

## Early Mikmaq Presence in Southern Newfoundland: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, c.1500-1763

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# Early Mi'kmaq Presence in Southern Newfoundland: An Ethnohistorical Perspective, c.1500-1763

CHARLES A. MARTIJN

## INTRODUCTION

COMPARED WITH MI'KMAQ studies elsewhere, scholarly interest in Newfoundland Mi'kmaq ethnohistory was slow to develop. Of the four Native groups which frequented Newfoundland during the historic period, the Beothuk have been the subject of a monumental monograph (Marshall 1996). In contrast, details relating to two others, the Innu (Montagnais) and the historic Inuit, whose range formerly extended into the western and northern regions of the island, constitute largely forgotten ethnohistorical chapters (Martijn 1990, 2000). Likewise, persistent preconceptions and an apparent scarcity of documentary sources dampened curiosity about the Mi'kmaq presence. Only bits and pieces of published information can be gleaned from nineteenth-century historians (Prowse 1895), geologists (Howley 1915, Jukes 1842), explorers (Cormack 1928), sportsmen (Millais 1907), as well as from various accounts by government officials, churchmen, and private individuals. During a brief visit in 1914, Speck (1922), an anthropologist, carried out limited ethnographic and ethnohistorical inquiries, but more than 60 years passed before Upton (1977) and Pastore (1977) decided to undertake systematic archival work.

History books have long promulgated the received wisdom that the Beothuk constituted the only permanent Native residents of Newfoundland at the time of European contact, designated here as the beginning of the sixteenth century (e.g., Briffett 1949: 47-48, 52). According to this view, the Mi'kmaq were later arrivals from a homeland in the continental Maritime provinces, first brought to the island

by the French in the eighteenth century, to serve as mercenaries against the British and to exterminate the Beothuk (Bartels 1979).

Over the past two decades, new data retrieved from archival records, as well as a re-evaluation of published sources and Native oral tradition, have substantially modified the above perception. The initial impetus for these research projects was provided, in 1973, by a formal commitment on the part of the federal government of Canada to deal with outstanding Native land claims across the country. Beginning in 1978, it led the Miawpukek Mi'kamawey Mawi'omi (Conne River Band Council) and the Federation of Newfoundland Indians to commission a series of ethnohistorical and juridical studies on which to base their land claims (Bartels 1988: 32). These studies were supplemented by independent academic contributions in the form of publications and theses.<sup>1</sup> Regrettably, however, this documentary data base is currently being analyzed and served up in a litigation-oriented research setting, *Crown vs. Mi'kmaq*. Such an adversarial context inevitably leads to the intrusion of contractual partisan positions into the debate, making it difficult to draw a consistent clear line between advocacy and detached objective interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

With the passing of time, as additional data accrue, another generation of scholars is bound to peruse the accumulated accounts anew in order to develop fresh insights. One primary objective should be an improved understanding of the adjustments made over time by Mi'kmaq hunters to their settlement/subsistence strategies in Newfoundland. In addition, special attention ought to be directed to Newfoundland Mi'kmaq genealogy and historical family linkages with the mainland. Individual community histories also merit more detailed consideration. One hopes, as well, for a rigorous attempt to explore and comprehend what factors combine to create a perceived absence of proof for early Mi'kmaq presence on the island. We need to progress beyond the facile belief that there somehow exists a complete and objective record of past historical events against which every datum can be securely measured for confirmation or rejection.

The discussion presented here is based to a large extent on recently updated ethnohistorical documentation. The intention is not, however, to provide an exhaustive overview of the available data but to explore a range of associated topics. It should be underlined that the nature of the historical Mi'kmaq presence in southern Newfoundland ought to be examined and understood in terms of Native subsistence practices, whether traditional or post-contact, and not solely in terms of Eurocanadian notions of effective settlement. 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. 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.

In short, reasonable demonstration of land use in the context of aboriginal subsistence practices, whether in the form of seasonal, concurrent, rotational, or opportunistic utilization, should receive formal recognition for the purpose of land title and/or aboriginal rights claims. A farmer who allows a field across the road to lie fallow for a time does not thereby lose his proprietary rights. When exploiting the resources of their homeland for sustenance, the eastern Mi'kmaq engaged in a comparable approach, though on a much broader scale and for more varied reasons.

#### DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH PROBLEMS

Because of circumstances which have not always been clearly set out, there are few substantial documentary accounts of Native lifeways in Newfoundland during the contact period. Unfortunately, in the case of the Mi'kmaq, there has been a tendency in some quarters to automatically interpret scarcity of evidence as signifying the absence of the Mi'kmaq at an early date. Such an assumption should not be left unchallenged. The absence of proof does not *invariably* constitute proof of absence. Unless this trite warning is heeded, ethnohistorians risk getting caught up in a corrosive mind-set of legalistic phraseology, litigation wordplay, and the finality of court judgements, instead of continuing to probe, to ponder and to periodically re-evaluate the data, as they should.

The historical record is always fragmentary, selective, and biased. We must therefore evaluate sources carefully. Can any of the data be quantified? What is their particular nature? To what extent are they likely to contain credible information on a specific subject? Might there be reasons for doubting their reliability? Are there any known gaps in the time period covered by these records? Do they merely represent a sample of a voluminous class of documents? Has there been a tendency for reliance on only some categories of relevant records to the neglect of others? More systematic attention should also be accorded to preconceptions, hidden agendas, and incomprehension.

What accounts for the lack of detailed ethnographical information in early documents relating to Newfoundland? With the exception of the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, Placentia Bay and adjoining areas on the south coast, the migratory European fishing population in Newfoundland was initially concentrated along the east and north coasts and in the Strait of Belle Isle, during the summer. For obvious reasons, attention remained turned to the sea, rather than inland. Unless hostile relations prevailed, as with the Inuit in the Northern Peninsula, business or administrative documents generated by the fishing industry contain only the briefest references to local Native people. A striking example are the Beothuk, for whom, with two or three minor exceptions, descriptive accounts of any substance are lacking from 1500 through 1768 (Marshall 1996).

In contrast to the St. Lawrence valley, the Maritime provinces and New England, Newfoundland's interior remained substantially unexplored until the nineteenth century. The writings of John Guy, John Mason or Richard Whitbourne do not compare in scope and content with the lengthy reports produced elsewhere in the northeast by explorers, settlers, missionaries and administrators such as Jacques Cartier, Marc Lescarbot, Samuel de Champlain, Nicolas Denys, the Jesuit Fathers and Recollet priests. Indeed, early church records relating to Native people in Newfoundland are almost nonexistent. No missions were ever established among the Beothuk. With the exception of Plaisance and adjoining regions in 1704, and of the French islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon beginning in 1764, not until the nineteenth century did ecclesiastical authorities institute specific measures to serve local Mi'kmaq and Montagnais families (Casgrain 1897: 261 n.1; Martijn 1996e). Nor did Newfoundland ever rank among the prime fur-producing regions in eastern Canada. Combined with a low indigenous population density, this factor inhibited the local development of extensive Native trade contacts, like those that took place in the mainland Maritime provinces, along the Quebec north shore and throughout the St. Lawrence River valley. In addition, while instances are known of shipwrecked or runaway sailors electing to go and live among Native groups in Newfoundland and Labrador, no detailed records of their experiences have been preserved (Marshall 1996: 33).<sup>3</sup> Much of the inland territory that served as a principal focus for Mi'kmaq subsistence and land use activities in southern Newfoundland remained almost unknown to Eurocanadians for several centuries.

As late as 1705, the governor of Plaisance, de Subercase, informed the French king that "I hope next year to send you more detailed news about the extent of the lands where nobody has ever been, nothing being known except for a league or two at most all along the sea" (1705: 32; free translation). The Jesuit historian, Charlevoix, in his famous *History and General Description of New France* of 1744, for which he consulted an impressive array of documents, remarked on the conflicting information available about Newfoundland: "nor do writers better agree as to the native inhabitants of Newfoundland, than on the character of the interior of the country. From the expressions used by some historians, they led us to infer that they believed it inhabited; but according to the more common opinion, it is not inhabited by any sedentary nation" (Shea 1900, III: 144). On the Bellin map of 1743, which was used to illustrate Charlevoix's volume, the southern part of Newfoundland has written across it: "The interior of the island & the course of the rivers are unknown". Until 1768, the cartography of Newfoundland was restricted to coastal areas, with the interior often left blank (Seary 1971: 15). Significantly, Thomas Kitchin's map of 1762 was entitled "A New Map of the only useful and frequented part of Newfoundland" and the interior bears the legend: "The inland parts of this Island are entirely unknown".<sup>4</sup> James Cook's 1768 map has a note written across the northeastern interior which reads: "This river and Lake Mickmack are laid down by Cook from the authority of the Mickmack Indians", while a similar

observation occurs on the 1770 chart of Newfoundland by Lieutenant William Parker (Martijn 1996c: 45). John Cartwright recorded his visit to the interior in 1768 but no other maps showed the hinterland until 1822, when Cormack illustrated his journey across Newfoundland on foot (Seary 1971: 15).

Another problem faced by researchers is that many of the earliest accounts do not identify Native groups by name, and one is left with the task of attempting to do so on the basis of scanty clues provided by cultural traits and geographical location (Quinn 1981: 1-9). Not surprisingly, in many instances, little can be gleaned from these historical sweepings. The literature is replete with misreadings and the false suppositions derived from them. Attempts at evaluating the reliability of certain secondary historical accounts often end up in frustration because the original sources on which they are based cannot be determined, or else geographical indications are lacking, or precise chronology neglected. In yet other instances, outdated, erroneous, and even fabricated information continued to be repeated for decades. Finally, the ethnohistorian can only bemoan the sparing attention devoted to Native matters by so many early writers and the countless opportunities that were missed for noting information on specific questions which today animate scholarly discussion. In one of the tracts which Richard Whitbourne produced about Newfoundland during the 1620s he (mistakenly) remarked that “on the East and South side of the Land, where the English doe fish ... there is not the least signe or appearance that euver there was any habitation of the Sauages, or that they euver came into those parts, to the Southward of Trinity Bay; of which I could also giue some reasons, if it were not a thing needless to trouble this discourse withal” (Cell 1982: 149).

Ethnohistorians must carefully analyze all categories of documents that are of possible relevance to Native groups in Newfoundland; select those which appear to refer to the Mi'kmaq; draw inferences from circumstantial evidence wherever necessary and buttress these with detailed justifications. We need to supplement this data, whenever possible, with Native oral tradition and other potential sources of information, such as archaeology, ancient maps, iconography, toponymy, linguistic and genealogical data; and to place this entire body of evidence in an historical context. Presumptions must be clearly articulated and identified, so that they are amenable to critical evaluation. Insights from recent scholarly syntheses should be used to bolster a variety of interpretations and thereby to broaden our overall perspective. In essence, ethnohistorians (and historians) are not mere collectors of facts; we expect them to use their imaginations creatively and to engage in reasoned conjectures about past events. Fact and speculation are each part and parcel of our thought processes.

Finally, a point which merits constant reiteration and reflection: the written documentation about aboriginal groups in Canada derives almost exclusively from persons of European origin who introduced their own particular cultural slant on Native affairs and historical events. Rarely do the earlier records present us with a Native point of view. As outsiders, we must therefore pay particular attention to this

rare evidence when it survives, while remaining constantly alert to the possible contributions which oral tradition and contemporary Native perceptions can make in reshaping our understanding of the past. For example, following this line of inquiry, an ancient Mi'kmaq link with Newfoundland is suggested by the fact that in a number of traditional stories Gluskap, their mythical culture hero, counted this island among his hunting territories (Harald Prins, pers. comm. 2000).

### MI'KMAQ LAND USE AND SUBSISTENCE PRACTICES

At contact time, the Mi'kmaq, an eastern Algonquian people, exploited the resources of a vast homeland, called by them *Mi'kma'kik*, which bordered the lower half of the Gulf of St. Lawrence (Clermont 1986: 12; Pacifique 1927: 111; Prins 1996: 1). This homeland (Figure 1) covered portions of the Gaspé Peninsula and the Quebec middle north shore, New Brunswick and Maine, all of Prince Edward Island and mainland Nova Scotia, as well as Cape Breton Island, the Magdalen Islands, the islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, and as shall be argued here, parts of southern Newfoundland (Martijn 1986, 1989, 1996b,d,e; Prins 1988).<sup>5</sup> Because of boundary fluctuations through time, the exact area of this traditional territory cannot be precisely calculated but it may have covered as much as 122,000 square kilometers. European colonial powers in the eighteenth century eventually split up *Mi'kma'kik*, apportioned it to different international and colonial jurisdictions, imposed regional passports, and erected new political boundaries which raised barriers against internal Native movement. It is difficult for us to realize today that the Mi'kmaq once had a unified vision of this traditional homeland, whose eastern sector constituted a domain of islands linked, not separated, by stretches of water, like the Cabot Strait, which served as connecting highways for canoe travel (Martijn 1989).

Scholars do not agree on the size of pre-contact Mi'kmaq population before it was devastated by European-introduced epidemics. A moderate estimate puts their numbers somewhere between 6,000 and 15,000, based on the carrying capacity of the available food resources within their territory, and on the state of their technology (Clermont 1986: 13-15; Nietfeld 1981: 393; Prins 1996: 26-27).

An extensive and indented coastline allowed for easy access to a rich array of aquatic fauna — seals, walrus, porpoises, small whales, various fresh and saltwater fish, eels, waterfowl, and invertebrates (clams, mussels, etc.) — which abound in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and along the Atlantic Ocean shore. Not surprisingly then, the Mi'kmaq were highly maritime-adapted. Nevertheless, especially during the winter months, they also depended on various types of terrestrial mammals, primarily moose, caribou, deer, black bear, beaver, porcupine, hare and other small game, in addition to partridge and grouse. Several kinds of berries, and also nuts, supplemented the diet. The countryside was largely covered with a mixed forest of

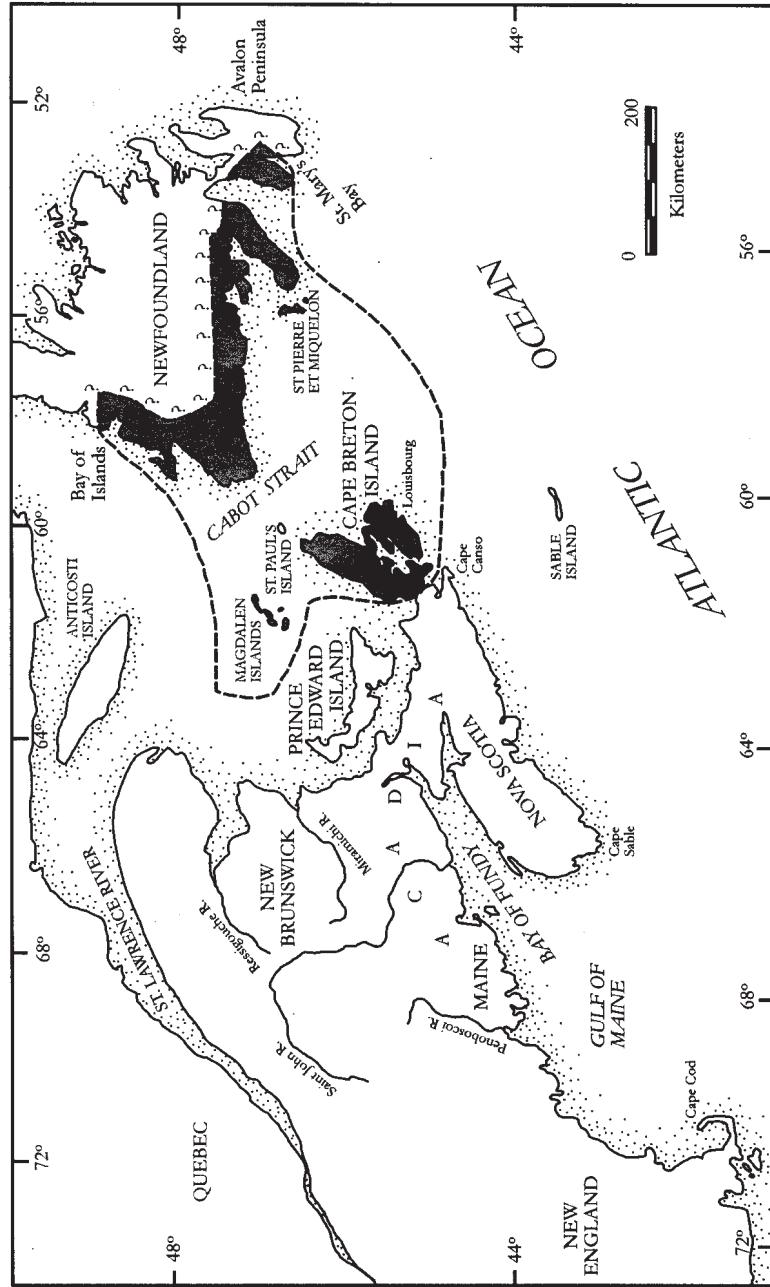


Figure 1. The eastern Mi'kmaq domain of islands (shaded).



deciduous and coniferous trees, with stretches of marshlands, meadows and upland taiga, as well as being dotted and transected by innumerable lakes, streams and rivers. Diversity of environmental conditions and regional differences in the distribution of faunal resources within their traditional Mi'kmaq homeland probably affected human adaptive patterns to a greater extent than we once assumed. Archaeologists and ethnohistorians are now focusing more intensely on evidence for regional variability within the prehistoric Mi'kmaq settlement-subsistence system, as well as on the changes that took place in post-contact times (Burke 2003: 42-44).

