

**Contemporary Mi'kmaq Relationships Between Humans and Animals: A Case Study of  
the Bear River First Nation Reserve in Nova Scotia**

by

**Lacia Kinnear**

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for the degree of Master of Environmental Studies**

at

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## **Abstract**

This thesis describes a case study with the Bear River First Nation Reserve (BRFN), one of thirteen Mi'kmaq reserves in Nova Scotia, Canada. The purpose of the research was to examine BRFN Mi'kmaq relationships between humans and animals in nature, and the modern factors that affect those relationships. This study adopted an ethnographic research strategy, which included a field stay in the BRFN community, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and document review. The findings in this study indicate that many individuals in the BRFN community rely heavily upon animals. Animals provide a variety of essentials for the people (physically, mentally, and spiritually) and form a central frame of reference for Mi'kmaq cultural identity. Although the BRFN's relationships with animals have evolved over time in accordance with modern needs, the community has maintained the social relations, practices and beliefs that form the bedrock of Mi'kmaq culture.

## Acknowledgements

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Background

The Mi'kmaq traditionally occupied a territory referred to as *Mi'kma'ki* (Henderson, 2000(b), p.257). Mi'kma'ki, or 'the homeland', spans five Canadian provinces including the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, as well as eastern Maine, USA. Archeological evidence suggests that the first inhabitants (ancestors of the Mi'kmaq) have inhabited the Maritime region for well over 11,000 years (Davis, 1997, p.35). Over the millennia, the biophysical, social, and political conditions of Mi'kma'ki have changed including temperature fluctuations, arrival of European systems and human-altered landscapes (Davis, 1997; Chute, 1998; Paul, 2006).

Mi'kmaq relationships with the land and animals are not simply about survival. Rather, the Mi'kmaq worldview respects all living and non-living entities, and individuals honour, and live in harmony with the earth and its resources (Native Council of Nova Scotia, 1993, p.5 and 8). Relationships with the land play a significant role in defining Mi'kmaq identity and nationhood. According to Mi'kmaq tradition, the land cannot be owned, possessed or governed by individuals. Rather, the spiritual forces of the land and the rules provided by the Creator govern the people (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001). The Mi'kmaq use stories, dances, art, rituals and practices to demonstrate and celebrate their relationship with the land, animals and spiritual world (Native Council of Nova Scotia, 1993, p.6). In Mi'kmaq communities, people strive to have an all-encompassing relationship with the world and the universe; their identity, language and survival comes from the land (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, Vol.1, p.50; Henderson, 2000 (b)).

Following European expansion in North America, the Mi'kmaq nation has consistently had to adapt to changing conditions originating within and outside of the community. Since the arrival of Europeans, the infusion of euro-centric dominant values and systems into Mi'kmaq communities has influenced Mi'kmaq perceptions of resources and the social conduct of their use. The term dominant society, systems, values

and paradigm is defined as the dominance of derived thought, knowledge and processes over other cultures in Canada (Doyle-Bedwell, 2002, p.28).

Further, many environmental changes have taken place in Nova Scotia in the past five-hundred years, including large-scale deforestation and the destruction of many fish and animal populations. Such changes have had many implications for the Mi'kmaq both physically and socially. Despite these impacts, the culture and social organization of Mi'kmaq communities, although dynamic and constantly evolving, remains resilient today.

### **Statement of the Issue**

Results of various studies found that Mi'kmaq people in Canada have a unique relationship with animals (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Denys [1672], 1971). These historic works, of course, do not include contemporary perspectives about the significance of animals to Mi'kmaq individuals and communities today. Further, popular media images of First Nation communities in Canada tend to present Aboriginal peoples as either ecological saints or as over-exploiters (Feit, 2004, p.101; Francis, 2004). Such images are often inaccurate accounts of the lived realities for First Nations peoples, and fail to address the practical understandings and lived experiences of contemporary life.

In the past 500 years, Mi'kmaq systems and identities have developed in response to non-natives and euro-centric systems (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001). The Mi'kmaq people have experienced colonialism, assimilation and cultural genocide due to the influence of Europeans. Despite direct attack by colonialists, Mi'kmaq people still maintain their spiritual and cultural relationships with the lands and animals. In Nova Scotia, there have been few academic case studies regarding specific Mi'kmaq communities' cultural relationships with animals and the factors that hinder or enable those relationships. Through in-depth examination of contemporary Bear River First Nation Mi'kmaq culture and relationships with animals in nature, the implications of such enabling/hindering factors can be understood.

## **Purpose of the Study**

Through an examination of the relationships between Mi'kmaq humans and animals in nature and the factors that affect those relationships, this thesis is cause for both reflection and understanding of the contemporary realities for the Mi'kmaq peoples who live in the First Nation reserve of Bear River, Nova Scotia. This study aims to investigate how animals are valued and used by members of the Bear River First Nation (which will be referred to as BRFN in this thesis), and what factors influence and transform human-animal relationships. The use of a case study approach allows for an exploration of how the BRFN community is impacted by, and reacts to, changing conditions from within and outside of the community.

## **Context for the Study**

The case selected for this research is the BRFN reserve, traditionally known as L'sitkuk, which means "flowing along by high rocks" (Ricker, 1998, p.vi). Bear River is one of 13 Mi'kmaq reserves in Nova Scotia and is located northeast of Digby, Nova Scotia. The population of the reserve is comprised of 278 members, 101 of whom live on the reserve and 177 of whom live off the reserve (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007, no page number). This reserve had appeal as a case study due to previously established research relationships between the BRFN community and the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie (see: MacDonald, 2000).

## **Research Questions**

The following questions guided this study:

- How are "nature" and "animals" conceptualized by members of the BRFN community?
- What role do Mi'kmaq cultural values shape animal resource use, stewardship and distribution in the BRFN community?
- In what ways are human-animal relationships significant to the BRFN Mi'kmaq people?
- What impacts do the Mi'kmaq people in Bear River experience when resources and animals in nature are affected by other users?

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In this research, I utilized a multi-disciplinary approach to investigate and understand the meaning and significance of animals to the BRFN members, and contemporary influences that affect those relationships. The research methods employed in this study are typical of cultural ethnographic approaches. The study took place during a field stay in Bear River during the summer of 2005. During June and July 2005, I volunteered on the reserve to build relationships with community members before any data collection began. In August 2005, 15 interviews were conducted with registered Bear River Mi'kmaq community members, who varied in age, gender and family clans. Also during August, participant observations were undertaken during day-to-day interactions with BRFN community members and while participating in cultural events and ceremonies. Using QSR NVIVO 2.0 qualitative text analysis software, the information obtained during the field stay was grouped into thematic categories based upon recurring topics.

### **Significance of the Study**

This study intends to address the importance of animals to the BRFN people in the twenty-first century. Greater clarity regarding the significance of animals to the BRFN will facilitate understanding of the effects within and upon the community when conditions (social, political, environmental, economic, spiritual) change. This is especially important for the development of socially sustainable policy because the lack of inclusion of Aboriginal interests into external development strategies cause losses through changing relationships with animals and the land. Indeed, such losses include, but are not limited to, declines in spiritual well-being, loss of economic opportunities, broken traditions, and a lost sense of community and personal identity (Rickson *et al.* 1995; Curtis, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, Vol.1; Winbourne, 1998). Only through learning what values Mi'kmaq people regard today as vital can we understand how they see their society developing in the future and what factors will enable or hinder that future (Berger, 1988; Winbourne, 1998).

## **Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis is comprised of seven chapters. The following chapter includes the literature review, which provides the theoretical and contextual basis for the study. The legal context is also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter Three provides a literature-based ethnographic account of the Mi'kmaq nation, as well as the BRFN Reserve. Chapter Four delineates the methodology used for this study, and includes a discussion of culturally-appropriate methods used when working with First Nations.

Chapters Five through Seven explore the interpretations and a discussion of the findings. Chapter Five outlines how community members conceptualize 'nature' and 'animals'. The sixth chapter describes the contemporary relationships between humans and animals, and addresses the significance of animals to the BRFN community, individuals and identity. The impacts of non-native/industrial logging observed by the BRFN community are discussed in chapter seven, including community members' perceptions of bio-physical impacts on the land and animals.

Chapter Eight summarizes the findings of the study and concludes with a discussion of the implications of the research and suggestions for further research.



## **Chapter 2: Background and Literature Review**

The following chapter provides the theoretical and contextual basis for this study. It focuses on social constructions of nature, looking at both anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric constructions, as well as policy and law with respect to Mi'kmaq treaty rights to resources.

### **The Need to Identify Contemporary Realities**

The concept of culture has traditionally encompassed a broad body of beliefs, customary traditions and behaviours, as well as modes of social organization – all of which are transmitted throughout generations (Head et al. 2005, p.255). Culture is not only relative to space but also to time. According to Head et al. (2005, p.255),

While cultural traditions are known to be resilient through time, it is important to recognize the normality of change and adaptation to prevailing social and environmental conditions. To this extent, we might conceive culture as being actively 'made' by each generation, that is 'constructed' by human agents rather than produced solely by a body of encompassing traditions.

Therefore, if cultures are dynamic, then cultural worldviews must also be dynamic – this is true of all societies. First Nation cultures, like many other cultures, are shaped by the generations, and changes can take place without the loss of importance of nationhood, identity and tradition. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol. 2, p.449), changes in the biophysical environment and lack of access to land and resources have a negative impact on Canadian Aboriginal peoples and their culture:

Even today, Aboriginal people strive to maintain this connection between land, livelihood and community. For some, it is the substance of everyday life; for others, it has been weakened as lands have been lost or access to resources disrupted. For some, the meaning of that relationship is much as it was for generations past; for others, it is being rediscovered and reshaped. Yet the maintenance and renewal of the connection between land, livelihood and community remain priorities for Aboriginal peoples everywhere in Canada.

Aboriginal peoples still strive for balance in the face of major upheavals in the past five-hundred years. Vivian (1992, p.63) says that “the common perception is that the sustainability of traditional ways of life is being threatened not only by exogenous

pressures and policy decisions, but also by stresses coming from within the community, including increased integration into the market economy, increased contact with western cultures and population pressures". Other events which have contributed to the social construction of modern worldviews for First Nations peoples include a history of colonization, development and implementation of reservations, implementation of euro-centric government and legal systems, residential schools, the assimilation of Indians into "western mainstream culture", capitalism and globalization (Deloria, 1969; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001; Stewart-Harawira, 2005).

Vivian (1992, p.63) emphasizes that, "[a]ll of these factors do inevitably bring changes to lifestyles, but no tradition has ever been static, and changes can occur without tradition being lost". To advance First Nation rights, interests and needs, in court and Canadian policy, Aboriginal traditions, worldviews and conceptions of relationships between humans-animals, humans-place, and human-human must be contextualized into a modern perspective. Berkes (1999, p.168) reaffirms the point that First Nation identity and society is based upon an amalgamation of old and new traditions and activities:

It is often assumed that indigenous peoples have only two options: to return to an ancient and 'primitive' way of life, or to abandon traditional beliefs and practices and become assimilated into the dominant society. Increasingly, indigenous groups have been expressing preference for a third option: to retain culturally significant elements of a traditional way of life, combining the old and the new in ways that maintain and enhance their identity while allowing their society and economy to evolve.

The relationship between historical accounts and contemporary dialogue deserves academic attention since much can be learned about the evolution and changes within a culture. Acknowledging that cultures are dynamic and investigating whether, why, and/or how they have changed will minimize the possibility of inaccurately stereotyping Aboriginal peoples and their cultures. It is through this approach that academic researchers, native and non-native, should investigate the contemporary realities of First Nations peoples. This thesis will touch on many of these issues.

