

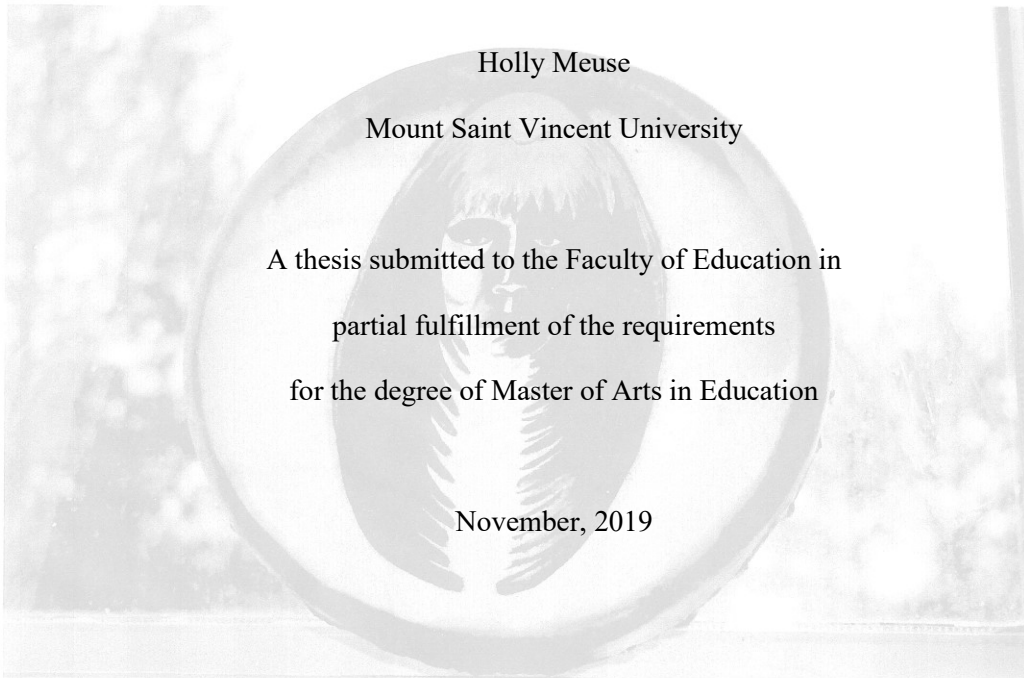
# **The Role of Mi'kmaw Art and Lifelong Learning in Sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture**

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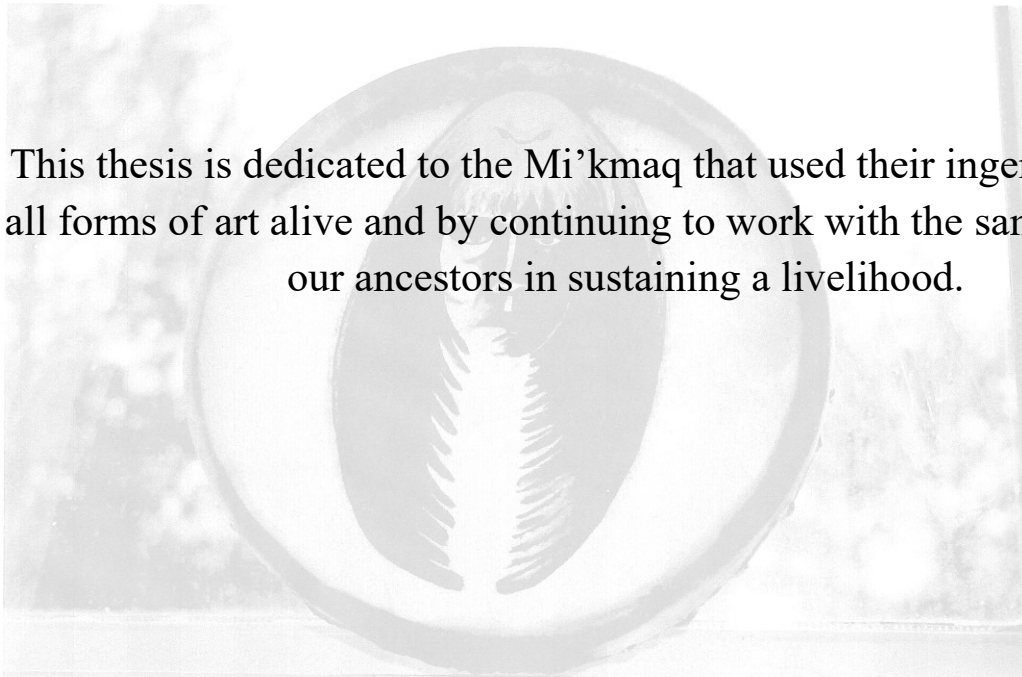
A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Education in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

November, 2019



## Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to the Mi'kmaq that used their ingenuity to keep all forms of art alive and by continuing to work with the same passion of our ancestors in sustaining a livelihood.



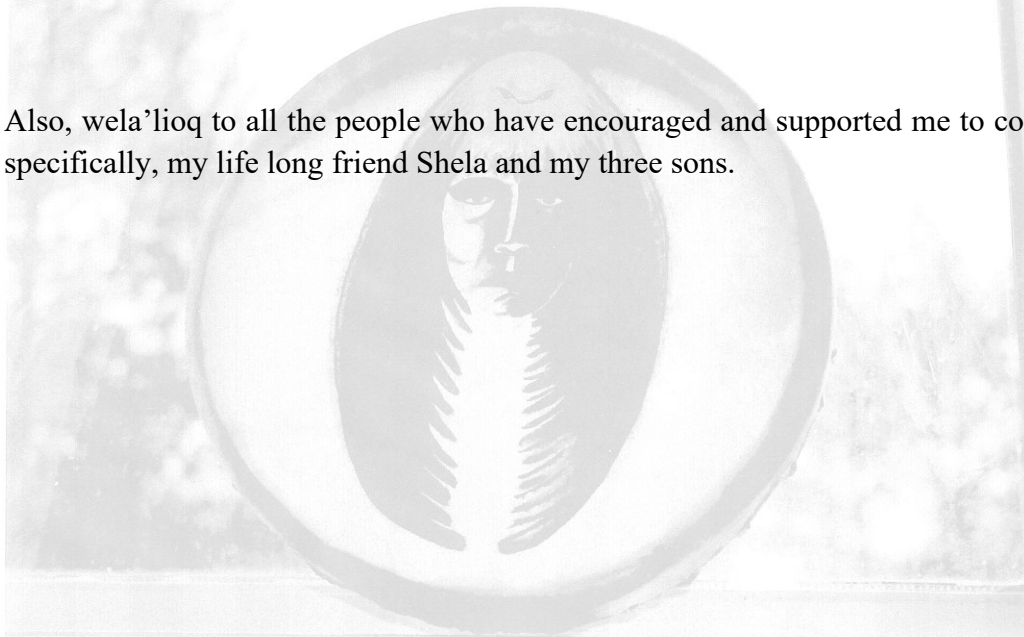
## Abstract

I remember living in a house with no running water, no electricity and only a wood stove in the kitchen. In late summer, just before I started school, we moved into a new home. In the new home, my father provided for his family by relying on his artist talents. In this thesis, I discuss how artistic talents are innate for the Mi'kmaq but were suppressed or lost due to the injustices placed upon our people through the ethnocentric lens of the newcomer's government. However, these artist talents are being regained. My study demonstrates how the artistic knowledge and today's art reflect our ancestors, current issues, and self reflection from a Mi'kmaw perspective. Coming from an arts-based approach with a critical theoretical perspective, I explain how art is used as a strength for our people. It is an aspect of maintaining our culture. It has provided a livelihood since time immemorial, and it provides an underlying self therapy towards addressing the injustices that had and continues to be placed upon our people. I argue that Mi'kmaq arts-based perspectives are needed in the lifelong learning for connecting our cultural past to enrich our present and future. I used qualitative methods, including one -to-one interviews, and a questionnaire. Twenty-seven Mi'kmaw participants from all thirteen Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia were involved in my study. I audio and video recorded some of my interviews with verbal and signed consent from my participants. The video compilation is part of my thesis and can be found at Mount Saint Vincent University Library, at Cape Breton University Unama'ki College, and in all of the thirteen Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia.

## Acknowledgements

Special thanks to Dr. Susan Brigham for providing supportive direction, and knowing that life's events will interrupt the thesis flow but still having confidence, without judgement, in my success. I also want to thank Scott MacPhail, PhD (committee member) and my research participants.

Also, wela'lioq to all the people who have encouraged and supported me to complete my thesis, specifically, my life long friend Shela and my three sons.



## Glossary

<b>Apajiaq:</b>	Results of/ Outcome	<b>Apunknajit :</b>	Sun is very Strong
<b>A'tugwewinu</b>	Storyteller	<b>Etquljuikus :</b>	Frog Croaking
<b>Glooscap :</b>	Traditional Trickster Hero	<b>Guwickson :</b>	Going door to doo _____
<b>Keptekewikus:</b>	River about to Freeze	<b>.Kiskewikus:</b>	Chief Moon
<b>Kisiku</b>	Lived Many Moons	<b>Kisikui kwaq:</b>	Three Old Ladies
<b>Kisulk or Kji Niskam:</b>	One who made everything or Great Spirit		
<b>Kisikwekewikus .:</b>	Ripening Time	<b>Kjikus:</b>	Great Moon
<b>L'nu:</b>	Original people of the Land	<b>M'quot:</b>	Burl of a tree
<b>Malswumis:</b>	Brother of Glooscap	<b>Naku'set:</b>	The Sun
<b>Netukulimk:</b>	Sustaining yourself	<b>Kisutaq'nn</b>	Has been told
<b>Nesk'a'we'mk-Panta'latl:</b>	Weave/intertwined	<b>Nipnikus :</b>	Leaves Full Blossom
<b>Npuion :</b>	person deals with life force	<b>Panuijgadm:</b>	Examine/study
<b>Penamuikus :</b>	Birds Lay Eggs	<b>Peskewikus:</b>	Birds Shed Feathers
<b>Punqmuijikus:</b>	Spawn of Tom-Cod	<b>Siw kewikus:</b>	Maple Sugar
<b>Uiskok .:</b>	Black Ash	<b>Wabinawab :</b>	Dice Game
<b>Waltestaqan'qwan</b>	Waltus Game	<b>Wikewikus :</b>	Fat Tame Animals
<b>Wikumkewikus :</b>	Moose Calling Time	<b>Wsitqamu'k:</b>	The Earth

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## Chapter One: Neska'we'mk-Panta'latl

### Introduction to my study

I am from the L'sitkuk First Nation community located in Bear River, Nova Scotia. My thesis is from a Mi'kmaw woman's perspective which unfolds in five chapters. The first chapter is called Neska'we'mk – Panta'latl which will give a brief look at my story and why I chose Mi'kmaw art as my research topic. Chapter two is called Mi'kmalogy, which gives a historical analysis and arts-based cultural research through an overview of various literature. This condensed outlook into Mi'kmalogy<sup>1</sup> provided from a review of various literature in conjunction with a critical discourse analysis (CDA)<sup>2</sup> gives the reader a sense of how and why artistic talents were lost in Mi'kmaw communities. Also, it provides a reflective overview of historical factors that have contributed to the struggles within Mi'kmaw communities in the process of conforming to societal changes with cultural hegemony<sup>3</sup> being an overall dominant factor behind these societal changes. In addition, the literature overview provides a historical analysis, which enhances the trustworthiness and credibility of my study. The third chapter is called Panuijgatg, which takes a look at the theoretical framework for conducting my qualitative research. I include critical theoretical views as I attempt to make a supportive argument that Mi'kmaq arts-based perspectives are needed in the lifelong learning<sup>4</sup> for connecting our cultural past to enrich our present and future.

In the fourth chapter, A'tukwawinu – Kisutaq'nn, I incorporate my research data with the participants' responses in their interviews/questionnaires. My voluntary research participants

<sup>1</sup> The study of the Mi'kmaq Nations

<sup>2</sup> “CDA aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures [political and historical], connections that might be opaque to the layperson” (Sheyholislami, 2001, p1).

<sup>3</sup> “Cultural hegemony: In Marxist philosophy the term describes the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of society so that their worldview becomes imposed and accepted as the cultural norm. Retrieved from [http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cultural\\_hegemony&oldid=609255521](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Cultural_hegemony&oldid=609255521)”

<sup>4</sup> Basil Yeaxlee and Eduard Lindeman (1929) provided an intellectual basis for a comprehensive understanding of education as a continuing aspect of everyday life.

(Elders, present day artists, and those who were randomly selected) have shared some of their knowledge, experience, and/or some stories that were passed down to them by their ancestors to address my research question: “Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?” To wrap up the chapter, I have also included the art of storytelling as yet another form of artistic expression for sharing our culture, teachings and as a form of entertainment. My final chapter, Apajiaq, takes a look at the results of the question: “How do you feel when you see a piece of Mi'kmaw art displayed?” As an educator with a lifelong learner perspective, I believe that my findings inform interested people of my inherent culture and the richness that my ancestors contributed to today's Mi'kmaq culture through the arts. I was able to establish and determine that there is a correlation between historical events and the resistance to give up or ignore Mi'kmaq culture that is displayed in the Mi'kmaw arts of today.

### **My Story**

I was born in Cohoes, New York. My parents moved back to Canada when I was two years old. About all I can remember of the big city were the lights and the noise from the traffic as my father carried me, which now, I believe must have been toward the subway station. We lived with family for a while in Shubenacadie, Indian Brook First Nation, until a home became available. We stayed in this home for a few years then moved to Bear River First Nation (L'sitkuk) which was the birth place of my father.

We first lived in a two-bedroom shack, with no electricity or running water. My parents slept in one room and myself and my three sisters slept in the other. In the winter months, sleeping with my sisters in the same bed or blankets on the floor, huddled together, helped us to stay warm throughout the night. My older sister had to walk two miles to school, with other young children

at the age of five. However, when I was five, my uncle who was Chief at the time, had a house built for us that had electricity and running water. My uncle also started driving all the children to school and his wife made lunches for all the children in the community.

Our new house was located at the end of the road that led into the community. Any vehicles that ventured to the end of the road would have to turn around in our driveway because the road ended. My father's favorite chair was right by the window where he could see the oncoming cars, which gave him enough time to get out of the house and meet these people as they maneuvered their car to get turned around. Sometime we had tourists who were thrilled to be in a First Nation community, then there were other times, when the people would get a worried or shocked look on their faces when my father would tell them that they were on First Nation property. He would then get talking to them and ask them if they would be interested in buying some of his art work. He made baskets, beaded necklaces with animal claws, small wood carvings, small birch bark canoes, and various other small Mi'kmaw art collectables. My father would use this money to purchase extra food for the week.

My father spent most of his childhood in residential school. From the age of five to sixteen, he grew up without the comfort of his parents and only knew the harsh exposure from the priests and nuns. My father never spoke of his childhood, and it was not until I grew up that I found out that he attended a residential school. I was twenty-two years old and living in Halifax when a lady stopped me on the street one day and asked, "You look familiar, what is your family name?" I told her my father name was Bruce Meuse. She said that my father attended the same residential school she did. She also said that she just finished writing a book about her experience as a residential school survivor and that there was a picture of my father in her book. She took a book out of her bag, signed it, and gave it to me. I did not know about these schools, at the time, but I

remember over hearing my father mentions a few times, in conversation with my mother, that the school he attended tried to take the “Indian out of him.”

My father’s job in residential school was to mend all the footwear, and knit socks and mittens, in addition to his regular daily chores. He was quite a craftsman. I remember him asking us, as soon as we woke up, if we had anything to wear on our hands or feet. If we did not, he could knit a pair of socks or mittens, for one of us, before we left the house in the morning for school.

Although my father attended residential school and I only heard him speak a few words of his language, he taught me that the Mi'kmaq paid attention to the animals, the seasons, the plants, and all of nature for survival tips. If I knew my father was going hunting, I would try to get up early to go with him. He showed me stuff like how to make a birch bark cup for drinking when we came across a stream. Or how to snare, clean and cook a rabbit. One day, while hunting, as I followed my father’s footprints in the snow, he said, “You know that a Native person can not get lost in their own land.” He taught me how to pay attention to the land, and told about the night sky and familiar sounds when traveling in the woods. Back then I did not realize how important these teachings were, and as I got older, I wished I had paid closer attention to the craft work he did. I believe that seeing the many talents that my father had in the arts, intrigued my interest as a child. My older sister was a beautiful painter, however, for many years I believed I was not fortunate enough to have been passed down his artistic knowledge.

My father was very arts-minded and talented. I discovered that I must have some of his artistic genes when I signed up for a fine arts course as an elective, when I was doing my social work undergraduate degree in British Columbia. I found it very stressful having papers due every other day or week. I decided to sign up for a course that did not require written assignments, so I

chose a fine arts class as an elective. I was excited about my marks being ninety or more on most all of my assignments. The students that were taking fine arts as their degree were not impressed with a social work student taking the course just for the fun of it, and making better marks than them. After these fine arts courses, I realized that I must possess some of my father's talents after all.

When I returned home to Nova Scotia, there was a cultural centre (for tourists) being built in our community. I went over one day to check it out. The front entrance of the building was in the shape of a very large tepee and I could not wait to see the inside. When I got inside, there were only white walls. I asked the director, "What are the plans for these walls?" He said, "Someone may paint a very large Eagle from one end to the other." I said, "That may scare off the tourists." I asked, "Why isn't it being painted like the shape it was designed for, which would be the inside of a tepee?" He asked if I could do that, I said, "yes of course" so then I got the job. First, I had to wash the walls because of the drywall dust. Then I gave the walls a white primer coat, all while having to climb up and down the scaffolding stacked four levels high. After weeks of preparation, the walls were ready to be painted. The next layer was painted a light tan color, then I repainted it with a darker tan color giving it the birch bark appearance. The walls were roughly about 30 feet tall, with a narrowing towards the top. In various locations around the centre and top of the room's walls I incorporated petroglyph-like designs telling a story of hunting, fishing and family. The following painting is an example of the birch bark design with the incorporated petroglyphs that can be seen on the walls of the community cultural centre.



Picture #1 -Art depicting petroglyphs hunt. Painted by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse

## Why Mi'kmaw Art

My research topic for my thesis is Mi'kmaq Cultural Art, mainly because I am a self-identified Mi'kmaw artist, and because I wanted to know of other Mi'kmaw artists' perspectives on the role of Mi'kmaw art in sustaining Mi'kmaq culture. During my undergraduate degree in social work, I also completed a certificate in fine arts. I completed both of my social work practicums in Art and Play therapy. I always had a desire to indulge myself in Mi'kmaw art and I offered various traditional Mi'kmaw art workshops to supplement a single parent income, such as: making hand drums, painting, making deer hide rattles, Mi'kmaq peaked caps, moccasins and beading, just to name a few. For years, I worked as a social worker and I enjoyed the everyday challenges of my job. However, when I finally made my mind up to complete a Master's degree, I chose education rather than social work.

