth. Yet, we must still be willing to reflect on how what has been gleaned from the particular may assist in a richer understanding of the general. In Chapter 6 below, I provide my conclusions and some reflections on how this work can be a useful lens to examine larger questions of oppression, resistance, and identity.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

### **6.1 Towards a General Understanding of Cultural Revitalization as Resistance**

When I began this work I set out to gain an understanding of how Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland intend to define, negotiate, and achieve a successful outcome for their efforts to revitalize their culture and to thus more fully recover their Indigenous identity. Based on my own research and understanding of identity, I knew that I would also need to examine the relationship between individual and communal identity. In the process of conducting my research and analysing my data I recognized that it was essential to examine how oppression and resistance shape outcomes both for the oppressed and their oppressors, since this dynamic shapes the lives of all involved in the complex relationship between settler and Indigenous people in Canada.

If we are to achieve an understanding of the difference that produces the socio-political divide between Newfoundland settlers and Mi'kmaq, we must first establish where we are in relation to one another. Settlers colonized and oppressed Mi'kmaq through marginalization and assimilation. One of their primary food sources, the caribou, was decimated by tourists using the railway built by settlers with no regard to the impact on Mi'kmaq (Jackson, 1993). When we reflect on the various discursive practices that Mi'kmaq use to resist and recover from this oppression, we can begin to grasp how they have positioned themselves in relation to their oppressors. Examining the strategic significance of this positioning is essential to understanding how Mi'kmaq are succeeding in revitalizing their culture and thereby contributing to the restoration of their nation.

*6.1.1 Contestation on the Ground: Mi'kmaq/Settler Relations*

It is important here to reflect on the socio-cultural milieu within which Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland live. Settler Newfoundlanders have a set of myths that frame them as being distinct from other Canadians. There is a level of historic veracity in that Newfoundland resisted becoming part of Canada until 1949. The primary mythos is of the hardy fisherman of English or Irish ancestry who lived a hard-scrabbled life. Having been born and raised in rural Newfoundland, I am all too aware of this common mythology. My European ancestors arrived in Newfoundland in the late eighteenth century and my family stories are replete with experiences representative of this mythical narrative. There are divisions along class lines – merchant versus fisherman, townie versus bayman – but this merely reinforces the dominant model of struggle and hardship against centuries of adversity. There is a comfortable uniformity to this model and in the decades following union with Canada it has been nurtured by those who left to find work in the mainland and exploited by those who stayed behind. Bhabha describes such marginal identities as representing “vernacular cosmopolitanism” (1994, p. xvi). The Newfoundland settlers cling to this newly marginalized identity when they find themselves immersed in the new dominant mythos of mainland Canadians.

The emergence of an alternative Indigenous identity threatens the essential uniformity of settler survival strategy. While they find themselves guarding the boundaries of their social world against incursion from without, they react against any perceived threat within. Mi'kmaq are perceived as such a threat. As Lawrence (2006, p. 15) pointedly claims “contemporary Newfoundland identity resolutely rests on the notion that Newfoundland is their land. To admit Mi'kmaq as Aboriginal would be to risk decentering these strong nationalist beliefs.”

Some settlers will resist such action; decry it as threatening to the status quo – the mythic structure of the dominant cultural motif. DiAngelo (2011) offers keys insight to settler here when he introduces his concept of “white fragility.” In critically examining the whiteness of the dominant settler society he opens up a much needed discussion of the racism inherent in white resistance to Indigenous aspirations. According to DiAngelo (2011, p. 61) white settlers have a “self-perpetuating sense of entitlement because many whites believe their financial and professional successes are the result of their own efforts while ignoring the fact of white privilege.” Mi’kmaq revitalization and resistance to oppression are direct threats to this sense entitlement.

At such moments of resistance, emergent minorities exert “the right to narrate” (Bhabha, 1994, p. xxv); to speak themselves into existence. Here boundaries are being discovered and traversed. They do not simply mark the end of something old but rather illuminate the beginning of something new. For Mi’kmaq, speaking themselves into existence is an act of resistance, of defiance, of separation but more importantly an act of reclamation. With this understanding we can extend the idea of re-inscription beyond gender to the full scope of identity as emergent from culture. Cultural revitalization is in its essence a fuller re-inscription of an authentic Indigenous identity and a purging of the prescribed consciousness produced by oppression.