## **Social Constructions of Nature**

Postmodern theory states that concepts such as 'nature' and 'conservation' are socially constructed from a basic core of context-specific values, beliefs, assumptions and attitudes, which together constitute a culture's conceptual scheme (i.e., a culture's worldview) (Evernden, 1992; Peterson, 1999; Kovel, 2003). As any given culture's beliefs, values and attitudes change and develop so too can their conceptions of 'nature'.

According to Warren, (2000, p.58):

What is meant by "nature," and even what counts as a "natural object," is constructed from and reflects such factors as the race/ethnicity, class, age, affectional orientation, geographic location, and religion of humans who name, describe, judge, understand, and interact with "nature." The meanings of "nature" are constructed out of human values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions – different and differing human conceptual frameworks.

The ways in which individuals interpret and behave in the environment are based on their social constructions regarding the role of humans within the natural world, which inevitably reflect an individual's context-specific worldview. Context specifics can be attributed to where an individual lives, cultural assumptions about the world, religious beliefs, family upbringing, education, and other factors.

In the following sections, a review of the literature regarding anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric conceptions of nature will be undertaken, followed by a discussion about the implications of differing worldviews for resource management. In this thesis I use the term dominant society to refer to the mainstream social, philosophical and political institutional structures in Canada. Alternative views within the Western world will be discussed at the end of this section (i.e. ecofeminism, paganism, deep ecology, Christian ecology). I argue, however, that although there are different views within the Western world, there is in fact an overarching 'dominant Western worldview' derived from euro-centric thought and manifested in institutional structures that impose western thought, laws, politics and theory onto all cultures and peoples in Canada. This notion is supported by Henderson (1997, p.22) who argues, "Canadian nationalism is intrinsically united as a part of Eurocentric diffusion". According to Pepper (1996, p.13), dominant Western society regards nature as a means to an "endless material gain". He goes on to argue that Western dominant society considers humans as separate from nature; "a view

inherent in our science and technology as it developed from the seventeenth century” (Pepper, 1996, p.13). This will be the focus of the following section.

### **Anthropocentric Constructions of Nature**

For the most part, the dominant society’s worldview holds the assumption that nature is something that exists ‘out there’ as ‘other’ and apart from the places where humans live; that is, nature is an antithesis to home and work (Hornborg, 2001, 47). Dominant euro-centric perspectives construct nature and humans in a dualistic way that mutually exclude each other since it is thought that humans exist outside of the natural realm (Plumwood, 1993, 2). Separations and dualisms shape and pervade modern euro-centric mainstream values and perceptions regarding human exploitation of nature (Refer to: Merchant, 1980; Levins and Lewontin 1985; Oelschlaeger, 1991; Evernden, 1992; Merchant, 2001).

However, dualisms and separations between humans and nature did not always underpin the dominant assumptions with respect to nature in the Western world. In fact, during the 1500’s, European’s interaction with the earth was the same as it was for many other cultures; that is, nature was thought to be close-knit, organic and co-operative, and was even referred to as a ‘nurturing mother” (Merchant, 2001). Merchant (2001) discusses how the dominion of nature became prominent in the 1600’s as the economy began to move into a market-oriented culture in accordance with the technological advances brought about by the scientific revolution. She explains that the development of nature as “other” was necessary in order to exploit the environment. The previous image of the earth as a mother served as a cultural constraint for the Europeans and restricted the actions of humans. Merchant (2001, p.276) states,

[o]ne does not readily slay a mother, dig into her entrails for gold, mutilate her body [...] As long as the earth was to be considered to be alive and sensitive, it could be considered a breach of human ethical behaviour to carry out destructive acts against it.

Gradually, euro-centric scientific thought and methods – originating in the Age of the Enlightenment through people such as Galileo, Newton, Bacon, and Descartes – began to construe nature as functioning similarly to a mechanical system that could be reduced

into parts in the goal of understanding the whole. In addition, nature as a machine did not experience feelings, and therefore it was thought that only humans possessed consciousness (Berkes, 1999, p. 3). According to Merchant (2001, p.275), such beliefs ultimately provided the justification for human dominion over nature:

The metaphor of the earth as a nurturing mother was gradually to vanish as a dominant image as the Scientific Revolution proceeded to mechanize and rationalize the worldview. The second image, nature as disorder, called forth an important modern idea, that of power over nature. Two new ideas, those of mechanism and of the domination and mastery of nature, became core concepts of the modern world [...] As Western culture became increasingly mechanized in the 1600's, the female earth and virgin spirit were subdued by the machine.

Western schools predominantly teach the mechanistic view of 'nature'. Nature as a machine, separate from humans, and under our control is "accepted without question as our everyday, common sense of reality" (Merchant, 2001, p.281). Western dominant thought presents nature as a "system of dead, inert particles moved by external, rather than inherent forces" (Merchant, 2001, p.281). Seeing nature in a mechanical conceptual framework consequently justifies the manipulation of nature. Separating humans from nature subsequently supports the interests of commercial capitalism which commodifies natural resources into passive objects used to generate profit (Merchant, 2001, p.282.).

In Canada, various schools of thought have attempted to bring back the human-nature connection into dominant Western thought, theories and systems. Eco-feminism, paganism, deep ecology, human ecology and social ecology all subscribe to beliefs that are not entirely congruent with dominant society's anthropocentric philosophies (Pepper, 1996). While some of these view points/worldviews share some similar perspectives to Mi'kmaq worldviews, they also differ in many important ways. First, many of these perspectives, such as eco-feminism, deep ecology and social ecology, grew out of radical responses to euro-centric dominant systems and in some respects are relatively new (Warren, 2000; Merchant, 2001; Zimmerman, 2001). Mi'kmaq culture, however, has developed out of lived experiences and worldviews that have been developed over millennia. Further, the Canadian Constitution recognizes Aboriginal peoples as distinct, with rights that separate them from all other people in Canada. Berger (1991, p.82)

makes another important distinction between First Nation peoples and other minoritized cultures within dominant society:

Seen from a Native point of view, these [ethnic] minorities are merely a part of the advancing European monolithic. Of course, ethnic minorities have sometimes been excluded from the advantages of membership in the dominant society, but their goal has always been to participate in the dominant society, not to be a people apart. The Indians *did*, however, desire to remain a people apart, a distinct people within America, governing themselves on their own land.

Morrison and Wilson (2004, p.2) echo Berger's claim:

Unlike other groups, Natives are not content simply to be Canadians or even be hyphenated Canadians. They generally recognize that they are in Canada and are necessarily Canadians, but they also insist that they are first of all Indian – or Inuit, or Métis. In so doing they place themselves beyond the experience and understanding of most Canadians.

It is these factors, along with others discussed throughout this thesis, which distinguish Aboriginal peoples from other members of Canadian society.

### **Non-Anthropocentric Conceptions of Nature**

Many non-western worldviews do not see nature as separate from humans.

Hornborg (2001, p.45) explains that, “[n]ature is a concept not easily applicable to non-Western cosmologies, since it derives from specific cultural (European) ideas about how the environment should be interpreted”. Ingold (1996, p.121) contrasts the perspectives of mainstream Western and non-Western worldviews as,

[...] one of which (the Western) may be characterized as the construction of a view, that is, as a process of mental representation. As for the other, apprehending the world is not a matter of construction but of engagement, not of building but of dwelling, not of making a view of the world but of taking up a view in it.

Although cultures differ, many First Nations traditional knowledge systems seem to encompass values emphasizing egalitarian, respectful relationships between humans and the land that do not separate people from the land (Leroy Little Bear, 2000). People are conceptualized as being a part of the land, and therefore belonging to the land (Berkes, 1999, p.163). The connection between humans and the environment underpins many Aboriginal worldviews. As noted by Henderson, (2000(b), p.252):

Aboriginal thought and identity are centered on the environment in which Aboriginal people live. As Aboriginal people experienced the forces of an ecosystem, Aboriginal worldviews, languages, consciousness, and order arose.

The principle that land (or nature) forms the basis of Aboriginal cultures and/or worldviews is further supported in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1996, Vol 2, p.448):

The way people have related to and lived on the land (and in many cases continue to) also forms the basis of society, nationhood, governance and community. Land touches every aspect of life: conceptual and spiritual views; securing food, shelter and clothing; cycles of economic activities including the division of labour; forms of social organization such as recreational and ceremonial events; and systems of governance and management... Traditional Aboriginal government, culture, spirituality and history are tied to the land and the sea.

The connection to the natural world has influenced all aspects of life for Aboriginal peoples including political, social, economic, spiritual, and ecological features.

### **Differing Worldviews: Implications for Resource Management**

Western dominant systems have been grounded within reductionist scientific frameworks and models that have been built upon worldviews conducive to colonial and capitalist development. As noted by Berkes (1999, 163), “the globalization of western culture has meant, among other things, the globalization of western resource management”. That is, dominant Western thought has led to Western environmental management systems which have crossed international boundaries (i.e. geographical, cultural, and theoretical), and have had an impact on First Nation communities.

Resource use and protection reflect a culture’s values and worldview regarding the natural world and their relationship with it. Due to differing perspectives, needs and worldviews, disputes have arisen within and between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities regarding environmental use, management and policy. According to Leroy Little Bear *et al.* (1994, p.2), the differences between dominant Euro-Canadian viewpoints and Aboriginal viewpoints is that the former “says land is simply another ‘object’ that can be the subject of ownership while the Aboriginal view says land is animate and something that can be related to in the same way one can relate to humans”.

Contrasting worldviews are often manifested through disagreements concerning rights and responsibilities over specific resource uses, appropriate relationships between humans, animals and the land, and the methods through which resources are extracted (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, Vol 2).

### **Canadian Environmental Policy and Aboriginal Peoples**

In Canada, First Nation peoples have constitutionally recognized treaty and Aboriginal rights which permit the consumptive use of wildlife resources on both Federal and Provincial land. To garner Aboriginal support of public policy, it is critical that Aboriginal relationships with animals and their conservation be understood to inform culturally sensitive and socially sustainable policy. As noted by Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.181), “[a]n understanding of Aboriginal environmental stewardship, beliefs and practices is essential to inform policy-making based on this legal foundation, because Aboriginal societies provide the substantive basis within which participation will occur”.

However, incorporating Aboriginal beliefs, values and knowledge into Federal and/or Provincial environmental policy development and implementation has not been a smooth process in Canada, as well as in many other countries around the world. John Borrows (2002, p.30) explains that, “Indigenous peoples are often submerged and invisible in their own land because the province does not make provision for a representation of their interests”. Borrows (2002, p.30) goes on to say that “Federalism constructs a ‘legal geography of space’ that marginalizes Indigenous peoples in significant environmental decision making”. Political boundaries create a division of powers and legal spaces between Federal and Provincial interests, and often First Nation people and their interests get caught in between (Borrows, 2002, p.30).

The exclusion of First Nations peoples within Federal and Provincial decision making has been greatly influenced by the Courts. For example, the vagueness of terms such as ‘consultation’ and ‘participation’ as used by the courts and government (Provincial and Federal) has often resulted in superficial dialogue between First Nation communities and policy makers. The lack of precise processes and/or definitions regarding such terms is evident in recent court cases such as *Delgamuukw v. British*



*Columbia*. Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.176) discuss the vagueness of the term consultation as described by the Crown in the *Delgamuukw* case: “[...] despite the need of the government to consult with Aboriginal peoples to meet the fiduciary duty, the Court does not outline the process required to do so”. Rather, the Crown states “the nature and scope of the consultation will vary with the circumstances” (Persky, 1998, p.116). The ambiguity of ‘consultation’ and ‘participation’ allows governments and courts to legally justify and to defend the lack or minimal inclusion of Aboriginal knowledge and values in the process and in final environmental policy decisions. Doyle-Bedwell (2005, p.12) argues, “[i]n order to ensure equality in the consultation process, the Mi’kmaq social context cannot be ignored [...] [w]e need a holistic perspective and framework that fully incorporates Aboriginal perspectives”. The author goes on to note that proper consultation between the Crown and the Mi’kmaq will only be achieved through determining Mi’kmaq understandings of consultation, and “the duty to consult should incorporate and respect Mi’kmaq language and culture” (2005, p.14).