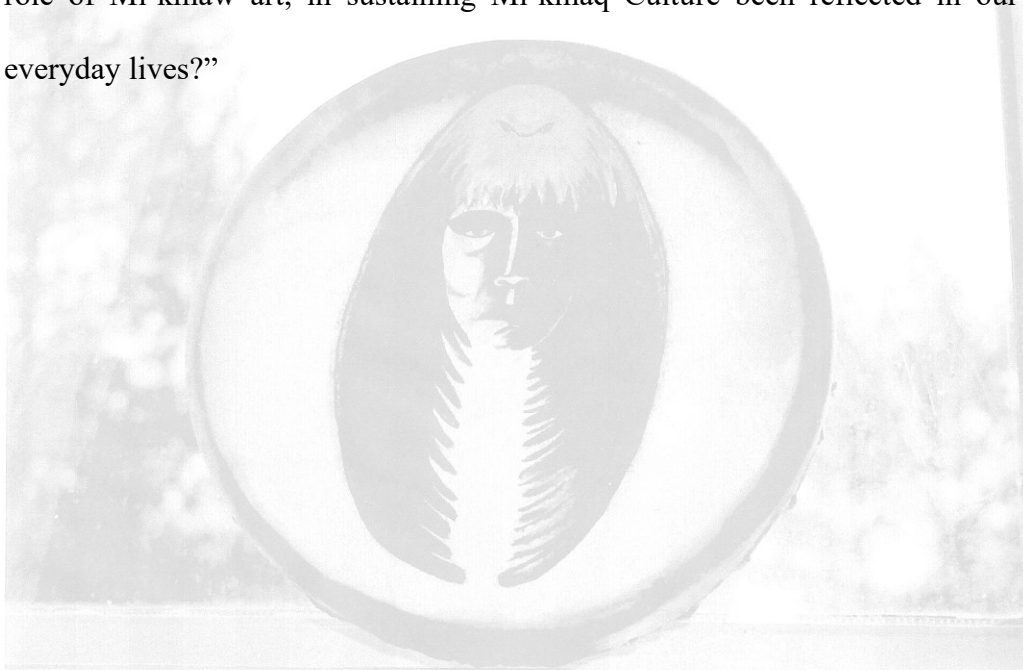
One of the course requirements, for my master's degree, was to complete a practicum that gave me an opportunity to teach adult learners and sharpen my facilitation skills. I was facilitating at one of my practicum workshops with the Mi'kmaq women of Newfoundland, when one woman, who was older than myself said, "If you can tell us about the history of the Mi'kmaq peaked caps

and show us how to make our own, we would consider you to be an Elder.” In our culture this would be a great honor. This shows that sharing our artistic talents is desired not only by academic researchers but also by our own Mi'kmaw community members. I still find myself busy with facilitating workshops and filling requested orders for traditional Mi'kmaw art and other items, so it seemed only obvious that I combine the talents I enjoy with academia.

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Today, I have an interest in taking a closer look at the teachings depicted in the past works of Mi'kmaw artist to see how it has or has not influenced our present-day culture. I believe that our present-day artists have contributed in keeping our Mi'kmaq culture alive through their artistic mind sets. I feel that our Creator has provided the artistic gift to our ancestors intern we continue with this innate talent. As for myself, my influences are all around me from a micro to a macro perspective. It is the designs of my ancestors, it's the daily appreciation for another day, it's my inherent sense of culture, it's my individual interpretation, and the anticipation of someone's desire to own a piece of my art that came from my artistic expressions. I believe that Mi'kmaw art is about expressing oneself spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically, until a connection is developed to its completion. My first painting on a drum took me months to complete. When I finally finished, I took it to a gathering one day. A First Nation's lady came up to me and said, “I have to have that drum. I do not have money to buy it but I can give you a few fresh salmon.” I was raised that at times we are only in possession of items until we know the right person and time to give this item away to its rightful owner. When this lady offered me salmon, I could not turn down her offer, even though I had lots of salmon in my freezer. I gave the salmon away to others that may not have had the opportunity to receive fresh fish. Luckily, I was able to take a picture of it before it left my hands forever and I have used it as a watermark for this paper.

Growing up attending the mainstream school system, there were negative connotations of being “Indian” throughout my elementary and high school years. With the enrichment of today’s education, and the sharing of all cultures, there is a change towards bigotry and ignorance with the growth of attitudes, personal perspectives and an open mind. I am very proud to be L’nu and want to share my teachings with those who have an interest in learning to interpret Mi’kmaq culture and its history within Nova Scotia. I start by sharing my thesis findings with the question, “Has the role of Mi’kmaw art, in sustaining Mi’kmaq Culture been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?”



## Chapter Two: Mi'kmalogy

In my qualitative research project, I gathered documentation and resources from various recorded literature that give a historical perspective on artistic ingenuity in Mi'kmaw communities. This selected literature looks at some of the outcomes of trading, colonialism, and the current political, social and economic challenges that influence Mi'kmaq culture. I have termed this *Mi'kmalogy*, which is a look into the study of the Mi'kmaq peoples.

### Art-Based Cultural Research

According to Mi'kmaq legend, Kisu'lk (gee-oolg) is the one who made everything. Sometimes Kisu'lk referred to as Kji Niskam (Jee nes-gam), or the Great Spirit. Neither word implies gender, because it is not important whether the Great Spirit is a he or a she. The Mi'kmaq people do not explain how the Great Spirit came into existence, only that the Creator is responsible for everything being where it is today. Wsitqamu'k (oo-sit-gak-moo) is the Earth, or the land upon which the Mi'kmaq people walk and share its abundant resources with the animals and plants. Wsitqamu'k was created by the Creator and was placed in the centre of the circular path of Naku'set, the sun. Naku'set shines bright upon Wsitqamu'k as it passes around its path, and this brought the days and night<sup>5</sup>. After the Creator made the earth, sky, trees and flowers they then bent down and molded a man and a woman from sand (using their artistic talents) then gave them the breath of life. These were the first people and they were Mi'kmaq. After creating humans, the Creator, using the dust from their own body, created Glooscap and his twin brother, Malsumis. He gave Glooscap the power to create a good world. Malsumis, on the other hand, is the opposite, and seeks evil. Glooscap learned that hunters who kill too much would destroy the ecosystem and

<sup>5</sup> <http://muiniskw.org/pgCulture3a.htm> Mi'kmaw Spirit

the good world he had sought to create. The legends with Glooscap always portrayed as "kind, benevolent, a warrior against evil and the possessor of magical powers."<sup>6</sup> Many stories, such as the creation of Glooscap are used to pass down teachings. Our Elders teach us that we need to listen, share our food, water and air and give honour and respect to all life and everything around us (McBride, 1990).

The Mi'kmaq in the Atlantic Canada region lived and survived in the area called Wabanaki, meaning "the land of the sunrise." Prior to European contact, was a time when people spoke with the animals, and maintained a spiritual relationship with all living things. They were taught that everything that is tangible and intangible must be given respect. This respect requires people to develop a special consciousness that discourages careless treatment of things (Augustine, 2005).

Since all things have a common origin in the spark of life, every life-form and every object have to be respected. Just as a person has life-force, so does a plant, rock or an animal. Thus, a person gathering roots, leaves or bark for medicinal purposes pleases the life-force of each plant by planting a small offering of tobacco at its base, believing that without the cooperation of the manitu the mere form of the plant cannot work its cures. (Henderson, 1997, p.15)

When a person has respect for all living and non-living elements, the world around them is viewed from a different perspective which sees the beauty of creation as an art form itself to behold and therefore to be respected. I found in various readings that there are common beliefs and values among First Nations people across Mother Earth. Chief Seattle, of the Duwamish people, states in the manifesto as he pleases to the government to protect the Indian's way of life.

All things are bound together. All things connect. What happens to the Earth happens to the children of the Earth. Man has not woven the web of life. He is but one thread. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself. (Davidson, 1984, p.8)

<sup>6</sup> <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glooscap> Glooscap

Many First Nations believe everything is connected – the spirit world is connected to the mortal world; the sea is connected to the land; the sky is connected to the land. This connectivity principle helps our cultural survival for First Nations (General believe of Indigenous Peoples).

### **Artistically Living off the Land**

The means of knowing how to make tools, the art of designing clothing for the weather, the art of storytelling, the art of rock drawing, the art of knowing the changes of the seasons<sup>7</sup>, and the art of astronomy<sup>8</sup> are all the historical paradigm of art making and were strictly seen as a means of survival (personal conversation with Stephen Augustine, Aug. 12, 2017). For example, in the fall, the collection of spruce gum and spruce sap were removed without the sags being broken. A patch of bark would be removed, and the sap pockets would be saved for medicinal purposes. I remember collecting spruce sap with my father, and he would use these tree cuttings for whatever ailed us. The dried clusters of spruce sap that was hardened to the tree was used for gum. These clusters were broken off the trees and chewed like chewing gum or saved for many other purposes such as water-proofing and patching the canoe or wigwam. Growing up, my family chewed spruce gum, but I remember that food did not taste as good for the rest of the day because of the bitterness that the spruce left in my mouth.

In the centuries before the arrival of the first Europeans, all of the cultural material was made from natural elements collected within the traditional territory. The Mi'kmaq developed ways of sustaining themselves under harsh environments and ecological conditions (Augustine, 2005). “For thousands of years the Micmac tribespeople lived as migratory hunters and gathers,

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<sup>7</sup> In a conversation with Stephen Augustine who spoke of our ancestors keeping track of age by the number of winters that passed.

<sup>8</sup> The Mi'kmaq kept track of the moons for their sense of age and time.

moving throughout Maine and the Maritimes” (McBride, 1990, p. 4). Whether on handcrafted snowshoes, toboggans, or birch bark canoes, they traveled enormous distances for food (e.g. fish, fruit, and game), trade, or pleasure (McBride, 1990).

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The Mi'kmaq had mastered techniques which enabled them to manufacture an enormous range of raw materials into the necessities of life. With a hunt of a moose nothing was wasted, for example, they took meat, blood and marrow for food, and fur and hides for clothing. Rawhide strips became woven into snowshoes filling. Moose brains were used for tanning skins, antlers were worked into tools, dew-claws became rattles, the shin bones was carved into dice, the hair used for embroidery, and the tendons became sewing thread. “The ingenious uses which the Mi'kmaq found for the materials available to them are as impressive as the high quality of their ingenuity. (Whitehead, 1980, p. 8)

Natural resources, such as birch bark were not only used for canoes but also for covering the wigwams for shelter, making watertight containers for drinking and cooking, moose calls for hunting, and special boxes for storing medicines. Other survival items included: spears for eel fishing, harpoons for bigger game, coats made from animal skin, seal skin moccasins, snowshoes made from caribou hide with wooden frames, thread made from tendons of a moose and knitting needles carved from a single piece of wood or bone. Every aspect of Mi'kmaq's survival depended entirely on Mother Earth with her bounty being used sparingly. Natural resources were respected and deeply appreciated for all its benefits received (common knowledge from childhood). For many moons, Mi'kmaw artisans have been passing down their knowledge to create items that took skill, talent, determination, and ingenuity for the innovative means of their survival.

The Mi'kmaw considered their seasonal fishing and hunting of wildlife, aquatic life, and marine life carefully keeping in mind the next seven generations. Hunting activities were kept in the winter season because there was a plethora of fish throughout the rest of the year. Next to fish and shellfish, moose was the most important meat for the Mi'kmaw diet. In the autumn, during rutting season, bull moose were lured by a clever imitation of the sound of a female moose (usually made of birch bark designed like a funnel that was larger on one end). Every part of the moose was used. "Grease was boiled out of the bones and either drunk pure or stored as loaves of moose butter. The legs and thigh bones were crushed and marrow consumed; hides were converted into robes, leggings, moccasins, and shelter covering; tools, ornaments, game pieces were made from antlers, teeth and toe bones, respectively" (Martin, 1978, p. 31). The massive animal was converted into an extraordinary range of necessities and luxuries. In the spring the fish began to spawn and the Mi'kmaw were very familiar with the spawning habits of each species harvested. "Weirs were built, from rock, to go across streams to trap the fish on their way downstream. The larger fish, like salmon were often speared or trapped. These traps, spears and weirs were made of trees, shrubs and roots" (Martin, 1978, p.32).

A net sometimes fifty yards in length were made of intertwined branches of birch, elder, or another tree or bush. These weirs were also described as weirs of wicker which was from fifty to hundred feet in length. The first step was to drive vertical sticks, about three feet apart, into the mud. They were then interwoven by a man who stood in the water. The intertwining was done at the surface, and the branches were pushed down, layer by layer, until the work was complete. (Whitehead, 1980, p. 67)

In addition to constructing these weirs, natural materials provided a wealth of other uses such as: tools, utensils, and other equipment. The use of birch bark was used to make an incredible range of objects, much as plastic is used today. For example, it was used for wigwams, canoes,

bowls, boxes, baskets, mats, torches, moose-calls and hats just to name a few. “The Micmac built single-family wigwams. Dwellings of this nature were warm and dry and could easily be erected or dismantled in a few hours. Their bark covers were easily rolled up and taken from camp to camp” (Whitehead, 1980, p. 31).

The Mi'kmaq lived in the areas known to them as Mi'kmaki, (the land of friendship), which covered Newfoundland, St. Pierre and Miquelon, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, the Magdalen Islands, and the Gaspé Peninsula (Lawrence, cited in Razack, 2002, p. 32). Long before the Europeans arrived in Mi'kmaki the Mi'kmaq learned through observation and experimentation about math, astronomy, physics, biology, chemistry and medicine, to name a few. For example, how to take a tree down and turn it into a basket or canoe through understanding the elasticity of the wood and how to use it when wet (Augustine, 2005, pp. 4-7). The knowledge gained by observing the natural environment around them was shared by demonstration and storytelling.

In the dim light of campfires in the long winter nights, and in the warmth of summer days when the needs of life were not so pressing, they took into their hands pieces of stone or wood and feeling its spirit of the stone, wood or bone they carved with wonder and delight as their hands strove to express the inner spirit of joy in beauty is all that matters. (Robertson, 1969, p. 12)

The following quotes are examples of a descriptive process of art being explained as quoted from various researchers. These survival tools of yesterday are seen in today's world as art:

### **Arrowhead**

This is how an arrowhead is made. You must work with the shape of the stone. You must see in your mind the picture of the tool, think of this tiny point speeding through the air on the tip of an arrow. Then from a branch of a cedar tree, cut a long bow and use a thin strip of hide for a bowstring (Blakeley, 1974, pp. 5-7).

## **Moccasins**

Scraping deer hide with a stone, cut the hide into the right shape for a foot, punching little holes along the edges of the leather. Sew up the moccasins with long thin strips of hide. The women decorate the moccasins with porcupine quills (gathered in the fall) that were coloured with Alder Bark then they would use hot twigs to flatten the quills to the hide. (Blakeley, 1974, p. 8)

## **Canoes**

At the time of European contact, the Micmac people of the Maritimes had successfully adapted to a wide range of environmental conditions. Some adaptations became not only part of the early history but continue to contribute to modern society are those associated with various forms of transportation” (Davis, 1997, p. 38). Canoes were made from birch bark and spruce gum. “The very fine design and attractive appearance of the Micmac canoe may have contributed to the early acceptance by the early explorers and traders of the birch-bark canoe as the best mode of water transport for forest travel. (Adney & Chapelle, 1983, p. 70)

## **Utilizing the Whole Animal**

Birch bark moose calls were made to help attract the moose. Moose or bear furs would be used to cover themselves during hunting, so that one could get much closer to an animal being undercover and less scent. The heart of the animal was buried, and a prayer was said for the animal for giving up its life, to provide food. Bones were utilized for everyday tools such as, for cooking, craving and other multiple uses. Every part of the animal was used and nothing went to waste, even the animal’s insides were buried to provide nutrients and fertilizer to mother earth or left as an offering for other animals (information passed down orally or observed from my father).

Every decision made reflects the seventh generation principle. All decisions must include consideration of impacts on community members seven generations into the future, while

honouring those who came before us. So, next time a community seems to be taking a long time to make a decision, reflect back on this<sup>9</sup>.



<sup>9</sup> Indigenous Corporate Training Inc. cited at <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/7-first-nation-facts-you-should-know>

## Historical Analysis

In the Mi'kmalogy of our culture we have rock drawings, the art of dance, clothing designers, story tellers, basket weavers, and much more knowledge that the Mi'kmaq today struggle to maintain at times, due to loss of some traditional knowledge, limited natural resources and cultural hegemony. However, with ethnomethodology<sup>10</sup> the Mi'kmaq continue to retain their traditional knowledge.

The Mi'kmaq gave assistance to the newcomers to survive the harsh winters and unfamiliar environment (Lockerby, 2004, p. 403). Early European visitors to the Maritime region wrote with interest about the "Micmacs" (earlier spelling of the Mi'kmaq) and how they acquired the necessities of life. They used stone and clay and every part of the plants and animals such as: roots, bark, wood, skin, bone ivory, antlers, shells, hair, fur, feathers, quills and sinew. The Europeans brought their own style and different materials for tools, weapons, clothing, and decoration. However, the art of making stone tools died out in one generation. The Micmac did not adopt all of the European materials, however, their way of life changed dramatically during the fifteen hundred (1500s). During the contact period, the Europeans discovered a thriving trade network (Leavitt, 1995, p. 170).

In the seventeenth century, word of these skills was carried back to Europe. The Europeans were quick to see the value of the Mi'kmaq technological products, such as "the birch bark canoes the snow shoes that were so superbly suited to life in a northern environment" (Whitehead p. 8). The Mi'kmaq and the Europeans began to trade goods. However, with the coming of the Europeans the Mi'kmaq culture gradual abandoned certain pre-contact materials in favor of European wares. As the Mi'kmaq continued to adopt Europeans ways of life, traditional skills

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<sup>10</sup> An academic discipline that attempts to understand the social orders people use to make sense of the world through analyzing their accounts and descriptions of their day-to-day experiences (Crossman, About.com, 2013).

became lost or forgotten (Whitehead 1980, p. 9). Unmasking the power that non-native contact had over the influences of Mi'kmaq culture changed our way of lifelong learning forever.

The Mi'kmaq began their trade with the Europeans with their baskets which created an economy for the Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq were well-known for their porcupine quillwork before using the glass beads introduced by the Europeans. The turn of the nineteenth (1900s) century marked a turning point, when the game on “reserves” became depleted and it became harder to be self-sufficient, where the sale of decorative items became a dependable source of income. Many Victorians enthusiastically began collecting Native arts and crafts. This Native art was cherished and some items were donated to the Provincial Museum, demonstrating the evolution of Native art and the significant transition in distinctive Micmac cultures during the nineteenth century (Pelletier, 1977, pp. 5-6).

The past two centuries have seen an active program of assimilation directed towards First Nation culture via the *Indian Act*, which includes relocation from traditional or territorial lands, disastrous assimilation programs, outlawing of cultural practices, loss of language and customs, where First Nation cultures barely survived. (<https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/7-first-nation-facts-you-should-know>)

Many of the Mi'kmaq artistic talents have been lost due to the government of Canada having control over the lives of the Mi'kmaq since the settlers' ancestors first stepped foot on our shores. Daniel Paul (2006), author of *We Were Not the Savages*, writes a history of the near demise of the Mi'kmaq, from a Mi'kmaw perspective, caused by the European invasion on the Mi'kmaq. When reading the records left behind by these Europeans, one gets the impression that they were proud of the barbarous crimes against humanity that they were committing. Bounties of massacre,

starvation and germ warfare were some of the methods used to clear the land of its rightful owners. All North American civilizations under their occupation were badly damaged, many eliminated, and close to ninety five percent of the people exterminated (Paul, 2006, p. 158). Today, although starvation and malnutrition have been mostly eliminated, the systemic racism instilled by the majority of non-Native peoples is still widespread. This is a very heavy burden for our peoples to try to overcome (Paul, 2006). The history of the Mi'kmaq illustrates the loss of artistic talents due to cultural hegemony.

In 1725, the Peace and Friendship Treaty were one of the first, of many, treaties negotiated between the Mi'kmaq and the new settlers in the Maritime Provinces (mikmaqrights.com). These treaties are relationships between nations that changes over many moons yet they are still valid today. Overtime, the Canadian laws have completely ignored or have tried to impose various defining limitations. However, these treaties' "original intent was a good-faith agreement between nations sharing this land in peace" (Palmater 2016, p. 40).