### *6.1.2 Revitalizing Mi’kmaq Culture: Reclaiming Home through a Counter-Narrative*

If we are to critically evaluate the possibility of Mi’kmaq cultural revitalization, we have to understand the various forms of resistance as a coherent whole. If we view them through the metaphor of culture as home for our identities, we can achieve that understanding. Bachelard (1994, p. 4) writes eloquently of the house as home, “our first universe, a real cosmos.” In

exploring the poetics of physical space, he offers us the opportunity to more fully reflect on how our sense of being is so directly tied to our notion of home. For many of us who have travelled, returning home is not simply to a physical structure, though that may be the focal point; rather, home is much more. *Home* comprises the mental and physical spaces from which our core identity emerges (Butler, 2007). Given this complex relationship of both mental and physical spaces, physical separation from our home is not necessary for a sense of displacement from it. Oppressed people are displaced from their homes even when they remain within the physical boundaries of their land.

This displacement from home is produced by the same prescribed consciousness that robs oppressed people of their authentic identities. When they begin to resist and to overcome their oppression, they also begin to reclaim their home. For Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, this act of reclamation is facilitated by the revitalization of their culture. It is the recovery of community through the collective action of individuals.

The initial act of resistance (Freire, 1970; Alfred and Corntassel, 2005) emerges from the individual's recognition of his/her own oppression. It is the refusal to be defined by the oppressor and the movement to restoration of an authentic identity. For young students, this awakening of consciousness is aided by being taught an accurate history of Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, one that removes the stereotype of invader and mercenary. Artists, like Jerry Evans, are helping to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture by creating critical cultural spaces where individuals can both share and reflect on what it means to be Mi'kmaq. Such generative forms of resistance inform the critical thought that Friere (1970) knows to be essential to the producing the counter-narrative that can help transform discourse into dialog.

Of course, identity is inherently individual *and* communal, and for Mi'kmaq, personal healing and cultural revitalization are closely tied to kinship networks. While these may have been damaged and diminished, they remain an essential part of their culture. The restoration of balanced gender roles that reflect the traditional relationship of respect and honour between women and men is essential for any communal healing. Importantly, organizations such as NAWN and the Bay St. George Cultural Circle are engaged in the critical work to bring people together and to help reconnect them with their authentic identities as Mi'kmaq.

In reflecting on the pattern of resistance explored above, we can see the key threads that are being woven into the fabric of a revitalized Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland. They are reclaiming their home. While these efforts are under way, significant challenges remain; in particular, the recovery of their traditional territory and the fuller restoration of their sacred relationship with the land. Any resolution of land claims, or even initiation of such claims, may well be years away. Nothing is likely to happen in this direction until the resolution of critical issues related to the implementation of the 2008 Agreement in Principle (AIP) through which the Canadian government offered to register the non-status Mi'kmaq under the Indian Act. The potential implications of this are discussed below in *Gaps and Future Work*.

The need to overcome a history of “domination and misrecognition” (Bhabha, 1994, p.52) sits at the heart of Mi'kmaq struggle to survive the liminal moment. They must achieve a discontinuity that fragments the colonial oppression and creates reconciliation with non-Indigenous people. In this work I aimed to further move research on identity construction away from what has long been a Euro-centric model, which excludes the worldview of those who, as Deloria (2001), argues have a different metaphysics. If we accept Deloria's argument, then we must also accept that such metaphysics must also produce both a different ontology (Butler,

2007) and a different epistemology. These differences contribute to the critical divide in understanding that still affects relationships between settlers and Indigenous people. In exploring the efforts to revitalize Mi'kmaq culture in Newfoundland, I am attempting to partially chart the expanse of this divide and to work towards closing it somewhat. When we understand difference, when we acknowledge it in positive terms, we can begin to accommodate it by building understanding and trust.