According to Berkes (1999, 164), “the use of indigeneous knowledge is political because it threatens to change power relations between indigenous groups and the dominant society”. Governments, policy and law mutually reinforce and represent modern colonial forces and power to suppress Aboriginal, as well as other ethnic minorities, voices. Henderson (2000(a), p.9), argues, “[t]he political system is still looking at instrumental self-interest and maintaining their economic monopolies that they created for themselves during the colonial period. And that’s our problem implementing any of the Marshall, any of the Sundown, and of the treaty cases we won across Canada”. The supremacy of dominant anthropocentric values in the Canadian legal system and environmental policy is much to the detriment of all Canadians. The knowledge and experience that Aboriginal people could contribute regarding environmental stewardship remains excluded and suppressed (Borrows, 2002, p.31).

### **Mi’kmaq Treaties**

In Canada, Aboriginal peoples form a distinctive group of resource users who have legal rights to the land and resources which ultimately differentiate them from other groups. According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001), the treaties signed by the

Aboriginal peoples of Canada can be separated into three distinct categories: Peace and Friendship treaties; the land-cession or numbered treaties which recognized Aboriginal title to lands after confederation; and contemporary land-claim agreements (i.e. James Bay Hydro-electric agreement, Nisga'a Agreement) which "include provisions for land, governance, and funds in exchange for the extinguishment of Aboriginal title over the traditional territory" (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.176). In addition, the Supreme Court has applied the term "sui generis" to First Nation law; meaning of "its own kind or class" (Nolan and Connolly, 1983, p.747). As noted by Borrows (2002, p.9) "[i]n defining Aboriginal rights as unique, the judiciary has acknowledged that it cannot use conventional common law doctrines alone to give them meaning [...] they do not wholly take their source or meaning from the philosophies that underlie the Western canon of law". He goes on to say "Aboriginal rights are different because they are held only by Aboriginal peoples in Canadian society" (Borrows, 2002, p.9).

Prior to Confederation, the Mi'kmaq people entered into a Covenant chain of treaties with the British Crown, where each agreement was linked and recognized (Grand Council of Micmacs, et al. 1987, p.2). The treaties established between the two nations acknowledged Mi'kmaq rights to the consumptive use of animals and natural resources in order to maintain Mi'kmaq way of life (Knockwood, 2003, p. 47). For example, the Drummer's Treaty, which was signed in 1726, guaranteed the Mi'kmaq the right to hunt, fish and fowl as previously (Knockwood, 2003, p. 47). The treaties, entered into between 1725 and 1794, and specifically the treaty of 1752 guaranteed the "Mi'kmaq the freedom and liberty to hunt, fish and trade under the explicit protection of His Majesty's Civil Courts" (Marshall, D, Sr. et al., 1989, p.82).

Although the Mi'kmaq entered into the chain of treaties with the British Crown, at no point did they ever agree to cede their rights or title to Mi'kma'ki, the homeland. According to Knockwood (2003, p.48), "Rather, from a Mi'kmaq perspective, these agreements were a symbol of the alliance made by the Mi'kmaq to live beside their British kin peacefully, respectfully and in friendship, to establish protection, and clarify their bonds for their mutual benefit". Neither the concept nor the uses of treaties were new to the Mi'kmaq. According to Grand Chief Marshall, Sr, et al., (1989, p.622):

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, we carried on relations with other indigenous peoples throughout North America, among other things for purpose of trade, alliance and friendship. All such dealings were based on mutual respect and co-operation and formalized through the treaty making process [...] Treaties are spiritual as well as political compacts that confer solemn and binding obligations on the signatories. The spiritual basis of the treaties is crucial to an understanding of their meaning, since it represents an effort to elevate the treaties, and relations among peoples, beyond the vagaries of political opportunism and expediency. They are intended to develop through time to keep pace with events, while still preserving the original intentions and rights of the parties.

The treaties signed between the Mi'kmaq and the British flowed from Mi'kmaq traditional customs and practices in order to ensure harmony and peace between the two nations. Furthermore, the Mi'kmaq signed the treaties to ensure that Mi'kmaq rights and way of life received protection for the generations to come.

In the past thirty years Aboriginal peoples have made progress regarding the recognition of Aboriginal and Treaty rights in Canada. That is, "there is a growing recognition in Canada and internationally that indigenous peoples are entitled to exercise fundamental responsibilities within their traditional territories" (Borrows, 2001, p.617). Within Canada, the Supreme Court has ruled positively with respect to "several treaty rights cases [which] affirmed the validity of the rights, explicated rules for interpreting them, and created the necessity for developing policy to implement the rights" (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.177). According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.177): "Judicial interpretations of the pre-confederation Mi'kmaq treaties of 1752 and of 1760-1 assert the rights of the Mi'kmaq people to hunt, fish, and take commodities for trade in their traditional territories". Treaty and Aboriginal rights were affirmed and recognized by the Canadian government and protected under the Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act, 1982*, which states:

35. (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
- (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" includes the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.
- (3) For greater certainty, in subsection (1) "treaty rights" includes rights that now exist by way of land claims agreements or may be so acquired.

(4) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the aboriginal and treaty rights referred to in subsection (1) are guaranteed equally to male and female persons.

The following section describes the history of Mi'kmaq treaty rights interpretation and implementation in Nova Scotia. As indicated in the following section, not always have Mi'kmaq rights been recognized and reaffirmed by the Crown.

### **Treaty Implementation in the Twenty-First Century: Implications for Access to Resources**

According to Cheryl Knockwood (2003), the Mi'kmaq-Crown relationship has moved through many phases within the Canadian courts and in the Canadian social system. Knockwood suggests that initially the Mi'kmaq and British entered into a 'Treaty Making' stage, which regressed into 'Treaty Denial' on behalf of Canada and 'Treaty Litigation' on behalf of the Mi'kmaq. Prior to the *Constitution Act, 1982*, the Canadian government largely denied any treaty promises they had made with the Mi'kmaq; the Crown also increasingly refused to acknowledge the Mi'kmaq treaty rights.

According to Borrows (2001, p.622), because the treaties "became the product of a cross-cultural dialogue [...] different interpretations often arose with great misunderstanding, which sometimes led to violent conflict". Although divergent opinions arose, the treaties remained the guiding principals for the relationship between the parties regarding land and resource use. Today, the treaties still have meaning and significance in Canada and in recent years courts have both interpreted and considered their meaning on many occasions (Borrows, 2001, p.623). For the purpose of this thesis, I have decided to focus on a limited number of key cases directly related to the rights of the Mi'kmaq regarding access, harvest, use and sale of animal resources.

In 1985, the Treaty of 1752 was recognized as a valid treaty by the Supreme Court of Canada in the case of *Simon (R.v. Simon; Knockwood, 2003)*. Although the Crown tried to argue that the Mi'kmaq treaties were void, the Supreme Court of Canada rejected this notion and affirmed that the Treaty of 1752 protected "the existing and continuing Indian right to hunt and constituted a source of protection against infringement of these hunting rights" (Grand Council of Micmacs, 1987, p.11).

Furthermore, “[t]he court held that interpretation of treaties must take into account changes in technology and practice, so that Mi’kmaq hunters could not be limited to using spears and handmade knives, as Nova Scotia [court] had asked” (Richardson, 1993, p.77).

Another recent apparent victory for the Mi’kmaq Nation was the *Marshall I* decision in 1999 (R.v. Marshall, 1999). Donald Marshall Jr. “was charged with three offences under the federal fisheries regulations: selling eels without a license, fishing without a licence, and fishing during the closed season with illegal nets” (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.178). Donald Marshall Jr. admitted that he had caught and sold 463 pounds of eels; however, his defence rested their case upon the 1760-1 treaty right to both catch and sell fish (Davis and Jentoft, 2001, p.178). One of the key legal issues arising from this case explored “whether a treaty clause, stating that the Mi’kmaq could only trade in Government appointed “Truck houses”, protected a contemporary right to trade for commercial purposes, given that Truck houses ceased to exist over two hundred years ago” (Borrows, 2001, p.628). The Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favour of the treaties of 1760-1 and upheld the Mi’kmaq treaty rights to fish, and sell the fish (R. v. *Marshall*, 1999; Coates, 2000; Davis And Jentoft, 2001, p.225). Previous Supreme Court judgements affirmed First Nation rights to fish for ceremonial and subsistence purposes (R. v. *Sparrow*, 1990; R. v. *Badger*, 1996; also see Davis and Jentoff, 2001).

While the *Marshall I* decision did protect the rights to a commercial fishery, the Supreme Court placed restrictions on the “right to access natural resources for commercial activity by holding that the treaty right did not give Mi’kmaq people a wholesale right to exploit natural resources for commercial gain” (R. v. *Marshall*, 1999; Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.178). The treaty right to fish and trade for commercial purposes was subject to governmental regulations and was contained by limits of ‘necessities’ that ‘would not exceed a sustenance lifestyle’ (Borrows, 2001, p.628; Davis and Jentoft, 2001, p.227). Further, the court protected treaty rights to fish and trade for a moderate livelihood - loosely defined as basics such as “food, clothing, housing, supplemented by a few amenities, but not the accumulation of wealth” (R. v. *Marshall*, 1999, p.166). According to Borrows (2001, p.629),

Such an approach demonstrates the Court’s view that the Crown is the paramount

party in the treaty relationship. The characterization of Aboriginal peoples' rights under treaties as "narrow in ambit and scope", while the Crown's rights under the same treaty are broad and plenary, illustrates the continuing colonial nature of the Crown-Aboriginal treaty relationship. It demonstrates the problems that Aboriginal peoples still encounter in attempting to pursue a course of life that is guided by their own principles and objectives.

Two months later, the West Nova Fisherman's Coalition asked the Supreme Court to revisit *Marshall I* on the basis that there should be regulatory authority over the Mi'kmaq fishery for conservation purposes (Borrows, 2001, p.629). In *Marshall II*, the Supreme Court reiterated and clarified the permissible government restriction of rights under *Marshall I* (Coates, 2000, p.18). Both the Federal and Provincial governments had the right to regulate the rights in the treaty which included the option "to give priority to non-Aboriginal interests in situations warranted 'by regional and economic dependencies'" (Borrows, 2001, p.630). The Supreme Court also stated that conservation was the first priority and therefore the Government had the power to regulate the treaty right through catch limit restrictions and closed seasons (McGaw, 2003, p.417).

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans eventually responded to the *Marshall* rulings through a program known as the Allocation Transfer Program. This program existed prior to *Marshall I*, and it was expanded to address the decision (McGaw, 2003, p.418). Through this program, existing stock licenses were allocated to Aboriginal communities, but as a communal license to the Band, not to individuals. Under this agreement, the Band designates people to fish, and catches are property of the Band for the collective benefit (McGaw, 2003, p.418). According to Davis and Jentoff (2001, p.228) the consequence of signing the agreement was that "[t]he Mi'kmaq bands were required to abide by the existing managements system's rules and procedures". By July 2002, twenty-two of the thirty-four Maritime Bands had signed agreements with DFO (McGaw, 2003, p.418). As of May 2007, the BRFN has still chosen to not sign any agreements with DFO (Pers. Comm. Chief Frank Meuse, May 16, 2007).