The Royal Proclamation of 1763 laid down the basis for how colonial administration would interact with First Nations peoples in the centuries that followed.

In 1774, a bill to prevent the destruction of moose, beaver, and muskrat in the Indian hunting ground was introduced in the legislature. The lack of game animals and trade items in the middle of cold Nova Scotia winter meant that the Mi'kmaq had no way of making or obtaining food or clothing. By 1838 the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia were on the verge of extinction. (Paul, 2006, pp. 196-197)

In 1876, the government consolidated the *Gradual Civilization Act* and the *Gradual Enfranchisement Act* into the *Indian Act*. Through the Department of Indian Affairs. This Act

afforded the government sweeping powers with regards to First Nations identity, political structures, governance, cultural practices and education.

The Act replaced traditional structures of governance with band council elections, at the discretion of the Department and its Indian agents. The Act was an attempt to generalize a vast and varied population of people and assimilate them into non-Indigenous society, and therefore forbade First Nations peoples and communities from expressing their identities through governance and culture (Henderson, 2006, para 6).

Subsequent amendments required First Nations children to attend industrial or residential schools (1894 and 1920) and in 1884, First Nation people were not allowed religious ceremonies such as the potlatch. The definition of religious ceremonies did not include dancing; however, Indian Agents (authority from government to enforce the act) allowed the lines to be blurred, and were instructed to use whatever means necessary to discourage dancing like that seen at powwows or Sun Dances. An amendment in 1914 outlawed dancing off-reserve and in 1925 dancing was outlawed entirely. Amendments to the Act in 1927 made it illegal for First Nations peoples and communities to hire lawyers or bring about land claims against the government without the government's consent. (Henderson, 2006)<sup>11</sup>

Another historically form of cultural hegemony is Canada's residential schools dating back to 1616. Four priests and one unordained brother landed in Quebec City with Samuel de Champlain. It had been Champlain's idea to turn the children of the "heathen savages" of New France into new Frenchmen.

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<sup>11</sup> (Henderson, 2006, ) Indian Art, Retrieved from <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/indian-act>

They were the first of the Catholic missionaries signalling a shift from alliance with the First Nations to change them and bring them under colonial control. (Benjamin, 2014, p. 7)

Courses of action to conform to the government of Canada were done by non-voluntary participation into mainstream society. One example is the residential schools that proved to be detrimental to our Mi'kmaq culture. I remember over hearing my father telling my mother that the overall mission of these schools was to “remove the Indian from within our minds, souls, and spirits leaving an empty shell of a person.” My father survived thirteen years growing up at the Shubenacadia Residential School. In the process to conform, the Mi'kmaq language was also forbidden to be spoken at the school and family members were sometimes never seen by their loved ones until they reached the age of maturity.

Mi'kmaq children were forced from their families and their old ways of day-to-day living were replaced with new chores at the residential schools. These chores usually started before dawn and ended well into the late nights. The girls were assigned to kitchen work, requiring them to rise at five o'clock in the morning. “The girls spent only about five hours each week in the classroom” (Knockwood, p. 58) because they had to spend so much time in the kitchen. As well, they washed clothes and bedding, for the entire school, which meant working with very hot large machines. The boys worked at hard physical labour because the school was run like a complete farming operation. As a result, most of the boys developed no more than minimal educational skills (Knockwood, 1992, pp. 57-61). The Mi'kmaq had a hunting and gathering tradition and their own customs, language and belief system. This was supplanted by “artificially, dogma, Christianity,” says Knockwood. During the first five years at residential school, “I cannot remember “talking, feeling, crying or even growing,” says Knockwood. “My life flat-lined.”

Knockwood attended Shubenacadie residential school from 1936 to 1947. Today, her goal is now to educate Canadians not only about the “dark history” of residential schools, but about the rich history of her people. Knockwood says, “There was nothing wrong with us. We were fine the way we were. I am still here, my people are still here, singing, dancing and celebrating life to the fullest” (Sison, Oct 29, 2011). Isabelle Knockwood goes into more detail on some of the experiences of surviving the residential school in her book. Isabelle is the lady who stopped me on the street to ask me, “You look familiar, what is your family name?” Since the residential schools and other governing practices by the dominant society, “such as the Indian Act,” the Mi'kmaq have been living with oppression in a dominant culture.

The Mi'kmaq, in the twentieth century was increasingly constrained by the Capitalism. Their artisan talents and labour rarely offered more than a subsistence level of living.

Living a life of material scarcity, they were likely to define themselves by what they could do with their hands rather than by possessions or a single address. Generation after generation, Mi'kmaq nomadism, ever adapting to changing cultural, economic, and climatic circumstances, has been an intricate, though risky, system of survival. (McBride, 1990, p. 21)

Even today, like our ancestors, to resist assimilation and to maintain a measure of distinct cultural identity, the Mi'kmaq continue surviving with intermittent scarcity and revolutionary changes in their system of survival. (McBride, 1990, p. 23)

Many historians, like Ruth Holmes Whitehead have recorded and researched our culture and stories for years. Ruth has worked with the Nova Scotia Museum for over 40 years and I appreciate her dedication. The following is a quote from Ruth Holmes Whitehead:

It is hoped that this research, will provide a comprehensive 400 year over view of the culture, and that it will give some idea of the now-forgotten richness of Micmac art-of the ingenuity, the craftsmanship and the eye for beauty that is part of the heritage of the Micmac peoples. (Whitehead 1980, p. 9)



## Chapter Three: Panuijgatg

### Theoretical Framework

The focus of my thesis is mainly on informal learning rather than formal learning (e.g. schooling). I have shown how learning (e.g. the various art, the culture, the stories, language, and spirituality) has been passed down through storytelling, demonstrations and teachings by Elders, and through spiritual inspiration, etc.

In my search for literature to support my thesis, I attended the Nova Scotia Museum, the Halifax Public Archives, and various libraries and I did not find specific books or articles that made direct correlation to Mi'kmaw art and Lifelong Learning in Mi'kmaq culture. For example, I was looking up information, at the public archives in Halifax, on traditional Mi'kmaq peaked caps or anything on Mi'kmaq Traditional Artisans. Hours passed and after combing through flash cards and binders of references and call numbers I still did not gather the information that I was looking for. I realised that I have my work cut out for me and that this information will not come easily without the dedication of time, the desire of knowing, and a vision of seeing this information in a collective resource document.

Until recent times the Aboriginal peoples of North America have not recorded their own history through writing, relying instead on oral traditions. The Mi'kmaq have been studied since the first contact between Europeans dating back to the 1500s. The Mi'kmaq gave assistance to the newcomers to survive the harsh winters and unfamiliar environment (Lockerby, 2004, p. 403). One would think that if a group of people has been studied since the 1500s that information would be more abundant. In my research of the literature I have not found to date journal articles, books, or any other documentation that supports my theoretical question, "Are the techniques our

Ancestors used for survival still reflected in the work Mi'kmaw artisans contribute to Mi'kmaw culture today?"

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I read Nicolas Denys' 39-page booklet, published in 1672. I was hoping that it would give me insight into how research was collected years ago and maybe give me a perception into the gap that would support the importance of my theoretical question. Denys goes into full detail about the customs of the Mi'kmaw. Had Denys been accepted into the community as he followed the daily activities of the Mi'kmaw? The book flowed nicely into a description of a group of people that took care of each other and worked together on one common goal. All customs seemed to benefit the family, from the making of the tools to hunting and maintaining the encampment. Denys then writes about the ships, where hunting and cooking tools were replaced with guns and pots. Alcohol seemed to be in abundance as a trading item. After reading this book, I was hoping that I could get some answers about how the research had been conducted. There was no mention of data collection so this book leaves me wondering if Nicolas Denys's research was ethnography, participatory action, participant observation or purely observational research? Nevertheless, trading goods for alcohol is another example of why the Mi'kmaw artistic talents were no longer practiced in the same manner. One day, farther into my research, while I was in a hurry to get home, I noticed a book store. I decided to quickly stop into the book store to see if they had any books on the Mi'kmaw. I took a quick look around and came across a book called, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade (1982) by Calvin Martin*. I had no idea that this book contained any information on the Mi'kmaw, I just thought it would be interesting to read, and it looked interesting. After getting home I saw that this book contained a whole chapter called, "The Protohistoric Indian-Land Relationship on the Mi'kmaw." In this book I read that

Nicolas Denys, a merchant, lived intimately with the Mi'kmaq for forty years, which answered my question of how Deny's research was conducted.

One of my most exciting book finds was *Canadian Aboriginal Art and Culture Mi'Kmaq*, (2008) by Christine Webster. I ended up buying the book from the library because I had had it for so long. The book reviewed the way of life for the Mi'kmaq as hunter and gatherers, their homes, clothing, tools, weapons, language and storytelling from many moons ago. The last few pages are dedicated to Mi'kmaq Art. There in the first sentence was what I had been looking to discover, it stated: "The Mi'kmaq were creative craftspeople. Many of the items they made for everyday use are now considered art" (Webster, 2008, p. 24). This supported what I already knew from experience.

I believe Mi'kmaq people are very craft-minded, and whether it was making a canoe, baskets, or whatever hundreds of years ago for livelihood, many Mi'kmaq still rely upon their artistic mind and skills today for their livelihood. From a young age I have seen how the Mi'kmaq were very arts-minded and how art helped to sustain everyday survival. I am proud to be Mi'kmaq and I respect and honor the tribulations that our ancestors endured. As one participant stated, "We are here despite everything we have been through historically speaking – colonialism, residential schools and reserve life." I see art used as a strength for our people. It is an aspect of maintaining our culture, it has provided a livelihood since time immemorial, and I believe that art is an underlying self-therapy towards the injustices that had and continues to be placed upon our people. Battiste (2013) advises us, "inequities were further created in the social construction of knowledge, how relations of power and privilege were linked to all inequities and sustained in government policy, practice, and the discourses of society" (p. 126).

Coming from an arts-based approach with a critical theory view I can agree with Marcuse who recognizes that art cannot change the world but it can contribute the consciousness of people who could change the world (Brookfield, 2005).

## Methodology

Academic researchers, being concerned by the nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired, are growing more sensitive about Native history, culture, and voice. Researchers must respectfully theorize and conduct research within their disciplines about Native experiences and issues.

Various disciplines collect and interpret data and generate theory with the idea of contributing to human knowledge, but knowledge is generally understood within epistemological sympathies. (Champagne, 2007, p. 355)

Data collection is a process of recording an event and gathering applicable information. The researcher gathers information about actions, interactions, [reactions] and reflects on their meaning, arrives and evaluates conclusions, and eventually puts forward an interpretation, most frequently in written form. (Marshall, 2011, p. 12)

In the literature, I found supporting quotes that makes sense to me as I compare arts-based approaches to critical theories. In “Revolutionary Potential of Art” (2005) by Stephen Brookfield, Marcuse states that liberating the senses through creative, artistic expression is potentially revolutionary and that the political potential for art lies in its contribution to the struggle for liberation. Marcuse believes that we catch glimpses of realities, through art, of what our world could be like if technological, social and economic domination were removed. Marcuse also

believes that art and the process of art can free the mind to express in ways that cannot be put into words (Marcuse, cited in Brookfield, 2005, pp. 200-204).

In the book called, *Method Meets Art: Art-Based Research Practice* (2009) by Leavy an important point made is that:

Art-based practices have emerged out of the natural affinity between research practice and artistic practice. Drawing on the capabilities of the creative arts, art-based practices offer qualitative researchers alternatives to traditional research methods. (Leavy, 2009, p. ix)

Leavy talks about the theory of artistic practices, (which conjures up the vision of making canoes, tools, clothing, etc. for me) that gives researchers alternatives for qualitative research methods. In my study, I draw on the creative minds of Mi'kmaq artisans as they express their knowledge and influences.

As mentioned above, the residential schools were just one example of oppression<sup>12</sup>, that the Mi'kmaq encountered by the hands of the political powers that be. As a result, the Mi'kmaq culture, history, language and social structure have been altered forever by the political dominant society. However, “Critical thinking is motivated today by the effort to abolish the oppression between the individual’s purposefulness, spontaneity, and rationality, and those work-process relationships on which society is built” (Horkheimer cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 12).

A critical theory of society can no longer be constructed in the exclusive form of a critique of the political economy. It must broaden its concern to investigate matters of morality and communication and how a democratic society might organize itself to promote the fullest and freest communication possible amongst

<sup>12</sup> To subject a person or a people to a harsh or cruel form of domination (Encarta Dictionary: English: North America).

its members. Overall, the purpose of theorizing, is having an explicit emancipatory intent about society in order to understand the mechanisms and relations at play so that these can be altered to give greater opportunities for people to realize their creative potential. (Habermas, cited in Brookfield, 2005, pp. 222-224)

In explaining power and interests and critiquing how value is placed on knowledge, critical theory points to the importance of theory itself and to the need for theorizing as a key element of praxis. “In contemporary times, critical theory can help us to understand oppression and disenfranchisement in terms of new social relationships of domination, control, and racial and ethnic profiling that are associated with particular socio-cultural formations. It can guide us as we focus on the kind of resistance needed to counter their debilitating social effects” (Grace, 2006, p. 131). Some members of society, because of their class position, racial identity, and education, may have more opportunities in life than others. Inequities resulting from class and racial factors are further compounded by the way ‘the communications media intervene with a selectivity of their own in this social distribution of knowledge’ (Habermas, cited in Brookfield, 2005, p. 233). As a Mi'kmaw woman growing up, I was taunted for being “Indian” but this has given me strength to be proud of who I am today. I know that my people have struggled to conform to the rapid changes of society. However, I feel that our resistance and resilience has made us stronger as a Nation within a society of socio-cultural formations. My research comes from a post positivist position:

Post positivism recognizes that the way scientists think and work and the way we think in our everyday life are not distinctly different. Scientific reasoning and common-sense reasoning are essentially the same process. There is no difference in kind between the two, only a difference in degree. Post-positivism recognizes that

all observation is fallible and has error and that all theory is revisable. Where the positivist believed that the goal of science was to uncover the truth, the post-positivist believes that the goal of science is to hold steadily to the goal of getting it right about reality, even though we can never achieve that goal. (Hacking, 1983, p. 1)

“In Marxist philosophy, the term cultural hegemony describes the domination of a culturally diverse society by the ruling class, who manipulate the culture of society so that their worldview becomes imposed and is accepted as the cultural norm.”<sup>13</sup> However, the term, “Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) aims at making transparent the connections between discourse practices, social practices, and social structures [political and historical], connections that might be opaque to the layperson” (Sheyholislami, 2001, p. 1).

As noted, reviewing various literature become a key source for adding multiple voices into the research, providing the framework and creating inferences. In addition, from conventional research practices, which typically start with a series of hypotheses and/or research questions, an art-based I started with a conceptual question of, “Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?” Given this, I feel that my research can make a link between the artisans of many moons ago that produced art on a daily basis, most likely not knowing that their ingenuity for survival, would be called art that Mi'kmaq culture identifies with today.

### **Interviews/ Questionnaire**

For my research I gathered data by interviewing Mi'kmaw Elders and Mi'kmaw artists. I targeted all thirteen Mi'kmaq communities which are: We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, Membertou,

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<sup>13</sup> Cultural Hegemony cited at [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural\\_hegemony](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cultural_hegemony)

Eskasoni, Chapel Island, Indian Brook, Acadia, Li'sitkuk (Bear River), Annapolis Valley, Glooscap, Millbrook, Paq'tnkek, and Pictou Landing First Nations (see appendix A).

I interviewed two Mi'kmaw members from each community, with hopes that they would have an artistic background as an Elder or an Artisan. I found that some communities were much easier than others to find artisans and I also found that those who did take the time to participate in my study had immediate family members, who had since crossed over, who had practiced traditional art such as basket making, tanning hides for clothing, making hand drums and hand made tools.

I designed an open-ended questionnaire that I handed out to two volunteer participants from each Mi'kmaw communities (n = 27) throughout Nova Scotia and I conducted at least one interview from each community (n = 13). In some communities the participant was both the artist and the Elder. I also thought that the participants would be randomly selected however, members of the community would refer me to the next person and I found that there were more names given to me than I had allowed for each community. These volunteers signed a consent form to participate, and were given the questionnaire. All Mi'kmaw participants were over the age of nineteen. Ten females and 17 males participated. Only three participants requested that they forward me their answers to the questionnaire at a later date.

## **Research Participants**

### **1) Elders**

It is important to know the issues of today as well as the tragedies of yesterday in the Mi'kmaq history. There is a need to document stories and teachings before they are gone forever. Not long ago I stopped to visit an Elder in the Millbrook area; she invited me inside to meet her mother. She had a picture of Queen Elizabeth II in a dress with the Mi'kmaq design on her collar

and sleeves. I asked about this and she said that she had made this for the Queen and that some of her art work is all around the world. Then she told me stories of how life was for her years ago. I said that I would love to come back someday and interview her. She welcomed me back and explained that I better hurry because there had been several Elders who had crossed over recently. I could not agree more, because I know that some of our stories and traditional knowledge are gone forever.

Elders play an important role in Mi'kmaw communities. Elders have gifts of insight and collective wisdom of past generations. One of their most important tasks is to pass their knowledge on, so that the culture of their people can continue. Some Elders are not very old; this is because they have proven themselves as role models who share their wisdom to guide their community. The Elders share their cultural and knowledge through action, example and oral traditions. My own father would tell me stories that his father told him. This is how I learned about some of my cultural history as the first peoples and how we survived off the land.

## **2) Mi'kmaw Artists**

I was able to take video recordings of some participants to create a video of local Mi'kmaw artists in which they share a sense of their inspiration<sup>14</sup>. This video captured some the participants in their artistic expression of art. While I was not able to capture all of my artisans while in their expressive art environment, I was grateful that they were able to give their time to fill out my questionnaire and grateful for some artisans who chose to be engaged in their art during my interview. Participants helped me answer my thesis question, "In what ways are the survival techniques of Mi'kmaq Ancestors still reflected in the art of Mi'kmaw artisans today?"

## **3) Randomly Selected Mi'kmaq Community Members**

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<sup>14</sup> Approved by of Mount Saint Vincent University's Research Ethics Board (UREB) and Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch.

I asked random Mi'kmaw community members to volunteer their time to participate in my research to get a general sense of the Mi'kmaw communities' perspective on, "In what ways are the survival techniques of Mi'kmaq Ancestors still reflected in the art of Mi'kmaw artisans today?" The selection of these participants was based on the following criteria: Must be Mi'kmaq, over the age of 18 and must hold a First Nations status card. Community members are to those who are registered with a Mi'kmaq Nation but may reside outside of the community. Some participants were recommended to me from other community members. I contacted all participants for an interview based on their availability. Members within the community referred me to the best person/s to talk with about certain subjects.

During one of my interviews someone told me that there was some Mi'kmaw art work at the Museum of History in Ottawa. So, I went to the Museum to find a small display of Rita Joe's book, a small basket, a beaded bingo dabber, and beaded earrings. Many of our ancestors' original everyday items are displayed in museums around Canada as art (Webster, 2008, p. 25). Rita Joe (1932-2007) was a well-known Mi'kmaw poet and songwriter, she wrote powerful poetry that spoke about Indigenous identity and the legacy of residential schools in Canada. Her works continue to influence Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers and artists alike.<sup>15</sup>

Also, during my research I was able to interview Jill Francis, from the Acadia First Nation Community. One of my first interests was the Mi'kmaw Rock Art, which is located in well-known places like Kejimikujik National Park in Nova Scotia. Jill works for Kejimikujik National Park as a Mi'kmaw Interpreter. Because I am Mi'kmaw and completing research that included rock drawings as one of my interests, she gave me a special tour beyond what she usually gives to groups. I was able to capture some pictures of our ancestors' rock drawings. She explained that

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/rita-joe>

some of these historical drawings are wearing away due to water and sun damaged, as well as by people. I felt very fortunate to have been able to see these drawing and stand on the same rocks that my ancestors would have stood on centuries ago.