The basic social unit of Mi'kmaq society was the extended family, that is to say an extended family to which various individual relatives were attached, such as grandparents, unmarried or widowed aunts, uncles and cousins, and even adopted persons. A number of these families formed a local band, the members of which habitually came together somewhere on the coast during the summer, but commonly split up again when its component family units departed elsewhere for winter hunting. Band membership was fluid and people could join up or leave whenever they considered it convenient. Alliances between bands were maintained through intermarriage, a practice which assured cultural cohesion and promoted ethnic identity. Usually, the most respected of the male family heads would serve as band chief. However, such a person had no real coercive power and depended on persuasion and force of character to lead the group. He dealt with the settling of disputes, the annual designation of hunting territories, the distribution of food resources, and other community matters. Beyond that there was no overarching political structure, although there is some evidence for the later eighteenth-century historical development of a *santa mawitomi*, or grand council composed of seven district chiefs, headed by a *kjisaqmaw* or grand chief. This body would meet during the year to discuss and decide on important matters of common interest, such as warfare and peace treaties (Prins 1996: 32-35).

The Mi'kmaq were semi-sedentary hunters, fishermen and gatherers. A short growing season did not favour extensive horticultural activities as a viable subsistence strategy, except for garden plots. As foragers, they were very knowledgeable about exploiting different ecological habitats within their homeland, adapting themselves to the growth cycles of the vegetation cover and the seasonal behaviour of the game on which they depended. In the early 1600s, Marc Lescarbot described them as "vagabonds, without agriculture, never stopping longer than five or six weeks in a place" (Thwaites 1959, I: 83-85). Marked regional differences in the distribution and availability of faunal resources, including fur animals, meant that the Mi'kmaq moved about a great deal in their quest for nourishment and shelter, particularly in winter when the band would split up into smaller family units.<sup>6</sup> During the summer, however, band members might congregate for weeks or even months at favourable fishing locations such as river mouths where food supplies were sea-

sonally plentiful (Clermont 1986: 19-25; Nietfeld 1981: 306-384; Passchier 1985: 47-57; Prins 1996: 27-30; Wicken 1994: 40-76).

To sum up, the Mi'kmaq needed to make continual adjustments to their seasonal rounds in response to various other factors, environmental as well as social. These included temporary declines in animal populations due to natural cyclical fluctuations or to overhunting, unfavourable snow conditions for running down big game, ice storms, forest fires, occasional droughts, variations in sea water temperature affecting the reliability of spring fish runs, human population pressure, conflict with other groups, and so on. Any such factor, or a combination of them, could mean hardship for particular Mi'kmaq bands and families, if it led to a scarcity of food supplies (Nietfeld 1981: 360-363).

#### ALTERNATING FORAGING STRATEGY

Today, none of us really know what it was to live “on the country” centuries ago, and we are only dimly aware of what kind of short and long term problems Native people continually faced, and how they went about making decisions, when attempting to resolve them. One way in which we can try to understand the past behaviour of people is to create theoretical explanatory models. I propose, as an hypothesis, that when faced with subsistence crises, Mi'kmaq bands turned to an *alternating foraging strategy* and temporarily extended their hunting, fishing and gathering activities to adjoining geographical districts, in order to supplement a variety of needs. This foraging model might take several forms. *Seasonal* foraging would be the exploitation by band members of available resources in a series of annual displacement rounds within a given territory, marked by occasional ventures outside it. In *concurrent* foraging, segments of the same band would exploit resources from more than one given district at the same time on a short term basis. *Rotational* foraging would involve the abandonment of a given territory for an adjoining one on a long term basis, possibly a period of several years. Finally, *opportunistic* foraging might, for example, involve band segments profiting from an unexpected bounty provided by the beaching of whales.

Samuel de Champlain depicted the Mi'kmaq in 1604 as “a people ... with no fixed abode; for they winter now in one place, now in another, wherever they perceive that chase for wild animals is best” (Biggar 1922-1936, III: 358-359). Father Barthelemy Vimont related in 1645 how a Mi'kmaq group in the Nepisiguit region of New Brunswick

had much to suffer at the beginning of last Winter ... They had selected their hunting district very far within the forest, hoping there to meet better success. They had intended to lay in a supply of Salmon; but the frost forestalled, and closed the rivers, which quickly reduced them to want. They subsisted as best they could until Advent,

when they found themselves completely destitute of provisions. They searched and hunted everywhere without finding anything but a few Porcupines, and that very seldom (Thwaites 1959, XXVIII: 25, 27).

The Sieur de Diereville also reported on such foraging practices within Acadia where he observed, in 1708, that “when they are in a district where Game and Wild-fowl are to be found, they remain so long as there are any left; when almost all have been killed, and the pot is no longer as full as it should be, they go elsewhere in search for better hunting” (Webster 1933: 172).

According to this model, the size of specific land areas used by Mi'kmaq groups underwent cycles of expansion and contraction. Depending on circumstances, and on the political situation of the moment, they exploited different parts of their territorial domain in an alternating fashion — on a seasonal, concurrent, rotational or even opportunistic basis. Relying on an analysis of primary historical sources, one scholar has suggested that rather than having fixed family hunting territories, which many researchers now believe only became a feature during the fur trade period, Mi'kmaq families traditionally employed an allotment system “whereby the hunters assembled in the fall (and spring?), and agreed among themselves, with or without intervention of chief or council, where they would hunt during the winter” (Prins 1988: 265).

It is from such a Native perspective that we should consider the land use of southern Newfoundland by the Mi'kmaq, starting perhaps already in prehistoric times. A case study is that of the eastern Mi'kmaq who, in historic times, as attested to by documentary evidence, ranged over a domain of islands which included Cape Breton, the Magdalens, St. Pierre and Miquelon, and southern Newfoundland (Martijn 1989). A tantalizing hint to this effect is provided by the declaration, in 1642, of a Dutch merchant called Dircq Hensse, stating that he had traded with an Amerindian (named Travas?) who said that he was “King of the aforesaid Island of Cape Breton and several others” (1642: 41).

The following episode is offered as an example of the foraging model formulated above. In 1597, Captain Charles Leigh of the *Hopewell* sailed to the Magdalen Islands and became involved in a confrontation with four French Basque and Breton ships. He reported that “there were also in readiness to assault us about 300 Savages” (Quinn 1979, IV: 69-70). No reference to this particular incident occurs elsewhere. This raises a number of questions. These Amerindians are unlikely to have been permanent residents. What had drawn them more than 97 kilometers across open water to this distant archipelago? Presuming that the group included dependents, such a large concentration of Mi'kmaq must have constituted a traditional summer band. While it is possible that the presence of European vessels may have served as a commercial or even short term labour attraction, the Magdalen Islands are never mentioned in French notarial acts as a destination for fur trading. This factor seems therefore negligible as an incentive for undertaking such a long,

risky voyage. A more likely explanation would be that coastal aquatic resources elsewhere, such as herring and mackerel runs, had been poor during the spring of that year (as happened periodically), thereby creating hardship, particularly so if the preceding winter hunt had been poor for other reasons. By crossing over to the Magdalens for the summer months, these Mi'kmaq families would have been able to support themselves on a variety of fish and seal species, rabbits, waterfowl and shellfish in the lagoons, eggs from nesting colonies of birds, and the walrus herds (Dumais and Rousseau 1986: 81-95). Significantly, the French king, on three separate occasions during the eighteenth century, when granting concessions to Eurocanadian entrepreneurs, formally recognized Mi'kmaq hunting and fishing rights on the Magdalen Islands (Martijn 1996d).<sup>7</sup> Since these activities were unrelated to the fur trade or to military affairs, however, they did not attract much attention and specific details about such subsistence visits are therefore rare. In other words, the Mi'kmaq who exploited the resources of the Magdalen Islands remain practically invisible during the post-contact period, and early authors such as Jacques Cartier, Samuel de Champlain and Nicolas Denys, who all visited and described this archipelago, never mention a Native connection.

Cape Breton provides additional insights. Documentary sources pertaining to the seventeenth century, including census reports, show that between 1603 and 1713 there were a series of marked fluctuations in the Mi'kmaq population of this island. The available information is at times contradictory and it remains uncertain whether each instance can be taken at face value. The Miller Atlas of c. 1520-1521 depicts the inland Bras d'Or area as a "terra de muyta gemte", that is to say "a land of many people" (probably on the basis of data provided by the Portuguese explorer João Fagundes) (Ganong 1964: 49, 53). In 1593 and 1597, summer encounters were recorded at Cape Breton between local Natives and crew members of English ships, with the latter learning that the Mi'kmaq name for the Magdalen Islands was Menquit (Quinn 1979, IV: 61-62, 71).<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Champlain affirmed in 1603 that the Mi'kmaq only overwintered on Cape Breton, while Brother Gabriel Sagard stated in 1624 that "as I am told, savages are seldom seen there" (Biggar 1922-1936, I: 170; Wrong 1939: 36). A decade later, however, a Jesuit missionary, Julien Perrault, described the local Native population as being better off than in many other places. During the winter they could depend on moose, while in the summer they caught fish and hunted wildfowl both on land and sea (Campeau 1987: 116-117). In 1642, Dirck Hensse, a Dutch trader, obtained 500 beaver skins and 200 moose hides there, while in 1659 a Jesuit missionary, Jerome Lalemant, stated that "for its size [Cape Breton] is well peopled with savages" (Hensse 1642: 41; Thwaites 1959, XLV: 59). Nevertheless, 13 years later, Nicolas Denys made a declaration which illustrates some striking parallels with an actual crossing over to Newfoundland recorded in 1705. Writing in 1672, he remarked that Cape Breton "has also been esteemed for the hunting of moose. They were found formerly in great numbers, but at present they are no more. The Indians have destroyed every-

thing, and have abandoned the island, finding there no longer the wherewithal for living” (Ganong 1908: 186-187). Interestingly enough, this observation coincides with a series of English reports from southeastern Newfoundland about a Mi'kmaq presence there during the 1670s. Sixteen years later, the Gargas census of 1688 listed 34 Mi'kmaq families who were again established at two locations on Cape Breton, for a total of 129 persons, and in June 1696, Father Jean Baudoin encountered 30 Native families at Sydney (Morse 1935, 1: 149, Williams 1987: 173). Moreover, after the island had been progressively deserted by them during 1705 and 1706, a census by Father Pierre de La Chasse (1708) two years afterwards enumerated 196 Mi'kmaq persons living on Cape Breton. When, in 1713, France took over Cape Breton in accordance with the Treaty of Utrecht, 25 to 30 Mi'kmaq families were accounted for (Saint-Ovide de Brouillon 1713: 11).

Although no direct proof can be advanced to show that these absences were linked to a presence elsewhere, they are consistent with the rotational foraging pattern discussed above. In each instance a number of Mi'kmaq families apparently leave Cape Breton Island to cross over to other parts of their island domain, including southern Newfoundland. These Mi'kmaq families undertook such migrations of their own volition, for subsistence reasons, and not due to inducement or recruitment by the French.

The fur trade undoubtedly gave an added impetus to what was already an ingrained pattern of rational decision making, when coping with the challenges of daily existence. This is attested to by an incident which took place, around 1755, on Cape Breton Island. Some eastern Mi'kmaq hunters protested to their French missionary Father Pierre Maillard, when he pressured them to become more sedentary: “Why should it be disapproved of for us to leave these lands to go and overwinter in other places, where we cannot fail to find abundant things on which to subsist, and where our earnings from fur trapping will be well beyond that which we need to pay our debts” (Maillard 1863: 366; free translation). The missionary specifically mentioned voyages to Newfoundland as examples of such alternating Mi'kmaq movements.

## MI'KMAQ SEAFARING SKILLS

The traditional Mi'kmaq ranked among the most accomplished Amerindian seafarers in northeastern North America (Beck 1959, Marshall 1986). Communication within their vast territory was facilitated by the use of birchbark canoes. They constructed several types to serve under different conditions, while travelling on small inland streams, on large rivers, in coastal zones or across stretches of open water. The sea-going canoe, used for long distance travel whether going to war or for hunting seals and porpoises, might measure as much as 28 feet in length. It could transport entire families, with all their baggage.<sup>9</sup>

Some commentators have expressed doubts about the ability of the Mi'kmaq, during prehistoric and early contact times, to regularly undertake the dangerous crossing of the Cabot Strait in birchbark canoes. The risks incurred during the course of such voyages should certainly not be minimized and it is evident that they would only be carried out under optimum weather conditions. Clearly the Mi'kmaq and their ancestors must have developed considerable navigation skills and they no doubt possessed a great store of traditional knowledge, much of it now unfortunately lost, about tides, currents, winds, stars, weather patterns and coastal approaches. A number of historical accounts testify to this. Father Maillard left the following reminiscence of an open water canoe trip in their company:

They often incur great risks, when undertaking considerable trips in their frail canoes, of four, five, six or sometimes seven leagues [up to 50 km] in order to go from one shore to another. However, they are not the type of people to expose themselves rashly to danger. I know all the precautions which they take to make these crossings, having been obliged many times to embark with them for such a purpose; such crossings are never undertaken unless it is calm, with canoes which have been carefully inspected and tested beforehand to detect the places where they might perhaps have taken in water.

The further one draws away from the land which one has just left, the harder one strives to paddle in order to get halfway across as soon as possible. When this point is reached, and one remarks that the wind is rising and blowing from a side direction, or completely head on, one does not stop paddling with the same energy, in the hope of thus reaching the land which lies in front, before the increasing wind can prevent it. If one only sees calm, after having reached midpoint, one continues paddling, but with much less vigour than before; one smokes, one sings, one tells stories, one eats if there is anything to be eaten (Maillard 1863: 408-409; free translation).

On another occasion, in 1704, Father Antoine Gaulin was transported in a canoe, from Cape Breton Island to Placentia by some Mi'kmaq warriors. He had fortunately declined a prior invitation to go there on board of a French bark which perished on the way over with all nine crewmembers (Casgrain 1897: 260-261).

Additional testimonials to Mi'kmaq ability in traversing open water can be cited. A Jesuit missionary, Hierosme Lallemant, marvelled in 1659 that "it is wonderful how these Savage mariners navigate so far in little shallops, crossing vast seas without compass, and often without sight of the sun, trusting to instinct for their guidance" (Thwaites, XLV: 65). In 1744, the Jesuit historian, Father Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix, related that "they do not hesitate to paddle their bark canoes thirty or forty miles by sea" (Shea 1900: 265). A British army officer expressed admiration for "the Indians about Nova Scotia and the Gulf of St. Lawrence [who] have frequently passed over to Labrador, which is thirty to forty leagues, without a compass, and have landed at the very spot they first intended" (Rogers 1765: 209). An English naval officer, Edward Chappell, subsequently en-

visioned how, after having been granted a tract of land in Newfoundland, a group of Mi'kmaq from Cape Breton Island ventured forth, and “boldly launched out to sea in their own crazy shallows or canoes, they eventually reached St. George’s Bay in safety ... without compass or chart, they are not perplexed in traversing the most boisterous seas” (1818: 76-77).