Today, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia continue to exercise and fight for their rights. In June, 2002, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, the Federal Government and the Nova Scotia Government signed an Umbrella Agreement and established the "Made-in-Nova Scotia Process" to settle outstanding land claims. Three separate initiatives have come from this

process: the negotiation of Aboriginal and Treaty rights; a Tripartite Forum; and a Consultation Table (Department of Fisheries and Oceans, 2007, no page number).

According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.181), aspects of Canadian Law, including treaty rights and Aboriginal rights, “have provided the constitutional and jurisprudential cornerstones for the participation of Aboriginal peoples in accessing natural resources”, which includes access to animal resources. To a considerable degree continued access and rights to natural resources and the land “are intrinsic not only to many indigenous peoples’ subsistence welfare but also to their cultural survival” (Stevens, 1997). Further, treaties and their interpretation - including modern day treaties - protect Mi’kmaq rights, but also ensure that Mi’kmaq ways of life and culture are protected. As stated by Marshall (2000, p.13), “The Mi’kmaq negotiators of the treaties intended to preserve a way of life, not just a moderate standard of living”.

## Chapter 3: The Mi'kmaq Nation and the Bear River First Nation Reserve

### The Mi'kmaq

Traditionally, the Mi'kmaq depended solely on the land and bodies of water for their sustenance. In order to fulfil their needs, they would travel across their homeland depending on the time of year and seasonal patterns (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Denys [1672], 1971; Davis, 1997). The population of the Mi'kmaq prior to European contact is not known with certainty; however, Paul (2006, p.45) estimates 200,000 at a minimum. As of 2002, the population of status Mi'kmaq people in the Atlantic Provinces was 22, 295 (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2002, no page number). Traditionally the Mi'kmaq called themselves “Lnu'k”, which means ‘the People’ (Ricker, 1998, p.4). Today, the Mi'kmaq form the major Aboriginal group in Nova Scotia with thirteen bands located across the province, as well as many Mi'kmaq people who live off-reserve. The following chapter provides a brief historical and contemporary account of the Mi'kmaq people. It concludes with a narrative description of the BRFN community.

Although the following section may also present Mi'kmaq culture as homogenized, this is not my intent. Rather, I wish to present the historical and contemporary features that are relatively uniform across the Mi'kmaq nation such as: traditional social governance, traditional values and the experience of colonialism.

### Mi'kma'ki – The Homeland

Mi'kmaq people refer to their traditional lands as *Mi'kma'ki* or ‘the homeland’. Mi'kma'ki can be translated into “space or land of friendship”, which emphasizes “the voluntary political confederation of various Algonquian families into the Holy Assembly or Santé Mawiómi, with a shared worldview” (Henderson, 2000 (b), p.257). Its meaning also includes the need for humans to live in harmony with the land, including both biotic and abiotic features of the landscape.

Mi'kma'ki is said to be the result of millennia of observations and experiences within a particular area (Henderson, 2000 (b), p.257). Experiences and observations originating within Mi'kma'ki are ingrained within Mi'kmaq language, symbolic literacy, memories and storytelling; in all cases Mi'kmaq identity comes from the land. The



Mi'kmaq cannot remove themselves from the context of the space of Mi'kma'ki. Henderson (2000 (b), p.257) explains: "They do not have an artificial notion of society or self independent of their place of creation".

### **Socio-Political System**

Prior to European arrival, the Mi'kmaq had "developed a culture founded upon three principles: the supremacy of the Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth, and people power" (Paul, 2006, p.7). The Mi'kmaq governed themselves through councils which were based upon consensus, consideration and full participation (Paul, 2006, p.12), promoting both personal liberty and social responsibility. This system was said to be quite complex and was enabled by social codes of conduct. Mi'kma'ki was divided into seven *sakamowit*, hunting districts (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, Vol. 1, p.49; Henderson, 1997, p.17). Each district had its own government which included a 'Chief' and a 'Council' comprised of "Elders, Band or Village Chiefs, and other distinguished members of the community (Paul, 2006, p.12)". District governments had responsibilities and behaved in a way that is comparable to modern governments. For instance, they had the ability to make war or peace, mediate disputes, make laws, and assign hunting grounds to families, which ensured that everyone had an equal share of the land and access to resources (Paul, 2006, p.12).

The citizens of the seven districts lived in small villages or family hunting grounds which contained anywhere between fifty and five-hundred people (Paul, 2006, p.12). Villages consisted of a few extended families, which were comprised of "a leader, some of his married sons and daughters and their families, other relatives on the side of both the Chief and his wife, and some unrelated individuals" (Pastore, 1994, p.35-36). Mi'kmaq people did not experience poverty because each person had access to the same level of support by the village; the laws of the culture dictated that each individual would be provided for equally, and no one would be neglected (Paul, 2006, p.18). For example, hunters shared meat from hunted animals throughout the community in order to ensure that each person had enough food to eat.

The seven District Chiefs comprised the "Grand Council", which still exists today. From the seven District Chiefs, a Grand Chief is chosen. The primary purpose of the

Grand Council was “to coordinate the resolution of mutual problems, promote solidarity, and act as a mediator of last resort” (Paul, 2006, p.12). According to Paul (2006, p.12), today, “the Grand Council may be compared to the modern British Commonwealth of Nations, which also has no real powers other than persuasion”. Today, the BRFN does not have a member on the Grand Council.

In the 1700’s, the Mi’kmaq also belonged to the Wabanaki Confederacy. The word “Wabanaki” means people of the dawn (Knockwood, 2003, p.58). It was an alliance created among various nations along the Eastern coast of North America to provide protection against the invasion of Iroquoian tribes (Paul, 2006, p.12). The confederacy consisted of the Maliseet, the Penobscot, the Passamaquoddy and the Abenaki. The Confederacy, which can be compared to the modern North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), ceased to exist in the eighteenth century due to high levels of death in member Nations from diseases and wars with the British, however in recent years it has begun to be revived (Paul, 2006, p.12).

Although the Confederacy is gone, ties continue between the Mi’kmaq, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy through the Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs (APCFNC). Today, the ACPFNC advocates “speaking with one voice on behalf of the communities and, through research and analysis, developing and tabling before the Congress and federal policy decision makers policy alternatives for matters affecting First Nations communities in Atlantic Canada, Quebec, and Maine, USA.” (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs, 2007). The areas of focus include “economic opportunities, housing and infrastructure, health, education and relationships, and to close the gap between First Nations communities and Canadians” (Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs, 2007).

### **Worldview and Environmental Stewardship**

In Mi’kmaq culture, an all-encompassing relationship with the world and the universe is important. According to Henderson (2000 (b), p.257), “[t]he sacred order in which the Mi’kmaq live is expressed as a mutually sustaining ecological relationship”. Five themes can be used to describe Mi’kmaq environmental management that leads to

the sustainable use of resources: identity, language, stewardship, sharing, and maintaining balance and harmony through ceremonies (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.185).

Mi'kmaq peoples do not view themselves as separate from nature and/or place, but rather as a part of nature/place through complex relationships that sustain the good of the whole. Nature, according to the Mi'kmaq worldview, is not seen as an object to be tamed and that can be reduced into categorical parts since everything is conceived as being inter-related and inter-dependant (Marshall, 1997, p.53). Marshall (1997, p.53), emphasizes this point by stating “[w]e (the Mi'kmaq) do not apologize for our needs but accept the interdependence of all things”. The use of natural resources flows from the Mi'kmaq worldview, culture and identity that remains completely grounded in the land (Berneshawi, 1997; Henderson, 1995). According to Henderson (2000 (b), p.257), “[t]he Mi'kmaqs’ understanding of their natural context establishes the vantage point from which they construct their worldview, language, knowledge, and order”.

Henderson (1995, p.222) further explains that, “Aboriginal peoples do not manage resources, rather they manage their space”. According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.187), the Mi'kmaq worldview “relies upon the concept of an orientation around space as opposed to a material consciousness”. From this perspective, the concept of space extends beyond the material world into the spiritual world as well. The authors go on to indicate that “Mi'kmaq people value land in terms of the land itself, not according to how the land is developed” (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.187). Mi'kma'ki consists of a series of ecological spaces, which contain resources, memories, and experiences, and therefore consists of a record of their history (Henderson, 1995, p.230).

#### Netukulimk – Relationships with the Land

Mi'kmaq people use the term *Netukulimk* to describe the Mi'kmaq worldview and relationship with the land. They define it as “a Mi'kmawey concept which includes the use of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for the self-support and well-being of the individual and the nation” (Native Council of Nova Scotia Language Program, 1993, p.8), “and thus is intimately tied to traditional jural rights” (Chute, 1999, p.524). *Netukulimk* “is the Mi'kmaq way of harvesting resources without jeopardizing the

integrity, diversity or productivity of our native environment” (Native Council of Nova Scotia Language Program, 1993, p.8). Netukulimk advises Mi’kmaq individuals to be “mindful of the Creator, the consent of the animal and other resources used, and the responsibility of sharing among the human community” (Henderson, 1991, p.26 quoted in Richardson, 1993, p.77). *Netukulimk ewe’l* “refers to the practices, customs and code of conduct governing the way Netukulimk is exercised” (Grand Council of Micmacs, 1987, p.15).

Recently, in 1986, following the Supreme Court of Canada’s decision to recognize and confirm Mi’kmaq treaty hunting rights, in *R.v. Simon*, Grand Chief Donald Marshall, Sr. “issued a proclamation advising Mi’kmaq people to return to hunting in accordance with Netukulimk” (Richardson, 1993, p.77; Barsh, 2002, p.16). Today, Mi’kmaq individuals in Cape Breton operate a “Netukulimk Geographical Information System (GIS) Management Project that monitors the biological and cultural resources of Cape Breton Island using a combination of field surveys, remote sensing and specialized software” (Barsh, 2002, p.16). As will be discussed later in this study, Mi’kmaq people who are not fluent in the Mi’kmaq language may not know the word Netukulimk, but they may still use the principles.

### **Mi’kmaq Adherence to Cultural Principles**

In the Mi’kmaq worldview, laws do not tower above natural and social worlds; rather “laws are processes that sustain and nourish relationships” (Henderson, 2000 (b), p.271). According to Leroy Little Bear (2000, p.83), “[l]aw is the culture, and the culture is the law”. That is, Mi’kmaq philosophies, values and customs delineate appropriate behaviours. Oral transmission of protocols and behaviour through the generations encourage individuals to view the world and act according to tribal consciousness (Marshall, 1997, p.51). Marshall (1997, p.51) states, “[i]t is through this window [tribal consciousness] that our behaviour has been governed, a behaviour that is acceptable within our own tribal world [...] It is vital in order for one to survive in this world, to learn these set of rules that have been given to us by the Creator”. Further, “[w]ithout these set of rules we would not be any different from all other human beings and we would lose that uniqueness of being Mi’kmaq” (Marshall, 1997, p.52).

The main authorities that the Mi'kmaq truly recognized were their kin, Elders and cultural codes of conduct (Paul, 2006, p.12). Mi'kmaq law and enforcement still operate according to Mi'kmaq culture, including guidance, teachings and social control, contemporary codes of conduct, protocols and enforcement, will be discussed in greater detail in later sections.

### **Relationships with Animals**

Animals are not considered human, but are rather conceived as 'persons' and 'separate nations' with whom one might have a relationship (Whitehead, 1989, p.21; Henderson 2000 (b), p.257). The Mi'kmaq conceptualize all animals as possessing certain spirits, which can become a person's spirit helper, and if required, a human can even take on that animal's form and power (Whitehead, 1989, p.21). Songs, stories, and mime dances consolidate these relationships (Whitehead, 1989, p.21, Native Council of Nova Scotia, 1993, p.6).