Picture # 2, Shoreline petroglyphs at Kejimikujik National Park. Photo by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse



Picture # 3 - Shoreline petroglyphs at Kejimikujik National Park. Photo by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse

## Ethical Considerations

To undertake this research, I had to go through two ethics boards. People conducting research in a Mi'kmaw community must first present their research proposal to the *Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch committee*.

The Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch committee has been appointed by the Sante' Mawio'mi (Grand Council) to establish a set of principles and protocols that will protect the integrity and cultural knowledge of the Mi'kmaq people. These principles and protocols are intended to guide research and studies in a manner that will guarantee that the right of ownership rests with the various Mi'kmaw communities. These principles and protocols will guarantee only the highest standards of research. Interpretation and conclusions drawn from the research will be subject to approval to ensure accuracy and cultural sensitivity.

(Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, 1999)

Due to the fact that my thesis research collected data for a qualitative research project involving Mi'kmaq knowledge, I went through the Mi'kmaw Research Principles and Protocols Conducting Research with and/or Among Mi'kmaq People application that would be reviewed by the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch committee. I submitted my proposal including: the questionnaire, information sheet on my research that was handed out to participants, consent forms and permission sheet to audio record with some videography, before the committee would consider reviewing my proposal. I received approval to conduct my research (see appendix B). Upon completion of my thesis, the Mi'kmaw Research Centre at Unama'ki College requested to be given the results to be made available to students and other researcher to foster a better understanding of Indigenous knowledge.

As a requirement of Mount Saint Vincent University, I had to apply for ethics at the Mount Saint Vincent University board. I formalized a statement of my intended research, an ethics declaration and a consent forms for the permission to record interviews (for accuracy) that was handed out for participants to voluntarily sign. There was a clause that welcomed the participants to stop the interview at any time without question. As well, there was also a section that gave the participants the opportunity, if requested, to review their selected comments from the questionnaire and or interview transcripts before being submitted as a completed research paper. There were two people who signed to say they would like to review their interview.

I did not have the financial support for my study and as a single parent I have to work full time to support my family. This affected the amount of time it took to conduct my research from start to completion. The highlight of my thesis was gathering the data and being able to meet and interview various community members. I met each participant face to face and gave them the option of completing the questionnaire on their own, while I waited. However, there was one female and one male who decided to email me their responses. Another option was for me to ask the question and they replied orally while I wrote their responses. Seven out of ten women and ten out of 17 men chose to complete the questionnaires for themselves. Eleven participants agreed to be video recoded while I read one question back to them for my final video (seven males and four females). My recorded interviews were based on their availability, space and my equipment working properly. There were no unforeseen issues that raised during my interviews with participants other than my video recorded not taking a charge and needing to be plugged in in order to work. However, as a social worker I felt confident that I would have been able to recognize any situation that may become emotionally changed. I felt confident that I had the skills, tools and

experience conducting workshops that would allow me to resolve any conflicts, except for working with poor equipment that caused technical issues on my final video.



## Chapter Four: Nesapoqtesing – Kisutaq'nn

Video Clips/ Interviews/ Questionnaires (see DVD insert at the back)



Picture # 4- Used with permission, a post card of my grand grandfather, Jim Meuse and his family. Taken from photographer's Alexander Leighton Collection, Nova Scotia Museum.

I produced a video of a few Elders and artists that agreed to be video recorded. The video begins with this picture above and a traditional flute/ chant song playing in the back ground performed by Joel Denny of Eskasoni. In the first scene, Todd Labrador is getting ready to set his birch bark canoe into the river at Bear River, Nova Scotia. Then in the next scene Stephen Augustine is standing proudly showing the beautiful bead work on his headdress and regalia. The remainder of the video shows a few Mi'kmaq artist sharing their artist talents of how our ancestral

skills and everyday tools are still being produced today. These survival tools are used differently today, where they are not needed as much for hunting and gathering. However, the artist sells their items to continue to provide a source of survival today. The video ends with photographs of one participant from each Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia sharing their knowledge of how “the role of Mi'kmaw art has been reflected in our past and present everyday lives, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture.”

For my interviews I decided on seven key questions for my interview guide. All responses were very informative and I gained a wealth of knowledge from people that continued to talk after they filled out their questionnaire (see appendix C). For finalizing my research data, I combined all seven questionnaires into one general theme, “Has the role of Mi'kmaw art been reflected in our past and present everyday lives, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture.”

In my research I have used the participants' real names with their permission. Each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix D). I was also invited to interview participants in their homes, work space or at an agreed upon meeting locations to suit their convenience. There was one video recorded interview that I was unable to use due to the amount of background sounds. Luckily, this participant also took the time to fill out her questionnaire. All participants agreed to be photographed, for the purpose of my final thesis paper and/or video.

Joel Denny showed patience, determination and endurance while helping me to produce my video. We spend three days working on putting all the clips together, then an additional weekend on edits. Overall, with my limited experience with video production, and failing equipment, I am very pleased with the end results of the video and very grateful for Joel Denny's support.

The video represents some of the passion that is still alive and well in our present day L'nu people. For the video I have included as many participants as I could while keeping in mind, I wanted to keep it to twenty minutes. Below I share the findings from all interviews.

45



## Elder Sister Dorothy Moore



Picture # 5-Elder Sister Dorothy during her questionnaire/ interview, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Sister Dorothy Moore is sitting in a comfortable chair periodically looking out the window to reflect on the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art been reflected in our past and present everyday lives, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture? In her own words she states:

Oh, absolutely. I think that some pieces of Mi'kmaw crafts that are being made today are reflective of our Ancestors. Like basket weaving and how today the art of weaving baskets is so evident of certain ones of our people, some people really make an effort to produce something extremely artistic and even weaving in sweet grass. I think that basically, where most of our ancestral art is shown through our baskets, and of course there are other ways like bead working, porcupine quill baskets, all of that is just so beautiful and just so artistic. However, quill baskets you don't see too many people doing quill baskets anymore. I know its very much reflective of our ancestors, you just have to go to the public library or the museum

in Halifax and you see what our ancestors have done in the past and it continues to be held as beautiful artwork.

I often wonder how creative our Mi'kmaw artists are, and I know what ever it is they are doing it is extremely reflective of the past. Whether its beadwork, basket weaving or working with porcupine quills, I believe, they've learnt it from the mother, they've learnt it from the grandmother and I'm sure the grandmother in the past would have learnt it from her mother. Then there is such a thing as paintings.

A lot of our paintings are done in acrylics not so much in oil painting. There is a difference, because acrylic paints are so much brighter and they express more life.

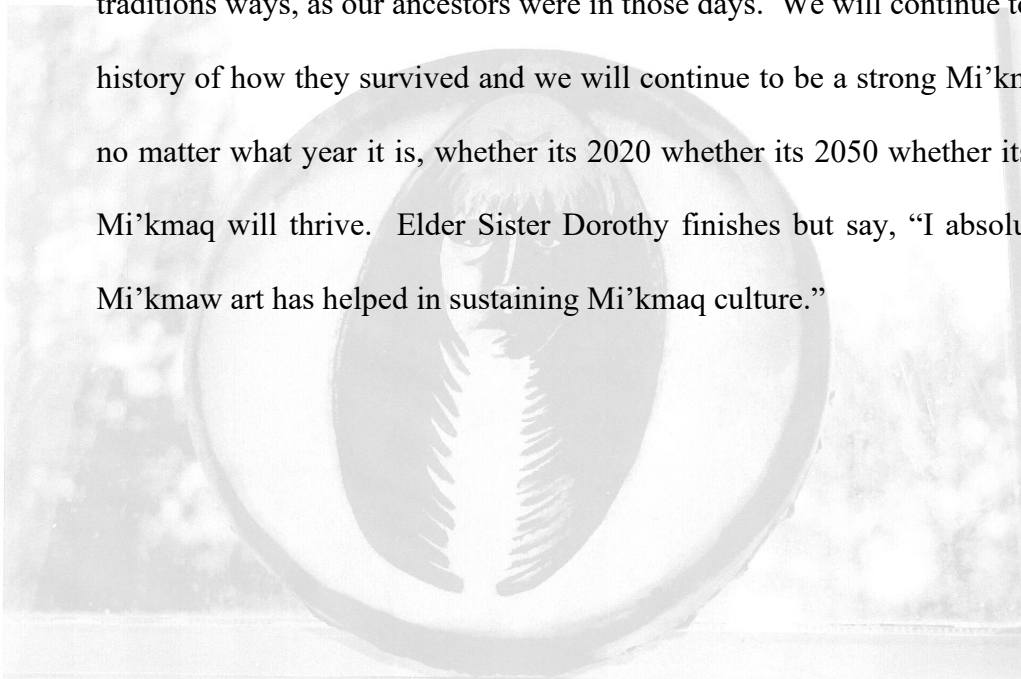
Artists like David Brooks would depict animals so that you know there is life in his art because often times he showed inner life in the womb of the animal or in the womb of the women. His art showed life and not only did it show life but the brightness of it is depicting real life because you look outside and you see real life.

You look at the painting and you see real life. So absolutely, I believe that our ancestors are working in the spirit of the artist, and I never tire of looking at Mi'kmaw art. My grandmother lived in Waycomah and we lived in Membertou

and periodically every number of months she would come by train from Orangeade to Sydney with big load of baskets, and that load of baskets would be all tied in a white sheet and she would come off that train, and she wouldn't come off the passenger side with the bag, no she would have to go to the baggage and that big bag of baskets in a sheet would be given to her and she would come up to Membertou. She would leave my home in the morning with the load of baskets and pedal them and I think some of the pedaling was bartering because she would often

come back with clothing, but most of the time it was to sell. This was a way of making a living, I think that the tradition of basket making and pedaling and bartering is not so much anymore. We have become a little more sophisticated so we don't have to do that anymore. Our artists are much more, I used the word sophisticate they're really not sophisticated, but our way of doing business using our art is more sophisticated and it continues to be means of survival and its not so much the way it was done years ago where some of our people here in Cape Breton would go to Newfoundland to sell their baskets, would go to Halifax to sell their baskets. Now today we have our own little businesses. But the tradition of the way we do the weaving, the beadwork, the baskets, the artwork is done in such a business way. I remember Margaret Gould saying her baskets would probably produce \$700, and I can imagine that would equal to the number of hours that she had put into making that particular basket. And the same way with art: paintings, beadwork, and porcupine quill work, it's the hours that are put in their works of art. I often hear people say, "Oh that's so expensive!" But what they don't realize is the hours that are put into weaving that basket or the hours into needling beadwork or the hours into painting. The artist visualizes that painting, before sitting down to paint, their spirit has spoken and they put it in a particular form so that others will see it and will experience the life that's in that painting. I have done a fair bit of painting. I have done oil painting. I have done acrylic painting. However, the spirit has not spoken to me to do painting like David Brooks or Alan Syliboy that type of painting. The spirit has stayed away from me relating to that. I have done painting more with nature and still-life, like flowers.

I think our young people are creating art through acting, putting on plays, showing art through our song, through our drumming, through our voices, through our chanting. Showing who we are, and yes, we will continue to always be sustained in our culture. I love my life and I love my tradition and I love my people I know I'm an Elder and I'm getting up there, but I have great hopes that we as Mi'kmaw will continue to thrive. And our art will continue to thrive in our culture and our traditions ways, as our ancestors were in those days. We will continue to live their history of how they survived and we will continue to be a strong Mi'kmaw nation no matter what year it is, whether its 2020 whether its 2050 whether its 3000 the Mi'kmaw will thrive. Elder Sister Dorothy finishes but say, "I absolutely think Mi'kmaw art has helped in sustaining Mi'kmaw culture."



## Frank Meuse Jr.



Picture # 6- Frank Meuse making a basket. Photo by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse

Frank Meuse was Chief for his community for over twenty years, and he still remains on the council for Bear River First Nation. I interviewed Frank in his workshop. He is sitting by a wood stove in a rocker making baskets. He completed a questionnaire and allowed me to record his last response:

Our reflections of the first peoples, and some of the things that our ancestors used and how practical they were, and how simple they were and how readily some of the materials and stuff was like just there in the forest. It's wonderful having, like for instance a nice fancy kevlar canoe, but if you want to repair it you have to go, I don't know where. But then someone comes along and says, "You know our people use to make canoes that were just made out of the forest." Then someone like Todd Labardor starts to research canoe building and how our ancestors built them. These canoes were simplistic and practical and were easy to repair if you knew where to

get the materials. Same thing with basketry. Our people would go into the forest. Others go to all these companies to buy fancy camping gear, such as back packs and stuff like that, then they get into the woods and they rip a hole in them or the straps break, so then they have to bring them back to the company. So, by building things out of the forest out of wood that is where it all originated from. So, I think that there is a lot to be said, looking at our past and looking at things that our ancestors used that still have a purpose in this day and age. Working with your hands is very rewarding and getting materials from the forest keeps you connected to the mother earth which I think is very important. You know when you see somebody trying to replicate something that our ancestors made you want to do it as well or maybe take it one step farther, or even better, but most of the time if you could do it half as well as they did, you get a sense of fulfillment. It might be a craft or art, or turned into an art or craft but I think within our First Nations culture that there are a lot of our people doing some wonderful work with different settings and mediums. I can't sit here and say they are just doing one thing, because there is a large range and some are being very innovative and expressive in the way they are thinking and being very creative in coming up with old things in new ways. So, yes, there is a concept of needing to know the fundamentals of the forest which are: knowing the relationship of the forest, knowing geography of the land, and being respectful of the forest. Never wasting our natural resource. It is our jobs as Elders to take our youth out to teach them about the forest and our natural resource and allow them to elevate their creativity. Each person takes their own journey and I see life as a circle because today I find that one always goes back to our ancestors. Maybe knowing that my ancestors did this same

thing a thousand years ago. I need this for my heart. “Only take as much as you need,” I hear my ancestors say. I hope that there never comes a day that a basket is on the shelf and it is said, “This is what the Mi'kmaq used to do.” I hope the spirit of our culture continues to be expressed through art. We seen it as art and craft but in the past, it was a form of survival.”



Picture # 7-Completed baskets of Frank Meuse on a shelf in his basket shop. Photo by Holly Meuse.

©Holly Meuse

## Elder Ernest Johnson

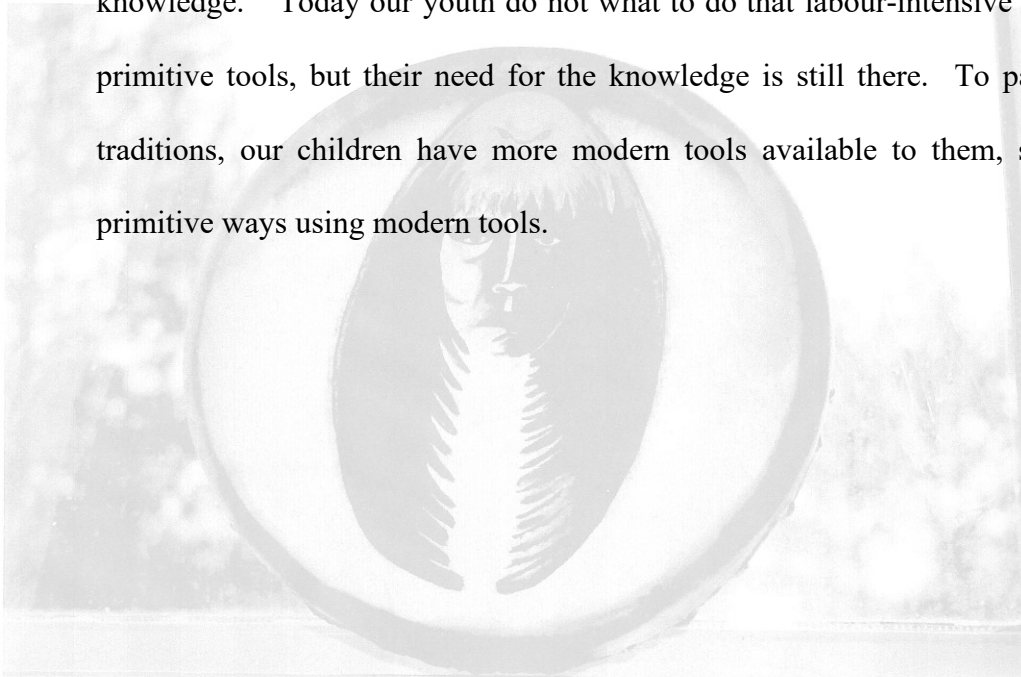


Picture # 8-Ernest Johnson showing some of his tanned deer hide. Photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Ernest Johnson stated:

Yes, all of it is in a way but some of the practices today our tools are modern. Our ancestors seen the things that they make as necessities and a need for were for survival. The art of petroglyphs is hard to interpret unless you have a deep spiritual history of our people. We really need to understand the truth behind the petroglyphs and they will teach us of our history. My artist background came from when I was very young. It started by making basket bottoms then I got promoted to do more when I got better as I went along. At age 12, I would trap muskrats and other small animals and I continued into my middle age to be a provider to my family. Traditional knowledge can be handed down as mild as milk. You don't have to force anyone and never put someone down if a mistake is made, we guide them to

correct tactfully. We need to pass our knowledge down as a progressive learning. We teach them the art and not be strict about traditional ways. I would say the best teaching is the respect and only take what you need. Growing up we only spoke 50 English words, so I had to learn the language. I started working with furs about 2 years old and I was using primitive tools. Then I sat back and said, “What other way can I do traditional work with natural resources from more modern knowledge.” Today our youth do not what to do that labour-intensive work with primitive tools, but their need for the knowledge is still there. To past on our traditions, our children have more modern tools available to them, so I teach primitive ways using modern tools.



## Elder Mary Bartlett



Picture # 9- Mary Bartlett displaying her integral basketry work at her home. Photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In her questionnaire, Mary Bartlett stated:

Sustain!! Yes, we pass our knowledge down and there is a real need. Today, many people still do art work. Mi'kmaw art has sustained our culture and sustains our livelihood. We have this talent to fall back on if we need to. All my family made baskets, drums, wood carving and other pieces of art. My dad and mom did it all. Back then potato and blueberry baskets were popular. My brother, Dave made traditional drums but I seem to be the only one that is still keeping the art alive, I was never pressured when I was being taught so I do not pressure my sons. I feel that working with my baskets is a form of worship. I have never made anything in a mean state of mind, always in a happy mood. I get into my zone and I lose all track of time. I usually have to stop because I run out of materials. But then life comes up and my art takes a back burner because the time and mood have to be

right. Sometimes it is hard to motivate myself because I live alone. I come from a long line of basket makers so I know how to do it. I really paid attention and I really wanted my mom to be proud of me. I had to respect my material 'basket strips' because I made things from the heart. My art is still getting better each day today. A lot of artists express the 4 colours, as well as earth, and spirituality. Mi'kmaq depict their Indian heritage through their medium. I haven't seen too many art pieces but I do authentic original art. When I sell a piece of art I share with my family and I don't work with a dollar sign. I do not mass produce because each piece is unique. My mom taught me a lot and I would watch and learn, then we would go 'Guwickson,' meaning going door to door selling. But when I asked, how to do something she only told me once. I had to learn the first time. I have been making baskets since I was 12 years old, in Maine with my Mom. Mom had a couple of friends, Sam Goose and Abner Paul that built a small "A" frame structure close to Trans Canada and they would come to collect our axe handles and baskets. Dad would come back with a back-pack full of food.