More important than accommodation is reconciliation. This is not a new concept; yet, it is one that is currently emergent both out of the aftermath of the residential school system, which former Prime Minister Paul Martin recently described as “cultural genocide” (CBC, 2013). For Mi'kmaq, reconciliation would mean acceptance by non-Indigenous people that Newfoundland is traditional Mi'kmaq territory.

## **6.2 Moving Beyond the Particular in Cultural Revitalization and Identity**

Indigenous cultures in Canada are incredibly heterogeneous and anyone who takes the least effort to move beyond the narrow and racist Hollywood stereotypes quickly recognizes this. Yet, when researchers begin to move past a particular understanding of one Indigenous culture and to develop some general observations about Indigenous identity and the impact of oppression, they must do so with considerable caution. As Clarke (2005) and Potter (1966) warn us, we must not confuse our understanding with some greater truth we have encountered out there in the field. However, it is possible for us to extend and enhance our understanding of certain dynamics that are present where oppression and resistance act to shape identity.

The discursive practices of oppression and resistance are not abstract ideas that simply exist in theoretical models but are produced and reproduced in the lived experiences of both

oppressor and oppressed. Where there is oppression there is always, already resistance. People as a whole are not simply docile creatures who comply with oppressors or who fully assume the inauthentic identities that are produced by oppression. This is not to suggest that resistance will always succeed, only to argue that it is an inevitable product of oppression. Knowing this can help us to move beyond asking *if* resistance is present to seeking to understand how it occurs.

### *6.2.1 Liminality and Resistance*

If we are to grasp the transformative impact of liminality we must be aware of how we each relate to the past. For Bhabha (1994), Locke's description of the role of the past in identity is a means of explicating how our sense of self – the 'me' – is directly dependent on the depth that is directly proportional to our sense of our past. It is that cumulative moment of being, emergent from the past, that aids transition through the liminal moment. The transition through the liminal moment is only completed when a new whole is constructed. There is a time of non-being that exists between past and future present.

For many oppressed people, that state of non-being is always already present. The prescribed consciousness forced upon them by their oppressors dehumanizes them and situates them inside a state of non-being, dehumanized, neither fully realized as an Indigenous person nor transformed into the oppressor. They reside at the cusp of a potential liminal moment. It is at this point, as Freire (1970, p. 75) argues, they must "discover through existential experience that their present way of life is irreconcilable with their vocation to become fully human." This liminal moment of discovery often comes through recognition of difference.

As I noted above, Indigenous people are heterogeneous and in this there always can be found the possibility of difference. The awareness of difference can produce ideas of resistance



within oppressed people. All people desire to have good lives if not simply for themselves then for their children and grandchildren. In recognizing and embracing how they are different from their oppressors, people can also begin to recognize and embrace the possibility of resistance (Hall and du Gay, 1996). Since they cannot see themselves as fully realized human beings in the lives of their oppressors, they turn to one another to find that positive representation of their own potential. It is that moment that Anderson (2000) so eloquently describes as “recognition of being.” The individual seeks his/her own identity within a community of others. Embracing the discursive practices of an authentic identity, one shared communally, is inherently a critical act of resistance.

Bhabha’s (1994) description of liminality is useful in trying to understand how Indigenous people may find their way from their colonized state to a more fully realized and liberated state of being. It also affords the opportunity to explore the dynamics that emerge from the tensions inherent in issues of representation. Existence at the cusp of the liminal moment will be sustained so long as the oppressed are not aware that their prescribed consciousness has imposed an inauthentic identity on them. Praxis is achieved when, through reflection, the oppressed become self-aware and through their own awareness that liminal boundary is made visible. At this moment in time they act to shift the dynamic tension between resistance and oppression so as to create a path across that boundary. This disturbance in the dynamic equilibrium, which has held them in a form of stasis, can only be produced by a re-inscribed consciousness that restores a fuller humanity.

### 6.2.2 Hybridity Authenticity, and the Third Space

One significant challenge to assertions of Indigeneity is that many, if not most, Indigenous people in Canada are of mixed ancestry. The more racial label, mixed-blood is often applied in this context whereby notions of blood quantum are employed to determine identity. Lawrence (2004) successfully challenges this notion when she forcefully argues that identity is not simply a matter of blood. It is clear from her work that she would also reject the concept of hybrid identity as a way of describing those who emerge from oppression through resistance. One critical flaw in any argument for hybrid identities is that there is an inherent assumption of a pre-existing racial purity, as if any culture exists in total non-awareness or non-interaction with others.