Mi'kmaq people consider animals not as resources or 'others'; instead, individuals treat animals as brothers and sisters. Everything in the world, living and non-living, has a spirit or 'mntu'; including animals (Henderson, 2000 (b); Whitehead, 1989). When an animal is hunted, the hunter has a responsibility to perform ceremonies and rituals that honour the spirits of the hunted animals (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen, 2001, p.188). Rituals ensure that the animals will continue to offer themselves to humans as a source of food, shelter and clothing. If respect is not shown, then the animals may not return. According to Whitehead and McGee, (1983, p.8),

One such ritual was to hang the bones of slain animals in trees or place them in the rivers and thus prevent dogs from gnawing on them. The Micmac believed that the souls of animals honoured this way would choose to be reborn near their bones. If the bones were shown any disrespect, the souls would leave the region and the people would go hungry.

Traditionally, the Mi'kmaq employed many different methods to ensure that animals were used wisely, and that the harvesting of animal resources was kept within sustainable levels. Specifically, the Mi'kmaq would place "restrictions on the times and places each species could be harvested" (Sante Mawi'omi wjit Mi'kmaq, 1996, p.3). Through knowledge and experience that was accumulated over many generations,

community leaders were able to change harvest levels to complement observed changes in species abundance (Sante Mawi'omi wjit Mi'kmaq, 1996, p.3).

### **Use of Animals – Pre-European Contact**

During the spring and summer months, the Mi'kmaq used to live in small villages along the coast (Bock, 1978; Miller, 2004, p.249). Villages were often at the mouth of a river so that individuals would have access to both fish resources and transportation routes (Whitehead and McGee, 1983). During the spring and fall, the Mi'kmaq would travel upriver to catch migrating fish such as eels, bass and salmon. During the winter months, communities would move inland and would rely primarily on forest game for their food, as well as for clothing. In addition, ice fishing was common during the winter months within the villages and communities. When the spring would return, the seasonal cycle would start over again. (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Whitehead and McGee, 1983). The use of marine and land-based animals was largely dependent upon the season (Davis, 1997).

### **Marine Animals**

Since the Mi'kmaq spent much of the year along the coast, fish and marine resources comprised a large proportion of the food source (Sante Mawi'omi wjit Mi'kmaq, 1996). Mi'kmaq reliance upon marine resources is confirmed by archeological findings which show “a widespread dependence on seals, small whales, cod, herring, salmon, smelt, gaspereau, eels and shellfish” (Davis, 1994, p.20). Specifically, “In some localities, shellfish contribute[d] as much to food security as all other marine species, especially in the winter, when other fishing is impractical or dangerous” (Sante Mawo'omi wjit Mi'kmaq, 1996, p.1). Shellfish, such as oysters, clams, mussels and scallops were easily picked from the rivers, marshes and estuaries along the coast. Shellfish were also used as bait to capture larger fish, and often the shells were used for ornaments on clothing (Robertson, 1969).

Fish, both coastal and species that would return to rivers to spawn (anadromous fish), were an important food source for the Mi'kmaq (Chute, 1998, p. 99). Coastal fish, often caught using hook and line, include striped bass, mackerel, capelin and cod (Speck

& Dexter, 1951; Whitehead and McGee, 1983; Miller, 2004). Ground fish such as halibut and haddock also constituted an important food source (Whitehead and McGee, 1983). Fish were caught using a variety of methods. In rivers, fish such as trout and smelt were caught using a hook and line, whereas in the fall individuals would use the light from a cedar bark torch and a spear to catch large quantities of salmon and eels (Wallis and Wallis, 1955, p.28; Bock, 1978, p.112). The fish were attracted to the light, and once they swam near the canoe they would be speared and lifted into the canoe by hooks on the spear (Wallis and Wallis, 1955, p.28; Bock, 1978, p.112). Large fish, including sturgeon and salmon were also caught using a leister, which is described as a “three pronged spear with a central point flanked by two barbed points” (Davis, 1997, p.27).

Nets made of intertwined branched of birch, elder and other trees and brush were often used to catch fish in deep waters. According to Wallis, and Wallis (1955, p.28):

A net, a’bi, sometimes fifty yards in length [...] is put into the water near the shore and extends into deep water. While some tend the nets, others in canoes splash water to drive the fish into the apex of the triangle formed by the shore, net and canoes. The deep water end of the net is drawn toward the shore and gradually pulled into shallow water, thus imprisoning the fish.

Mi’kmaq fishers also built dams on rivers to catch migrating fish such as smelt, gaspereau, herring and salmon. Whitehead and McGee (1983, p.11), describe this method in detail:

Men and women worked together to block the passage of the fish by building a dam or weir of rocks, wood and shrubs at a narrow shallow space on a river. They left one small opening through which water poured, and the salmon would attempt to jump it. On the other side would be a larger net or loosely-woven basket into which the jumping fish would fall.

Seals, porpoises and walrus were also important to the Mi’kmaq (Wallis and Wallis, 1955, p.29; Whitehead and McGee, 1983). Seal meat was eaten for food and the skin was used for clothing. The oil was used to drink. Ivory tusks from the walruses were used on the tip of harpoons and traded for goods with various nations such as the Penobscot (Speck and Dexter, 1951). As stated by Leonard (1996, p.32),” [i]n summary, fish were an important element in the Mi’kmaq diet in all seasons, but no single species was a focal resource” (Leonard, 1996, p.32).

## Land-Based Animals

Land-based sources of food along the coast included water fowl and migratory birds which were killed using bows and arrows (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Denys [1672], 1971; Miller, 2004). Wild geese, ducks, and brant were the most common water fowl that were hunted. To capture these birds, two or three individuals would go out at night in a canoe with torches made from birch bark, and they would silently drift toward the sleeping birds. When they got close enough they would simultaneously light their torches which would awaken the birds who then attempted to fly away. The confusion caused by the light made it easy to either hit the birds with sticks or shoot them with a bow and arrow, after which they could be gathered into the canoe (Wallis and Wallis, 1955, p.40; Denys [1672], 1971, p.27). Eggs were also gathered from birds during nesting times (Speck and Dexter, 1951; Wallis and Wallis, 1955).

During winter months when the Mi'kmaq did not live on the shores, a wide variety of animals were hunted. Examples include the moose, caribou, beaver, porcupine, partridge, deer, bear, raccoon, fox, rabbits, wolves, squirrels and weasels. These animals were used for food, and all parts of the animals were utilized to make goods such as clothing, footwear, shelter and crafts (Davis, 1997, p.30). Fat from the animals helped to tan hides. The Mi'kmaq used moose hairs for embroidery on clothing, and feathers and porcupine quills provided decorations and jewelry (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Bock, 1978, p.112). Bones, antlers and shells made instruments and tools for hunting and cooking (Bock, 1978, p.112; Davis, 1997, p.30). Many parts of animals were utilized for medicinal purposes as well.

Land-based resources were hunted along the forested edge during the spring, summer and fall months, as well as during the winter when the Mi'kmaq lived inland in the forests. During each season, the method of hunting game would change to accommodate the natural environment and cycles (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Denys [1672], 1971). For example, beaver was obtained in the winter by cutting holes in the ice and either pulling the beaver out, or waiting for it to come up for air so it could then be harpooned (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Miller, 2004). In the summer, the dams were broken so the beavers were exposed and could then be speared with arrows (Denys [1672], 1971, p.22). In the winter, moose were chased into deep snow, thereby allowing the Mi'kmaq to



approach and kill them with a bow and arrow (Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Denys [1672], 1971). In the summer, individuals would quietly follow the tracks of the moose and shoot it, and proceed to follow it until it finally died (Denys [1672], 1971, p.20). In the spring and fall, hunters imitated the sound of a female moose to attract male moose along the waters edges where they would be killed with bows and arrows (Denys [1672], 1971, p.21).

## **Impact of Europeans**

### First Encounters

Significant changes occurred for the Mi'kmaq nation following the gradual European colonization of North America. In the early 1500's, news of the North Atlantic's incredible fishing grounds spread quickly throughout Europe. In addition, European explorers became aware of the vast riches that the "new world" had in terms of natural resources and goods. Early in the sixteenth century, fishermen from Portugal, England and France crossed the Atlantic every year and would return home with their boats full of Maritime fish (Hornborg, 2001, p.29). Paul (2006, p.43) explains, in Newfoundland, by 1509, only nine years after Cabot's first voyage to the Americas, "the fishery was so large that the Portuguese government was taxing it". By 1540, the fishery had become overcrowded in Newfoundland, therefore European fishermen began to establish fishing stations along the coasts of Cape Breton and the mainland Nova Scotia (Paul, 2006, p.44). During this time, Europeans would come into frequent contact with the Mi'kmaq, which caused many disruptions in Mi'kmaq day-to-day existence. Many of the events that occurred during the Early European encounters and the subsequent consequences for the Mi'kmaq Nation will be discussed in the following sections, beginning with the fur trade.

### Fur Trade

The fur trade began in the latter part of the sixteenth century and lasted until the eighteenth century (Gonzales, 1982, p.119). In the early seventeenth century, the French had established a fur trading colony at Port Royal, Nova Scotia (twenty km from Bear River, Nova Scotia). The Europeans wanted furs from animals in the forest and so

purchased them from the Mi'kmaq. In return the Mi'kmaq received tools, clothing, grains, beans and liquor. Beginning in 1613 and until 1763, the French and the British were in battle with each other over the control of Nova Scotia. During this time, the Mi'kmaq allied themselves with the French who regarded them more as equals than did the British (Gonzales, 1982, p.120).

The fur trade began to intensify in the seventeenth century, and this had significant implications for the Mi'kmaq and the environment. Specifically, the lifestyle of the Mi'kmaq was transformed to place great focus on commercial trapping, and the European trade affected the natural balance. According to Gonzales (1982, p.120),

[s]ince small animals were not marketable, this traditional source of faunal resource was ignored in search of the larger fur-bearers which often did not provide meat. Areas were hunted "out" – hunted until all fur-bearers had been trapped. This contrasted with the proto-contact period and very early contact period when the Mi'kmaq continued traditional conservation measures of taking only what was necessary for survival and thus maintaining an ecological equilibrium.

The implications of the fur trade can be assessed in a context that extends beyond Mi'kmaq cosmology and environmental consequences. According to Hornborg (2001, p.70), although the Mi'kmaq had beliefs regarding the importance of preserving the land, their moral codes were influenced by various external and internal colonial influences. Specifically, Hornborg (2001, p.70) states,

The incentive for the mass slaughter of animals was the European demand for pelts and a market system, which penetrated the life-worlds of all but the most isolated hunting bands. What started as a modest barter developed into an escalating pursuit of pelts, where the pelts themselves were only a visible expression of more radical changes that the Algonquins had to confront: epidemics, competition with trappers and other Indian groups over game, new and desirable European merchandise (e.g. guns and kettles), new status relations, and new wars.

With the spread of European technology, the ways in which animals were hunted also changed. For instance, the gun became readily available to the Mi'kmaq through European trade, which meant that more animals could be killed with less effort. Further, traditional hunting patterns had to be changed in order to meet European demands. For example, the European merchants requested thick furs which meant that more animals

had to be killed in the winters when their coats were the fullest, rather than spread throughout the year (Whitehead and McGee, 1983).