Mary sat at her kitchen table as I interviewed her for my video. After the video was complete, I couldn't wait to go to Yarmouth to show Mary the completion of the video. While viewing the video with Joel Denny's wife, she said, "Isn't that Mary Bartlett? She passed away last month." I did not what to believe Joel's Denny's wife had her phone in her hand, and googled Mary's obituary. I felt a deep sadness because our Nation has lost yet another one of our Elders and knowledge keepers. I felt so fortunate to have been able to spend some time with her before she crossed over. She showed me a small basket she was making, it was in the shape of a head, the weaving was so small even with my glasses on I could hardly see the very intricate basketry

work. She was working on a doll made of ash, which was going to be complete with an ash back-  
pack basket.



## Gerald Gloade



Picture # 10-Gerald Gloade designer of the 2017 quarter- Photo by Colleen Jones from [www.google.com/search=gerald+gloade+artist](http://www.google.com/search=gerald+gloade+artist)

Gerald Gloade is a well-respected artist, story teller, and knowledge keeper for the Mi'kmaq. My interview with Gerald Gloade was an eye-opening experience as he explained that First Nations people are mostly right-brained learners due to the fact that our tradition was learning from stories. He told me of a teacher that taught history in a way that told a story. When he wrote the test for this class, he received a hundred percent on the test. Another First Nation student, that sat across the room from him, also got a hundred percent. The teacher was convinced that the two boys had cheated some how even though they were on different ends of the classroom.

I followed Gerald Gloade around the province to attend a few of his presentations at universities, conferences, and various Mi'kmaw communities. Gerald is very knowledgeable and knows the stories of how our ancestors paid attention to the seasons and the environment around them and used the land with Netukulimk (saving for the next seven generations) in mind.

Gerald states that there were thirteen moons instead of the twelve months we refer to today. Which are: January (Punamujikus) Spwan of the “Tom-Cod,” February (Apunknajit) “Sun is very strong,” March (Siwkewikus) “Maple Sugar,” April (Penamuikus) “Birds lay eggs,” May (Etquljuikus) “Frogs croaking,” July (Nipnikus) “Leaves full blossom,” July (Peskewikus) “Birds shed feathers,” (Kjikus) “Great Moon,” August (Kisikwekewikus) “Ripening time,” September (Wikumkewikus) “Moose calling time,” October (Wikewikus) “Fat tame animals,” November (Keptekewikus) “Rivers about to freeze,” December (Kiskewikus) “Chief moon.” Gerald’s gift of story telling has reinforced in him the need to listen to Elders, do research and pass that knowledge on to others.

In the interview, I asked Gerald the question: Do you think Mi’kmaw art has helped or not helped to sustain our culture?” Gerald said, “Yes, Mi’kmaw Art has helped to sustain it. The word “Netukulink” refers to sustaining yourself. It is the things that you do whether you are hunting, fishing or producing art work for sale to make money for your family. People have been doing that for generations and we still do it today. We owned and operated a basket shop way back in the 50s and 60s and my brother and his son still run the basket shop today. However, they buy items off of local artist, which are more contemporary art.”

Gerald Gloade also stated in his questionnaire in response to the question: Has the role of Mi’kmaw art, in sustaining Mi’kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, we’ve been sharing the photos from the Museum trips with contemporary artists. They are using the patterns and colors of ancestral work today. We did it all, from making our own draw horses (a bench designed to hold a piece of ash), made the crooked knives, pounded the ash to slip into stripes of ash, and even made

our own eel spears, etc. Art is a personal expression – depends on the time. In truth a lot of work is done for sale so there wasn't time to capture their inner feeling. They were just trying to produce something that would sell. I feel happy that someone can relate to my subject or topic, it's like making a contact with someone over art. "Art for Sale" that's our way of sustaining ourselves as an individual and community.



## Elder Joel Denny



Picture # 11-Joel Denny showing a couple items he made for his regalia, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Elder Joel Denny is a song writer, film editor/producer, artist, dancer, and knowledge keeper of our traditional stories and of the Mi'kmaq language. I interviewed Joel in his workshop making the Waltestaqano'qwan or Waltes Game. He explains the process, speaking Mi'kmaq throughout his interview, telling me how he gets the materials from the burl of a tree and what to look for. The sticks are made of ash and the dice are made of deer or moose bone. The legend of Waltes, was passed down to him from his mom, which she learned from her mother:

Joel goes on to say that the Creator has planted a sacred tree on earth for the Mi'kmaq people. The roots spread deep into the body of our mother earth. Its branches reached upward like hands praying to father sky. Respectively known as an Elder Kisiku (lived many moons). It has been on earth since the beginning of time, where it has wisdom, it holds power to heal, and is security for our people. The M'quot (burl) is found on the side of a tree. M'quot is used to make the plate for our game known as Waltes. A certain person, Npuion, would have visions of where

to find the burl from the sacred tree. Before extracting the burl, Npuion had to prepare a ceremony and a gift offering to the Kisiku the tree. Npuion wedged and pounded at the burl for days to make sure that the tree would not be harmed and that the powers of the spirit will remain strong. Returning home with a bundle Npuion had to prepare the burl to be shaped into a bowl. The burl had to be boiled in saltwater for some time to remove the gum in the wood. The bones of a deer or moose are then placed in with the burl for another round of boiling. This is believed that the animal and the spirit of the tree would work together as one. Once the burl became a certain softness and shaped into a bowl which would take days of grinding, then the counting sticks and six bone dice were made to finish the Waltes set. Counting sticks are made from Uiskok (black ash) and the dice were carved from deer or moose bone. One side of the dice is made flat and the other round. A token is carved on the flat surface to symbolize the clan of the people. The stick consists of the old man (Kisiku), three old ladies (Kisikui kwaq) and fifty-one counting sticks. To our people Waltes, the game of chance had its symbolic role and spiritual importance. Waltes game was played by our ancestors long before the time of Columbus. When the missionaries discovered that Waltes played a role in rituals and ceremonies of our people, they believed anybody that carried a Waltes for ritual purposes were into witchcraft and satanism. A hole was drilled into the spirit of the bowl and power of the Sacred Tree was lost.

Joel's stated this in his response to, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, it is identifying the proper wood and how to process our renewable resources.

I showed you the tools that we used for war and hunting. I think we need to bring

back that knowledge. I think it is vital to keep our knowledge going and the use of

art to keep our culture alive. Today it is called Art but yesterday it was called Survival.



## Jim Maloney



Picture # 12-Jim Maloney's great great grandmother's quill work on the back of a chair.  
Photo provided by Jim Maloney

Jim Maloney is a 10<sup>th</sup> Dan Uechi-Ryu Karate Grand Master, a traditional Mi'kmaw dancer, an artist and knowledge keeper/story teller. He expressed that the art that was being made many moons ago came from a place and time where our ancestor's mind, body and souls were content. Jim wrote in his questionnaire that, "Knowledge and tools were everyday survival tools; my family didn't consider them art. Art is our traditional knowledge. It connects us to the past, and our people are proud of their culture." Jim stated that art is our traditional knowledge that connects us to our past and our ancestors did not consider their work as art yet it was seen as everyday survival tools.

Jim added, "I thought I should post a better picture of my Great Great Grandmother Artist Catherine Sack Maloney's porcupine quill chair backs. These are on display at the Halifax museum. They were made in the 1880s. Some people and Art collectors mistakenly call our ancestors, Artwork Native Crafts! This is an insult that continues to put anything old and made

by European settlers as valuable Antiques and anything made by Indigenous people as crafts. These fine Pieces of Art designed by my Great Great Grandmother are worthy of hanging on any Art collector's wall or in the finest museums. The time it would take to make these star chair backs would be months. The material used is porcupine quills in their natural colour of black, white, and grey. Other colours probably came from berries or boiled roots. The design would be one of a kind coming from a Mi'kmaw Indigenous Female Artist's mind and Mi'kmaq Indigenous spirituality. Just imagine a fist full of porcupine quills and to come up with these amazing works of Art!

In the video Jim stated:

So, the art that we are talking about, my great grandmother's art, there was a freedom of expression coming from a time when people were proud of who they were and they had all the resources they needed. They were not in as bad a shape as we are today. So, their expression of art was really art and it was expressed in that coming from good positive experiences. Today, we are a captive people living on townships, reservations, residential schools, prisons and welfare. We are the 'have-not' people. So, the art will reflect how the artist feels and how they came through that whole process. So, there is going to be a big difference between the art made today and the art that we can see at the museums of the Mi'kmaq.

Jim Maloney also stated in his questionnaire: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

A lot of the art I see today is expressing mostly pain and distress from the present-day artist by expressing the individual's own experiences, mostly poverty, unemployment and incarceration at institutions including reservations. Knowledge

was passed down by family members and things such as tools were everyday survival items My family didn't consider them art. Art is part of our traditional knowledge; it reconnects us to the past and makes our people proud of their culture.



## Krista Thompson



Picture # 13- Krista Thompson shows one of her baskets in the works, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

I interviewed Krista at her home in Paqnek. She has a real passion for Mi'kmaw art. She states, "I think we need a traditional trades school where we can go to learn our traditional Mi'kmaq trades, I took a basket course over a weekend, but I need more than a weekend course, to become a good basket maker because that is what I want to become."

Krista Thompson also stated in her questionnaire: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, I see a lot of new artists incorporating old styles into new art and different media. Mi'kmaq have used art as a resource and source of economic opportunity through practicing Treaty Rights. Baskets and Quillwork of the Mi'kmaq are internationally known. I am proud of my culture; I learned from my Elders. My grandparents were basket makers, Noel Marshall and Annie Lena Marshall. They had a strong work ethic and were proud not to have to take welfare.

They earned money by travelling and selling baskets as far as northern Quebec.

There are not enough opportunities to learn from our Elders today. We need a traditional trade school to teach traditional Mi'kmaq trades.



## George Marshall



Picture # 14-George Marshall showing one of his regalia pieces that he sewed, photo by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse

George Marshall sits at his kitchen table and tells a story of his first hunt with a friend. After the deer was gutted, George asked for the hide. His friend said, “Sure but what are you going to do with it?” George said, “I am going to make a hand drum.” George told me about a small tree in front of his place that he cut, shaved the bark until he had the shape he wanted, then bent and molded his drum frame. George made his first drum that he was very proud of. George showed me some of his art work, such as: a craved knife from bone, his regalia that he sewed himself, a beautiful Bussell (made of feathers for the back of a regalia) and paintings. I noticed that even the stitching on his regalia was designed in the double curved motif.

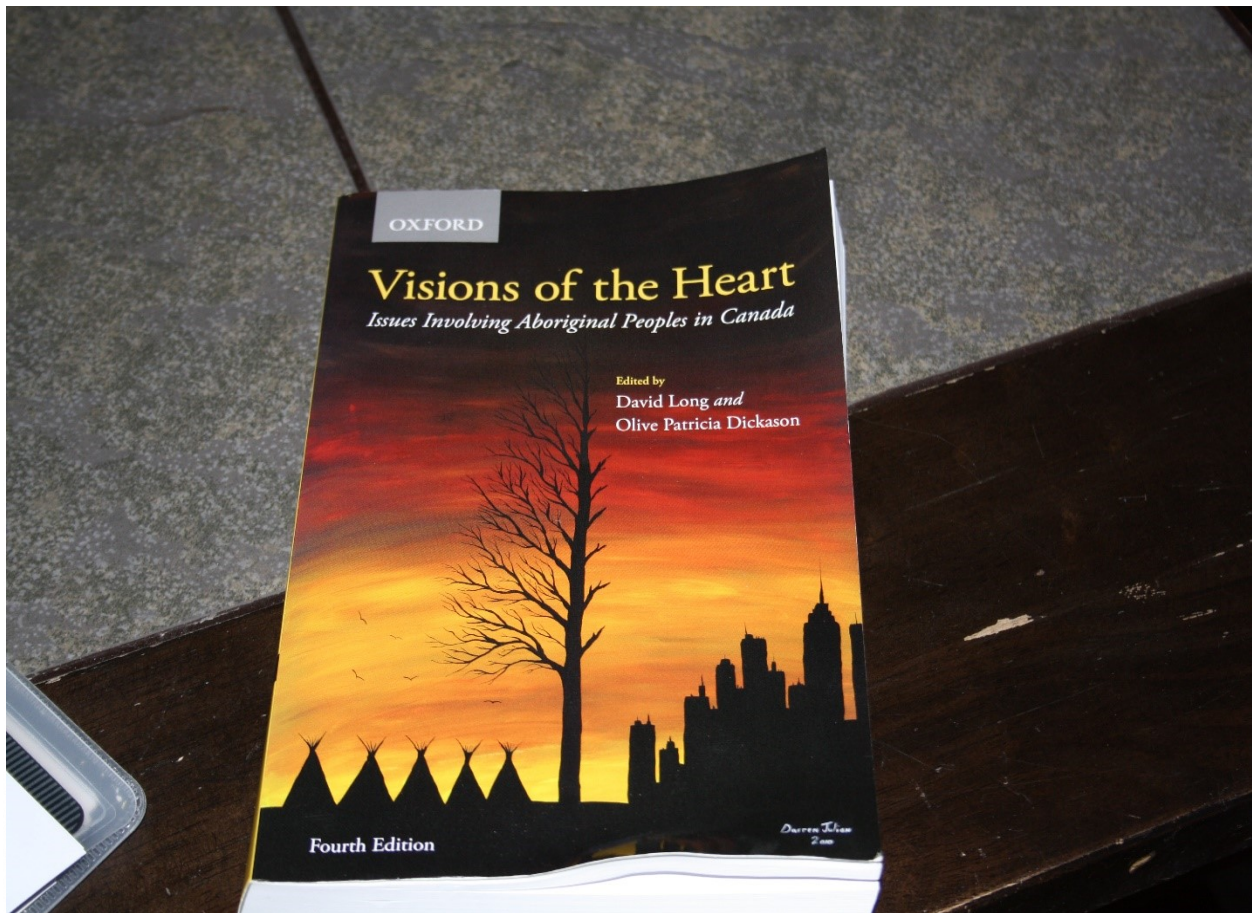
George Marshall also stated in his questionnaire in response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, I believe crafts made today are reflective of crafts made by our early ancestors. Stories told to me by my grandmother attest to the need to be able to construct things for survival. Things like spears, baskets and bone utensils well made and often sold or traded. I am a believer in passing down traditional learning. I think there should be more traditional knowledge taught in the schools. I have only one sister that I know makes crafts. My sister has a natural ability to produce crafts. Perhaps she gathered knowledge from other crafters. I'm sure she inherited her artistic abilities from my father who was very creative and artistic. I am 54 years old and as a child I can remember going out with my grandfather and cutting down a tree that he would later carve down to make a spear pole to go out spearing eels through the ice. I can remember stories told to me by my grandmother about how they used to make baskets and travel as far as Canso<sup>16</sup> (Appendix F) by boat to sell their baskets to survive. Much of the art I've seen are depictions of legends that were handed down over the centuries. Modern works by local artists use this a lot in their paintings. Mi'kmaw art has come a long way, it has united the legends of the past to the social issues we face today. It has brought recognition to ancient artifacts and has helped to raise the profile of our people in today's society. It has helped to reinforce our identity of who we were and of who we're to become.

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<sup>16</sup> Chapel Island to the town of Canso is over 50 miles driving (one way) on a fairly straight road. On the map you can see that this distance would be much farther by canoe. George did not tell how many hours this would have taken traveling all the way by canoe and return

## Darren Julian



Picture # 15-Illustration on this textbook cover is by Darren Julian, photo by Holly Meuse.

©Holly Meuse

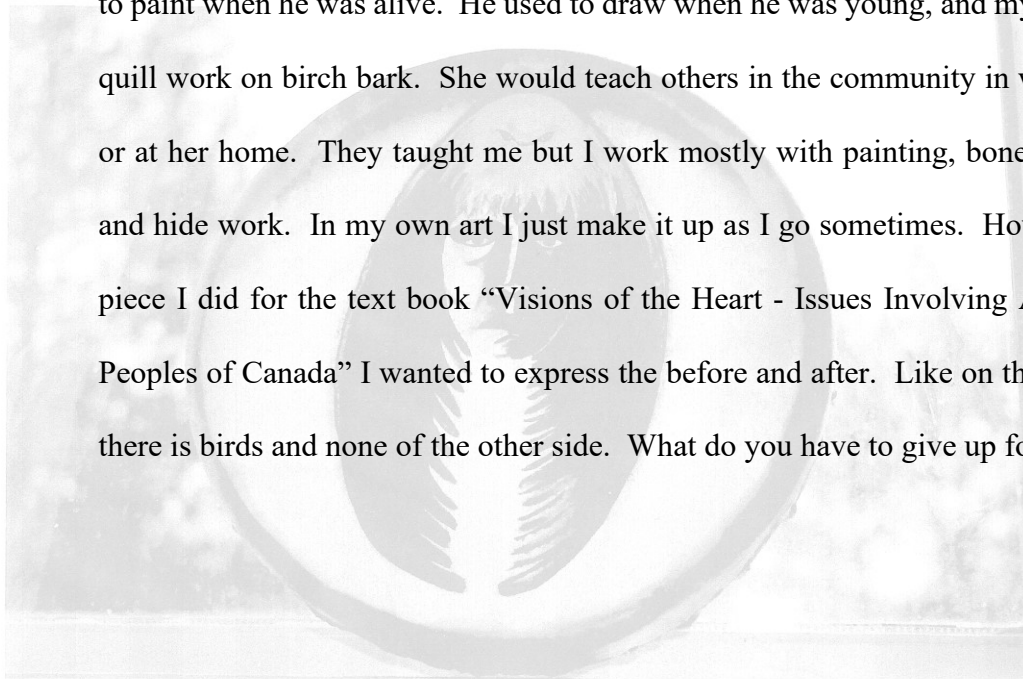
I traveled to We'koqma'q First Nation to meet with Darren Julian. He had some of his art hanging in his home. One piece of his art depicted a before and after or a past and present. The picture showed how trees grow and birds flow and teepees were set up as a community. On the other side of this tree its branches were dying, there are no birds, and tall buildings replace community. This painting was used for a cover of a text book (see above). Darren still practices his traditional ways of life. He said that when he was old enough to hunt his first moose he distributed the meat to all the families in his community, and he did not save any for himself, which is the practice for one's first hunt. However, he said he gave all the meat away from his second moose as well. After a moose has been killed the first action Darren said he does is offer

tobacco and says a prayer to thank the animal for giving up his life to sustain his family and community.

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Darren stated in his questionnaire in response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, my mother did very fine porcupine quill work. Her baskets sold all around the world by just word of mouth because she did not travel. My dad used to paint when he was alive. He used to draw when he was young, and my mom did quill work on birch bark. She would teach others in the community in workshops or at her home. They taught me but I work mostly with painting, bone jewellery and hide work. In my own art I just make it up as I go sometimes. However, the piece I did for the text book "Visions of the Heart - Issues Involving Aboriginal Peoples of Canada" I wanted to express the before and after. Like on the one side there is birds and none of the other side. What do you have to give up for change?



## Loretta Gould



Picture # 16 - Loretta Gould filling out research questionnaire, photo by Holly Meuse.

©Holly Meuse

Loretta Gould is from Waycobah First Nation and her colorful art usually depicts spirituality, current First Nations issues, and custom paintings. She is self-taught and very proud to have her art displayed all around the world.

Loretta stated in her questionnaire in response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, we need more of our crafts to be displayed and passed down as a skill for our children. My oldest daughter started painting before me. We supplied everything that she needed to paint. The only thing that my mom passed down was sewing as a craft to me, but my other sisters learned that trade. My father still fishes, traps and hunts, he also picks medicine. My sewing machine broke down, one

winters night, and in a week or so after I started painting. There are a lot of stories told through our art works, like the latest Mi'kmaw Art I saw was done by Alan Syliboy and his story was about our Ancestors who were whale hunters. I'm proud that my artworks are going down in history. I feel we don't have enough Mi'kmaw Art displayed in Art Galleries so I think we need to start aiming to these art galleries.