Yet, if we are to argue for authentic identities being recovered through reinscription we must account for the fact that this process does not suggest that those who succeed do so by first purifying themselves thereby returning to some fully reconstituted *original* identity. Authenticity is not a return to the past; it is a transition to a more fully realized future. We can resolve any misgivings about such an authentic identity that even includes elements imbibed from the oppressor's culture. Certainly, Indigenous people do not seek to abandon the modern tools of technology. Rose's (1996) arguments for infolding describe a form of resistance that allows the oppressed to selectively incorporate aspects of identity while avoiding assimilation. Smith's description of Geronimo driving a car to church is an excellent example of this. (2006, p.21)

Even if we problematize notions of hybrid identity we need not reject the concept of the third space described by Bhabha (1994). Instead, we can understand it as a site in which liminality occurs and authenticity is achieved. The third space can be a threshold between the

domain of the oppressor and a place where oppressed people become fully actualized human beings.

### *6.2.3 Overturning Ideas of the Postcolonial State*

One of the barriers that impede settlers from comprehending or accepting Indigenous ideas of identity is the false belief that Canada is a postcolonial nation. Both King (2004) and Battiste (2004) pointedly reject any arguments for such a claim. That the official relationship between the Canadian government, as representative of the settler population, and Indigenous people is framed and enacted through the Indian Act is in and of itself substantive proof we remain a colonial state. The ongoing failure to resolve the numerous land claims put forward by First Nations add support to this argument.

If we, as settler people, can accept that we remain a colonial nation, it becomes more possible for us to better understand the dynamics of oppression and resistance that shape our relationship with Indigenous people. Only by fully acknowledging our complicity in the ongoing oppression and marginalization of Indigenous people can we begin moving through our own liminal moment. It is the first crucial step we must undertake if we are to achieve the ontological shift that takes us from colonial to postcolonial nation.

### *6.1.3 Final Thoughts*

I never expected that simple and clear answers to the complex situations, which I would encounter through this work, might be developed through my analysis. Rather, my focus has always been to develop a reasonable understanding of Mi'kmaq people in Newfoundland face the challenges to revitalizing their culture. It is inevitably problematic when an outsider, such as I am, conducts research involving a different culture, even when it is a culture with which the

researcher has a familial connection. Language itself, in particular the Euro-centric semantics embedded in academic language, can be problematic for any study of Indigenous people. Yet, in the process of my research, through my interactions with people such as Gertie Mai Muise, I was able to directly address concepts such as subaltern and to understand how life on the ground is always already free of theoretical constraints that once may have been imposed. For Indigenous people, culture does not exist outside as separate for them. They are part of all life and all existence. I have countered this tendency towards abstraction and theory with the words of my participants so that the reader is reminded that people sit at the heart of this work.

Smith (2009, p. 70) pointedly describes those “white people who take an active interest in Indians are not very bright.” Despite this blunt description, Smith also points out that “Indians are at the very center of everything that happened in the Western Hemisphere...over the past five centuries” (2009, p. 71). Given this harsh truth, I would argue it has seldom been more critical that research, which aims to dispel some of the great distortions non-Indigenous people cling to about Indigenous people, should be conducted. As a descendent of a settler population that has continually colonized the Indigenous people in this country since first contact, I believe I have a moral and ethical responsibility to try to dispel some of the myths and outright falsehoods related to what it is to be Indigenous in Canada today. This is not to in any way suggest I speak for Indigenous people. Rather, I would hope those who encounter my work might choose to listen to others more authoritative such as King (2013) and Smith (2009).