Most significantly, archaeological research on the Magdalen Islands has revealed that during prehistoric times, over a period of several millennia, voyages took place between them and Cape Breton, and perhaps Prince Edward Island as well (McCaffrey 1988). Some undated prehistoric sites containing lithic objects made from chert and rhyolite, most likely deriving from Nova Scotia and the Shick Shock Mountains in the Gaspé Peninsula, have been found on the southwest coast of Anticosti Island (Chalifoux 2004; Kidder and Tuck 1972: 89). Mi'kmaq oral tradition also provides detailed descriptions of canoe crossings from Cape Breton to Newfoundland, using St. Paul’s Island in the Cabot Strait as a stopover point (Speck 1922: 119-120).

It seems clear that Mi'kmaq technological capacity and the seafaring skills necessary for traversing the Cabot Strait and other vast stretches of open water were acquired far back in time. From the mid-1500s, the Mi'kmaq rapidly learned how to handle European shallows, while continuing to make widespread use of their canoes until the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### MI'KMAQ IN SOUTHERN NEWFOUNDLAND: THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY

The sixteenth-century French exploration literature contains hints of an early Mi'kmaq presence in southern Newfoundland (Figure 2). Despite their scanty nature, these observations should not be overlooked or cavalierly dismissed as isolated bits of unreliable hearsay, but accorded close scrutiny. Furthermore, they make little sense unless treated from an anthropological perspective. The oldest reference to a possible presence of Mi'kmaq there occurs in the third volume of a collection of travel literature published in 1556 by Giovanni Battista Ramusio, a reputable Italian scholar (Hoffman 1963: 2-10; Parks 1967: 35). It includes an account, by an unnamed author, of several voyages to different parts of the world, including Newfoundland, apparently made during the second and third decades of the sixteenth century by Jean and Raoul Parmentier of Dieppe. Most authorities believe this account, entitled *Discorso D'un Gran Capitano*, to be the work of the cosmographer Pierre Crignon, a close friend of the Parmentier brothers. It reads in part:

From the said Capo di Ras [Cape Race] the coast runs east and west 100 leagues to Capo di Brettoni [Cape Breton] ... Between Capo di Ras and Capo di Brettoni [pre-



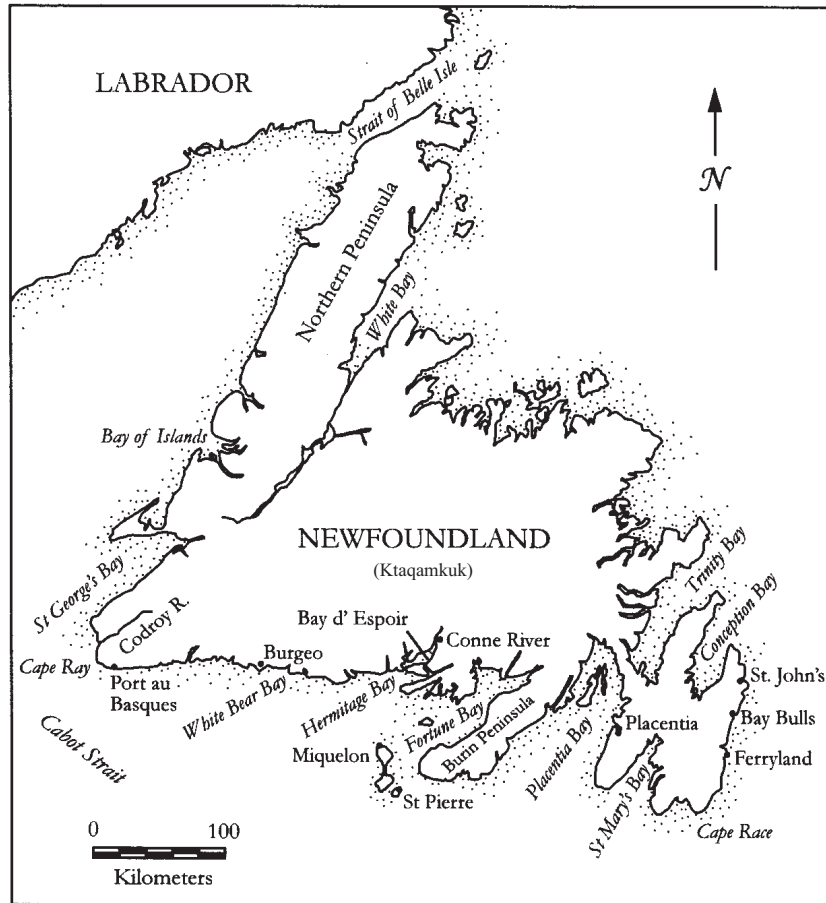


Figure 2. The island of Newfoundland, with places mentioned in the text.

sumably on the south coast of Newfoundland] live a cruel and austere people, with whom it is impossible to deal or to converse. They are of large stature, dressed in the skins of seals and other savage animals tied together, and are marked by certain lines made by applying fire to their faces, and are as if striped with a colour between black and brown [with tattoos or face decorations] (Hoffman 1963: 13-14).

Crignon then goes on to describe a second Native group in Newfoundland, along its east and north coasts, which could be the Beothuk:<sup>10</sup>

On the coast running north and south above Capo di Ras, as far as the entrance to the [Golfo di] Castelli [or Strait of Belle Isle] — there are great gulfs, large rivers and nu-



merous large islands. This land is more sparsely inhabited than the before-mentioned coast, and the inhabitants are smaller, more humane, and friendlier than the others (Hoffman 1963: 14).

It is impossible to say whether the Parmentier brothers themselves had met these Native peoples — but, if not, there was certainly no lack of fishermen informants in both regions. Indeed, by that time, the area around St. Pierre and Miquelon, the Burin Peninsula, Placentia and St. Mary's bays had already begun to attract Basque, Breton and Portuguese fishing vessels on a regular basis (Harris 1987: Plate 22). As such, it is likely within this southeastern district that initial contact took place with Mi'kmaq frequenting Newfoundland. At first, such encounters may have been hostile, or held at arm's length, but during the second half of the sixteenth century they are more likely to have assumed the form of casual commercial exchanges.

Crignon's observations are of specific interest because, for the first time, they provide us with an early indication that more than one Native group was present on the island. The bellicose people on the south coast, who had tattoos or face paintings, were likely Mi'kmaq, since the Beothuk, in contrast, are invariably described as timid and as lacking distinctive facial decoration except for red ochre body painting.<sup>11</sup> Dealing as we are here with a geographically closely-circumscribed area, these disparate traits take on a definite cultural significance.

The fierce character of the Mi'kmaq was remarked by Europeans through the centuries. Jean Alfonse claimed that the short-lived Portuguese colony established on Cape Breton Island in the 1520s was wiped out by "the natives of the country [who] put an end to the attempt, and killed all of those who came there".<sup>12</sup> The Norman merchant, Etienne Bellenger, who undertook a trading voyage to the Maritimes in 1583, noted about the Natives there that "in divers places they are gentle and tractable. But those about Cape Briton and threescore or fowerscore leagues Westward are more cruell and subtill of norture than the rest. And you are not to trust them but to stond upon your gard" (Quinn 1962: 341). Father Pierre Biard wrote in 1611 that the Mi'kmaq "are exceedingly vainglorious: they think they are better, more valiant and more ingenious than the French ... They consider themselves, I say, braver than we are, boasting that they have killed Basques and Malouins, and that they do a great deal of harm to the ships, and that no one has ever resented it, insinuating that it was from a lack of courage" (Thwaites 1959, I: 173). The Mi'kmaq, moreover, were greatly dreaded by both New England fishermen and English settlers, in both Acadia and Newfoundland. As late as 1766, Governor Hugh Palliser reported that "One Hundred and Seventy Five of those [Mi'kmaq] Indians, after having been (as I suspected) at St. Pierres, landed in the Bay of Despair, in Newfoundland, and immediately dispersed themselves about the Country to the great Terror of all our People in those Parts ..." (1766: 257v).

The first direct reference to a Mi'kmaq presence in southern Newfoundland, as well as additional corroboration of their reputation for aggressiveness, comes from the navigator Jean Alfonse, who accompanied the Sieur de Roberval on his colonization attempt up the St. Lawrence River in 1542. His *Cosmographie* of 1544 was a *routier* or sailing directions for different parts of the world, which in addition to his own observations, drew extensively on information provided by other pilots and explorers. This work contains a section on the St. Lawrence Gulf region. Internal evidence reveals that his personal experience related to the east and north coasts of Newfoundland, the Strait of Belle Isle, the Quebec north shore, and the lower St. Lawrence River valley (Ganong 1964: 364-380). The *Cosmographie* also contains five crude sketch maps of coastal areas in Eastern Canada. One of these is marked *la terre-neufve*, revealing that by 1544 Newfoundland was commonly known to be an island, a fact first established by Jacques Cartier in 1536 (Biggar 1924: 238-240). According to Ganong, “despite their crudity [these sketch maps] possess a certain interest of their own as the earliest surviving autographic maps by any of the first explorers of the St. Lawrence region” (1964: 366). Alfonse makes the following statement in his *Cosmographie*:

The people of this coast [the Gulf of Maine?] and Cape Breton are evil persons, strong, great archers, and subsist on fish and meat, and have a language and speak almost the same tongue as those in Canada and are a tall people. And those from Cape Breton [Mi'kmaq] make war on those of Newfoundland [Beothuk] when they go fishing and never spare the life of any person whom they capture, unless it happens to be a young child or a young girl. And they are so cruel that when they capture any man who is bearded, they cut off his limbs [private parts?] and carry them to their women and children in order to be avenged for this [affront?]. And among them there are many furs of all kinds of animals (Musset 1904: 503-504, author's translation).

Alfonse's report confirms that the Mi'kmaq living on Cape Breton, while pursuing traditional subsistence activities, were in the habit of crossing over to Newfoundland, in search of marine resources. According to Mi'kmaq oral tradition, St. Paul's Island in the Cabot Strait served as a stopover point when trips were made between Newfoundland and Cape Breton. It was known as *Tuywe'gan Meni'quk* or “Temporary Goal Island” (Speck 1922: 119-120). Europeans were engaged in similar migratory practices. The distances across the Cabot Strait on one hand and the Atlantic Ocean on the other were not comparable, nor were the modes of transportation similar — but the objective was the same: the exploitation of fish and sea mammals in Newfoundland waters.

Where and from whom did Alfonse obtain his information? He does not appear to have been personally familiar with the Newfoundland south coast itself, for the Roberval expedition passed through the Strait of Belle Isle on the way over from Europe and back. However, Alfonse might have heard about clashes between the Mi'kmaq and the Beothuk during the course of an extended stay in the harbour of

St. John's, either from fishermen encountered locally whose activities took them to the southeast part of Newfoundland, or from Cartier and his sailors. Roberval's fleet arrived at St. John's on 8 June 1542, "where wee founde seventeene Shippes of fishers" and "while wee made somewhat long abode here, Jacques Cartier and his company returning from Canada whither he was sent with five sayles the yeere before, arrived in the very same Harbour" (Biggar 1924: 264). It should also be pointed out that Alfonse's remarks constitute one of the rare references to Native people in that section of his *Cosmographie*. This would suggest that the events in question had made an unusual impact on the Europeans who observed and recounted them — and in turn on Alfonse himself.

The authenticity of Alfonse's story, and the veracity of his informants, is supported by the allusion to young enemy captives being spared by the Mi'kmaq, and to the aversion that beards, worn by Europeans, initially aroused among Native groups in eastern Canada. The Mi'kmaq are known to have replenished their human resources by incorporating potential marriage partners, such as enemy women and children, within regional groups (Prins 1988: 174). One early seventeenth-century observer, Marc Lescarbot, reported that the Mi'kmaq "show humanity and mercy towards their enemies wives and little children, whose lives they spare, but who remain their prisoners to serve them ... but as for the warriors they spare none, but kill as many of them as they can" (Grant 1907-1914, III: 168-269). Regarding beards, in 1658 a Jesuit missionary wrote that among Europeans:

the beard is held to add grace and adornment to man, but this opinion is not everywhere received. In that *new world*, a beard is the greatest disfigurement that a face can have. The peoples of those countries call the Europeans "bearded" as a gross insult. Some time ago a Savage, looking into a Frenchman's face with most extraordinary attention and in profound silence, suddenly exclaimed, after considering him a long time, "Oh the bearded man, how ugly he is". They have such a dread of this disfigurement that, if some hair is inclined to grow on their chins, they pluck it out immediately, to rid themselves of what is beautiful to us, but ugly to them (Thwaites 1959, XLIV: 287).<sup>13</sup>

Alfonse's account suggests that in addition to the skirmishes with the Beothuk at that time, the Mi'kmaq also had fights with and mutilated the bodies of European fishermen, many of whom were customarily bearded.<sup>14</sup>

## NEWFOUNDLAND AND THE EARLY FUR TRADE

For centuries, it was rich fish resources which drew Europeans to Newfoundland — the island was never a prime fur trade region compared to areas on the mainland. This was not for lack of fur species such as beaver, marten and otter, which

Mi'kmaq, Innu and Europeans regularly exploited. To understand the history of the Newfoundland fur trade, one needs to examine a series of other factors which played a determinant role. During the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, apart from Cape Breton Island, the mainland places most frequently mentioned as the scenes of major fur trade encounters were Canso, Acadia, the lower Saint John River, the coast of Maine, Gaspé, the St. Lawrence estuary around Tadoussac and Matane, the lower St. Lawrence River valley, and parts of the Quebec north shore. These were all strategically situated locations, mostly at the mouths of big rivers where large seasonal parties of Natives would congregate during the summer. Such rivers not only provided good fishing for sustenance but also served as important waterways for penetrating inland. They also facilitated the transportation of large quantities of furs and hides — which attracted European traders to these regions.

How did southern Newfoundland rank as prime fur country in comparison? A combination of several factors appears to have relegated it to a secondary status in the eyes of European merchants. The latter were always on the look-out for large and diversified supplies of furs and suitable animal hides, which would ensure them an optimum profit margin on the European market. Historical Native population density was always low in Newfoundland, whether it involved Beothuk, Innu or Mi'kmaq. In the case of the latter, in early historical times their foraging strategies likely confined them locally to no more than a tiny fluctuating population at any point in time — a serious restriction on potential fur supply. In any event, the south coast lacks major river systems capable of attracting large seasonal concentrations of Natives by offering easy access to the hinterland. For European merchants, the availability of moose hides for manufacture of leather apparel must have served as a strong inducement to seek out mainland localities such as Cape Breton Island, Acadia and the St. Lawrence valley, where Natives could offer such hides, as well as furs, in large numbers. Moose were not indigenous to Newfoundland, but were introduced only in 1904 (Banfield 1974: 397). Caribou hides were available, but were never favoured on the European market, their condition being considered unsuitable for leather manufacture, likely due to damage by fly larvae (Allaire 1999: 227 n.88).