## DeeAnn Sack



Picture # 17-DeeAnn Sack at the 2018 Peace and Friendship Gathering in Grand Pre, Nova Scotia-Photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

My interview with DeeAnn Sack was video recorded at the Grand Pre' Peace and Friendship Gathering in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. She was very patient with me as I set up my equipment and settled down to ask her some questions from my questionnaire. However, after reviewing Deeann's interview for my video, I could not use the information, because of the background noise and feedback on the video recorder but the audio recorder was right beside her which worked well for her interview:

When I see the traditional Mi'kmaq ladies' regalia, with the peaked cap, and the filigree beadwork on it that's amazing. I perceive them as artists as well when they do their beadwork and put their regalia's together, that's amazing and they are also expressing their heritage.

It makes me feel very very proud to see Mi'kmaw art displayed. I think we need more of that positive reinforcement building one another up as artists promoting one another as best as we can. I do my best to collect whatever I can collect, and it makes me proud whenever I see somebody hit it big and their art becomes publicly known and widely received and sought after. Very, very proud.

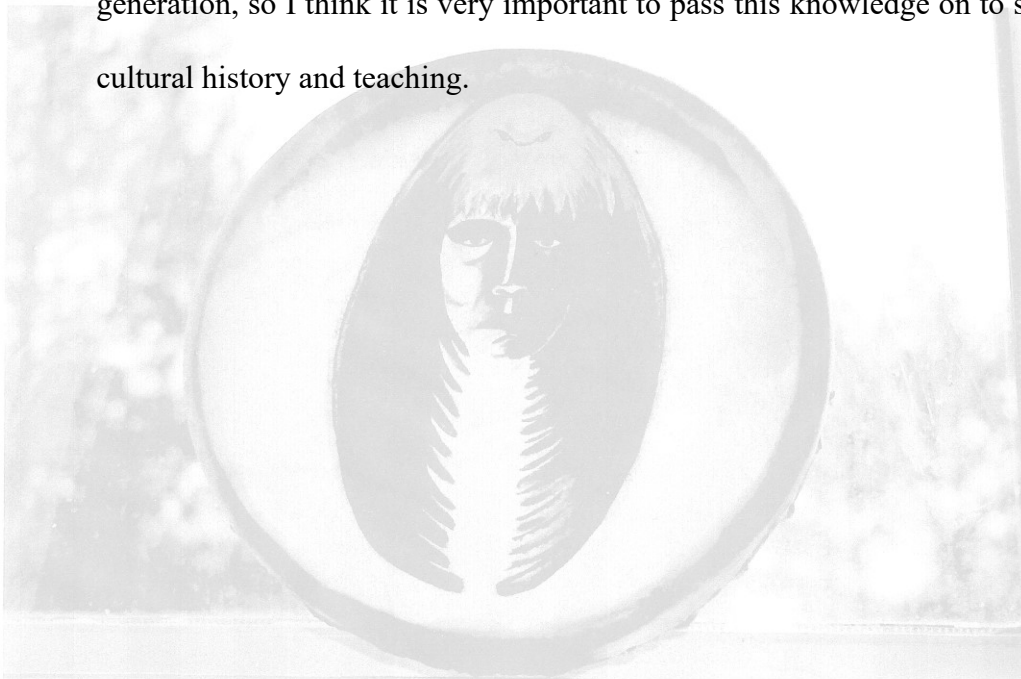
We have team building or personal development workshops in Sipekneketik that artists come in to teach their art. There is one lady her name is Sandra Racene and she does like a modern basket weaving and her baskets are amazing, I don't know if you've had an opportunity to see them, but she goes into communities and she teaches people the art of how to weave baskets and I think there needs to be more of that and there are other individuals like Crystal Gloade from Millbrook. She was originally from Sipekneketik. She does porcupine quill work and her work is amazing too. But even the whole idea of using the porcupine quill, it's not like you can go to Michaels and buy the porcupine quills. There is a whole process to that you have to find and gather and collect and process the porcupine quills. My grandmother would say you never wanted to harm the animal so she said they would take blankets and toss the blankets over the porcupine and the porcupine would shoot their quills into the blanket or towel or whatever they used and when they shook it off you collected that towel and you would harvest the quills from the blanket so the animal didn't lose his or her life. Then there is the dyeing process, using natural dyes and that comes with tea and berries and other natural ways to dye the quill. This is a long process because you have to clean each and every quill its almost like when you pick sweet grass its one blade at a time. Crystal goes to

community and she holds sessions as well to teach people how to make little porcupine quill items. So, the way I see it is these ladies they go out and do these traditional arts and crafts in the communities if one or two people per community, or even more, catch on and acquire a passion or desire to continue on with that and develop themselves personally, then they've done their job to pass on the knowledge so yes it is very, very important to continue to teach our traditional knowledge. For me, I would go to my great grandmother for traditional knowledge. She lived in a two-bedroom house in Sipekneketik just before you get up to the church and I think there was eleven or twelve of us living in that house. When you walked into the back yard, there was one of those horses that would pound the ash, lots of ash shavings, and a couple of crook knives tucked close to her. But when I was a kid, I would jump on them horses and push them back and forth, I thought they were like carnival rides (haha). But these wooden horses' purpose was for pounding the ash and making the splints. I remember my great gram would wrap the crooked knives up in cloth and they would be stored in her bottom dresser. She didn't want to leave them out because they were super sharp. But being a kid, you're digging around nosing, and I don't know how many times I cut myself on one of those knives. I remember her beading a lot too. She would soften her leather by chewing on it, chewing on the leather to soften it. I even remember using cereal boxes, to make the moccasin tops, vamps for the moccasins where you bead, I can remember her using whatever she could recycle. It is unfortunate that I didn't pick up the beading and the sewing. For now, I do stain glass and glass etchings.

Deeann Sack stated in her questionnaire in response to: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

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Yes, I like to etch glass and stained glass. I use historical Mi'kmaq symbols (petroglyphs, etc.) as my great gram did and people still make a living with their art. I try to ensure my work is accurate and provides a true version of Mi'kmaq Ancestry. Mi'kmaq people have an oral culture and pass history down to the next generation, so I think it is very important to pass this knowledge on to sustain our cultural history and teaching.



## Terri-Lynn Toney



Picture # 18-Terri-Lynn on her front porch, photo by Holly Meuse

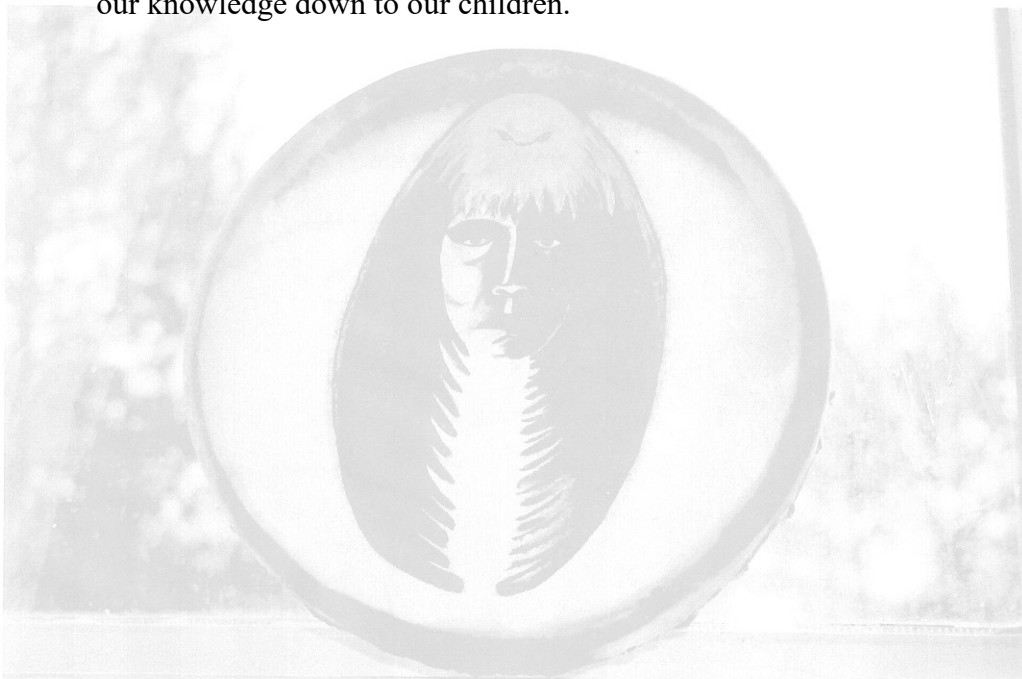
©Holly Meuse

Terri-Lynn was interviewed at her home in Annapolis Valley First Nation. She grew up with a large family and her and her husband Kenneth have dedicated their lives at raising their own four children and looking after foster children. Her home was filled with children on the day of the interview, but her home is always tidy. Seeing her place helps me to understand the expression, “You could eat off of their floors.”

Terri-Lynn’s stated in her questionnaire: Has the role of Mi’kmaw art, in sustaining Mi’kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, I think it has helped to a point because I see a lot of non-Native people wearing beaded earrings, moccasins or displaying a dream catcher from the mirror of their car. Today, people wear moccasins not because that is the only footwear available. Today you can buy moccasins at the mall and are used mostly as slippers. I think that for some of our Mi’kmaq people doing their art has been a stress

releaser, a way for them to stay busy or helping to keep some people stay out of trouble. It may also be helping some with their addictions and giving them a small income for their work. Some paintings express emotions like the life style that the artist lived or the pain that they have endured. Some artists paint an environment from their imagination of what their ancestors' past may have looked like. Some of my immediate family still makes art as a past time. I think there is a need to pass our knowledge down to our children.



## Todd Labrador



Picture # 19-Todd Labrador getting ready to take his first few strokes in the birch bark canoe he just completed, photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

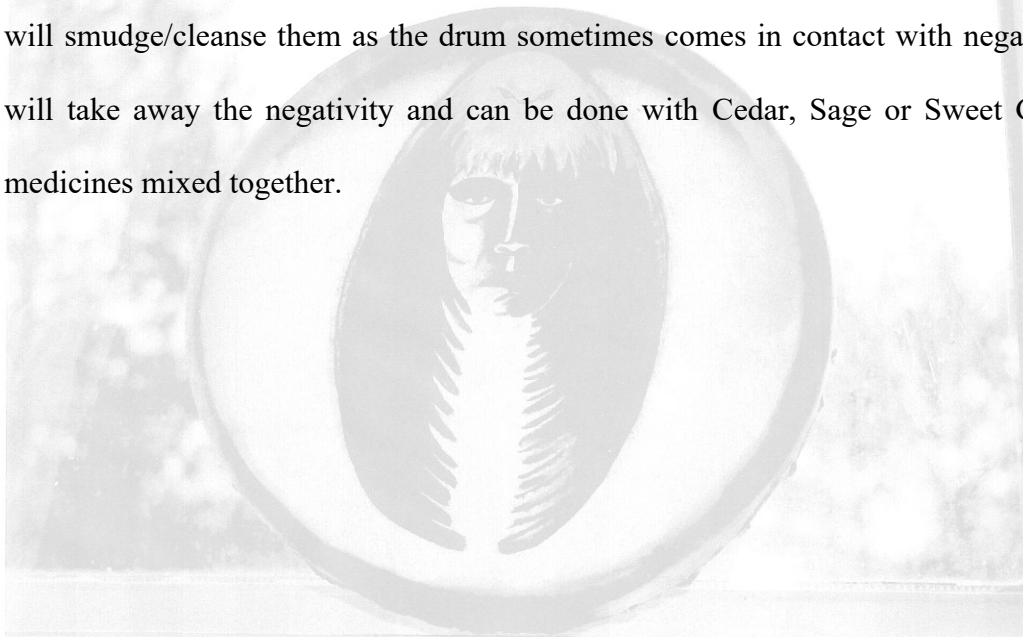
Todd Labrador dedicates his life with sharing his knowledge of working with birch bark. He spent years researching before perfecting the beautiful birch bark Mi'kmaw canoe replicas of our ancestors.

Todd's response to, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, some are a reflection of more recent art or it could be a story from their grandparents' spirituality or from today's politics. I think a lot is passed down from generation to generation. Some art today they may have learned on their own. Or gone to museums and learn about how things were done. I believe art has helped to sustain Mi'kmaq culture. I did not set out to be become an artist. I learned about building canoes because I thought it was valuable. I realized that no one was building canoes so I studied and learned for over 30 years. But now with the

knowledge of teaching our youth it is bringing pride back to our communities. It is also helping community members to stay away from drugs and alcohol. “Today everyone sees me as an artist. I feel good to see Mi'kmaw Art especially when it is displayed respectfully.”

Todd also offers hand drum workshops in various communities. He explains that the drum needs to be respected as it represents the Heartbeat of our Nation. The drum should be kept away from drugs and alcohol or people who have been consuming them. Often people who have drums will smudge/cleanse them as the drum sometimes comes in contact with negativity. Smudging will take away the negativity and can be done with Cedar, Sage or Sweet Grass or all these medicines mixed together.



## Danny Paul



Picture # 20 - Danny Paul boiling maple sap in his workshop at Membertou, First Nation, photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

Danny Paul is a knowledge keeper and is very respected for the knowledge he shares with others around sustaining animal life (moose) for the next seven generations.

Danny's response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaq art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, I think it has helped out quite a bit but what we are having difficulty with now is language. Each Artist has their own way of making the material and that is what needs to be done with our language so it can be understood better. I think we also have to understand what it means to be an artisan by using what is available in nature around us. Stories that are related to our spiritual connections can easily be identified in some Mi'kmaw work. Well, let's look at the use of bark and when it has to be harvested. Bark is used for containers and making quill

baskets. I am working now on a traditional head dress that will be made out of birch bark. Then there is the lost art of folding and biting the bark to make an image on it. The Harvest had to be done in a repetitive manner so not to endanger the tree. We have to be more responsible with the resources. at hand so not to deplete the resources. The best example is the black ash for basket making.



## Lorne Julien



Picture # 21-Lorne Julien venting his art outside the doors of a conference held in Truro, Nova Scotia, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Lorne Julien's work is becoming well known across Mi'kmaq territory. He turned to art as a way to find a deeper self. His art keeps him busy traveling to many events to display his art pieces.

Lorne gives this response to the question: "Has the role of Mi'kmaq art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?"

Yes, some artists are doing the same type of work, like my grandfather/Great grandfather were basket makers and they made axe handlers and hockey sticks, etc. They would harness these skills to stay alive etc. Others are maybe trying to expand on new methods. (Note: Don't appreciate China taking our work). Both my son and daughter are natural artists. Myself, I am a self-taught artist. More people are

losing skills that they possess, but at the same time, it's a natural hidden skill and some people never exercise their full potential. I feel artists are trying to convey where they are, at that moment in time. Some are just doing what they enjoy with no rules or boundaries.



## Peter Pictou



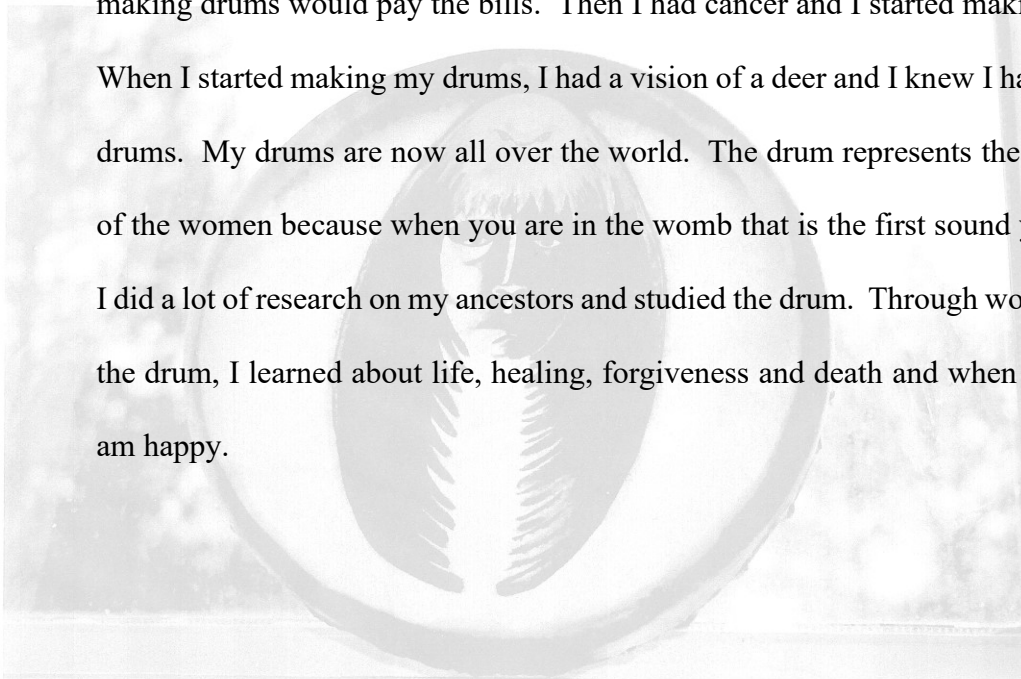
Picture # 22-Peter Pictou stands in his back yard demonstrating the beautiful sound of one of his hand drums, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Peter Pictou walked me through the process of how he takes the fur off of the deer hides. He said with the deer having so many ticks he has to be very careful checking for ticks himself at the end of the day. He puts a lot of hard work into making one drum.

Peter's response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Sure, I think it is the main reason why we have sustained our culture. I know there are many people, looking at the First Nation culture, while seeking their spirituality. Our culture has brought a lot of people together as one. My Dad was

a well-known axe handle maker. He made a living by selling them because our work became more of a trade commodity. Back then we had to use our hands. I think the greatest gift to give our children is passing down our knowledge. My brother and I learned from my Dad. We learned by watching. I learned it over 30 years ago but never used it. I call my drum “the healing drum” because when I first stopped drinking, I had an Elder say, “Come make a drum with me.” I didn’t think making drums would pay the bills. Then I had cancer and I started making drums. When I started making my drums, I had a vision of a deer and I knew I had to make drums. My drums are now all over the world. The drum represents the heart beat of the women because when you are in the womb that is the first sound you heard. I did a lot of research on my ancestors and studied the drum. Through working with the drum, I learned about life, healing, forgiveness and death and when I play it, I am happy.



## Monica Googoo



Picture # 23-Monica Googoo visiting her family. Photo by Holly Meuse

©Holly Meuse

In conversation with Monica Googoo, she told of a time that she remembers her family producing Mi'kmaw Art to sustain the household.

Monica Googoo stated in her questionnaire: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?

Yes, each piece tells a story/tale or history of our traditions. Some of the art is created with respect to depict what is going on today such as: the red dress campaign, beaded red dress earrings and broaches. When I was younger, I made crafts as a form of income, because that is all we had. I do not make crafts or art today but know that I have the knowledge if ever needed. Before my sister passed away, she taught her daughter how to do bead work. A piece of art tells a story, a tale, or a piece of our historical traditions. I think it is very important to teach the next generation. Once we stop, we lose it, then it's gone.