Perhaps this was a foolhardy undertaking. King (2012, p. 73) insists “all North America can see is the Dead Indian. All North America dreams about is the Dead Indian.” Living Indians, according to King, are “inconvenient”. This helps to explain the general resistance by the settler population to attempts by First Nations in Canada to remind us that they are still here and that

they have the inherent right to self-determination and to sovereignty on their territories. This includes the right to define what it is to be Indian today despite accusations that they are trying to live in “dream palaces” (Simpson, 2013). What seems to be at issue here is that as non-Indigenous people most of us really do not understand our legal and moral relationship with Indigenous people in Canada. As Smith (2009, p. 10) points out, “everything most people know about Indians is wrong.”

Reflective of the diversity amongst Indigenous peoples, Sylvia Maracle argues for a different approach to understanding this critical relationship than the one described by King. When I attended a cultural safety workshop that Maracle led, she pointed out to those in attendance that Canada is a nation founded on a set of treaties through which settlers gained access to the rich lands occupied for millennia by Indigenous people. Those treaties exist in perpetuity and as such our relationship with Indigenous people makes all of us *treaty people* by default. We cannot choose to enjoy the benefits of living in this country without undertaking to discharge our responsibilities. That these same treaties, along with Indigenous sovereignty, are enshrined in Section 35 of the Canadian constitution (Chartrand et al, 2002) support Maracle’s contention.

The Federal Court ruling, that the Canadian government has under Section 5 of the Constitution responsibility for off –reserve Indians and Métis, has profound implications for the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada.(CBC, 2013) If the ruling stands, it effectively more than doubles the number of recognized Indigenous people in Canada. Essentially, the Indian Act becomes irrelevant as the arbiter of who is Indigenous; something that has always been a fact for Indigenous people.

### 6.3 Gaps and Future Work

This project was not intended to be exhaustive, but exploratory. It aimed to provide a snapshot in time of a people working to revitalize their culture after centuries of colonization, oppression and assimilation. It focuses on the experiences and efforts of some Mi'kmaq in Western Newfoundland to revitalize their culture. They do not act in isolation from the larger Mi'kmaq nation, Míkmaq. In fact, their efforts through the active involvement of elders such as Maggie Paul and Mi'sel Joe help to strengthen their bonds with their extended kin networks. The local Powwow has become part of the Atlantic Provinces Powwow circuit. NAWN is a provincial body that has active membership across the island. They are, in effect, working to rebuild community and to reintegrate themselves into the socio-political fabric of Míkmaq.

Those who assume that after several centuries the possibility of an authentic Indigenous culture being revived in Newfoundland, forget the lessons of history. Oppressed peoples have for centuries resisted and overcome their colonizers. That their cultures were altered, perhaps even transformed in the intervening process, makes them no less authentic. Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland stand within a liminal moment, and there are many more thousands of them than even I imagined when I began this work. That there are some one hundred thousand people who applied to self-identify as Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland has enormous implications for our understanding of the demographic makeup of the province. To state that the political and social implications are significant is an understatement. The mythos of the province is altered in a way that changed what it means to be a Newfoundlander. It complicates notions of provincial identity and in of itself is an important subject for additional research.

One critical gap is the limited interaction with youth. They have unique voices and insights that need to be included in a broader exploration of Mi'kmaq cultural revitalization.

Additionally, a closer examination of the attitudes of settlers in Newfoundland towards Mi'kmaq revitalization would have been useful in gaining a richer understanding of the social worlds and arenas that Mi'kmaq must navigate.

The lack of statistical data on lateral and domestic violence in Indigenous communities on the island of Newfoundland creates a serious gap in the overall analysis of how women and men are each affected by oppression. That this absence also inhibits the work of an organization such as NAWN underscores the critical impact this deficiency for research related to Indigenous communities in the province.

### *6.3.1 Recommended Future Work*

In setting the final scope for this work I made a deliberate choice to focus on the role of culture in identity. This work does not endorse the archaic and exploitive model of past anthropological and sociological work that far too often acted to further fetishize Indigenous people through a narrow understanding of their identities as fully realized human beings. Certainly, that this practice continues at all is decried by many of my key sources (Battiste, 2002, 2004, 2008; King, 2004, 2012; Mihsuah, 2004; Alfred, 2006).