During the initial stage of the fur trade in eastern Canada, into the 1560s, furs were acquired only in limited quantity by individual seamen for their own profit. This was the so-called *portage trade* under the terms of which sailors and ships' officers were allowed free transport of their personal belongings, which might include a moderate number of furs to supplement their income, presumably no more than could be tucked away in a sea chest (Pope 1996). Reference to this type of casual bartering does not often show up in commercial documents, such as the notarial acts which were primarily concerned with transactions between merchants, ship owners and suppliers relating to the outfitting of vessels and incoming cargoes (Turgeon 1998: 587). Indeed, within the Gulf of St. Lawrence region, evidence for

small scale fur acquisitions is virtually unavailable at all times except for rare indications in other categories of records, such as voyage narratives, mariners depositions, post-mortem inventories and other types of legal documents.<sup>15</sup> The ethnographical limitations of French notarial acts in this and other respects merit much more reflection.<sup>16</sup>

As far as the south coast of Newfoundland is concerned, this initial phase of the fur trade and even the second half of the sixteenth century and the seventeenth century remain practically unknown for the very good reason that the archives of many important ports which sent Basque and Norman vessels to southeast Newfoundland no longer exist. One author laments that this “is the case for St. Malo and for the Basque ports of Bayonne, St. Jean de Luz and Ciboure, all of which were actively involved in outfitting ships for New World fishing expeditions. While we can spot some of these ships in the records of Bordeaux and La Rochelle, it is clear that many others elude us. Of the three port cities where such documents still exist, only Bordeaux’s includes series that are more or less complete. The archival holdings of La Rochelle and Rouen have significant gaps beginning in the 1560s” (Turgeon 1997: 3-4). It should be noted that the Bordeaux archives, because of their voluminous quantity, have thus far been sampled only between 1544 and 1605 for two consecutive years out of every five (Turgeon 1997: 5).

By 1575, the fur trade in eastern Canada had evolved from a sporadic activity by individual sailors and fishermen to a full-fledged commercial enterprise organized by merchants, ship owners, and shareholders — although fishing and whaling still often maintained an ancillary role. French notarial records increasingly specify that vessels were being outfitted for the fur trade, providing lists of trade goods, and indicating destinations. Some ships would be assigned to fish in one place and, later in the same season, to another for trade with Native groups. Such was the case with the *Jehan* of Honfleur, which according to its 1564 charter party was to go to “Newfoundland to fish for cod and to Cape Breton for the fur trade” (Turgeon 1998: 597).

Even so, nothing would have prevented fishing vessels in southern Newfoundland, before proceeding to the mainland, from carrying on the ancient custom of engaging locally in desultory bartering for furs whenever an opportunity presented itself. The 1688 Dutch edition of Nicolas Denys’ description of Acadia contains an interpolation relating to an incident of Native debauchery which took place on the New Brunswick coast in 1657. It is likely to have been representative of other European-Amerindian encounters throughout the Gulf of St. Lawrence region in the period:

The Indians are in the habit of betaking themselves to the vicinity of places whither they know the fishermen will come to stand with their ships. As soon as they catch sight of these, they make a great smoke in order to inform their people that they are there. The ship thereupon approaches the land, and the Indians take a few skins and sit down in their canoes in order to row nearer. They are well received, and are given to

eat and drink as much as they wish, to help things going; and then it is found out whether they have any skins and whether there are more Indians thereabout, as here now in the description of their customs is to be spoken of more fully. These skins are bartered for brandy, for which they, ever since they have begun to trade with fishermen, are very greedy (Ganong 1908: 82).

Such practices continued on well into the eighteenth century. In 1700, two La Rochelle notarial contracts relating to the hiring of French captains for fishing expeditions to Newfoundland stipulated that crew members were forbidden to engage in commercial activities and trading for furs under penalty of losing their wages (Arseneault 1992: 21-22). This restrictive clause suggests that surreptitious bartering was a common practice which, while illicit, often tended to be winked at. As late as 1755, Father Maillard observed that the average hunter among his Cape Breton Mi'kmaq flock, "does effectively go far away, like to the Island of Newfoundland, where he does not fail to engage in very successful hunting, but he never brings back anything worthwhile because the real reason he had in going there was none other than to use all the furs to be obtained by him, for purchasing brandy and Navarre wine, which the fishermen of those coasts provide in exchange without any scruple" (1863, III: 366). Small scale transactions of this nature would not likely have shown up in notarial acts. There is no indication that European vessels kept ledgers recording such sporadic fur purchases. These may simply have been included in the overall figures at the end of the voyage without their place of origin being distinguished from that of the main rendezvous. Thus a commercial notarial document does not necessarily inform us about the full range of casual encounters and barter exchanges involving Native persons. It can be likened to a net whose mesh is not fine enough to capture the smaller fish.

Turgeon claims that "sixteenth-century notarial records designate 'the New Found Land' ('Terre-Neuve') as a quite extensive territory comprising both coastlines and islands in eastern Québec, the maritime provinces, Newfoundland and the state of Maine" (Turgeon 1997: 1). Like all generalizations, this statement distorts reality. The claim that the term "Newfoundland" was used only in a broad sense for almost a century contradicts the findings not only of other scholars but even some of Turgeon's own. Between 1580 and 1600, at least 22 Basque vessels equipped for the fur trade are known to have crossed the Atlantic Ocean. According to Turgeon, "two vessels each were recorded as bound for 'Gaspay' (Gaspé) and 'Grande Baye' (the Strait of Belle Isle and the northern part of the gulf), with four destined for *Terreneufve*, but the fourteen [others] were simply headed for 'Canada'" (1997: 15). A history of the usage and meaning of the designation "Newfoundland" in French, English, Basque, Portuguese, Dutch and other European sources remains to be written. However, there is clear evidence that by the 1550s it was commonly being applied in a narrow sense to the island itself. While holdouts undoubtedly clung to the older practice here and there, more so among landlubber notaries than



among experienced seamen, it is a mistake to assume automatically that this term possessed only a broad meaning in the second half of the sixteenth century.

The relatively early realization that Newfoundland was a geographical entity distinct from the mainland can be traced at least as far back as Cartier's 1535-36 voyage, during the course of which this explorer circumnavigated the island (O'Dea 1967, 1971). In 1544, Alfonse depicted Newfoundland as an island on a sketch map, while in 1545 a Basque notarial act from the port of Mutriku contains the designation "Ysla de Tierra Nueva" (Isle de Terre-Neuve — Island of Newfoundland) (Huxley Barkham 1987: 64; Musset 1904: 476). The English, who had seasonal fishing establishments along the east coast of the island, employed the name Newfoundland in its strict sense from the 1580s onwards when they annexed the island (Quinn 1979, III: 126-138). Confirmation of this narrow English usage is provided on a 1588 map by Baptista Boazio, an Italian cartographer residing in London (Cumming et al. 1972: 186-187).

As for the French, from the 1560s onward some seaport notaries were already distinguishing between Cape Breton, the "Coast of Florida" and Newfoundland, to which two decades later an additional regional name, "Canada", was added (Turgeon 1998: 593-598). More to the point, Parisian furriers developed a system for classifying furs and hides from eastern Canada according to their provenance. One specialist who has studied their notarial acts and who believes that they employed the name "Newfoundland" in a restricted sense, provides the following citations: Newfoundland wildcat (1591) and Newfoundland lynx (1610) as contrasted with Canada lynx (1615); Newfoundland otter (1573) and Newfoundland marten (1584) as contrasted with Canada otter (1609) and Canada marten (1608); Acadia moose (1604) as contrasted with Canada moose (1609), which accurately reflects the fact that there were no moose in Newfoundland at that time; and two different terms for Newfoundland beaver, namely "bièvre de Terre-Neuve" (1582) and "castor de Terre-Neuve" (1584) respectively (Allaire 1999: 65-66, 241-262). A vessel called *La Marie* was outfitted in 1610 to go to "Canada" or to "Newfoundland" for fish and trade (Allaire 1999: 70, 91 n.116). In the absence of attested French trade relations with the Beothuk, dealings with Mi'kmaq in southern Newfoundland are a plausible interpretation of some of this evidence.

This suggestion is bolstered by a Basque mariner's deposition made on 30 December 1597, before the High Court of the Admiralty, London (Arestega 1597a,b). The witness in question, Captain Martin Sance de Arestega (Arritsaga), was well known in London shipping circles, according to the English merchant, Phillippe Huneman, who was acquainted with "his father and many of his kindred". In 1595, Arestega had been to St. John's where his ship "laded fish and oil". On that occasion he carried an English passport "from the L[ord] Admirall of Englande, which was procured for him in England before the undertaking of the said viadge" (Quinn 1979, IV: 118). Two years later, in 1597, he went on another fishing trip "to the New found land ... where they made and laded into the said ship [the *Bonaventure* "of the

burthen of one hundred tonnes”] thre score thousand of dry fish — twelve thousand of wet fish [and] fourteen hogsheads of trayne”. In other words, this was a codfishing, not a whaling, vessel and the 14 barrels of train oil were undoubtedly from cod livers, rather than whales, since an adult whale of the two main types of cetaceans the Basques were catching in the Strait of Belle Isle would have given between 40 to 80 barrels. In addition, Captain Arestega “gott of the Savidges in trucke for tobacco fifty buckskynnes, forty bever skinned, twenty martins and [they carried in addition] twenty barrels of rowes of fyshes [cod roes]”. (On its way back to St. Jean de Luz, the ship was captured by an English privateer near Cape Finisterre, France, and brought to London.)

His previous English contacts and familiarity with St. John’s suggests that Captain Arestega’s fishing activities were centered on southeast Newfoundland, rather than in the Basque-dominated area of “Terranova”, the Strait of Belle Isle. Since his deposition does not mention Cape Breton or any mainland regions such as “Acadia” or “Canada”, the 50 buckskins would most likely have been caribou rather than moose hides and are again suggestive of Newfoundland. In addition, the use of tobacco as a trade item by Europeans at this early date is particularly intriguing, all the more so because it appears to have been the only exchange commodity offered on this particular occasion. Aristega does not specify that his ship was outfitted for trade, and this may be an indication that it took the form of an opportunistic activity engaged in locally with Native people. But where would he have obtained this tobacco? There is a strong possibility that it reached Newfoundland by way of New England trade connections, many early aspects of which elude us and require a more thorough study. One indication is provided by a Dutch ship captain, David De Vries. During the summer of 1620, he ranged the coast between Placentia Bay and St. John’s, buying up fish for transport to Europe. While at Ferryland, he was anchored next to “a vessel of a hundred or a hundred and twenty ton’s burden, which came from the Virginies laden with tobacco in order to exchange it for codfish” (Glerum-Laurentius 1960: 24).<sup>17</sup> If the Natives who traded with Arestega were Beothuk, one wonders why they willingly accepted to take only tobacco for their peltries. From all available evidence this item never played a large role in their life style, certainly not during the late 1500s (Marshall 1996: 381-382). On the other hand, the Mi’kmaq were noted tobacco consumers and may have welcomed the opportunity of acquiring what must have been unaccustomed large quantities.

#### MI’KMAQ IN SOUTHERN NEWFOUNDLAND: THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

In the early 1600s there existed a network of Native traders in the Gulf of Maine, some of them indubitably Mi’kmaq, who were familiar with the name Placentia



(Bourque and Whitehead 1985; Quinn 1979, III: 353; Thwaites 1959, III: 109, 111). This is well illustrated by the voyage of Captain Bartholomew Gosnold to Virginia in 1602, during the course of which a Native trading vessel was encountered. Three narratives of this voyage have come down to us (Quinn 1979, III: 347-358). It is instructive to briefly dwell on them for they tell us much about the limitations of eyewitness accounts which are so frequently held up as being the most reliable form of testimony, as distinct from hearsay. In his own account, Captain Gosnold never mentions the episode, a quite common omission among the tens if not hundreds of thousands of ship captains who came in contact with northeast Native people during those early centuries, but failed to write a single word about them. This underscores the cautionary warning embodied in that old adage about *absence of proof*. Countless such invisible Natives, though unmentioned, haunt our historical records. The second participant in the Gosnold voyage, the Reverend John Brereton, provides only a minimum of descriptive details, several of which do not correspond with those given in a lengthier statement by a third passenger, Gabriel Archer. According to Archer:

[there] came towards us a Biscay shallop with saile and Oares, having eight persons in it, whom we supposed at first to bee Christians distressed. But approaching us neere, wee perceived them to bee Savages. These coming within call hayled us, and wee answered. Then after signes of Peace, and a long speech by one of them made, they came boldly aboard us being all naked, saving about their shoulders certaine loose Deere-skinnes, and neere their wastes Seale-skinnes tyed fast like to Irish Dimmie Trousers. One that seemed to be their Commander wore a Waste-coate of blacke worke, a paire of Breeches, cloth Stockings, Shooes, Hat, and Band, one or two more had also a few things made by some Christians, these with a piece of Chalke described the Coast there-about, and could name Placentia of the Newfound-land, they spake divers Christian words, and seemed to understand much more then we, for want of Language could comprehend. These people are in colour swart, their haire long up tied with a knot in the part of behind the neck. They paint their bodies, which are strong and well proportioned (Quinn 1979, III: 353).

Archer acknowledged that except for the name Placentia and “divers Christian words”, neither he nor his companions were able to make out what these Amerindians were saying. The context in which the name Placentia came up is therefore obscure. However, when drawing a sketch map, as these Natives did, one normally identifies various locations, so as to ensure geographical comprehension of what is being depicted. This seems a logical explanation of why Placentia was mentioned. These Natives, sailing their shallop, had in all likelihood been there on one occasion or another, to barter with fishermen. Such an interpretation is reinforced by Father Biard’s declaration a decade later that the Mi’kmaq referred to Newfoundland as *Praesentis* (Thwaites 1959, II: 67). This name obviously derives from Plaisance (Placentia) and does not have a Native origin (Hewson 1982). The

Mi'kmaq name for Newfoundland is, in fact, "Gtagamgog" (*Ktaqamkuk* = land across the water) (Pacifique 1934: 138, 144). Apparently then, Biard misunderstood his Native informants who must have meant a specific location, Placentia, where they traded with European vessels, rather than the entire island itself. Indeed it is rather unlikely that the Mi'kmaq were aware of the insular nature of Newfoundland. When conversing with the French, the Mi'kmaq perhaps employed the name *Praesentis* to facilitate communication. Amongst themselves, according to common Native practice in the past, they most likely used a Mi'kmaq name for Newfoundland. At any rate, the use of the toponym *Praesentis* strongly suggests that the Mi'kmaq were personally acquainted with the island. Speaking of the Mi'kmaq, Lescarbot observed in 1610 that "from the first land (which is Newfoundland) to the country of the Armouchiquois, a distance of nearly three hundred leagues, the people are nomads, without agriculture, never stopping longer than five or six weeks in a place" (Thwaites 1959, I: 83). Since Lescarbot was personally unacquainted with the Beothuk and their habits, the specific inclusion of Newfoundland in his enumeration suggests a Mi'kmaq presence there. By the same token, this statement serves as a counterpart to Father Biard's later declaration in 1616 that "I have often wondered how many of these people there are. I have found from the Accounts of the Savages themselves, that in the region of the great river, from Newfoundland to Chouacoët, there cannot be found more than nine or ten thousand people. The Souriquoys [Mi'kmaq], in all, 3000, or 3500 ..." (Thwaites 1959, III: 109, 111).

Through the first half of the seventeenth century, few surviving records have a direct bearing on southern Newfoundland. This situation effectively hinders any understanding of local developments among the Natives. Starting about 1655, France gradually established an administrative presence in the southeast, but for 30 years the situation can only be described as chaotic (Humphreys 1970; Janzen 2002: 32-41). Although a fortified colony had been established at Placentia by 1662, the small garrison lived under wretched conditions and went for long stretches without pay. Local officials, the fishermen and the continental merchants were constantly at loggerheads. Illicit trade with New England vessels flourished but was kept hidden from the authorities in Paris. Most of the early governors turned out to be incompetent and corrupt. One was murdered; another, faced with sedition, had to make his way over to St. Pierre, in order to find a ship to take him back to France. Under such circumstances, little administrative documentation was generated until the 1680s. When it becomes more detailed and voluminous, references to Natives begin to crop up, as might be expected, simply on the basis of better record keeping.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, it is English sources, much concerned about these French colonial initiatives on the southeast coast, that provide the first indications of a mid-century Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland. The deposition of an English planter, John Mathews, mentions that in 1662 he had been sent with a warrant to St. Mary's Bay,

to bring back to Ferryland the “masters [chiefs] of the Indians (who came to kill beaver and other beasts for Furs)”. English officials wanted to interrogate these presumed Mi'kmaq hunters about their actions “for making an attempt upon the Island without any authority from his Majesty of Great Brittain”. Before Mathews could carry out this task, a French ship captain challenged his jurisdictional authority, took him prisoner and brought him to Placentia. The French governor there, Thalour du Perron, was only recently arrived from France and was likely unaware of a Native presence. Since he too wanted to question them, he ordered the French vessel to return to St. Mary's Bay and to search for the Indians. Mathews managed to escape before the ship reached its destination, so we do not know the result of these inquiries (Mathews 1670: 471).