The European fur trade also brought with it the spread of European diseases. As the number of Europeans who came to the Atlantic coasts of North America increased, so too did the number of diseases they brought with them. Diseases quickly spread throughout the Mi'kmaq nation. According to Pastore (1994, p.35), "[b]y the middle of the seventeenth century, Native populations in the northeast had experienced mortality rates ranging from 55 percent to 98 percent". Moreover, the Europeans often traded liquor in exchange for furs (Miller, 2004, p.258). Consequently, many Mi'kmaq people, including both men and women, became dependent on alcohol, which had numerous detrimental consequences (Miller, 2004, p.258). For instance, they began to neglect their social duties, increasingly traded their furs for alcohol, and violence increased within the Mi'kmaq communities (Miller, 2004; Hornborg, 2001)

A consequence of the fur trade was that "the equal exchange of services and goods was gradually transformed into a Mi'kmaq dependency on European goods" (Hornborg, 2001, p.32). As the populations of the fur-bearing animals were extirpated, the access to pelts decreased, and consequently so did the access to French products. After 1780 the demand for fur in Europe began to decrease (Miller, 2004, p.261). Pelts were no longer worth enough to exchange with the Europeans for the goods and services (tools, grains, clothing) to which the Mi'kmaq had become accustomed. Consequently, the Mi'kmaq were left with little to no means to provide for themselves (Miller, 2004, p.261).

### British Settlement and the Reservation System

In the mid-eighteenth century the British were victorious over the French and thus controlled the Atlantic Provinces, leading to increased British settlement and control over Nova Scotia. Britain settled on and ruled Nova Scotia from 1763 until 1867, until it became a part of the Dominion of Canada (Gonzales, 1982, p.120). This period was known as the "Golden Age" for the Europeans in Nova Scotia since it reflected "the economic prosperity based on shipbuilding, fishing and lumbering" (Gonzales, 1982, p.120). According to Gonzales (1982, p.120), "A case can be made that this prosperity

was possible only at the expense of the near total destruction of those resources – forests and fisheries – which heretofore allowed the Micmac to exist successfully”. Further, various treaties (see pages 14-16) were signed during the 1700’s and 1800’s between the Mi’kmaq and the British. The treaties, such as the Peace and Friendship treaties, were designed to protect the Mi’kmaq rights to resources, and to maintain peace between the two nations.

In the mid-eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, Nova Scotia experienced a drastic increase in population due to the immigration of Europeans, mostly British Loyalists and Scottish Highlanders (Gonzales, 1982, p.120). As population increased, the demand on the land grew, which had implications for the Mi’kmaq. For example, “[v]ery often lumber mills erected upstream of traditional Micmac fishing areas would so pollute the waters that they were no longer suitable for fishing” (Gonzales, 1982, p.120). Conflict began to arise between the Mi’kmaq and the British regarding land allocation since much of the territory assigned to settlers (e.g., entire townships and grants up to a thousand acres) were the lands used by the Mi’kmaq (Paul, 2006, p.103). Moreover, since the Mi’kmaq migrated from the coast to inland depending upon the seasons, their way of life was disrupted by white settlements, which resulted in lack of access to lands and resources.

In the early nineteenth century, the Mi’kmaq were eventually regarded by the British as “a social problem because of their increasingly destitute condition” (Gonzales, 1982, p.120). “The Mi’kmaq slowly transformed from a guarantee for the survival of the European in the province to an impoverished proletariat and a burden for the colony” Hornborg (2001, p.35). According to, Abraham Gesner, a government observer of Mi’kmaq life in 1848 (quoted in Whitehead 1991, p.237),

Almost the whole Micmac population is now vagrants, who wander from place to place, and door to door, seeking alms. The aged and infirm are supplied with written briefs upon which they place much reliance. They are clad in filthy rags. Necessity often compels them to consume putrid and unwholesome food. The offal of the slaughterhouse is their portion. Their camps or wigwams are seldom comfortable, and in winter, at places where they are not permitted to cut wood, they suffer from the cold. The sufferings of the sick and infirm surpass description, and from the lack of a humble degree of accommodation, almost every case of disease proves fatal. In almost every encampment are seen the crippled, the deaf, the blind, the helpless orphan, with individuals lingering in consumption, which

spares neither young nor old. During my inquiries into the actual state of these people in June last, I found four orphan children who were unable to rise for the want of food – whole families were subsisting upon wild roots and eels, and the withered features of the others too plainly to be misunderstood, that they had nearly approached starvation.

In order to alleviate the problems of starvation and impoverishment of the Mi'kmaq, in 1820 the government proposed the development of land areas that could be set aside for the Mi'kmaq (Redmond, 1998, p.118). It was the hope that the reserves would encourage the Mi'kmaq to be self-sufficient through learning skilled activities such as farming for men, and knitting and spinning for women. The goal was to teach the Mi'kmaq to assimilate themselves into the white man's world (Gonzales, 1982, p.120; Hornborg, 2001, p.36). By the end of the century most Mi'kmaq individuals had settled onto the reservations (Hornborg, 2001, p.36). Unfortunately, the majorities of reservation lands were of poor quality and were difficult to farm, and the Mi'kmaq were unskilled in farming methods. Further, when the Mi'kmaq were given seeds for potatoes they ate them because they were starving, which further hindered their abilities to grow crops (Gonzales, 1982, p.121). Some reserves, including Shubenacadie, Gold River and Bear River, received extensive support in establishing their farmland and practices from an English humanitarian named Walter Bromley and from Judge Wiswall (Redmond, 1998, p.118). The agricultural practices on these reserves were thus better equipped to flourish (Redmond, 1998, p.118). The other reserves, which received little government or humanitarian assistance, supplemented their farming practices with hunting and fishing.

### **Contemporary Mi'kmaq**

The past century has brought about many changes to the Mi'kmaq Nation. Often many of the problems and changes experienced by the Mi'kmaq were beyond their control and were imposed upon them by European influences, systems and beliefs. Historical experiences and impacts of European imposed systems and ideologies are still evident in contemporary Mi'kmaq culture.

## Catholicism

The introduction of Catholicism into Mi'kmaq communities can be dated back to the fifteenth century when the French explorers brought Christianity to the people of the Americas. Grand Chief Membertou and his family were baptized on June 24<sup>th</sup>, 1610 (Paul, 2006, p.77). According to Chief Donald Marshall, et al. (1989, p.77) “[o]ver the course of the seventeenth century, the whole of the Mi'kmaq people became Catholics, and took St. Ann as their patron”. In spite of a growing interest in traditional forms of spirituality within Mi'kmaq communities, Catholicism still remains an important part of Mi'kmaq life (Hornborg, 2001, p.40). The role of Catholicism in contemporary Mi'kmaq life will be discussed in later sections.

## Indian Act

The *Indian Act* was passed by the Canadian Parliament in 1876 to consolidate all of the previously existing legislation regarding Native peoples of Canada. The *Indian Act* had many negative effects on the Mi'kmaq nation, notably the removal of decision making from the Mi'kmaq which was put into the hands of the government. According to Brown (1991, p.49),

The Indian Act consists of rules and regulations that cover a wide spectrum of the affairs of Indians. These include the following: definition and registration of Indians, reserves, possession of lands in reserves, the sale or barter of Indians, roads and bridges, lands taken for public purposes, descent of property, wills, appeals, mentally incompetent Indians, guardianship, management of reserves and surrendered lands, management of Indian monies, loans to Indians, treaty money, regulations, legal rights, taxation, schools, election of chiefs and band councils and the power of the council.

As noted in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol 1, p.257), the *Indian Act*, and its evolution over time, is “marked by the often vast differences in philosophy, perspective and aspirations between Canadian policy makers and Indian people”. Not only has it delineated the boundaries of who can be a registered Indian, it also has defined “what constitutes a ‘band’, how the chief and council of a band are elected, and what bi-laws it can make” (Imai et al., 1993, p.6). According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996, Vol 1, p.259) “[t]he Indian Act, largely unchanged, is still with us”.

The Residential School System (1890-1930) and the Centralization Policy (1942) were two other policies that affected Mi'kmaq life. Each of these two policies will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

### Residential School System

The residential school system was an attempt by the Federal Government to “eradicate Aboriginal cultures by separating children from their home communities while providing educational opportunities in order to become the Government’s vision of productive Canadian citizens in the workforce” (Doyle-Bedwell, 2002, p.3). In Atlantic Canada from 1930 until 1967, many Mi'kmaq youth attended the Shubenacadie Indian Residential School, which was run by the Catholic Church (Paul, 2006, p.283). The implications and consequences of the residential school system are described in the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report (1996, Vol. 1, p.335-336):

The school [residential] system’s concerted campaign “to obliterate” those “habits and associations”, Aboriginal languages, traditions and beliefs, and its vision of racial re-socialization, were compounded by mismanagement and underfunding, the provision of inferior educational services and the woeful mistreatment, neglect and abuse of many children – facts that were known to the department and the churches throughout the history of the school system.

The Shubenacadie Residential School closed in 1966, however the impacts are still felt in Mi'kmaq communities today. Doyle-Bedwell (2002, p.4) illustrates this point:

The forced relocation of Mi'kmaq children to the residential schools had significant impacts not only upon the generations that attended the schools, but also on their children and grandchildren. The mainstream educational system has meant the separation not only from our homes but also from our very identity as Mi'kmaq people [...] The cultural genocide imposed by the Federal Government through the residential schools upon Aboriginal peoples continues to traumatize residential school survivors today. Phil Fontaine, Chief of the Manitoba Indians, breaks down and sobs as he discusses his experience in residential school. My mother continues to have nightmares about her experiences. A friend suffers from flashbacks and trauma due to her experience at residential school.

Not all individuals who attended residential school thought it was a negative experience, nor do they perceive education as bad (Doyle-Bedwell, 2002, p.5). Regardless of one’s perspective, the intentions and assumptions of the Federal government and Churches,

through which residential schools were based, require acknowledgement as an important element influencing Mi'kmaq communities today.

### Centralization Policy

By the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Mi'kmaq who lived on reservations had learned farming skills and were able to provide some food for their communities. In order to generate income, individuals sold baskets and became hunting and fishing guides. Furthermore, men were able to be employed in the growing labor field in Nova Scotia. Between 1941 and 1953, however, the various reserves were consolidated into two main reserves: one on the mainland in Shubenacadie, and one on Cape Breton at Eskasoni, and many Mi'kmaq people moved to these two communities (Bock, 1978, p.119; Gonzales, 1982, p.121; Hornborg, 2001, p.37). This move, initiated by the Indian Affairs Bureau and known as The Centralization Policy, was intended to relocate the Mi'kmaq people for effective delivery of social welfare programs (Gonzales, 1982, p.121). Instead it proved to be a disaster for the Mi'kmaq. The move obliterated established farming operations and destroyed social and economic ties with surrounding communities. At the same time, it placed great pressure on the two remaining reserves as their populations increased significantly (Gonzales, 1982, p.121). Shortly after, many Mi'kmaq individuals began to move back to their original reserves or into cities (Bock, 1978, p.120). However, the farming operations which were built up over fifty years never regained their previous intensity (Gonzales, 1982, p.122).

The reserve system was an integral part of the Federal agenda to 'civilize' Aboriginal peoples in Canada. The outcome of the reserve system is two-fold, including both negative and positive consequences. Disadvantages include low levels of education, poverty, high suicide rates, unemployment, and drug and alcohol abuse, which contribute to physical disease, depression, divorce and abuse (Hornborg, 2001, p.38). The positive side is that the isolation of the reservations has "preserved the use of the Mi'kmaq language. Furthermore, there is a great value in living close to friends and relatives and a pride in being Mi'kmaq" (Hornborg, 2001, p.39).