In this work, I have focused on cultural revitalization while acknowledging the inherent political nature of such action. I have not directly examined efforts that are explicitly and overtly political such as efforts to be registered under the Indian Act. Yet, this legal framework impinges on and constrains the lives of all Indigenous people. As such, the Indian Act must be part of any future work in that its continued existence perpetuates Canada's role as a colonial state. The challenge here is to develop a concept of Indigenous sovereignty that accounts for Indigenous ideas of nationhood.

An Agreement in Principle (AIP) between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI) and Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) to allow registration was signed in 2007 and ratified by both parties in 2008. The AIP put in place a process to register an estimated 10,500 Mi'kmaq outside of the Conne River Band and included a two-year timeline for implementation. The key requirement for membership was "a direct relation to an ancestor who was registered with the government as Mi'kmaq in the 1945 census" (CBC, 2008). However, the initial estimate based on existing band membership proved wildly inaccurate.

During the first round over 25,000 applications were received. At first the FNI announced it would proceed with registering those applications that could be processed within the original timeframe. There was considerable consternation amongst those who felt they would be excluded and little faith that the registration process would ever be reopened once the Founders were established. Elder Calvin White (Personal Interview, March 8, 2010) sought a court order that would delay closure of the process in order for all applications to be screened. Another former band chief, Hayward Young publicly supported this move (Western Star, 2010) while his successor Gerard Alexander characterized the delay as unnecessary. "Any other process that would cause further delays is certainly not in the best interest of our peoples" (Western Star, 2010). Alexander's claims seem questionable in that by extending the allowable time, the membership of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation could be more than doubled.

While the court case was still underway it was clear from the FNI website that they felt White had full responsibility for any delays in the formation of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation.

The formation of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band continues to be delayed while the FNI and the Government of Canada wait for the Federal Court of Canada's decision on Calvin White's Court motion seeking an injunction to delay the Band's formation. It is not known when the Federal Court will make its decision. If the Federal Court does



not grant the injunction, the Government of Canada will proceed with band creation as quickly as possible after a decision has been rendered. (FNI, 2011)

White's application to the provincial court was rejected on all points and the registration process was allowed to proceed with the initial approval of some twenty-five thousand applicants (The Georgian, 2011). That this number represents the vast majority of applications received means that the delay caused by White's appeal in fact allowed time for the addition of many thousands of members to the Founder's list than originally anticipated.

The latest published numbers of applicants, for registration under the AIP, now exceed 100,000. If this number holds (even half of it), then the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation will be the largest First Nation in all of Canada. Such an event, by its mere occurrence, transforms our understanding of Newfoundland and must also impact on Canada as a whole. While this nation frames itself as a multi-cultural mosaic, it continually fails to acknowledge that its existence has always been dependent on Indigenous people. We might as King (2013) argues prefer the "Dead Indian" but we cannot refuse to acknowledge the existence of the living Indigenous people across the country.

Additionally, the significance of some 100,000 people choosing to self-identify as Mi'kmaq, in a province that has always seemed to have a clear sense of its own unique identity, must not be dismissed as simply the pernicious act of avariciousness people trying to take advantage of a set of perceived socio-economic benefits. Such a reading is simplistic and superficial. That some may act from such motivation is irrelevant to the larger import this holds both for Newfoundland and Canada.

The federal government and the FNI leadership clearly imagined they would each accrue benefits from the AIP without the political and legal storm that seems to be emerging from the

response to the handling of AIP. The government sought a public relations triumph that they could use to claim they were achieving progress in dealing with Indigenous people. The FNI leadership hoped to proclaim victory through achieving status for a limited number of people. Prior to these recent events, no substantial critique of the agreement had been successfully mounted.

Despite the evident desire of many people to be included in the process, a reading of the AIP points to an underlying issue. The major direct benefactors of the current agreement appear to be the political and administrative leaders in the FNI in that these are the only items explicitly spelled out in detail. While there are some broader benefits that accrue to all members of the new Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation referenced in the document, these will have to be negotiated through budgetary processes followed by the Federal government. Simply put, though those registered may qualify for these benefits, but the extent to which the government will actually fund such programs is uncertain at best.