Meanwhile, rumours began to circulate along the English shore regarding the intentions of the French in building fortifications at Placentia. A 1675 report of the Committee for Trade and Plantations, mixing facts with muddled speculations, conjectured that the fort was intended to defend the French “from the Indians, who at certain times come off from the mayne [Cape Breton Island and Acadia] and molest them in their Beaver Trade, for which Trade onely, and not for fishing they doe inhabite there ...” (Berry 1676; Humphreys 1970: 23 n.69). The English naval commodore, Sir John Berry, was ordered to investigate the matter. It is unclear whether he actually went to Placentia or whether he gathered additional hearsay from local planters and fishermen. Berry concluded that the French were only concerned with the security of their cod fishery, rather than with the “beaver trade”, and that “no Indians ever come to those parts” (1676). The following year, however, a prominent settler, John Downing, contradicted and qualified Berry's statement. In a description of social and economic conditions, Downing cited an Irish merchant, John Aylred, who had visited Placentia in person, to the effect that “to that part of the land where the French forts are as Plasentsia, St. Peters & the rest, no Indians come but some Canida Indians from the forts of Canida ...” (Downing 1676: 175r). Aylred, in accordance with English usage, apparently designated all the French possessions in the northeast by the general term “Canida” (Canada), and in Downing's report the term “Fort” is applied in a broad sense to any locality defended by a few cannons, even though otherwise lacking fortifications, such as St. Pierre, Ferryland, St. John's or Bay Bulls (Downing 1676: 174r). The designation “French forts of Canida” referred most likely to nearby French settlements on Cape Breton Island or in Acadia. Presumably then, these “Canida Indians” were Mi'kmaq, accustomed to visiting the Placentia region.

A slightly later seventeenth-century letter provides further evidence that there were Mi'kmaq on the island. It was sent from Bay Bulls in 1680, by a ship's chaplain, John Thomas, who had interviewed local settlers. He actually referred to the presence of several Native “nations” in Newfoundland, but without distinguishing them clearly one from another by name. However, among the traits mentioned are “some now clothed, since they have some doings with New England men ... and

have got Guns amongst them alsoe ... they kill foxes and otters and the provident Beaver ... and preserving the Fur they sell a great quantitie of it. They bear a deadly few'd [feud] and hatred to the English, but are said to have a Commerce with the French in this land" (Thomas 1680: 229-230). These four indications all point to the Mi'kmaq, who possessed guns and were fiercely hostile to English settlers on the Avalon Peninsula as well as on the mainland, although they maintained intermittent contact with New England traders along the coasts of Nova Scotia, and possibly in Newfoundland itself. Indeed, Downing confirms that New England vessels made yearly voyages to the southeastern part of the island at that time (1676: 174v, 175v). This New England trade is also attested by contemporary French sources (Parat 1687; Landry 2002b; Le Blant 1935).

A common thread can be seen to run through these five English accounts, namely the presence of mainland Amerindians in southeast Newfoundland during the decade of the 1670s. Interestingly enough, as noted by Nicolas Denys, the Mi'kmaq temporarily abandoned Cape Breton Island around this same time, due to the virtual extinction of moose there, a situation which recurred during the first decade of the eighteenth century. In both instances, there are indications that the local Mi'kmaq, faced with an ecological emergency, resorted to a rotational phase of their alternating foraging strategy, by crossing over to Newfoundland for an extended period.

A French census report for 1687, ordered presumably by Governor Antoine Parat, listed three Native persons: "1 sauvage, 1 sauvagesse" and "1 garçon de sauvages" at Placentia (Thibodeau 1962: 205). The reason why this Native nuclear family resided there is not indicated. Mi'kmaq rarely actually lived in French settlements — which leads to the conjecture that one or both of the adults worked as servants for a merchant or a military officer.<sup>19</sup> In fact, they may even have been *Panis*, or foreign Amerindian slaves, which the French obtained primarily from western outpost regions on the continent such as the Upper Missouri and Mississippi river basins, or the Great Lakes area (Trudel 1960: 61-87).<sup>20</sup>

From 1692 to 1693, Louis-Armand de Lahontan resided in Placentia as the king's lieutenant in command of the local garrison. Writing in 1703, no doubt based on firsthand experiences there as well as personal contacts elsewhere, he postulated that the Labrador Inuit "cross over to the Island of Newfoundland every day, at the Straights of Belle Isle, which is not above seven Leagues over, but they never come so far as Placentia, for fear of meeting with other Savages there" (Thwaites 1905, 1: 309). These reports by Lahontan and others of Mi'kmaq living "on the country" predate the French practice (from 1696 onwards) of bringing in Mi'kmaq and Abenaki allies to attack English settlements overland.<sup>21</sup>

The proceedings of a French court martial, held at Placentia in the autumn of 1695, corroborate Lahontan's statement and unexpectedly permit us a glimpse of an extended Mi'kmaq family leading an essentially autonomous existence on the island:

Judgement of the Court Martial, held at Fort Louis of Plaisance against 2 men, assassins, and which condemns them to the gallows and to be shot in the absence of a hangman. [17 September 1695]

In the month of July, 1695, Henry Hivary of Marseilles, 20 years old, and Adrian Acard of Buly, near Dieppe, 26 years old, go to a Mi'kmaq woman living with her family in a wigwam near Plaisance, seeking refuge. They reside there for 40 days. The eldest son of the Native woman, named Daniel Turbis, leaves to look for provisions. During that time another son, Claude Turbis, goes in a shallop with his mother and 4 children, his sister Magdelaine Turbis who had her 3 very young children, and the 2 Frenchmen to try and take some game on a small island. There Claude goes ashore. As soon as he is out of sight the Frenchmen seize pistols and axes with which they massacre the old mother and the 4 children, [and] two of those of the daughter, and give the latter a blow with an axe which lays open her back, and throw her into the sea clutching her child in her arms. She has the strength to save herself by swimming, and also the child which she does not abandon. This unfortunate person, and the 2 brothers, provide accusations and testimony against the 2 scoundrels who admit their crime (Conseil de guerre 1695; author's translation).

This horrifying story prompts several thoughts. The fact that the Mi'kmaq matron is not described as a widow suggests that her husband, as well as her son-in-law, were absent somewhere, possibly on an extended hunting trip. They may even have been participating in a minor excursion against English establishments on the lower Avalon Peninsula, a common occurrence during the final decade of the seventeenth century (Le Blant 1935: 59-88). The two Frenchmen must have been either military deserters, or more likely runaway fishing servants (*pêcheurs-engagés* and *garçons de grave*) employed by resident fishermen (*pêcheurs-habitants*), who secretly planned to return to Europe on one of the home-bound ships which would depart in the autumn. To do so they needed a small boat to surreptitiously board a vessel at night. Such attempts at escape from a monotonous and often wretched existence were a common occurrence in isolated garrison outposts and small fishing communities dependent on hired manpower (Johnson 1992, Landry 2002a). The most logical explanation for this episode is that, in anticipation of their getaway, they had gone to hide out with a Native family in the countryside, since it provided a means of survival, the best way of avoiding detection by French authorities, and a chance of laying their hands on a small watercraft which, as it turned out, would be the motive for their sordid crime. The last thing they wanted was contact with Placentia, and they succeeded in successfully avoiding this for more than 40 days during July and August. When food supplies ran low in early September, the eldest son of the Native family departed alone to fetch some provisions, either by going hunting, visiting a cache somewhere, or from a Native or European friend. While awaiting his return, the remaining members of the Turbis family, accompanied by their two French lodgers, crossed over in a shallop to an island to search for small game. The location of this island is not

given. It may have been in the neighbourhood of Placentia, or further up the bay, or even across to its west side. Whatever the case, these activities suggest a distinctive Native pattern of subsistence “on the country”.

It is striking that we learn about the Turbis family members only from a unique Placentia court martial account, and that all other contemporary documents are silent about their existence. This silence brings home the basically fortuitous manner in which evidence relating to early Mi’kmaq presence in southern Newfoundland was recorded and preserved. Lahontan’s brief remarks indicate that there must have been additional Mi’kmaq families in the Placentia region, and perhaps elsewhere on the island, for such an experienced military officer would hardly consider four men, two women and seven children as posing a threat to an invading Native group.

Note that the Turbis family does not show up in any of the French Newfoundland censuses carried out during the 1690s. This is hardly surprising, since such population counts only covered the actual inhabitants of Placentia and affiliated fishing hamlets, and not Native people living “on the country”. This was often the case in New France and Acadia as well, where with certain exceptions, missionaries were customarily assigned the task of taking separate Amerindian censuses. In other words, we cannot rely on French civil authorities in southern Newfoundland to have systematically recorded the presence and number of Native people. Indeed, under the succeeding British regime, Natives were not enumerated on the island until well into the nineteenth century.<sup>22</sup>

It has been suggested that “in the wake of the French, Micmac from Cape Breton Island, who may already have been visiting Newfoundland for the purpose of hunting and trapping, relocated to southern Newfoundland” and that the building of a French fort at Placentia in 1662 “enabled the Micmac to get a firmer footing on the island and to make territorial advances in the wake of Anglo-French conflicts” (Marshall 1996: 3, 44). While such a link cannot be entirely ruled out, it should be divested of its eurocentric concept of permanent relocation, as well as of the implication that, historically, the Natives of eastern Canada were completely dependent for their survival on trade goods provided by European officials and merchants.<sup>23</sup> As another scholar has phrased it, “contact with European society brought an irreversible change to the Mi’kmaq, though the pace at which it occurred has been overstated ... As long as the Mi’kmaq retained occupancy over their fishing and hunting grounds, their culture remained intact and thus also their collective sense of separateness from French and English society” (Wicken 1994: 440, 444).

Judging from the Turbis family episode, the presence of the French at Placentia was not the sole element of attraction, but one among several factors to be reckoned with by the Mi’kmaq when planning subsistence and trapping activities within their eastern domain of islands. Furthermore, the idea that Newfoundland had no permanent Mi’kmaq population until that time needs to be reconsidered. It is not unreasonable to suppose that during earlier centuries, some Mi’kmaq groups crossed back and forth regularly from Cape Breton Island, in line with known ex-



plotation practices, while other families engaged in more prolonged stays, either by choice or due to unfavourable weather conditions which at times interfered with safe return voyages. Locally then, there is likely to have been a small floating Mi'kmaq population, varying in size from year to year. This could explain the fact that in 1704, the Bishop of Quebec extended the powers of vicar general exercised by Father Antoine Gaulin, missionary for the Mi'kmaq in Acadia, to encompass Plaisance and the surrounding areas in Newfoundland (Casgrain 1897: 260-261 n.1). Newfoundland Mi'kmaq oral traditions speak of the *Say'ewedjkik* or "Ancients", who were the predecessors and relatives of later Mi'kmaq arrivals on the island during the eighteenth century (Speck 1922: 123). Their role might be compared to those small numbers of European fishermen who, in early historic times, stayed behind in Newfoundland after the fishing season had ended, laying the basis for a later permanent population.

#### MI'KMAQ PRESENCE IN NEWFOUNDLAND: THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

References to a Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland become much more frequent during the eighteenth century, partially due to their involvement as allies of the French in repeated raids against English settlements. Initially then, this information tends to be restricted to southeastern Newfoundland, whereas the southwestern area remains little known to us. Events of 1705 underscore a basic reality of Mi'kmaq existence and allow us a glimpse of the alternating foraging strategy employed by these Natives, when faced with ecological emergencies. Implying that the event was unexpected, Governor de Subercase of Placentia reported that 20 to 25 Mi'kmaq families had crossed over to Newfoundland from Cape Breton Island in July of that year (1705: 321). Their leaders declared that they wanted to allow moose and other animals to repopulate the region which they had left, and that the remainder of their band would follow suit that coming spring. It is clear that they had made this move of their own volition and not at the urging of the French authorities. De Subercase took advantage of this unforeseen development and subsequently engaged 40 warriors amongst their number to serve in the war against the English. He requested presents for them from the king and, in accordance with French colonial practice, he also nominated an officer, the *Sieur de Rouville*, to "command" them (Subercase 1705: 280, 322-323).

The following year, in 1706, an additional 20 Mi'kmaq families came over and camped on the island of St. Pierre, where they were provided with powder, shot, flour and some arms by the local French commander (Costebelle 1706: 55). It is significant that this group chose to come to St. Pierre rather than Placentia and suggests that they were already familiar with food resources available in the region.<sup>24</sup> Altogether, close to 60 Mi'kmaq families appear to have overwintered in southeast-

ern Newfoundland during that period (Costebelle 1707b: 244). They seem to have used a network of seasonal base camps, one of them on St. Pierre and others around Fortune Bay. From these base camps, the Mi'kmaq hunted, trapped, and carried out overland sorties on their own to attack the English in places such as Carbonear and Bonavista. They paid occasional visits to the French to obtain certain goods, either in the form of customary gifts, or else by bartering furs. For the rest, the Mi'kmaq were self-sufficient and led a separate existence on the island.

The state of affairs between 1705 and 1706 differed from what had taken place on previous occasions between 1694 and 1704 when Native warriors, Mi'kmaq as well as Abenaki, unaccompanied by their families, had been brought in expressly by the French to serve in joint coastal expeditions, on sea and land, against the English settlements (Martijn 1989: 219-220). An English engineer, John Roope, who spent eight months as a prisoner of the French, confirmed this when he noted, in an account of his captivity, that “about the beginning of July [1705] there came to Placentia about 150 Indians of another nation and brought their wives and children and went immediately to disturb our fishery ...” (1705: 346v).

These new developments in 1706 embarrassed the French governor, Philippe de Costebelle, because of his inability to exercise direct control over those additional foraging Mi'kmaq parties in Fortune Bay which had no French officers attached to them, as they had on previous occasions. This fact deprives us, again, of potential eyewitness descriptions of how Mi'kmaq families subsisted on the land. We only learn that these Mi'kmaq did not behave in accordance with European standards of military discipline and dealt with prisoners as they saw fit. The English authorities complained bitterly about the cruel treatment meted out to captives, including torture and summary execution. Exasperated by these incidents, de Costebelle sought to rid himself of his intractable allies, whom he saw as “awkward neighbours”. Although he informed the Court at Versailles of his intention to send them back to Cape Breton, the Mi'kmaq did not, in fact, accept that he had that kind of formal authority over them — as the governor himself realized (Costebelle 1707a: 130-131). De Costebelle tried various stratagems to achieve his goal of sending the Natives back, including sustained efforts at persuasion, reiterated shows of displeasure, the refusal of customary gifts on the pretext of having run out of desired items and the offer of free transport (1707b: 167-168).

By 1708, a number of these Native families had returned to the mainland no doubt partly in accordance with their traditional foraging practices, and partly due to those astute pressure tactics. Others, however, opted to remain on the island, where they eventually participated in more raids (Costebelle 1708: 124-126). Some likely continued the long-established practice of crossing seasonally back and forth between Newfoundland and Cape Breton. There are indications to this effect in a letter of 1708, written by Father Gaulin (1708: 250v). The missionary reported on discussions held with a group of Mi'kmaq “who came for the most part from Newfoundland”. In accordance with the calculating French policy of using these Na-



tives as a buffer against the English, Gaulin tried to convince them to settle at the east coast locality of Chedaboctou in Nova Scotia. Allowing habitual common sense to guide them, the Mi'kmaq expressed their reluctance to heed this request, saying that it was too distant from their hunting grounds and that the English were too close. They finally decided to move to the St. Mary River, about 50 kilometers west of Canso. Even then, although admitting that the climate there was milder than in Newfoundland, they debated returning to the latter and would have done so, if Gaulin had not promised to overwinter with them at St. Mary and to make arrangements for obtaining supplies for spring planting.