## Jill Francis



Picture # 24-Jill Frances at Kejimikujik National Park, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Jill Frances works as a Mi'kmaw interpreter for Kejimikujik National Park and she took me out beyond what she shows usual park guests in her tour of the Mi'kmaq rock petroglyphs. In response to the question, "Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives?" In her questionnaire, Jill Frances stated:

Yes, I do think they are reflective. Perhaps the biggest connection is in the gathering, harvesting and use of natural materials. Natural materials are the constant reminder of our connection to the earth and this knowledge must keep going. It is part of Mi'kmaq culture; it is part of being L'nu: to know how resources are used, to understand our relationship to the land, and 'traditional art' represents

that connection. Mi'kmaw art showcases traditional ecological knowledge and our connection to land and resources. Mi'kmaw art skills take lots of time, practice and patience. It expresses world views and way of living from hunting, fishing, survival to legends and education. My father makes Mi'kmaw art and has gotten his knowledge from his parents and they got their knowledge from parents, grandparents, etc.



## Wilford Johnson



Picture # 25-Painting by Wilford Johnson, a local artist from the Paq'tnkek First Nation Community, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

I stopped in Paq'tnkek First Nation Gas Bar one day and asked the employee where I could find a local artist, they replied, "There across the road." Wilford Johnson is a young man who was running his own Wellness Medicine shop and he had his art displayed on the walls for his customers to enjoy.

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Wilford Johnson stated:

Yes, Mi'kmaw art has helped to bring awareness to our culture. I believe it is like our language; if we don't pass it down, we are going to lose it forever. Every artist has their own expression and meaning. Artists express part of their soul and you can see what they are feeling. In their art. I remember being taught how to make the Waltes game, how to boil the cancerous lump from the tree and curving

the deer antlers from the bones. My children still hunt with Bow and Arrow because I teach my children the way of the land the way I was taught. Knowing the land. There is a need to pass our knowledge down from generation to generation.



## Robert McEwan



Picture # 26- Robert McEwan's workshop on creating art with birch bark, photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

In response to the question: Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Robert McEwan stated:

Yes, I try to reflect our ancestors in all I do from harvesting to my finished art. A lot of Mi'kmaq uses their art to sustain their own lives to make it to the next week. I work hard from sun up to sun down to teach my culture. For myself, my art it is very relaxing and if you like what you are doing, it is not work. We need our younger people to carry on the tradition, so we need to show them the right way to harvest at the start then they should not go wrong we need to instil good values. Mother Nature will take care of you, but you need to have respect for what you will be collecting from her.

## Elder Gerald Toney



Picture # 27- Gerald Toney is a traditional basket maker, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

Elder Gerald Toney served his community for many years as Chief of Annapolis Valley First Nation for years. Gerald is retired, but still enjoys hiking in the woods to find that perfect ash tree for his baskets.

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Gerald Toney stated:

Yes, the art of our Mi'kmaq helped our heritage and traditions. It helped our community to make a decent livelihood and it kept the families and communities together. We were a family of basket makers and we supplied all farmers in the Annapolis Valley from Digby to Windsor, Nova Scotia with apple baskets (500 baskets a week). In my community we make baskets, axe handles, beading, and wooden flowers. We also fish, and hunt moose, deer, and bear etc.

## Leonard Cremo



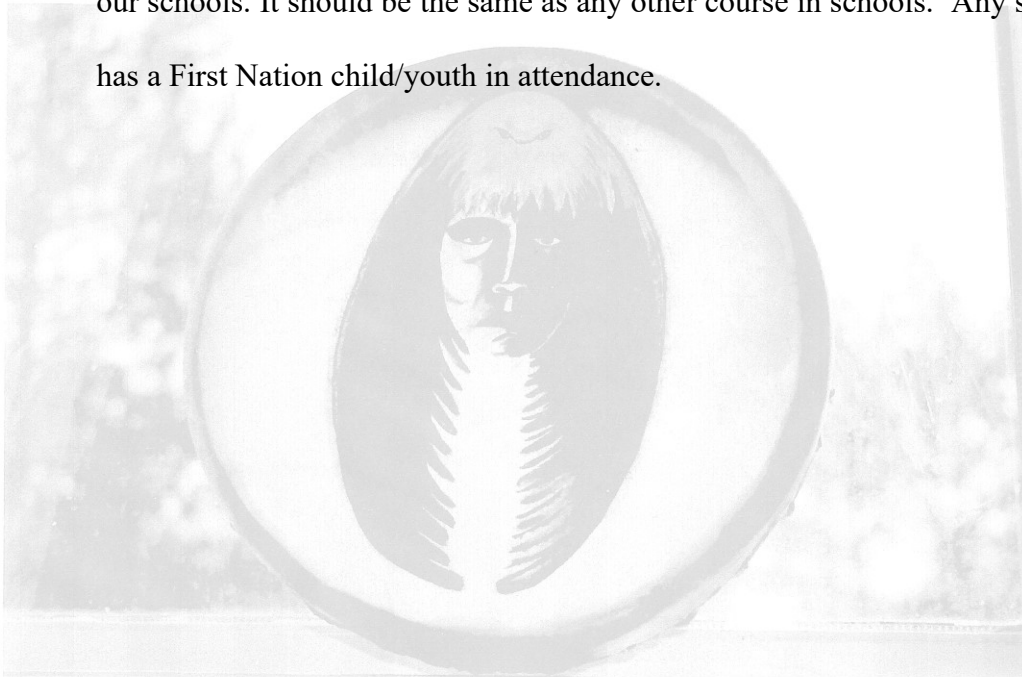
Picture # 28- Leonard Cremo is a local artist from Pictou Landing First Nation who creates chairs from natural resource, photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

Leonard Cremo has a large family so he relies on his art work to supplement his income to provide for his family.

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Leonard Cremo stated:

Yes, I see our people learning through visual learning. I would like to see more Mi'kmaw learning the arts. I learned my skill in two days, before the Elder that was teaching me crossed over. I make ash/birch bark, willow, alder, and spruce chairs. I think a lot of Elders are hurting for people to learn. I know an Elder that is trying to pass on his knowledge to the youth but the youth are not so much interested in the old ways. Seems to me that some people are desperate to make money but they do not really want to do the work for it. I think we lost a whole generation of our traditions being passed down because of residential schools, my parents didn't teach me my artistic talents, I had to learn on my own. The most important thing for me was to learn how to use an axe. I learned when I was older

because, like I said, there was a skipped generation. If we didn't miss that generation to residential schools, we would have more of our artistic talents and cultural knowledge. Wabinawab was a dice game but back in the day the RCMP arrested our people if they played the dice games, such as Waltus. My grandmother learned from her mother but she didn't go to residential school. Like I said "primitive way with modern tools" Mi'kmaq knowledge should be taught more in our schools. It should be the same as any other course in schools. Any school that has a First Nation child/youth in attendance.



## Alan Syliboy



Picture # 29-Alan Syliboy's art on the side of a building in Windsor, Nova Scotia, photo by Holly Meuse ©Holly Meuse

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaq art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Alan Syliboy stated:

Yes, most of today's art is reflective of our historical culture. Art making is never static. New ideas and materials were always adopted by Mi'kmaq. Ursula Johnson is a basket maker who has stretched the craft into art that are non-functional art pieces. She has brought basket making to a higher level as a result. It has shown that a Mi'kmaq artist can express their knowledge about art in many unique ways. It is very important to keep traditional crafts such as basket making. It is necessary to share this so that this knowledge remains with our people. My grandfather used to make crooked knives and hoops for lobster traps. He made all of his tools by himself. I helped him with this process when I was young. He used materials at

hand. For example, he would make a knife out of a skate blade. My cousin Teresa Marshall is an artist of high rank. She went to art school at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design (NSCAD), and trained to be an artist. She uses traditional materials for her art making. So yes, I do carry forward that traditional Mi'kmaw art work will definitely sustain Mi'kmaq culture.



## Shane Wilson



Picture # 30-Shane Wilson member of Glooscap First Nation, photo by Holly Meuse. ©Holly Meuse

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In his questionnaire, Shane Wilson stated:

In the aspect of the arts I believe it has. However, you can get dreamcatchers at Dollarama today. Huge parts of our culture are being ripped off. Our people were not recognized as citizens in Canada. Yet they served in WWI and WWII. My grandparents used to make baskets. I would sit for hours watching them. My aunts and cousin make baskets, quill work and beautiful bead work and I believe they had

to relearn their knowledge. I purchased a hand drum and I think of joyful gatherings and cultural. Items like baskets, drums, and canoes are definitely reflective of our ancestors. However, I think they may have been a little reluctant to pass on their knowledge maybe due to residential school. However, today there is a sort of interest due to the world of consumption (day to day life).

**(No Photo Available)**

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In her questionnaire, Georgina Julian stated:

Yes, for sure, for example, canoes because we still use canoes today but there are not many who still make canoes. To keep our native culture alive and strong, I feel that we must pass down our knowledge to the next generation. My grandmother made baskets. My grandfather made tools. Not sure where they learned from but they taught their children on how to make them. I was taught by our Elders in our community on how to make baskets but my passion is working with leather. Most crafts I made are self taught. However, I was taught by an Elderly woman how to prepare the wood for making baskets. We made fishing hooks at one time with hooks made of bone and sticks. We also fished with spears. I didn't use a stone. I just sharpened the wood. When I see Mi'kmaw art, I see a reflection of the person who makes or designs it. I found that some artists such as Lorretta Gould, reflects on the hardships of the past and present and bring the painting to life. So, I feel that any form of Mi'kmaw art, is a strong bond to our Mi'kmaq culture and to ourselves.

**(No Photo Available)**

In response to the question, Has the role of Mi'kmaw art, in sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture, been reflected in our past and present everyday lives? In her questionnaire, Yvonne Doucette stated:

Yes, in reflecting on art, I am realizing all of the many different items of art and have expanded my understanding from physical art (baskets, paintings, canoes, regalia, drums) to dancing, singing, chanting. Most artists continue to use the same or similar tools as our ancestors. There have been adaptations but for the most part they continue to embrace their history/culture. For example, baskets are still being made using the same natural resources ash and the like. As is the same with regalia, although some artists use modern materials. There are those who would and do use leather. One thing I would mention is that items of our history were probably made for more practical or ceremonial reasons, where today it may be made more for sale. The artists of today are expressing many things such as their history, the history of Mi'kmaq, emotions, and beauty. They are expressing that despite everything we have gone through-we are still here. I cannot recall any specific story of one tool but story telling has been passed down. My grandmother was a master basket maker but she got sick and had a stroke before I was of an age that I could learn from her. My mother did learn some of her teachings but she moved away from my Grandmother at a young age and did not learn everything her mother could teach her. My father went through residential school but did tell me stories of travelling with an uncle to gather medicines. Also, from my father and mother we learned to gather berries, sweet grass and other medicines for example for colds which are still used today. We learned to recognize different areas for example where or how to

look for sweet grass which is used in ceremony. I do have family members that share their knowledge. My Grandmother/Grandfather were basket makers, my brother is an artist of different media. He is a trained artist and also writes poetry. Another brother is a modern artist who works with wood medium. My sisters are quilt makers, basket makers, and quill workers, Aunts/uncles/cousins are regalia makers, singers, dancers, and basket makers. Knowledge was acquired mostly from older relatives passed down, but in some cases, it was learned, for example through school/formal lessons. So yes, I believe Mi'kmaw Art has helped, despite our long history of contact and attempts on our people for everything from assimilation to genocide. We have survived and it is through things like art that continue to survive to demonstrate we are surviving and we are present despite their efforts.

### **Final Questionnaire Results**

Many non-Indigenous people say, “That was the past, let it go.” I believe in the phrase; one can not go forward until knowing where they have been. In 2008, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC) was created as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA) (Historical Canada, 2019). The IRSSA was intended to compensate survivors for the harm they suffered in residential schools and to work towards a more just and equitable future for Indigenous peoples. In June, 2015, the TRC collected over 150,000 tragic experiences where many children were sexually and physically abused. The commission also found that approximately 3,200 residential school students died of malnourishment, tuberculosis and other diseases caused by poor living conditions. Justice Murray Sinclair, an Objibwa judge, stated that “Canada must move from apology to action.” Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has committed to

implementing all of the 94 recommendations set out in the final report.<sup>17</sup> Recommendation number 83 states:

We call upon the Canada Council for the Arts to establish, as a funding priority, a strategy for Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process.

A couple participants recommended that an institution be provided by the government to assist the Mi'kmaq to regain their cultural traditional knowledge through art.

**Some of the reoccurring themes from the research gathered from the participants were:**

- Use resources with care. Don't waste anything
- Spirituality. Thank the animal for giving up their life to sustain community
- Spirituality is what guides the artist's creation
- The amount of time that goes into the creation of art as a means of making a living, especially in the past and the difference compared to modern times
- Art as a way of dealing with past oppression, colonization, trauma, and alcoholism
- "We have survived...despite their efforts."
- The role of art to bring together the Mi'kmaq people, history, culture and community.

One of my questions on my questionnaires was, "How do you feel when you see a piece of Mi'kmaq art displayed? The reason for this question was for confirming my own sense of how I feel when I see a piece of First Nations art being displayed in either a public or personal setting. Right away I feel at ease somehow, like a feeling of comfort knowing that this person,

<sup>17</sup> Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs (2008) *Kwilmu'kw-Maw-Klusuaqn Mi'kmaq Right Initiate* Accessed on 07222019, <https://mikmaqrights.com/negotiations/treaties/>

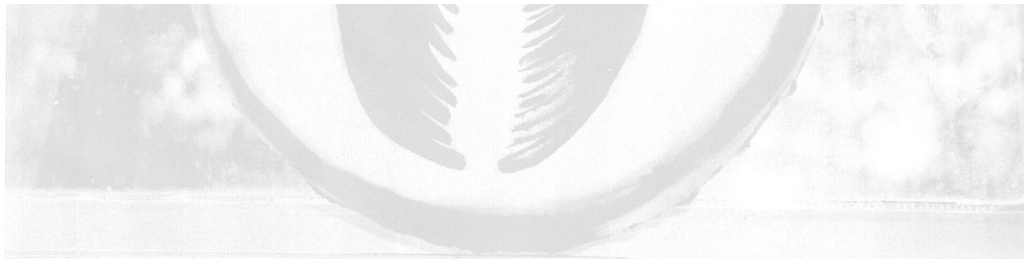
business or organization has an appreciation for First Nations people. When you grow up having peers call you names and picking on you because of your culture one may tend to carry precautions. Today, I am very proud to be L'nu but it has taken some personal growth to wash away memories of racism.

Out of the 27 people interviewed, about eleven responded by saying they feel pride or proud with the question. The following are a few of the participant's responses:

- Pride/Proud. I see it as a projection of myself-that I/we as Mi'kmaq are here. We are here despite everything we have been through (historically speaking – colonialism, residential schools, reserve systems etc.
- Proud, depending on the art displayed
- Proud and I always try to look to see who the artist is. I feel proud. That non-Native businesses acknowledge other cultures by displaying their art.
- Happiness. Great seeing it.
- I feel proud to see a piece of Mi'kmaw art.
- When I see someone else's art piece displayed, it makes me proud that another artist is doing something with their life.
- I feel connected and proud to the Mi'kmaq art in the public and private residences. Sometimes the stories behind how the art was acquired may make me feel sad.
- It makes me super proud
- I feel good, especially when it looks good displayed and they tell a story of it. Some pieces are not made from natural material, and I cannot give my opinion on other people's art, but when I see quill and bead work, I say "wow."
- Some people do work today as a mass product because they see dollar signs. This is normal for today's society. I have three prices: family, friend and tourist.
- Proud to see my community and other First Nations art work displayed at places like the Halifax Casino and Halifax City Hall.
- I think it represents the health of the culture. It has been re-produced by more people and there is a deeper interest in gaining knowledge about the culture.
- I appreciate seeing people taking pride in Mi'kmaw art.

- I feel great about it and knowing that the effort has been made to promote who we are.
- I feel proud that our culture is out there. I love to see my artwork and very proud to see other peoples work. A lot of native people are proud of their work.
- I love seeing that however, I am not okay with displaying scared items publicly. Like Eagle feathers and Land drums.
- Proud and lots of respect for the artist. I keep asking them are you passing on your Knowledge. My artwork is about 50 percent of my income. I teach and do presentations. I make my own traditional spears for eel fishing's and teach others.
- It is nice to see another crafters work being put out to see.
- A feeling comes over me that is hard to explain. Makes you feel at home. Also makes me want to pass on the traditional knowledge to the youth in my community and the other places like King's Historical Society.
- Art is a physical thing coming from an individual Artist; however, I just don't appreciate racist expression.
- I feel appreciated when I see some of my own Art work displayed.
- I feel good if I go into a business, a hotel, a store, or a company and I see Mi'kmaw art. Our art really reflects something about ourselves. I believe a Mi'kmaw is born an artist and carry's the genes; however, I believe that our artists all have a special gift and there's just no way you would argue that point.

In the past our ancestors used their skills for living off the land and providing for their family and community. Today, we still use our skills for our livelihood. However, to produce some of the items that our ancestors used are seen to be a valuable talent. Many are very humbled with their talents and many share their skills through teachings. I found that most Mi'kmaw artists are pleased and proud when others produce similar work. In my research I did not find any competition. Each artist admired other artists' work. I also found that in some communities, if someone is making something for livelihood, for example hand drums or wooden flowers then others will try to stay away from that Art to avoid competition. In all communities, I noticed that members from other communities are known for their work, meaning that someone in Membertou, Cape Breton may have heard about the work of a basket maker in Annapolis Valley. I also found that artists support one another as well. One participant, said her house looks like a museum because she buys art work from other artists.



## The Art of Storytelling

Storytelling is a form of art. Storytelling is a component of lifelong learning in the Mi'kmaq culture.



Picture # 31- Used with permission, Wigwams near Sydney. Taken from photographer's Harold Medjuck Collection. Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University.

The art of storytelling has been passed down from generation to generation. Traditionally, in a Mi'kmaw encampment, at the end of a hard work day, people sat in a circle to tell stories for hours. The youth would gain knowledge as the Elders told stories of their experiences. This was a time spent sharing, listening, laughing and enjoying time together. Most stories had essential life learning lessons; some included dancing as a way to share their story<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Canadian Museum of History, cited from <https://www.historymuseum.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/aborig/storytel/mi'kleng.html>

In this section I share three stories. One story or legend is from the creation of Glooscap. Such legends are told to help us understand the landscape, animals, life skills and other teachings. I share a story from George Paul, who is an artist, a song writer, and knowledge keeper. George wrote the Honour song for our nation and it is known all over the world. The last story I share is written by myself about 23 years ago. I was influenced by my young son, who is now 25. He never cut his hair until his right of passage into a young man. So, when he was very young, he loved the night sky and asked me to pick him up and twirl him around so that he could collect the stars in his hair. His middle name is Clearsky, and I would tell him the story of Clearsky before bed. I never wrote this story down until about a year ago.

### **Glooscap and the Creatures of Land and Sea**

In the beginning the animals which roamed the land were great, ferocious beasts. Squirrels, as large as bear, lived in the forests and deer nibbled easily from the tops of the tallest trees. The beaver was a powerful animal, able to dam the mightiest rivers and the moose, king of all the forest, easily pushed down the greatest trees. The Indians were afraid for the wild animals preyed constantly on them, breaking up their homes and carrying off their people.

When Glooscap first strode among them the people appealed to him. He listened to their tales and he became very angry for he was their protector. In the deepest forest he called the animals together and to each in turn he directed simple question: “What would you do if you saw an Indian coming through the forest?”

The squirrel jumped up, eyes flashing: “I would scratch up a tree by the roots so it would fall on him.” King Moose tossed his great antlers proudly: “I would push tall trees down upon him.” The great white bear growled briefly: “I would eat him.” Then Glooscap took each animal

in turn and stroked him with his hand. As he stroked the animal began to shrink smaller and smaller. The other animals watched in fascination. All but the beaver and the bullfrog. They were the sworn enemies of Glooscap and soon as they saw the master's powers at work they fled.