The continued implementation of the AIP is a significant topic for study. That the leadership of the former FNI should agree to accept an agreement that excludes any possibility of land claims is unprecedented and has implications for other Indigenous people in Canada. It must be understood that this agreement should not be read to mean Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland have given up on land claims. For most of them Newfoundland is unceded territory and land claims have only been deferred, not abandoned. It also critical to recall that for all Mi'kmaq, the island of Newfoundland is unceded territory,

How legal discourses, often informed by the Indian Act and decisions of the Supreme Court of Canada, inhibit and distort Indigenous identity ( Macklem, 2008, Palmater's ,2008, 2009, 2011; MacIntosh, 2009) need to be further explored in the context of Mi'kmaq in

Newfoundland. The “legal concept of ‘Indian’”, as explored by Palmater (2011, p. 7.), need to be further examined in order to understand how this impacts being Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland. Understanding how these discourses also shape political leadership and action within the larger Mi’kmaq nation is equally essential for future work

For Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland the lack of support from political leaders who make up the Grand Council of Mi’kmaq Chiefs, has in the past been a deterrent to their ability to restore their place as full members of the Míkmaq, even though Mi’sel Joe, Chief of Miawpukek Mi’kmaq First Nation, sits as Newfoundland representative on the council. Gertie Mai Muise recently related how a group of Mi’kmaq men were devastated after being ridiculed and rejected when they went seeking support for their claims for recognition as being Mi’kmaq on unceded territory in Newfoundland. (Personal Conversation, January 24, 2014)

I also believe research into non-Indigenous attitudes is of some interest and value and this topic may well form the basis of future research. Such work, however, would be reflective more of questions about the impact on stereotypes surrounding Newfoundland identity in general. The popular stereotypical Newfoundlander is generally viewed as of Irish or English ancestry with no inclusion of Indigenous heritage. Yet, some of the qualities attributed to this persona are more common to Indigenous culture than European. Certainly, communal living and sharing of resources do not match up with the individualism central to settler exploitation within colonies.

Clarke (2005) argues that textual sources may also be included in a grounded theory methodology. These sources may provide insights that address standard criticism of Mi’kmaq claims of Indigeneity in relation to Newfoundland and complement or confirm oral traditions: the apparent absence of archival material that provides textual historical records of their presence here during times of first contact with colonial powers. There is the possibility that there might

be extensive archival material in both Great Britain and France. An extensive examination of such archives could produce critical evidence to support Mi'kmaq claims to Newfoundland as being part of their traditional territory. A more complete understanding of Mi'kmaq identity in Newfoundland can only be achieved through such additional work.

The work of grassroots organizations such as NAWN should also be followed in the future. The socio-economic work of the latter organization holds great potential. My late father, Temple Butler, once said that women would change the world for the better and in NAWN I witnessed clear evidence of this. While gaining the trust of a people who have long been exploited is no easy task, I recommend that a more extensive study be carried out in collaboration with either NAWN or the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation. In particular a quantitative study into domestic and lateral violence involving Indigenous people is an essential study that needs to be undertaken at the earliest possible date.

At the time of this writing there continues to be a rather contentious debate between the public and the Qalipu leadership centred on negotiations between Qalipu and the federal government in reaction to the large number of application for Qalipu membership and status. Hurley (2013) reports: "If the review of the enrolment process of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band results in anything resembling unjust treatment, those who feel they are rightful Indians are preparing for a fight." It appears that Qalipu leaders are willing to reduce the number of accepted applicants, given recent remarks by their chief Brendan Sheppard:

I am pleased that we have reached a supplemental agreement that will address our shared concerns about the enrolment process. This agreement will protect the integrity and credibility of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation by ensuring that only those with a legitimate claim to membership and registration are enrolled. (The Georgian, July 4, 2013)

Given that this level of dispute and contention in the political arena does not seem likely to be easily resolved priority should be given to seeking to work with NAWN.

Still, even modest undertakings can be transformative and two other matters also bear closer study and examination. The introduction of Mi'kmaq Social Studies in the public school system may take a generation to bear fruit but Sexton (2011) already sees a real difference in her students' perceptions of being Mi'kmaq. The Bay St. George Cultural Circle affords access to ceremonial and cultural practices year around, long after the powwow is over. Continued engagement through participant-action research within these two critical areas of socio-economic development and land claims is highly recommended. Such direct experiential and interactive work is highly effective approach for developing a richer understanding of Indigenous culture while avoiding exploitive research practices.