French officials seem to have been unaware of, or perhaps simply not interested in, the different factors which triggered cyclical Native movements between the mainland and Newfoundland. Intent on their own agenda, they evaluated the entire Mi'kmaq population primarily in terms of warriors and guns that it could contribute to warfare. To all appearances, the eastern Mi'kmaq were on familiar ground in Newfoundland. Governor de Subercase, an experienced soldier, wisely decided to use them as guides during incursions against the English communities on the Avalon Peninsula, and was assured by his allies that "they knew the route perfectly well" (1705: 282). Many of them must have known the island from first-hand experience, having lived and hunted there previously. Some had undoubtedly been born locally. In fact, as we have seen, there are indications that their ancestors had frequented this territory over the course of many centuries, if not millennia.

Raiding activities in Newfoundland tapered off after 1710, and the war ended when the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713, with the French possessions in Newfoundland being ceded to England. From 1713 onward, references to a Mi'kmaq presence in Newfoundland continue to crop up at irregular intervals in the documentary records. Significantly, the eastern Mi'kmaq persisted with their subsistence and trapping activities in both the southwestern and southeastern parts of Newfoundland, notwithstanding the French surrender of Placentia that year, thereby demonstrating that their presence was not exclusively tied to military events, as has sometimes been maintained.

In 1713, William Taverner, an English planter and trader, was commissioned by the British government to be "Surveyor of such parts of the [south] coast of Newfoundland and the Islands adjacent as the French have usually fished upon and wherewith our subjects are at present unacquainted" (Quinn 1974). He received special instructions to the effect that:

whereas we are informed that the French, as well from their settlements on Newfoundland, as from Canada, have driven a considerable trade with nations of Indians inhabiting the aforesd. Island, by exchanging with them European goods and merchandizes for several kinds of furs and other commodities of the growth and product of Newfoundland, you are to use your utmost endeavours to gain the sd. trade to our subjects, and upon making the best enquirys you are able, you are to lay before us

the most proper methods you can discover for effectually procuring and settling the same (Great Britain 1713).

Taverner felt confident about this task and replied that “I doubt not but to bring the Indians in Newfoundland to Trade with us, which will be a great advantage to the British Nation” (Taverner 1714b: 257). The Board of Trade, which issued these instructions, were obviously referring to assorted English intelligence reports regarding a Mi’kmaq presence in Newfoundland over a period of at least five or six decades, whether seasonal in nature, or of a longer rotational residence duration. Had Taverner fulfilled his commission to the letter, we might at long last have gained a clearer understanding of the subsistence and settlement practices engaged in by the eastern Mi’kmaq, when exploiting faunal resources on the island. Whatever his reasons, he does not appear to have personally interviewed any Mi’kmaq hunters. In 1714/1715, his travels were restricted to partial southeast coast surveys and never led him to explore the deeper bays or the interior. At one point in the autumn of 1714, when planning additional winter activity, he did, however, engage an unnamed French “Canadean” interpreter at Placentia for just such an eventuality. This man spoke “the Indian Language very well, that when I meet with any Indians I may be the better settle a Commerce with them” (Taverner 1714a: 261v; 1718: 226). Unfortunately, this project was aborted in the spring of 1715, when the supply vessel *Delore* was shipwrecked, and we hear no more about the Canadian.

Elsewhere, particularly along the southwest coast running from Port-aux-Basques, Cape Ray, and Codroy to St. George’s Bay, Taverner depended exclusively on hearsay information from European informants who, as far as we know, had never accompanied Mi’kmaq hunting parties inland during the winter months. Once again we are left ignorant of essential details. What was the composition of such groups? What river basin systems and overland travel routes were used? Which regions did they frequent? What were their techniques? How much time did they ordinarily spend “on the country” in Newfoundland? Were faunal harvests annual or seasonal? Next to nothing is known of these aspects of Mi’kmaq life. We have to rely on broad declarations, such as the one by Father Gaulin in 1722, who proposed an idealized plan to establish a Mi’kmaq community on Bras d’Or Lake, in Cape Breton Island. In his opinion, “if they were brought together where we were in possession, the English would be quite unable to attract them, and in wartime we could send them to worry the English. In peacetime the women and children would remain in the village while the men could still go hunting on the Acadian mainland and carry out fur trade with Île Royal. They could even push as far as Newfoundland” (Le Normand de Mézy 1722: 75).

Another missionary affirmed, about 1755, that the Mi’kmaq engaged regularly in subsistence hunting on the island, as well as in the acquisition of furs needed to pay their debts (Maillard 1863: 366). Such debts no doubt included the cost of outfitting expeditions, acquiring essential manufactured necessities, and occasional

dissipation. In other words, Mi'kmaq hunters had two main preoccupations, namely to keep their hungry households supplied with game, and to accumulate peltries as barter items for other goods. Again, Newfoundland did not rank among the prime fur regions of the northeast, and fur yield on the island tended to be moderate. Hence, eastern Mi'kmaq hunters and their families are unlikely to have come to Newfoundland in anticipation of amassing a fortune — but they could expect to make a comfortable living off the land. From this point of view the beaver was an ideal prey for at one and the same time it provided both meat and fur, in addition to its other uses.<sup>25</sup> The hides and sustenance obtained from larger mammals such as seals, caribou and walrus also represented a double benefit.

Similar dual purposes motivated the Innu of Labrador to western Newfoundland to engage in foraging and trapping activities (Martijn 1990: 232-233). Those who frequented the Quebec lower north shore during the summer knew from experience that they risked famine if they also spent the winter along the coast in this region. Whenever that time arrived a number of Innu families would cross over, assisted in this task during the eighteenth century by the willingness of the French at Brador to help outfit such displacements in exchange for seasonal fur catches. This mobility represented a latter day adaptation of an ancient foraging practice, recently confirmed by archaeological findings at the North Cove site (EgBf-08) near Ferolle on Newfoundland's west coast (Hull 1999: 16, 19). Elsewhere, a comparable late variant of another pre-contact tradition saw French authorities outfitting eastern Mi'kmaq hunting parties, travelling from Cape Breton to the Magdalen Islands, not to obtain furs in this instance, but to kill seal and walrus for supplies of meat, oil, hides, and tusks, some of which were bartered to French merchants (Martijn 1986: 176-177, 269 n.84).

Like most other European colonists, French as well as English, Taverner was unfamiliar with Mi'kmaq subsistence/settlement patterns and the practice of alternating foraging between Newfoundland and Cape Breton. Given the times and his occupations, his perception of this activity was not, of course, anthropological. Conditioned by a filter of interdictive British self-interest, he mentally tucked the Mi'kmaq into a French sphere, behind a barrier of geographical boundaries, political jurisdictions, and mercantile concerns. They became tagged as “foreign visitors”, “outsiders”, “emigrants” and “interlopers”, a discriminating practice based on ignorance which lasted well into the nineteenth century, despite the evidence contradicting it. In this respect, Taverner can be seen as a forerunner of the authoritarian later eighteenth-century Newfoundland governor, Hugh Palliser. From an early date, when Taverner heard that “the Indians from Cape Britton did frequently come there in Shallops to Furr and hunt in the winter season”, and that they were being outfitted by French merchants from Ingonish, he lobbied the Board of Trade to prevent these Natives “from coming over” in order to allow local English settlers an exclusive hand in fur trapping (1715: 48v, 50; 1733: 181).

Taverner eventually concluded that all Mi'kmaq living in the Placentia and Fortune Bay regions left the southeast coast when the French departed (Marshall 1996: 45, 468 n.26). He accused the French of spreading false rumours to the effect that:

the Indians of Cape Britton are coming to St. Peters and the Harbs Adjacent to Plunder the French Inhabitants that remain there, their design in so Doing is to hinder the Inhabitants of those Places from going to Cape Ray to Catch Furr, and the English Inhabitants to settle in those Harbours, their design hitherto have had the desired Effect, for neither will any boat go a Furring on that Coast, nor is there one English man as yet come to settle there, besides this Engine [ploy] of the French have Frightned away a great many of the Inhabitants Servants which might have taken the Oath, being afraid of the Indians coming (Taverner 1715: 50).

Given the volatile political climate at the time, there may well have been interruptions in the established pattern of Mi'kmaq frequentation of the island. These Native families had, however, no pressing reason to completely abandon their hunting and trapping territories in southern Newfoundland, even if they avoided localities such as Placentia or St. Pierre where there was an English military presence. Taverner turned out to be mistaken about the absence of Mi'kmaq in southeast Newfoundland. In December 1720, Samuel Gledhill, the English governor at Placentia, reported that "there was two open boats full of Indians seen from St. Peters [St. Pierre] but suppos'd to be only a party hunting from the Main [Nova Scotia] etc., for they have done no damage" (1720). English military and naval officers all too often made assumptions about Mi'kmaq subsistence practices in Newfoundland, because they lacked detailed understanding of such matters. A decade later, in 1730, at least 15 Mi'kmaq were reported at Desgraules [Grole?] Island on the southeast coast (de Bourville 1730: 42r).

Then, in 1746, out of the blue, comes an instructive but not altogether unexpected revelation:

The Indians from Canada [Mi'kmaq] last Winter taken several of the Furriers in the *White Bay*, they killed one, wounded another, the Chief of the Indians were kind to'em, there were only twelve Indians of the party, there were three more partys on the island, they were well acquainted with the country as far as the Bay of Bulls, and had been there the last War; they are thought to be hunters, who yearly come to the Northward a Furring (Craven 1746: 160v).

Not only do we learn that by this time Mi'kmaq hunters customarily ranged far into the interior, reaching even the north coast, and that their activities included southeast Newfoundland as well, but also that such excursions were regular annual undertakings and not just sporadic occurrences. We have confirmation, two years later, in 1747/48 that "40 Micmac of Ile Royale have been wintering at Newfound-

land ...” (O’Callaghan and Brodhead 1853-1887, 10: 174-175). Mi’kmaq familiarity with the Newfoundland west and north coasts as early as the 1740s is supported by a remark written on a 1764 British map of the Bay of Three Islands: “According to the Reports of the Cape Briton Indians who the last winter was at Caderoy [Codroy], another River from that lake [Deer Lake] runs out at the head of White Bay on the east side of the Island. It was this way the Cape Briton Indians used to pass encouraged by the French to kill our people employ’d in the Winters seal fishery” (Gilbert 1764).

To sum up, through the first half of the eighteenth century eastern Mi’kmaq families engaged in an alternating foraging and furring subsistence strategy within their domain of islands had large stretches of the Newfoundland south coast, part of the west coast, and a great deal of the interior practically to themselves. Whenever necessary, they could obtain essential European provisions from small French-speaking settlements and seasonal fishing vessels along the south and west coasts, or by crossing back and forth to Cape Breton Island.

#### MI’KMAQ INTERACTION WITH THE BEOTHUK AND THE INNU

History books usually depict Mi’kmaq-Beothuk relationships as primarily antagonistic (Marshall 1988; 1996: 42-51, 154-159). According to a popular myth about Mi’kmaq mercenaries, the Mi’kmaq were originally brought to Newfoundland by the French in the eighteenth century, not only to fight the British, but also to exterminate the Beothuk, for which they were supposedly offered scalp bounties (Bartels 1979, 1988). This story is completely illogical, since the Beothuk posed no threat to the French. In fact, no account of such an administrative decision, nor of any Beothuk scalp bounty ever being paid out survives in French colonial records (Lozier 2003: 538; Martijn 1996g: 116, 125 n.43, 44). On the contrary, there is undisputed evidence to show that in western Newfoundland the French encouraged Innu hunters, who often overwintered there, to try and contact the Beothuk in order to draw them into the fur trade (Martijn 1990: 232-233). Occasional clashes between the Beothuk and the Mi’kmaq are bound to have taken place. Unfortunately, such conflicts are the events which tend to be singled out and recorded, whereas other, more practical aspects of contact between these Native cultures, in the form of intermarriage, acts of hospitality, mutual assistance, and barter remained unnoted. The subject of Mi’kmaq-Beothuk relationships requires more attentive study, including an analysis of all Native oral traditions that have any bearing on the matter, so as to register the full spectrum of attitudes, values, social gestures and historical components embedded in them. Only in this manner will it be possible to arrive at a more discriminating perception of collaboration, and not just of conflict between the two groups.

The Mi'kmaq also had regular encounters with Innu groups who made seasonal fur trapping expeditions to the west coast and the interior of Newfoundland, from at least 1700 onwards (Martijn 1990: 237). Information about these particular Native interactions in Newfoundland is much more detailed than about Mi'kmaq/Beothuk contact (Speck 1922). Both Mi'kmaq and Innu had religious and linguistic (second language) affiliations with the French, which may have played a role in facilitating contact during later historical times.<sup>26</sup> Inevitably, certain Innu individuals who came to the island ended up with Mi'kmaq marriage partners. This led to close alliances between these two groups, with Innu males invariably being assimilated into Mi'kmaq society. In fact, intermarriage is believed to have been so common that more than half the Mi'kmaq population on the island today can probably claim some Innu ancestry. Nevertheless, confrontations over fur trapping rights occasionally surfaced between Mi'kmaq and Innu (Martijn 1990: 238-239).

## EPILOGUE

During the 1760s a number of political, economic and demographic developments took place in the Maritime provinces. The primary effects were an increasing influx of eastern Mi'kmaq into Newfoundland, marked by concomitant changes in their traditional pattern of rotational land occupation. A gradual transition took place, from age-old seasonal or cyclical movements between Cape Breton and Newfoundland, to a semi-sedentary type of existence on the island itself, and to the eventual establishment in the early nineteenth century of permanent communities at specific places such as St. George's Bay and Conne River in Bay d'Espoir (Anger 1988; Bartels and Janzen 1990; Jackson and Penney 1993; Martijn 1989).

The official surrender of New France to the British, in 1763, had a decided impact on the subsistence activities of the eastern Mi'kmaq (Martijn 1989: 222-224). One part of their domain, the Magdalen Islands, was granted to a merchant, Richard Gridley, who promptly started an extensive walrus fishery there, leading the Mi'kmaq to abandon this hunting territory. On Cape Breton Island and in mainland Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq began to endure increasing hardship as an ever-growing number of Eurocanadian settlers entered the region. No steps were taken to provide the Natives with clear title to large tracts of land where they would not be disturbed in their subsistence activities. Game depletion worsened and affected not only Native food supplies but also diminished income from fur trapping. This overall reduction of Mi'kmaq resources was further aggravated by the fact that, under the British, the annual distribution of government presents ceased. The resulting lack of access to essential manufactured goods brought many Natives close to complete destitution. Furthermore, with the death of Father Pierre Maillard in 1762, not one Catholic priest was left in Acadia to look after their spiritual needs. Until 1768, dis-

trustful British officials opposed the entry of new missionaries because of their former role in keeping the Mi'kmaq attached to the French regime. This was a major violation of the Peace Treaty of 25 June 1761, for without a priest the Mi'kmaq could not freely exercise their religion (Belcher et al. 1761).<sup>27</sup>

Plagued by so many problems, and deprived of the Magdalen Islands, the only remaining refuge of the eastern Mi'kmaq lay across the Cabot Strait. As in the past, southern Newfoundland still offered good hunting, trapping and fishing opportunities, while the limited number of Europeans settled there allowed the Mi'kmaq relative freedom to lead their own way of life, particularly in the interior. The islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon, France's tiny possessions in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, were another important attraction. Here the Mi'kmaq could still hope to acquire arms, ammunition, certain food supplies and manufactured goods from the civil authorities. Equally crucial for the Mi'kmaq was the presence there of Catholic priests who could minister to their spiritual needs and perform baptisms, marriages, burials and other religious ceremonies, in line with the guarantees offered by the 1761 peace treaty (Martijn 1996e).