When Glooscap had finished, each of the animals was the size we know him today. To each he gave the strength and cunning needed to live in the wilderness-but no more. Then he repeated his question. This time the tiny squirrel said meekly: "I would climb the tallest tree." Glooscap assigned him to live forever in and amongst the trees. The Moose said: "I would flee into the deepest woods. "And that is where he has since made his home. The white bear, still defiant, was banished to the ice and snow of the far North where he lives today.<sup>19</sup>

### George Paul's Story

When George Paul was young, he grew up on the same lands, called Mi'kma'ki, that his parents and grandparents lived for many moons. He loved playing outside and listening to the Elders tell stories, speak their language, and sing. When George was eight years old, he was sent to a school, along with other Mi'kmaw children, far away from their families and community. Some children returned home for the summer while others had to stay there for years on end. At school, the children were not permitted to speak their language, sing, dance or drum. Most children forgot the teachings of their parents, grandparents and Elders. George finished school, and traveled, meeting many people and attending gatherings from coast to coast. One day George had a vision, where he saw many nations of people dressing in magnificent regalia, and the Mi'kmaq lead the dancers. This was very surprising to George because very few Mi'kmaq celebrated and danced in powwows since the days of the school. Not knowing what his vision could mean,

<sup>19</sup> One story from the book *Glooscap Legends*

George decided to keep his vision to himself. Many years later, George was fasting on a mountain when his vision returned to him. He tried to think about something else, and remembered the schools that he and so many other L'nu children had been sent, and wondered what had they done so wrong to be forbidden to speak their language, sing their songs, or practice their ceremonies. George began to cry and sob loader and loader. Then he realized that his sobs had rhythm, and listening closer he heard a chant resembling a song.

Way oh hay hi ya,

Ya way yo hay yo hay hi ya

Way yo hay hi ya

\ya way yo hay hi ya

George sang the chant, again and again, stronger and stronger until his sobs became the song. As he sang, he thought about all that the Mi'kmaq had lost. At that moment, he made a promise to himself, to the Creator that gave him his vision and his Nation to bring back the songs, the dances, the chanting, and the drums. Knowing that this chant was a gift from the spirits, he knew that it had a special power to heal and gather all Mi'kmaq together. He called it – The Honour Song.

The Honour Song

Kepmite'tmnej ta'n teli l'nuwulti'kw

Let us honour the people we are.

Ni'kma'jtut mawita'nej

My people, let us unite!

Kepmite'tmnej ta'n wetapeksulti'k

Let us honour our ancestral lineage.

Ni'kma'jtut apoqnmaltinej

My people, let us help one another.

Apoqmatultinej ta'n Kisu'lkw teli ika'luksi'kw ula wksitqamu

Let us help one another the way our Creator has placed us here upon Mother Earth. (Paul, 2018, pp.1-18)

### Clearsky's Spiritual Connection to Mother Earth

Clearsky grew up like all the other boys in his tribe. He had all the responsibilities bestowed upon him as he was a strong healthy young man. He worked hard from the time the sun peeked awake until it lowered itself to rest. When the sun disappeared, the stars gleamed and glistened which captured Clearsky's attention. He would stare at the stars, while sitting around the encampment fire, listening and gaining all the knowledge he could from his Elder's stories. He could not help but think that the stars were calling his name. He dreamed that one day he would climb the tallest mountain so that he could meet the stars.

So, one day came, and just before the Sun started to descend for its rest, Clearsky headed to the tallest mountain. The stars came out and Clearsky was overjoyed that he was so close to them. Clearsky wanted to save the joy that these stars made him feel, so he decided to unbraid his hair. "My hair is an extension of me," he thought. So Clearsky closed his eyes and twirled around and around and round, fanning his hair to collect all the stars. He felt this was more rewarding than expected because he could feel himself being lifted beyond the blanket of stars into the black abyss where the Creator waited for his arrival.

The Creator gave Clearsky special spiritual powers that connected him to Mother Earth, then Clearsky was sent back down to Earth. Clearsky woke the same time as the Sun did the next morning. He felt very different, a little light headed and light on his feet. But he tried to shake it

off, and started running for home. He did not get too far before he stopped and listened to the music he heard. From that day on Clearsky's world was filled with the sweet sounds of harmony and rhythms like one would hear a million hand drums rhythmically beating in the distance.

Clearsky stayed with his family as long as he could, until the children turned into Elders and they would question why Clearsky did not seem to be aging. Clearsky would then wander off until he came across another encampment where he was accepted, welcomed and loved as if he shared the same blood that runs through their own bodies. At the end of the day, Clearsky would lay for hours on the river banks where the waters roared from the steady rush of the falls that pooled into a cascade of calm. He would close his eyes and could hear a single drop from the waterfalls. If he put his ear to the ground, he could hear the beauty of the music even louder.

From the time Clearsky awoke, until the time he closed his eyes for sleep, music filled him with a peaceful embrace that gave him a sense of forever. Each day played a different tune, Clearsky would hear the ants march in single file, while at the same time, the slow chomping of a tree slug keeping a perfect beat like symbols. Winter was one of Clearsky's favorite time of the year because most of the insects and animals were sleeping while the snowflakes fell on the land. No two snowflakes had the same note. This peaceful sound did Clearsky's heart good, like the summer sound of butterfly wings in the wind. This Music seemed to be the strength that kept Clearsky's heart beating, for he knew that when the day comes that the symphony and harmonies stop playing, he would surely cross over forever.

## Chapter Five: Apajiaq

### Conclusion

In summary, all participants either made art themselves or had an immediate family member that was an artisan and all agreed by stating that art has defiantly played a major role in keeping our culture or used other words to state the same.

After all my interviews were completed, only one person said they would like to review their transcribed interview before it is to be included into my final research. I made an appointment with this person and they liked the edits and their contribution to the video. I realize that my video equipment is getting past its time, so the quality of some parts is a little noisy and the photographer (me) moved a little too often. Overall, I am very satisfied with the results of my video. Only four people requested to receive a summary of my final research provided to them by email and one requested for my final research paper to be mailed to them by Canada post.

Completing this Master's thesis was three-fold:

First and foremost, was the desire to research and learn more about my ancestors' history and culture. We have always been a proud people, and the endeavors of our ancestors has built strength for our people today. I feel that I have benefited so much from this research as a Mi'kmaw.

Getting to talk to Elders, reviewing the literature and interviewing Mi'kmaw community members across Nova Scotia gives me the sense of priceless enrichment. I am proud of the knowledge that I have gained as I prepare myself in becoming a knowledgeable Elder for the youth of our future.

Second, I had to rely on my self-determination and strength from within to complete this Master's degree while external struggles such as: working, parenting, volunteering and doing landlord duties. All these demands required that I prioritize my time in everyday life tasks. Most of all being able to prove to myself that once I set my mind to something, I can overcome it with persistence. The reason I mention this is because when I was in grade six the principal of the

school that I was attending called me to his office, to discuss changes to my academic classes. He said he will be moving me to level “C”, and that I would not be attending the same classes with my peers. I let the principle know that I will not be moving to a different class or academic level then I walked out of his office and went back to my class. This principal did not approach me again about switching classes. I may have been young and struggling with some of my school work but I was not going to let this man take me away from my friends. I knew even back then that this was a racial decision on his part, because most of the students in level “C” were First Nations. Being First Nations, I knew it was important to stick with the peer group that I had built friendships with. However, looking back, I can see that this encounter with the principal was positive. I became more determined to keep up with my peers. So, completing this Master’s degree has been a lifelong learning goal to prove to no one else but myself my academic abilities.

Third, as mentioned at the beginning of my thesis, my goals and interests when applying for my Master’s degree was to gain additional knowledge that would assist me in becoming a better facilitator and conduct research on my ancestors as it applies to traditional handcrafting life styles. My thesis research gave me the opportunity to research Mi’kmaw art while combining the opportunity to learn more about my Mi’kmaq heritage throughout Nova Scotia.

Completing a thesis around Mi’kmaw art was a passion for me. Years ago, I decided to take an art course as an elective and fell in love with how creating art made me feel especially when viewing the end results. Then I continued pursuing personal and/or professional knowledge over a lifetime. I believe that Mi’kmaq cultural lifestyle, through expressing art and other handmade crafts are an excellent example of lifelong learning. Lifelong learning is not a new concept for First Nations people. Traditionally, First Nations people ensured that lifelong learning was not only over a lifetime but over seven lifetimes. My research found that the Mi’kmaq have

used and still use their artistic talents and their ingenuity to sustain themselves and their culture by using the resources all around them to provide a livelihood for themselves since time immemorial.

I believe that learning is achieved on an emotional, spiritual, physical, and mental state throughout a life time. It is the passing down of lifelong knowledge, and the continuous pursuit of knowledge gain from birth to death. Chilisa (2012) also believes that lifelong learning is decolonizing and contributing to a theory of learning. Chilisa (2012) believes, “Decolonization is about centering our concerns and worldviews and then coming to know and understand theory and research from our own perspectives and for our own purposes” (p. 39). Battiste (2013), asserts that, “When one is connected to community and to place, the relational aspects of communities, people, families, and their context becomes the important elements of how to proceed with knowledge search and production” (p.74).

After completing all of my questionnaires, I would conclude that my findings did indeed find a correlation between the traditional Mi'kmaq ways of living from many moons ago to present day Mi'kmaq artisans contributing to Mi'kmaq culture today. Mi'kmaq art may have played and continues to play a role in lifelong learning within Mi'kmaq communities. My expectation is that my research will be a resource conducive to learning, interpreting, understanding and building awareness of the Mi'kmaq past and present cultural identity. Due to genuine interests and the opportunity to share Mi'kmaq history and culture, my mission is to incorporate art into teachings within lifelong learning, starting with the question, “In what ways are the survival techniques of Mi'kmaq Ancestors still reflected in the art of Mi'kmaq artisans today?”

Through a critical theoretical perspective, I believe that I have demonstrated a supportive argument that Mi'kmaq arts-based perspectives are needed in the lifelong learning of connecting our cultural past to enrich our present and future. Lifelong learning expands over a life time.

Someone asked me, “Are you done your thesis yet?” I could have continued to add research and add more recorded information but then I had to limit my thesis for completion. To me this topic can be explored on a much deeper level and I feel like I have just scratched the surface of the Role of Mi'kmaw Art and Lifelong Learning in Sustaining Mi'kmaq Culture.



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## Appendix A

**The communities where I conducted my research.**



<https://novascotia.ca/abor/aboriginal-people/community-info>

## Appendix B

### Letter of approval from the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch Committee.



February 27, 2015

Miss Holly Meuse  
Mount Saint Vincent University  
166 Bedford Highway  
Halifax, NS  
B3M 2J6

Dear Miss Meuse:

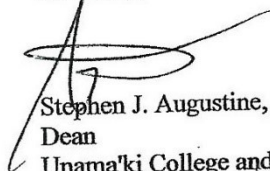
I wish to inform you that the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch committee has reviewed and approved *"The Role of Mi'kmaq Art and lifelong learning in Mi'kmaq Culture."*

As your project moves forward with the approval of the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, I must note that individual communities have their own perspective on research projects and it is your responsibility to consult them to ensure that you meet any further ethical requirements. Governments, universities, granting agencies, and the like also have ethical processes to which you might have to conform.

When your project is completed, the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre at Unama'ki College would be pleased to accept the results in a form that could be made available to students and other researchers (if it is appropriate to disseminate them). Our common goal is to foster a better understanding of the Indigenous knowledges.

If you have any questions concerning the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch review of your project please do not hesitate to contact me and I will forward them to the committee members.

Sincerely,



Stephen J. Augustine,  
Dean  
Unama'ki College and Aboriginal Learning  
Cape Breton University

## Appendix C

### Questionnaire (To be completed independently, face to face orally, or with assistance)

- 1). Do you think that some pieces of Mi'kmaq art (crafts) that are being made today are reflective of our Ancestors? Please explain.
- 2). Think of Mi'kmaq art that you have seen. What knowledge do you think the artist is expressing?
- 3). How do you feel when you see a piece of Mi'kmaq art displayed publicly or in someone's home?
- 4). Do you think there is a need to pass down to the next generation the knowledge of how traditional arts are made, such as basket-making? If yes, please explain.
- 5). What are some examples of knowledge, experiences and/or historical stories that may have been passed down to you by your ancestors about how traditional tools or everyday survival items were made by your family members?
- 6). Do any of your family members make/or made Mi'kmaq art? How did they acquire their knowledge and skills?
- 7). Do you think Mi'kmaq art has helped (or not helped) to sustain Mi'kmaq culture? If yes, please explain.

If you are filling this questionnaire out independently please contact me at (902) ###-#### so I can make arrangements to pick up this questionnaire. As a gesture of my appreciation, please accept a small handmade gift upon completion.

Wela'lin

Holly Meuse



## APPENDIX D

The ethical components of this study were approved by the University Research Ethics Board

### **Combined Information Letter and Consent Form for Elders**

(An interpreter or assistance can be provided upon request)

**Title of Project:** The role of Mi'kmaq art and lifelong learning in Mi'kmaq culture

**Researcher:** Holly A Meuse, Master of Arts in Education student in the Faculty of Education, Mount Saint Vincent University.

### **Statement of Intended Research**

Kwe', my name is Holly Meuse and I am completing a master's degree in Education (lifelong learning). As a condition for graduating I have opted to complete a thesis which I decided will focus on Mi'kmaq art. I hope that my research will broaden the concept of how important Mi'kmaq art compliments lifelong learning throughout generations within Mi'kmaq communities. The following information is provided to give you an insight into the purpose of my research and what will be involved if you choose to participate (including any risks and benefits, and what is expected of you).

#### **Purpose of the Research:**

The purpose of this research is to establish and determine any cause-and effect relationships or correlations between historical events and the Mi'kmaq cultural arts of today. As an educator with a lifelong learner perspective, I hope my end results will inform interested

people of my inherent culture and the richness that my ancestors contributed to today's Mi'kmaq culture through the arts.

### **Participation criteria:**

To participate, you must:

- Be nineteen (19) years old or older
- Have a First Nations Status Card
- Be affiliated with one of the thirteen Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia
- Self identify as an Elder

### **Your Involvement as a Community Participant:**

I will be requesting your time for an interview. I am interested in learning about your knowledge, experiences, and any historical stories that may have been passed down to you from your ancestors. With your permission, during the interview session I will be using an audio recorder to ensure that I accurately capture your direct words. You may ask that the audio recorder be turned off at any point and no information will be recorded.

Your identity will remain confidential, unless you want to be identified. If you agree to be audiotaped and you do not want to be identified your identity will remain confidential so you will be asked to choose a fake name. This is for the purpose of keeping your identity confidential when I report the research findings. When I transcribe the audio recordings you will only be referred to by your fake name. For the purpose of keeping your involvement in this study confidential, it is very important that no other person (including family, friends) will be able to identify you by the fake name that you choose. Any known information that could lead others to figure out who you are will be deleted to protect your confidentiality.

In addition to publishing this research in my thesis I intend to publish in a peer-reviewed journal and present at an academic conference presentation.

### **Confidentiality:**

It is likely that my thesis supervisor will have access to all information collected, such as the audio recordings, transcripts of the audio recordings and the consent forms. However, all data will be stored on my pass word protected lap top and on a backup recording will be saved on a flash drive. These will be securely locked in filing cabinet at my home. After the audio recordings are transcribed, they will be erased from recording device and the flash drive and the electronic transcripts of the sessions will be saved on a flash drive and stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home. Five years after the research is completed, any printed material (e.g. the signed Informed Consent Forms) will be shredded by me.

**Duty to Report:**

Please note that there are legal limits to the information researchers can promise to keep confidential and that I have a duty to report. If, during the course of this research, I learn that you plan to harm yourself and you are in immediate danger to yourself, I am required to report this. In addition, if I learn you plan to harm someone else, I am also required to report this. If I learn that you are currently harming a child, or a vulnerable adult, I am also required to report this.

**Potential Harms:**

It is possible you may experience emotional distress as you reflect on your experiences. If you become distressed, I will ask you if you want to continue in the research session or take a break, or stop your participation in the research project altogether. You will be assured that you will only share as much as you feel comfortable. If you do become emotionally distressed and would like to talk to a professional counsellor please contact your local Community Health Centre.

**Potential Benefits:**

There is no direct benefit to you; however, your participation will give you an opportunity to share your experiences with others. You will be able to express your views about Mi'kmaq art and any stories that were shared throughout your life time. The information gathered in this research may allow others to better understand how Mi'kmaq survival tools have influenced today's Mi'kmaq Artisans.

**Withdrawal from Participation:**

You may choose to stop participating in this study at any time without penalty. If you choose to withdraw, all data collected from you will be destroyed. All files (that contain audio recordings of you) will be deleted from any flash drive or electronic devices. Your consent form will be shredded by me.

## **Informed Consent for Participants**

My thesis is on the role of Mi'kmaq art and lifelong learning in Mi'kmaq culture. My research proposal was reviewed and granted permission by the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch and the Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU) Ethics Review Board to ensure that principles

and protocols will protect the integrity and cultural knowledge of the Mi'kmaq people. With this in mind, my work will be submitted to MSVU; however, the gathered information will be the ownership of the Mi'kmaq.

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All information gathered is for the purpose of this research. You can withdraw from participating at any time. I do not foresee any harm to you while participating in this research, however if you feel any psychological discomfort that may be endured during an interview setting such as being worried, upset, or disclosing of personal information, etc. please feel free to bring this to my attention.

I will **not** be offering a monetary dollar amount or honoraria; however, a small incentive will be provided. As a Mi'kmaq customary gesture to show my appreciation I will be offering tobacco ties for your participation and a small handmade gift.

### Statement of Consent:

By signing this consent form:

- You agree to participate in this research project and you understand that your participation is completely voluntary and you may terminate your involvement at any time without penalty.
- You agree to have your interview audio recorded to assist and ensure that your true statements are recalled accurately.
- You give permission for me to use your direct quotes in the write up of my research in my thesis and in future publications such as, for a peer reviewed journal and in presentations, such as community presentations, or academic conference presentations.
- You agree that you have had the opportunity to discuss this research with the researcher, Holly Meuse and have had your questions answered satisfactorily.
- You have read this letter and freely agree to participate in this study (a copy of this letter will be given to you after signing).

I agree that my interview will be audiotaped.      Yes      No

If you have any questions, concerns or need more information on this research, I can be contacted at my Home: (902) ###-#### or Cell #: (902) ###-####, or by email at: [hmeuse@msvu.ca](mailto:hmeuse@msvu.ca). However, if you have additional questions or concerns about this study and wish to speak with someone who is not directly involved with this study, you may contact my thesis supervisor Dr Susan Brigham by email [susan.brigham@msvu.ca](mailto:susan.brigham@msvu.ca), or the

University Research Ethics Board (UREB), by phone at (902) 457-6350, or by email at [research@msvu.ca](mailto:research@msvu.ca).

Would you like to review your transcribed audiotaped interview before it is included into my final research?      Yes     No

To receive a summary of the research, provide your email address: \_\_\_\_\_

To receive the summary in the mail, here is my mailing address:

\_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_ give consent to take part in this study.  
PRINT YOUR NAME HERE

Participant's signature

Date

Researcher's signature

Date

Miss Holly Meuse

Wela'lin

## Appendix E

I gave each participant a small gift of appreciation after they completed their interview and/or questionnaire. Once my research was collected from all the participants, I placed everyone's name into basket to win a hand drum and bag that was made by myself. The winner was contacted via email and the hand drum and bag were delivered to Eskasoni, Cape Breton.



## Appendix F



Map from Google Map of canoe trail from Chapel Island to the Canso Causeway.