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## **Appendix A: Participant Consent Form**



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**Name of Researcher, Faculty, Department, Telephone & Email:**

C. W. James Butler, Communications and Culture (226) 374-0983 [jcbutler@ucalgary.ca](mailto:jcbutler@ucalgary.ca)

*Supervisor: Dr. Wisdom Tettey*

**Title of Project:**

A Grounded Theory Study of Identity Construction by the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland: Still Colonized?

**Sponsor:**

N/A

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This consent form, a copy of which has been given to you, is only part of the process of informed consent. If you want more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board has approved this research study.

The Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch at the University of Cape Breton has approved this research study.

**Purpose of the Study:**

This purpose of this project is to record and study the implementation of the Agreement in Principle between the Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland and the Government of Canada. The information gathered by the researcher will be used to study how achieving status under the Indian Act impacts the lives of the Mi'kmaq. The research will be further used as part of the requirements for PhD in Culture and Society at the University of Calgary.

**What Will I Be Asked To Do?**

As a member of the Mi'kmaq people of Newfoundland you will be invited to describe your personal experiences and expectations in relation to the implementation of the Agreement in Principle that is intended to allow registration of the Mi'kmaq people as Status Indians. Participants will be asked to be available for periods of up to two hours. As much as possible scheduling will be done at the convenience of participants recognizing that this may mean some people are not able to take part. Where possible, participants will be interviewed only once; however, some participants may be contacted for follow-up interviews. Participation is entirely voluntary and a participant may withdraw from the project at any time, however, data collected will be retained by the researcher and may be used for the stated purposes of the research.

**What Type of Personal Information Will Be Collected?**

You will be asked to share your personal insights and experiences. The range of topics discussed will be determined by you. This information is to be used for my work on a PhD in Culture and Society in which I am studying how a group of people construct a shared identity as Aboriginal people in Canada. With your permission I will record our conversations to help me in my work.

There are several options for you to consider if you decide to take part in this research. You can choose all, some or none of them. Please put a check mark on the corresponding line(s) that grants me your permission to:

<i>I grant permission to be audio taped:</i>	Yes: ___ No: ___
<i>I grant permission to have my age used:</i>	Yes: ___ No: ___
<i>I wish to remain anonymous:</i>	Yes: ___ No: ___
<i>I wish to remain anonymous, but you may refer to me by a pseudonym:</i>	Yes: ___ No: ___
<i>The pseudonym I choose for myself is:</i> _____	
<i>You may quote me and use my name:</i>	Yes: ___ No: ___

**Are there Risks or Benefits if I Participate?**

I expect there are minimal risks related to this project though there is the possibility that through the unstructured interviews you may have an emotional response to topics under discussion. The key benefit here may be your contribution to recording insights important to the larger Mi'kmaq community.

**What Happens to the Information I Provide?**

I will keep the interview notes, drafts and voice recordings in a locked drawer my home office and subsequently they will be stored in a safety deposit box. All research materials will be retained for a minimum of four years and reserved for the sole use of the researcher.

**Signatures (written consent)**

Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to participate as a research subject.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the investigators, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from this research project at any time. You should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Participant's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Participant's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Name: (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Questions/Concerns**

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Mr. C. W. James Butler  
Faculty of Communication and Culture  
University of Calgary  
(709) 646-2959, email [icbutler@ucalgary.ca](mailto:icbutler@ucalgary.ca)

*And*

Dr. Wisdom Tetley, Interim Dean and Professor  
Faculty of Communication and Culture  
University of Calgary  
(403) 220-5885 – email: [tetley@ucalgary.ca](mailto:tetley@ucalgary.ca)

If you have any concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact the Senior Ethics Resource Officer, Research Services Office, University of Calgary at (403) 220-3782; email [rburrows@ucalgary.ca](mailto:rburrows@ucalgary.ca).

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator has kept a copy of the consent form.