Between 1763 and 1768, Jeannot Peguidalouet, the eastern Mi'kmaq chief of Cape Breton, regularly crossed to Newfoundland, where he sometimes overwintered with a group of as many as 200 followers, who spread themselves from Fortune Bay and Bay d'Espoir on the south coast, all the way up the west coast to Port au Choix, Ferolle and Bay of St. John's (Balcom and Martijn 1996; Martijn 1996f).<sup>28</sup> Initially, many maintained the seasonal practice of crossing back to Cape Breton, but over time these people became increasingly sedentary. More and more families decided to remain in Newfoundland and to mingle with the members of a small floating population, the *Say'ewedjikik* or "Ancients", who were already established there (Speck 1922). They continued, nevertheless, to make regular pilgrimages to Saint Anne and visits to relatives on Cape Breton Island and elsewhere on the mainland (Johnston 1960; Martijn 1996e). Chief Jeannot and his people also undertook journeys to St. Pierre and Miquelon for encounters with French authorities and Catholic clergymen, a tradition which lasted until about 1865 (Martijn 1996e). Baptismal and marriage acts from parish registers there, most dating to the second half of the eighteenth century, contain information about which regions in Newfoundland were frequented by the Mi'kmaq, including Bonne Bay, St. George's Bay, Codroy, Burgeo and Bay d'Espoir. In addition, they provide evidence for wide-ranging contacts with Mi'kmaq communities on the mainland, revealing the existence of a social network which covered the entire homeland of the Mi'kmaq people.

Initially, these eastern Mi'kmaq migration movements seriously alarmed British authorities, including Sir Hugh Palliser, the governor of Newfoundland. He was not aware of the reasons underlying this long-established pattern of resources exploitation, although his superiors, at least, were cognizant of the regular movements of these Native people.<sup>29</sup> In fact, the royal instructions issued in 1763 to his



predecessor, Governor Thomas Graves, regarding Newfoundland, Anticosti, the Magdalens and “other small Islands” under his jurisdiction, specifically mentioned “the establishing and carrying on a Commerce with the Indians residing in or resorting to the said Islands ...” (Great Britain 1763). Palliser, nonetheless, considered the Mi’kmaq a threat to the security of the Newfoundland fisheries, accused them of engaging in clandestine trade with the French, and menaced them with warships. Claiming that “none of His Majesty’s Subjects from the Plantations are permitted to resort to this Country but in the Summer Season with Suply’s of Provisions for the Fishers and Inhabitants”, he decreed that “all People whatever from the Plantations whether Indians or others without Distinction, that may be met with in this Country after the first day of November, shall Immediately retire to the Governments to which they respectively belong” (Palliser 1765a).

Palliser also took measures to discourage the Labrador Inuit from continuing their seasonal crossings over to northern Newfoundland, or even from coming down to southern Labrador (Martijn 2000). Since both Newfoundland and Labrador were under his direct jurisdiction, this created a peculiar legal situation. To achieve his purpose, Palliser shrewdly used persuasion and backstairs dealings rather than official decrees and naked force.<sup>30</sup> He had subordinates confer with the Inuit, and he supported Moravian missionaries with land grants and trading privileges, in return for their assistance in keeping the Inuit restricted to the northern part of Labrador (Lysaght 1971: 207-210; Anon. 1764: 5; Whiteley 1969: 154). This policy was eventually implemented, in 1772, by one of his successors, Governor Molyneux Shuldham (Whiteley 1964: 46).<sup>31</sup>

The legality of the arbitrary efforts by Palliser to prohibit the eastern Mi’kmaq, who were British subjects, from crossing over to Newfoundland was questioned by other British authorities in the Maritimes (Wilmot 1765). Although the Board of Trade in London backed Palliser’s decision, it prudently distanced itself from him, in an analogous case, in this instance involving North American colonists of European origin, including Newfoundland settlers. In 1765, Palliser had banned North American colonists from the coast of Labrador. When two English merchants from Quebec City insisted, as British subjects, on exploiting a seal fishery in Labrador, Palliser had their crews arrested and their equipment confiscated. The aggrieved traders, considering their rights to have been transgressed and arguing that Palliser’s regulation had not received parliamentary sanction, launched a lawsuit against him in a London court. Palliser lost and was obliged to pay damages (Rothney 1934; Whiteley 1969: 156). Although the Board of Trade approved of his actions and actually paid his costs, it did not appeal the decision, being uncertain that his high-handed measures could be legally defended (Rothney 1934: 271). In fact, the Board of Trade soon admitted that Palliser had misinterpreted the act of 1699 in excluding colonists from the Labrador fishery and instructed him not to interrupt North Americans fishing on the Labrador coast, as long as they observed the established rules of the fishery (Whiteley 1969: 157). If the Mi’kmaq and the Lab-



rador Inuit had been in a position to avail themselves of influential legal representation in London, they too might well have succeeded in overturning the edicts of Palliser and Shuldham.

Palliser's short-lived efforts to discourage the Mi'kmaq from Newfoundland, and in particular from St. Pierre and Miquelon, were ultimately unsuccessful. No subsequent governor ever again challenged the Mi'kmaq right to freely engage in hunting and trapping in Newfoundland. Nevertheless, until the early decades of the nineteenth century, officious British naval patrols and self-serving settlers frequently referred to Mi'kmaq encountered on the island as "foreign Indians" from Nova Scotia, as opposed to the Beothuk whom they classified as indigenous Indians — even if they were well aware that the Mi'kmaq either spent an extensive part of the year hunting and trapping in Newfoundland or resided there.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly enough, as early as the seventeenth century, Richard Whitbourne made the astute observation that the Beothuk "resemble the Indians of the continent, from whence (I suppose) they come" (Cell 1982: 117). In the final analysis, if one goes back far enough, there are only newcomers — a statement of fact which invites reflection. In the end, sometime between 1783 and 1787, the government granted an unnamed Mi'kmaq chief a tract of land at St. George's Bay (Bartels and Janzen 1990: 83-86). This grant officially sanctioned a state of affairs which had already endured for many centuries.

Aside from the customary gifts, which the French authorities continued to distribute, various commercial ties (including presumably a trade in furs) also linked the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq and the population of St. Pierre and Miquelon. One instance is mentioned by a French naval commander, Scipion de Castries, who had been sent out to take over the islands from the British when the Treaty of Versailles came into force in 1783 (1992: 303-305). After negotiating for several days with a Mi'kmaq delegation composed of representatives "belonging to different bands", apparently including St. George's Bay, an official agreement was signed whereby these Natives consented to furnish quantities of construction lumber and firewood which were to be left at unspecified places along the Newfoundland coast for French vessels to pick up. De Castries was anxious for the Natives to keep a guard over this material until it had been loaded on board. The Mi'kmaq, however, showed themselves very reluctant to do so, because it would have been at a time when family groups were moving inland for seasonal hunts.<sup>33</sup>

The underlying complexity of recurrent Mi'kmaq population movements between Cape Breton and Newfoundland during the final decades of the eighteenth century is illustrated by the Cape Breton Council Minutes of 9 September 1794:

The Lieutenant Governor informed the Board that of the Evening of the 7th Instant he received Information that Nine Indian Families were arrived in this Harbour [Sydney] from Newfoundland — His regard for the Inhabitants of Sydney induced him immediately to require a Watch and Ward of Six Men to be assembled for the preservation of their property and His Majesty's Stores — That he Yesterday received the Indians

and inquired what were their intentions and views for coming to this Island, which he did in the presence of two of the Members of His Majesty's Council, who happened to be in his House.

One Louis Christoph[e] who seemed to be a principal Person amongst them said that he was a Native Indian of Cape Breton — that he left the island Ten Years ago that two Years since his Father died on this Island — that he is now returned in Company with Nine Families consisting of Sixty persons, Seventeen of whom are Men grown that they have brought with them some Dry fish, Furs and Feathers to sell that it is their intention to become residents on this Island [Cape Breton] and they pray for such assistance as the Governor may be pleased to grant them to enable them to begin their Hunting.

He farther says that they are descended from the Native Indians of this Island, that their place of residence in Newfoundland was the Bay St. George — And that there are ten other Families relations of the Indians of this Island intending to come here next Spring —

[Chief] Old Indian Tomma and two of his sons declared they knew the Father of Christopher very well, and that they believed the whole which has been related by Christopher — Joseph Tomma said that he went last Year to Newfoundland and prevailed upon these Families to come to this Island [Cape Breton], and on being asked at whose request he did this he replied that it was at the request of his Father — Old Tomma then said in behalf of the Indians that they all desired to be considered as neutrals who intended to fold their Arms in all Wars between England & France — And that they hoped none of the Subjects of England would be suffered to Inhabit the Lands round lake George, that is to say the Ground [sic] Lake Brasdor. The answer given to them by the Lieutenant Governor was that when the weather would permit the assembling of His Majesty's Council, he would lay their application before it — But in granting lands he could only obey the order of His King — And the Board humbly conceive that it would be proper to acquaint these Indians that while they remain Peaceable and quiet and pursue their hunting and other Employments they will receive all favour and protection from this Government ... (Cape Breton Council 1794).

This document, in conjunction with other related data, is bound to receive close attention in future ethnohistorical studies dealing with Mi'kmaq migrations between Cape Breton Island and Newfoundland during the eighteenth century. It provides new insights into a range of underlying motivations which governed such recurrent movements, and sharpens our appreciation of their socio-economic and political context. Prior to 1783 various small groups of semi-sedentary Mi'kmaq were already associated with specific localities along the south and west coasts of Newfoundland. Population mobility remained high, however, and the demographic composition of these agglomerations underwent regular transformations, as Native families arrived from or returned to the mainland or else moved locally between communities. Thus in 1784, a year after France took repossession of St. Pierre and Miquelon, the governor, Baron de l'Espérance, reported the arrival there in August of 80 Mi'kmaq men, women and children who "inhabit the vicinity of île

Royale” (de l’Espérance 1784). He supplied them with a quantity of presents from the *magasin du roy*. They declared that “to give evidence more and more of their attachment to France, they were proposing to settle at Baie de Désespoir in order to be more within reach of coming to visit us more often”. If so, they must have joined an already existent Mi’kmaq community there, for the parish records of St. Pierre and Miquelon contain one burial and three baptismal acts between 1778 and 1790 involving Natives living in the “Baye des Experes” region. Their family name is variously given as Heli, Helie and Hely (Martijn 1996e,f). As well, a John Elly and a Silvester Elly figure among the 12 Amerindian trappers listed in the 1790 Little Bay ledger of the Newman and Hunt Company (1790).

Was the above-mentioned Mi’kmaq group of 1784 the same as the one headed by Louis Christopher ten years later? Could the latter also have been the same person as the Mi’kmaq interpreter called Louis whom de Castries met at St. Pierre in 1783? Or the Louis Christopher who is listed among the “Indians” in the 1790 Newman and Hunt ledger? On the other hand, Louis Christopher claimed Bay St. George as his place of residence and intimated that the families who accompanied him to Cape Breton Island in 1794 were all from there. It would not have been unusual for him, however, to have spent time in southeast Newfoundland, for in 1797 Captain Ambrose Crofton was informed that the St. George’s Bay Mi’kmaq “travel over land with their Furs annually to Fortune Bay, of the Bay of Despair, where they receive Powder, Shot and Blanketing in lieu of their Furs, which I find has been very trifling owing to their indolence” (Crofton 1798). He added that “the greater part of them having removed from Cape Britton in consequence of being informed that Deer [caribou] was more abundant in Newfoundland”. Those Mi’kmaq were not exclusively inland hunters and trappers, for Crofton also described how these “Foreign Indians always remain near to this Harbour during the Winter, that their principal motive, is on account of the great quantity of Eels that are found in Flat Bay near St. George’s Harbour, and all along the South Shore from Cape Anguille”. This continued maritime orientation is also attested to by the fact that the Mi’kmaq who crossed over to Sydney in 1794 brought with them “some Dry Fish ... and Feathers to sell”, the latter commodity no doubt obtained from aquatic birds, such as the Common Eider duck, at their coastal colonies (Cape Breton Council 1794).

The Cape Breton Council minutes of 1794 also suggest that the subsistence requirements of the eastern Mi’kmaq were not exempt from political considerations. Edward Chappell, who visited Newfoundland in 1818, refers to an old Mi’kmaq chief who kept his followers faithful to the British Crown during the American Revolution (1775-1782), and who, for services rendered, received a tract of land at St. George’s Bay, where he and his band eventually established themselves (1818: 76-78). The identity of this chief remains unknown, but Old Tomma now seems a likely candidate, and this may have been the event which triggered a major migration in 1784. The renewed French presence on St. Pierre and Miquelon from 1783

must have served as an added attraction, with its promise of official presents and various commercial opportunities.

A decade later, however, the political situation underwent a transformation. War broke out between England and France and, from 1793 until 1814, St. Pierre and Miquelon passed back to British control. In Cape Breton, the expansion of European settlement continued its pressure on Mi'kmaq hunting lands. Adding to this uncertainty, American and French sources spread rumours that the British in Newfoundland would treat Mi'kmaq ill (Thorne 1794). This was cause for apprehension. During the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, the French and English had subjected each other's fishing communities in areas such as the Avalon Peninsula, St. Pierre and Miquelon islands and Codroy to veritable razzias, with local populations being summarily rounded up and deported and their belongings destroyed (Janzen 2002; Poirier 1984; Williams 1987). The Mi'kmaq had been involved one way or another in a number of these events and were well aware of their implications.

After reviewing this situation, Old Tomma and his elders appear to have reached the conclusion that the safety of the Mi'kmaq families at St. George's Bay might be better assured if they assumed a completely neutral stance and moved to the less exposed interior of Cape Breton Island. At the same time their presence in this new location would have served as a counterbalance to relentless settler encroachment. They sent an emissary, Joseph Tomma, over to Newfoundland to submit this proposal directly to his people. No British officials seem to have been consulted on this matter. Louis Christopher led back an initial contingent of nine Native families and the additional ten families mentioned by him may have followed in the spring of 1795. St. George's Bay was never completely abandoned, however, and a general exodus by Mi'kmaq living in other areas of Newfoundland did not take place. Although the Cape Breton Council reacted with a certain wariness to this return migration and took preventive measures to forestall possible disorders, they otherwise accepted it with equanimity. The right of the Mi'kmaq to freely move back and forth between Cape Breton and Newfoundland was no longer contested, as it had been in Palliser's time. In a sense, the authorities permitted the Natives to exercise a kind of dual colonial citizenship, although the eastern Mi'kmaq themselves never conceived of it that way. Rather, it was the Creator who had granted them the different islands that comprised their domain.

## CONCLUSION

The eastern Mi'kmaq have been closely linked with southern Newfoundland for a long time. Whether this stretches as far back as the prehistoric era remains an open question, awaiting archaeological confirmation.<sup>34</sup> Other evidence supports the hypothesis that the Mi'kmaq connection with this island was rooted in established Na-

tive subsistence practices, carried out within a farflung insular domain which also included Cape Breton, the Magdalen Islands, and St. Pierre and Miquelon.

Historically, the Mi'kmaq moved around a great deal, as they exploited faunal and natural resources in different ecological habitats, according to a seasonal cycle. Such movements were also influenced by other environmental and social factors, which affected the availability of local food supplies and the survival of group members. Whenever faced with subsistence crises, eastern Mi'kmaq bands, or band segments, would temporarily shift activities to other parts of their extensive island territory. It is from such a perspective that the aboriginal Mi'kmaq land use of southern Newfoundland should be viewed and understood.

There are indications, dating to the sixteenth century, that Mi'kmaq living on Cape Breton Island, using canoes and later on also European shallops, frequented the south coast of Newfoundland during alternating foraging expeditions. It is hypothesized here that such crossings back and forth were a common practice, while on occasion certain families may have spent longer periods of time in Newfoundland for a number of reasons — thus constituting a small floating population whose size varied year by year. Testimony by eastern Mi'kmaq leaders in the early eighteenth century reveals that some groups used Cape Breton and southern Newfoundland on a rotational basis, for example when animal populations had been depleted in the former and time was needed for their renewal. Such extended stays on the island of Newfoundland involved the use of temporary base camps for hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering.

The second half of the eighteenth century was the beginning of a period of transformation. Larger and more sustained migration movements took place, as the eastern Mi'kmaq started to suffer the relentless encroachment of European settlers on their Cape Breton and mainland hunting territories. Over time, a growing number of Mi'kmaq families became more sedentary, as families elected to take up a fixed abode in Newfoundland, joining those already living there, the *Sa'yewedjkik* or “Ancients”.<sup>35</sup> Finally, in the nineteenth century, the Mi'kmaq established permanent communities with wooden cabins and churches, at St. George's Bay and Conne River, which had long served as seasonal meeting sites (Jackson and Penney 1993).<sup>36</sup> Close social, political and religious ties continued with other Mi'kmaq communities in the Maritime provinces and Quebec.

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### Abbreviations

CO	Colonial Office, in PRO
CSP Colonial	Calendar of State Papers Colonial (Headlam 1926 and 1933)
France, AC	Archives des Colonies
GBPC	Great Britain Privy Council
HCA	High Court of Admiralty, in PRO
PRO	Public Record Office, London
PANL	Provincial Archives of Newfoundland and Labrador, St. John's
PANS	Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, Halifax
NAC	National Archives of Canada, Ottawa

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>See notably Anger (1983, 1988); Bartels (1979, 1988, 1991); Bartels and Janzen (1990); Chute (1999); Hewson (1978a,b; 1982); Jackson and Penney (1993); Kennedy (1987); Marshall (1988, 1996); Martijn (1986a, 1989, 1990); Pastore (1977; 1978a,b); Penney (1984, 1990, 1992, 1997); Penney and Nicol (1984); Stone (1993); Tanner and Henderson (1992); Tompkins (1986); Wetzel (1996); Whitehead (1987, 1991); and Wilkshire and Penney (1991).

<sup>2</sup>Ray (2003) provides a perceptive analysis of the manner in which the participation of academic experts in American, Canadian and Australian Aboriginal rights litigation has caused deep divisions within professional ranks. In his opinion, "historical experts have to be guided by the highest ethical and professional standards to maintain their integrity and avoid becoming merely advocates who do courtroom history. Also, they must bear in mind that their primary responsibility is to the court rather than to their clients" (273). In another context, Morin (2003) has emphasized the need for ethnohistorians, when dealing with land claims, to also familiarize themselves with juridical concepts rather than limiting themselves only to historical concepts.

<sup>3</sup>In 1784, Major Percy Thorne, British commander on St. Pierre and Miquelon, reported a visit by two Mi'kmaq families from St. George's Bay: "An Englishman, Dennis, from Dorchester, came with them, at the great age of 104. Has resided in Newfoundland upwards of 80 years. He dined with me, and I found he had his faculties perfect, except his sight impaired" (1794: 81v). Unfortunately, there is no mention if this person had lived with the Mi'kmaq for any length of time and spoke their language.

<sup>4</sup>It has been argued that Newfoundland "presents an interesting contradiction to the student of exploration history. Known as Britain's oldest colony, [it] remained for three centuries following its discovery one of Britain's least known colonies" (Tompkins 1986: 3). Given that much of the interior remained a *terra incognita* well into the nineteenth century,

this is a thought-provoking perspective on the lack of detailed ethnographical information in early documents.

<sup>5</sup>Presumed prehistoric Mi'kmaq sites are known from the south coast of Anticosti Island, located 46 miles (75 km) from the Quebec Gaspé Peninsula, while ethnohistoric records show that they exploited the resources of this island and also used it as a stepping stone to reach the Gulf of St. Lawrence middle north shore (Gélinas 2004; Martijn and Martin 2001).

<sup>6</sup>Nash and Miller emphasize that “there were a variety of pre-contact economies, which varied regionally in accordance with the distribution of resources” (1987: 41, 53). For example, moose and caribou tended to be more abundant on Cape Breton Island than on Prince Edward Island. Walrus herds had their preferred places for hauling up, such as on the Magdalen Islands. Salmon favoured larger rivers. Clam beds and waterfowl marshes were not present everywhere. Some anadromous fish runs occurred earlier than others, and not always at the same location. For a general discussion on regional differentiation within Mi'kmaq territory, see Nietfeld (1981: 331-335).

<sup>7</sup>Details about the historic Mi'kmaq presence on the Magdalen Islands are provided in Martijn (1986b). In addition, there is ample data on their prehistoric remains which cover a range of several thousand years (McCaffrey 1988).

<sup>8</sup>*Meneg* (“removed from — separated from”) + *kwitk* (“in or on water”) — the sense of an island which is separate or removed from a larger body of land (Emmanuel Nagugwes Metallic, pers. comm. 2002).

<sup>9</sup>In 1996, members of the Miawpukek Band at Conne River, Newfoundland, constructed a 26-foot ocean-going canoe (Penney 1997). This work was supervised by René Martin, a Mi'kmaq canoe builder from Listuguj (Restigouche), Quebec. During the summer of 2004, a Mi'kmaq delegation from Conne River, led by Chief Misel Joe, crossed over in such a large canoe to Miquelon Island in order to commemorate historical ties with this French community.

<sup>10</sup>Crignon may also have grouped with them Innu (Montagnais) who made excursions to the island from the Quebec/Labrador peninsula.

<sup>11</sup>The use of tattoos and facial as well as body painting among northeastern Algonquians, and specifically the Mi'kmaq, is summarized in Flannery (1939: 50-52). The most detailed description of such Mi'kmaq decorative practices is provided by Father Chrestien Leclercq in 1691 (Ganong 1910: 95-98, 269). In 1583, a Norman merchant, Etienne Bellenger, obtained from Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia quantities of “divers excellent Cullors, as scarlet, vermillion, redd, tawny, yellow, gray, and watchett [blue]” (Quinn 1962: 341 and n.51). As late as 1839, Jukes encountered an old Mi'kmaq woman at Humber Sound, Newfoundland, who “had a kind of moustache tattooed on each cheek ...” (1842: 113). For the Beothuk, see Marshall (1996: 337-338).

<sup>12</sup>In his unpublished manuscript *Voyages Avantageux* (Ganong 1964: 199). However, a later Portuguese source (1570) stated that the colonists initially considered the Natives to be “submissive”, but eventually, after “they had lost their ships ... nothing further was heard of them” (Ganong 1964: 67-68).

<sup>13</sup>In Atlantic Canada, such prejudices were dissipated over time as mixed European-Mi'kmaq unions became more common. In 1612, Father Pierre Biard depicted the great Chief Membertou as being “the greatest, most renowned and most formidable savage within the memory of man; of splendid physique, taller and larger-limbed than is usual



among them; bearded like a Frenchman, although scarcely any of the others have hair upon the chin” (Thwaites 1959, JRII: 23). Judging from this description, Membertou may have been a Métis.

<sup>14</sup>In 1527, a hostile encounter took place somewhere in southeast Newfoundland between Captain John Rut and Native people. However, the geographical location is imprecise and either Mi’kmaq or Beothuk could have been involved. According to this account, “they turned about and came to explore Newfoundland [les Vacallaos], where they found some 50 Spanish, French and Portuguese fishing-vessels [at St. John’s]. They desired to land there to have tidings of the Indians, but on reaching the shore the Indians killed the pilot, who they said was a Piedmontese by birth [perhaps Albertus de Prato ?]” (Quinn 1979, I: 190, 192).

<sup>15</sup>For examples of casual small scale fur trading with Natives, not recorded in French commercial notarial acts, see the Bay of Chaleurs (Gaspé) in 1534 (Biggar 1924: 49-56); the Quebec lower north shore in 1542 (Biggar 1930: 460-463); southern Labrador in 1557 (Barkham 1980: 54); southern Nova Scotia in 1629 (Griffiths and Read 1992: 506-507); and southern Newfoundland in 1755 (Maillard 1863, III: 366). At Plaisance, in 1711, inventories of the belongings of two deceased fishermen helpers show that they each possessed a set of fur clothing, without any indication as to how and where these had been procured (Landry 1998: 117, 122 n.62,63). As one historian has underlined, “in addition to ... insurance records and lawsuits, there are also logs, journals and other records of Europeans on board ships passing through the Cabot Strait. At the present time, no one has searched or compiled these systematically, so one can only guess what such a search might reveal” (Janzen 2002: 32 n.9).

<sup>16</sup>Ideally, the entire corpus should be restudied by being quantified and subjected to rigorous analysis and comparative testing. Among other things, as pointed out by Quinn, notarial acts were not exempt from falsification (1962: 330). He cites the case of the French ship *Chardon* whose official charter-party signed on 24 January 1583 gave various localities in Africa and South America as its ostensible destination, whereas the captain, once at sea, was provided with secret instructions to proceed to the Nova Scotia region.

<sup>17</sup>During the period between 1700 and 1715, French corsairs operated out of Plaisance, preying on English vessels who frequented the codfishing grounds. In 1711, among the captured prizes there were the *Rebecca* of Virginia and the sloop *Elisabeth*, whose cargoes included tobacco, while the *Timothy* had two barrels of fur on board (Landry 2002b: 82).

<sup>18</sup>At this stage it is difficult to formulate an opinion on whether the lack of early seventeenth-century references denotes an actual Mi’kmaq absence or represents yet another example of supposed invisibility stemming from the commercial bias of the historical records themselves. For reasons which remain obscure the fur trade in the Placentia region never flourished because the inhabitants “could find no way of disposing of the furs they accumulated” (Humphreys 1970: 12). Might this have induced Mi’kmaq hunters to carry their fur catches to Cape Breton instead? On the other hand, were minor fur transactions by Placentia residents kept under cover during the course of illicit trading with New England merchants? Future archival research needs to be devoted to such questions.

<sup>19</sup>In his discussion on Louisbourg, A.J.B. Johnson remarks that “As for the Micmacs, these military allies were rarely seen in town ... Nonetheless, the occasional baptism of a native child, the entry into domestic service of a young Micmac girl, and the infrequent visits of their scouts or chiefs, testify that Micmacs did sometimes come to Louisbourg” (1984: 8-9).

<sup>20</sup>According to Donovan, “Black people were the most numerous slaves in Louisbourg, but there were at least 18 Amerindians enslaved in the town as well. In the Louisbourg parish records, Amerindian slaves were usually referred to as *sauvage* or *Panis*” (1995: 19).

<sup>21</sup>An English traveller, who is said to have visited Newfoundland in 1700, affirmed that “we did not encounter any [Native] inhabitants in the eastern parts nor in the southern parts, except around Fort Plaisance” (A. White 1715: 6). Whether he was actually speaking from experience or relying on Lahontan (to whose publications he refers in several footnotes) is unclear. In 1694, two French warships with 45 Mi'kmaq from the mainland on board, were sent to Placentia, from where they apparently carried out sea patrols along the southeast coast without engaging in land warfare (Martijn 1989: 218).

<sup>22</sup>In the “Miscellaneous” column of the 1857 census there are entries listing Indians at five localities, together with a reference to Conne River (Bay Despair) as being an Indian settlement. At best, however, the incomplete British censuses prior to 1891 offer only a hint as to the actual Native population on the Island of Newfoundland (Newfoundland, 1857).

<sup>23</sup>See for example the studies on the western and eastern James Bay Cree by Ray and Freeman (1978); Feit (1969, 1978); Francis and Morantz (1983); Tanner (1979), and on the Great Lakes Algonquian tribes see R. White (1991: 128-144). White points out that “there is no denying that European goods had become an integral part of Algonquian life, but by the end of the French period there was not, as yet, material dependence. In an emergency Algonquians remained able to feed, clothe, and shelter themselves without European assistance, and more significantly they had more than one source for the manufactures they wanted” (140).

<sup>24</sup>As late as 1865, Newfoundland Mi'kmaq were still requesting permission from the French authorities in St. Pierre to go seal hunting on the coast of Miquelon (Anon. 1865: 252).

<sup>25</sup>In traditional daily life, apart from food, the beaver also provided the Mi'kmaq with protective clothing, bedding, incisors for tools, medicine (castoreum and kidneys), wrappings for bodies and for lining graves in funerary rites, and fur exchange goods in the context of pre-contact native trading networks.

<sup>26</sup>The parish records of the French island of St. Pierre contain an entry, on 24 August 1790, of the baptism of Jean Martin, a Montagnais boy aged ten years, who had been adopted by a Mi'kmaq family (Martijn 1996e: 10, 20).

<sup>27</sup>Not until 1768 was this situation rectified by an authorization extended to Father Charles-François Bailly de Messein to serve as Vicar General within the vast area now covered by Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island (Johnston 1960: 92-93).

<sup>28</sup>Although rarely mentioned by Canadian historians, and not even accorded an entry in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, Chief Jeannot Peguidalouet figures among the most remarkable Native personages in the history of eastern Canada. From a redoubtable warrior, he developed into an able political leader, astute negotiator and respected statesman who providently saw to the interests of his people during a difficult transition period occasioned by the mid-eighteenth-century changeover from French to British administration in the Maritimes (Balcom and Martijn 1996).

<sup>29</sup>Writing to William Campbell, governor of Nova Scotia, in 1767, Lord Shelburne, the British Secretary of State, cited the need to prevent “their Annual migrations to Newfoundland & the Islands [of St. Pierre and Miquelon]” (1767).

<sup>30</sup>However, when the Inuit killed three men at the fishing station of Cape Charles in 1767, and burned it down, the garrison commander at York Harbour sent out a detachment in pursuit. Some 20 Inuit were killed in retaliation and nine women and children captured. Palliser gave orders for the prisoners to be well treated. He took three of them back to London with him in 1768, in order to impress them with the “power, splendor and generosity of the English nation”. They were eventually returned to Labrador in order to convince their countrymen that the British only wanted to engage in fair and peaceful trade (Whiteley 1964: 40).

<sup>31</sup>In a “Short Account of the Territory of Labradore ...”, an unnamed writer, presumed to be Lieutenant Roger Curtis, stated that the Labrador Inuit “have been threatened by punishment if they steal again, and were this year [1772] forbid going to Newfoundland. This Restriction was very displeasing to them. But they submitted with the Appearance of much Anxiety not to offend” (Great Britain Privy Council 1927, III: 1054). This appears to be a reference to the Proclamation (1772) by Governor Molyneux Shuldham (1772: 15, 437).

<sup>32</sup>See for example, the egregious report by William Parker (1810); the scheming proposals by a settler, John Gale, in 1819 (Howley 1915: 118-119); and the menace by Governor Charles Hamilton that same year to prevent the Mi’kmaq “from resorting to the Island again” (1819).

<sup>33</sup>De Castries declared that “the chief of these savages was an intelligent person who looked well after the interests of his nation” (1992: 303-305). Could he have been one and the same person as the Cape Breton Chief Old Tomma and the unnamed Mi’kmaq leader who had received a land grant at St. George’s Bay around this time? De Castries also related that “this deputation had as its interpreter a certain Louis who prided himself about being baptized and who spoke French relatively well. This man who had nothing of the savage [about him] except for the name and the clothing was well familiar with all affairs ... [and] had much credit and exerted great influence on the chiefs”. Was this perhaps the Louis Christophe(r) who in 1794 led back a group of Mi’kmaq families from St. George’s Bay to Cape Breton Island, as noted elsewhere in this paper?

<sup>34</sup>In passing, no archaeological sites have been yet located, relating to the ethnohistorically confirmed Innu and Inuit presence in western Newfoundland, covering a post-contact period of almost three centuries.

<sup>35</sup>Speck postulated that the term *Sa’yewedjkik* “simply refers to the earlier Micmac colonists from the mainland, whose numbers were few and whose isolation rendered them distinct in some respects in culture and possibly in dialect” (1922: 123).

<sup>36</sup>Surviving records suggest that the Bay d’Espoir region, where the present day Conne River settlement is located, has been associated with the Mi’kmaq for at least several centuries (Subercase 1705; Costebelle 1706, 1707b,c, 1708). On one occasion Governor Palliser attempted to evict them from the area, but to no avail (Palliser 1765a,b). In the summer of 1819, a French botanist, Jean-Marie Bachelot de La Pylaie, visited Conne River which he referred to as “La Corne ou conne”. It was by then a semi-sedentary encampment composed of a number of huts and one larger structure which he presumed to have been a chapel. The inhabitants were absent at the time (Rousseau 1962: 75-76). The French fisherman from Miquelon who brought him over related that his father had once encountered a Mi’kmaq band nearby (200 canoes) who were seasonally camped at Chipkow (St. Alban’s).

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