The past five-hundred years have brought many changes to the Mi'kmaq nation. Notions of cultural survival, however, are described by H. Prins (1996) who conducted



research with the Mi'kmaq in Northern Maine, USA. According to Prins the Mi'kmaq culture has survived and continues to thrive even though it has confronted hundreds of years of colonialism and oppression. He states, “[i]t seems a miracle that the Mi'kmaq should survive this long-term apocalypse, but survive they did. They are currently enjoying both a burst in population and a revitalization of their culture as well as their sociopolitical status” (Prins, 1996, ix). The focus will now turn to a discussion of the history and characteristics of the BRFN.

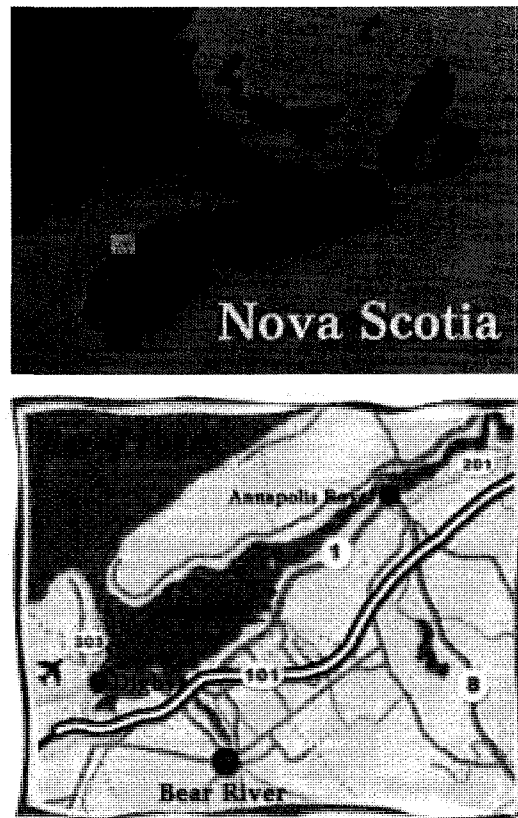
### **Bear River First Nation (BRFN)**

The BRFN community is traditionally referred to as L'sitkuk (pronounced ělsĕtkook) which means “flowing along by high rocks”. The Bear River, located off the BRFN reserve, flows along high rock cliffs, which is possibly what L'sitkuk refers to. Archeological evidence, uncovered by archeologist John Erskine, dates humans living in the Bear River area to 2300 years before present (Ricker, 1998, p.2). The Bear River area is of special significance to the Mi'kmaq because it was once the meeting place of the Wabanaki Confederacy (Ricker, 1998, p.vi). According to Ricker (1998, p.vi), who has written a detailed book regarding history and present life of the BRFN, “L'sitkuk is a place and a space where a culture, a language, and a distinct and proud identity are gaining strength after hundreds of years of colonialism”.

The BRFN reserve is located in southwest Nova Scotia (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Center, 2004, no page number). It is centrally positioned over the line which separates Annapolis and Digby counties (Ricker, 1998) (Figures 2.1 and 2.2).

### Figure 2.1: Location of the Bear River First Nation

(Source: Bear River First Nation Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number).



The surface area of the reserve is 633.8 hectares, and the population, as indicated previously, is comprised of 278 members, 101 of whom live on the reserve and 177 of whom live off the reserve (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007, no page number). Although the population of the reserve is relatively “small in numbers, with only a few family lines, the Bear River Mi’kmaq have an incredible ability to function well as a closely knit community” (Ricker, 1998, p.vii). There are approximately 50 homes on the reserve, along with a school, a church, a community centre, a health centre, a band hall, a pool, a gas station (opened in 2007) and many trails. Further, there are two additional separate parcels of land that are a part of the reserve: Lequille (59.96 acres) and Graywood (80.32 acres) (Bear River Resource Project, 2000). Both parcels of land are located many kilometres from the reserve. Four families live in Lequille, while Graywood remains uninhabited with the exception of a few camps.

### Early Economies and Reliance upon Animals

For thousands of years the people of Bear River lived and traveled in what is now known as Annapolis and Digby counties (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number). In the past, this region was known to the Mi'kmaq as Kespukwitk, one of the seven districts of Mi'kma'ki (Paul, 2006, p.10). Since the early 1600's, the Mi'kmaq of this area have been recognized for their rich tradition of guiding (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number). In 1604, when the French first arrived in the Bear River area, the Mi'kmaq people acted as teachers in the wilderness by teaching the Europeans how to track, hunt, and fish, and what berries to eat. These skills enabled the French to survive in Mi'kma'ki. In the late 1800's and early 1900's, American sportsmen would travel to Bear River because the community had a strong tradition and reputation of providing hunting and fishing guides for non-native sportsmen (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number). Today, however, members of the BRFN community no longer guide sportsmen. According to Chute (1999, p.515) members of Bear River First Nation hunted and camped seasonally in the Kejimkujik area, located in central Nova Scotia.

While the traditional economy of the area was founded upon fishing, hunting and gathering, the people of the region were also well known for their artwork such as basketry, leather work, and for embroidering porcupine quills on birch bark (Ricker, 1998, p.v). Developing an economy based upon their skills allowed the community to maintain their traditional way of life, and to generate income for their families at the same time (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number).

The fur trade between the Mi'kmaq and Europeans was very important to the Mi'kmaq of Bear River from approximately 1580 until 1700 (Ricker, 1998, p.9). The Mi'kmaq of Bear River would trade beaver, martin, otter, moose skins, bark dishes, and leather purses for tobacco to the Europeans in exchange for technologies and products such as metal hunting tools, powder and shot, fabrics, hardware, fishing lines, flour, liquor, clothing, beans, bread and sail cloth (Ricker, 1998, p.9). The fur trade had many rapid and profound implications for Bear River Mi'kmaq culture, way of life and behaviours. The introduction of new technologies and goods from Europe altered many modes of activity for the Mi'kmaq (Ricker, 1998, p.10). According to Ricker (1998, p.10),

by the 1630's "it was common to see Mi'kmaq at Port Royal using kettles, axes, knives and iron arrowheads [...] by the end of the seventeenth century the People were using muskets almost entirely, as opposed to the bow and arrow". Further, as the fur trade increased in scale, it "disrupted the natural conservation and ecosystem of the Mi'kmaq. Game was exploited, sometimes to the point of extermination. As well, L'sitkuk was dealing with the permanent encroachment of non-natives into its hunting grounds" (Ricker, 1998, p.10).

In the nineteenth century, the BRFN community supplemented its income through hunting porpoise during the summer months. They ate the meat and made oil from drying and boiling the blubber (Ricker, 1998, p.96). "The oil was bottled and sold as machine lubricant, both locally in Digby and in Saint John, New Brunswick. Often hunters would take up to 13 porpoises a day, or 150 to 200 porpoises per summer" (Ricker, 1998, p.96). In 1816 and 1836, European fishermen tried to end the hunt claiming that it was causing a decline in the herring fishery. The Mi'kmaq won their rights through a hearing before the House of Assembly where they successfully opposed the bill (Ricker, 1998, p.98). The porpoise hunt did not cease in Bear River until early in the twentieth century with the advent of petroleum oil which caused a decrease in value for porpoise oil (Ricker, 1998, p.98; Bock, 1978, p.119).

#### European Impact on BRFN Community

Europeans settlers, missionaries, the fur trade, and colonial government regimes profoundly impacted the lives of the Mi'kmaw people in general, and Bear River in particular since they were among the first to be in continuous contact with the Europeans (Ricker, 1998, p.v). The people of Bear River were among the first to be exposed to European disease, technology, Christianity and European trade (Ricker, 1998, p.v). During the early 1600's, the Mi'kmaq welcomed the French newcomers and formed alliances with them. According to the BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre (2004, no page number), "[w]e [the Mi'kmaq] helped the French survive during their first winter at the settlement at Port Royal in 1605-1606. The French lived among our people, feasted, hunted, traded, and inter-married with us". Although the French and Mi'kmaq developed

friendships, they did not share the same ideologies, particularly with respect to land.

Ricker (1998, p.8) states:

When the French Explorer Samuel de Champlain arrived on the St. Lawrence in 1603, he held a tabagie or feast, to ask permission of the native people to build posts on the St. Lawrence. However, he did not hold a tabagie when he arrived closer to L'sitkuk, to build a fort at Port Royal. The People may have been accepting of the French, but both the French and the Mi'kmaq had completely different concepts of land title, which would have been difficult at best to communicate to the other. The French believed in land ownership, while the Mi'kmaq believed no one owned the land. So the French built their fort, called the Habitation, without objections from L'sitkuk. This settlement marked the establishment of the first permanent contact between the People and Europeans.

After the British gained control of Nova Scotia from the French in the mid-eighteenth century, the British began to clear the forests and land along the Bay of Fundy in order to build homes and farms in the fertile lands of the river valleys. According to the BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre website (2004, no page number), European land-use activities and transformations "made it difficult for our people to continue to hunt, fish, and travel as we had done for thousands of years. Our land and way of life were disappearing".

In 1801 the colonial government assigned territory in Bear River as land reserved for Indians, however the actual reserve was not established until around 1820 (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Center, 2004, no page number; Paul, 2006, p.192). At this time, the colonial government set aside one thousand acres for the reserve (Paul, 2006, p.192). Ricker (1998, p.v) explains: "Government and church officials persuaded some of the area Mi'kmaq who had not yet succumbed to disease, starvation and poverty to live on this piece of land. They were told to farm, but the soil was poor and rocky. In addition, little money for tools, equipment and seed meant crops failed". During the 1800's the porpoise hunt, along with hunting, fishing and gathering, did help to generate income on the reserve. Hunting continued to take place off the reserve in order to ensure subsistence food security.

The current form of community government in Bear River is a result of the *Indian Act*. Under the provisions of the *Indian Act*, Chiefs are elected for two-years and have control over community affairs; however, "the veto was retained by the Department

[Indian Affairs]" (Bock, 1978, p.119). According Ricker (1998, p.v) the *Indian Act* is "a powerful piece of legislation which has ruled the lives of all First Nation peoples, including those at L'sitkuk, in many ways".

### Contemporary BRFN Reserve

According to Ricker (1998, p.183), "[t]hrough good times and bad, the People have maintained a close-knit yet welcoming community. And they continue to build creativity and strength in their unique identity". In recent times, BRFN has made many positive steps toward community and economic development (Ricker, 1998, p.183). The BRFN separated from the Union of Nova Scotia Indians in 1987 and became a member of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, a Mi'kmaq-controlled organization that acts as "a Tribal Council that provides advisory services and programs to member-communities" (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number). The objectives of the Confederacy are "[t]o proactively promote and assist Mi'kmaw communities' initiatives toward self determination and enhancement of community" (The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, 2007, no page number).

In recent years, the BRFN has developed and implemented many projects within the community. Some community projects include silviculture forestry practices, Mi'kmaq language classes, traditional arts and crafts (quillwork, basket aiming, leatherworks), and fisheries programs (Ricker, 1998, p.185-187). The community built a new Band Hall in 1980, and paved the roads on the reserve in 1985. In the early 1990's the community built their first school; the official opening of the Muin Sipu Mi'kmaw Elementary School was in October 1993. Muin Sipu is literally translated to mean "Bear River". The school was constructed by the community's in-training carpenters. Today, the school offers a kindergarten class for the community's youth. The school also provides internet and computer services for use by community members. The computer lab is run and operated by a community member who is trained as a computer technician. In addition, the community built and opened a health centre in 1999, which offers health services to community members so that they do not have to travel many kilometers for health care services. The health centre has hired community members who are knowledgeable of health services to staff the clinic. Doctors, therapists and nurses visit

the clinic weekly to assess and treat community members. A gas station was also built and opened on the reserve in 2007.

The BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre opened in 2003/2004 with the mission of interpreting and celebrating the local heritage, culture and traditions that flourish within the BRFN community. Within the centre, a variety of activities are offered including a heritage gallery, interpretive exhibits, workshops and demonstrations (Basket making, dream catchers, and canoe and wigwam building). Further, community members who work at the centre share stories, and perform plays and music for visitors. There is also a re-creation of an authentic Mi'kmaq encampment of pre-contact times, and a medicine trail where experienced guides describe traditional and modern usage of plants. A gift shop is located inside the centre which sells art and craft works made by local community members.

The political structure of the BRFN community consists of one Chief and two Band Councilors. Elections take place every two years for both the Chief and Councilors. Councilors assist the Chief during the year regarding decisions, supervising staff, and mediating/addressing community members concerns.

Most residents on the reserve are employed. Employment on the reserve is predominantly through the Band Hall, Health Center, Cultural Center, or through other community programs. Some residents are unemployed and receive Government assistance. Many youth in the BRFN community work during the summers on the reserve through a summer employment program. Some individuals supplement their income by selling locally-made jewelry, baskets and other Mi'kmaq crafts which are sold in the cultural center or in their homes to tourists.

Reserve life in Bear River has had a great impact on contemporary relationships between humans and animals. The reserve is not only 'home' it is also a place of work, intricate social relations, and provides the space for BRFN Mi'kmaq identity. The following chapter will examine the methods employed in this study, followed by a discussion of the contemporary relationships between humans and animals in the BRFN community.

## Chapter 4: Methods

### Evolution of the Research

This research project initially developed as one part of a larger Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project by Dr. Karen Beazley, Director of the School for Resource and Environmental Studies. Over time, however, the project began to take its own shape and form to evolve into an ethnographic case study of one community's relationships between humans and animals. The current form of the research project also grew out of a personal interest in how communities and individuals relate to and interact with the natural environment. I chose to work with a First Nation community because many authors in the literature suggest many First Nation people had, and continue to have, a special relationship to the land that was unique. Feit (2004, p.102) for example, argues that the Cree "concept of hunting is very different from the everyday understandings common in our own culture [non-native]". Berkes (1999, p.xiv) echoes the uniqueness of Aboriginal relationships with the land: "[o]ut of discussions [with Cree individuals] emerged a worldview different from the mainstream Euro-Canadian one, a worldview in which nature pulsed with life, compelling in its spiritual ecology".

From the literature and through conversations with a variety of Mi'kmaq individuals, I realized the many changes over time had not severed the relationships between humans and the land; the relationships had evolved and survived. I was interested in the ways in which animals were gathered, utilized and respected within a modern context, and the role that animals played in the everyday lives of the Mi'kmaq people. I was also intrigued by the ways in which the changing landscape (socially, politically, environmentally) in Nova Scotia was contributing to the relationship dynamics. For example, American Moose were traditionally harvested by BRFN community members for food. However, on the mainland, where the BRFN reserve is located, the American Moose are listed as provincially endangered, and therefore community members must travel to Cape Breton to hunt for moose.

The Chief and Band Council of the BRFN reserve encouraged and supported my interests to conduct a study that examined relationships with animals. Their interest was in part related to current concern among BRFN community members about the



consequences of logging practices on social dynamics and animal well-being in the local region. In this study, emphasis will be placed on animals, but it is important to recognize that within Mi'kmaq culture the environment as a whole is interconnected, and all elements in nature are central to relationships within, and between, the physical and spiritual worlds.

### **Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Research Guidelines**

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Integrated Research Plan (1993, p.37) report, included a section titled, Ethical Guidelines for Research, in which the purpose was stated:

These guidelines have been developed to help ensure that, in all research sponsored by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, appropriate respect is given to the cultures, languages, knowledge and values of Aboriginal peoples, and to the standards used by Aboriginal peoples to legitimate knowledge.

The Commission explicitly developed guidelines to ensure culturally respectful methods in research with Aboriginal peoples. The guidelines were regarding Aboriginal knowledge, collaborative research, access to research results, community benefit, and guideline implementation. In keeping with these underlying practices and principals, I focused on building rapport, respect and trust with community members. Throughout the study I attempted to incorporate community input as much as possible so that the community had the opportunity to contribute to the direction of the research. I asked for and received community feedback and input concerning not only the planning process, but also the development of interview questions, analysis and writing - all aspects that are recommended by RCAP and various Aboriginal researchers and communities.

### **Volunteer Work**

As previously mentioned, I did volunteer work in the BRFN community for two months (June and July, 2005) before I began participant observations or developing interview questions. The reason for this was to give something back to the community before I began the research as an advance thank-you for welcoming me and sharing their knowledge and culture. I also believed it was important that I establish a good rapport

and develop relationships with the community members prior to any data collection. Volunteer work was beneficial because it allowed people to get to know me as a person and for me to get to know the community before beginning my role as a researcher. Doing volunteer work was the first stage in developing my relationships with the community members.

The Chief and Band Council appointed me to various volunteer duties. Specifically I assisted with the summer program for youth in the community who were making two videos. I helped at the Health Center preparing meals for community events, and assisted community members debark poles for teepees. A further benefit of being involved in such diverse activities within the community was the opportunity to meet the majority of the residents. It is important to note that during this time I did not hide my role as a researcher. Instead I introduced myself as a researcher who was volunteering in the community and who would begin interviews and data collection in August.

Although I did participate and volunteer in many events throughout the summer, I was not able to record and formally use any observations until I received Dalhousie Research Ethics approval that permitted me to begin to gather data. During the first two months, the information I learned on the reserve contributed to my understanding of the community, culture, and context, however formal observations and discussions were not recorded as data until August 2005.

## **Research Methods**

### **Study Design**

I chose a case study research strategy with the objective to present in-depth information pertaining to a small group of participants, and in which interpretations were made regarding only those participants, and only within the specific context of the BRFN. A case study approach was appropriate for the thesis because of its flexible nature and emphasis on context, processes, and interpretation of meaning (Yin, 1994), all of which were crucial for the investigation of relationships and experiences in a cross-cultural context. Furthermore, an in-depth case study, as opposed to a general survey, would generate a greater understanding for research questions that are designed to elicit meaning and significance.

I adopted a social constructivist theoretical approach, which takes the position that meaning is formed within the context of social and historical norms, and the processes and actions among individuals (Creswell, 2003). In addition, the research project was designed as a qualitative study and utilized inductive reasoning. Qualitative research seeks to understand *how* things happen and not only *what* happens; thus it is concerned with process. This method is particularly suited to research that aims to explore the meaning of processes in an Aboriginal community. Through qualitative research and understanding of processes, “the dilemmas of integrating traditional and modern values, beliefs and lifestyles can be revealed” (Kenny, 2004, p.20). This is particularly relevant in this study since it explores contemporary relationships and changing conditions of those relationships, which link both modern and traditional values and worldviews. A survey or questionnaire would not suffice to answer questions focusing on significance and meaning.

I organized the information into broad themes from the analysis and interpretation of particular, specified data obtained from interviews, participant observations and document review. Interviews were the main source of information, corroborated with information obtained from participant observations and document review. It was important, however, to ensure that the plurality of individual voices of the participants were not lost within the broad themes that emerged. I present the variety of voices (the differences and similarities) of 15 individuals of the BRFN Reserve.

### Field Research

My initial introduction to the community took place in March 2005 when I went to BRFN reserve with a Mi’kmaq professor, Patricia Doyle-Bedwell from Dalhousie University and Chapel Island First Nation, and was introduced to the Chief. During this visit I was able to discuss the project with him and receive his support for the project. I moved into a house located near the BRFN reserve in June 2005. At that time I was introduced to the community as a researcher who was getting to know the community and volunteering for two months of a three-month field stay. In the introductory letters sent out to potential interview participants, it was explicitly stated that the decision of

participants to take part or not take part in the study would not affect their ability to be involved in the various activities that I had volunteered with (refer to Appendix I).

Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch is one option designed by the Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia to which researchers can apply to before beginning any research project that involves Mi'kmaq peoples and/or communities. The other option is to receive approval and permission from the Chief of the community. Since I was working with only one community I was able to obtain permission from the Chief in lieu of the Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch program. To obtain their permission, the Chief and Band councilors had the opportunity to read and amend my research proposal/ Dalhousie Ethics proposal prior to commencing the project. Upon reading my ethics proposal they did not have any suggestions for changes. Please refer to Appendix VI for the letter of approval from the Chief. Approval from the Dalhousie Social Science and Humanities Research Ethics Board was obtained in July 2005. Data collection began in August 2005.

### **Methods of Data Collection**

A variety of qualitative data collection techniques was used in the study including, participant observations, interviews and document review. Yin (1994, p.91) stated that “any finding or conclusion in a case study is likely to be much more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode”. Using several sources of data to examine specific occurrences can increase the validity and reliability of the concluding results because information can be cross-checked with other data (Yin, 1994). As is consistent with most qualitative research projects, I was the primary instrument/investigator through which the participants shared their knowledge and stories. According to Kenny (2004, p.19), “Qualitative research methods, such as interviewing [...] and participant observation, are relevant to the oral traditions and personal interactions in the Native community”.

Interviews, participant observations and document review occurred during the last month of the field stay (July and August, 2005) and during return visits to the reserve throughout the remainder of 2005, 2006 and 2007. Thus, data collection was an ongoing, iterative process. Data analysis involved the transcription of interviews and participant observations into organized text which was sorted and coded for emerging themes.

Documents were also coded and then compared and analyzed in relation to interview and participant observation data. Both the data collection methods and data analysis procedures will be discussed in greater detail in the following sections.

### Document Review

Documents are a common form of data collection in case study research, and can be used “to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (Yin, 1994, p.80). A range of documents were gathered, reviewed and analyzed. Some of the documents that were used in this study were Preschool and Kindergarten teaching curriculum for the Muin Sipu Learning Centre on the reserve. Public documents such as brochures, flyers and community newsletters were also examined for themes relating to contemporary relationships with animals and factors which influence those relationships. Documents were reviewed and analyzed to look for emerging themes regarding human/animal relationships, concerns regarding wildlife within the area, and attitudes toward existing wildlife and conservation initiatives. In order to gain access to the documents, I requested permission from the individuals who were responsible for the documents.

### Participant Observation

Participant observation during the field stay in Bear River contributed significantly to identifying behaviours of the BRFN Mi’kmaq community toward animals in nature which defined the relationships. Participant observation is a type of data collection whereby the researcher is not a passive observer, but rather the researcher may take on a variety of roles within the case study, and may even participate in the events under investigation (Yin, 1994). Participant observation allow behaviour to be recorded as it is happening and allows information to be retrieved that individuals may not want to talk about. Furthermore, according to Kenny (2004, p.19), “[l]earning by observation is a key element in Aboriginal teaching methods”.

Participant observation in BRFN focused on daily activities, youth camps and programs, and social/cultural gatherings and activities. If it was inappropriate to record notes during events, then observations were written in a field notebook as soon as possible following the events in order to recall as much detail as possible. Initially the

observations were unstructured, however as more information was gathered the observations became more structured around themes such as human/animal relationships, behaviours that were evident to illustrate such relationships, and the attitudes or values that underlie such behaviours and relationships. Such observations included what animals and animal parts were in participants' homes, what individuals did with the animal parts, how they treated/interacted with the animal/parts, how they harvested animals and parts, and what lessons they taught to their own children and/or other children in the community.

### Interviews

According to Yin (1994), interviews are one of the most important sources of data collection in case study research. Interviews are especially useful in qualitative research because it is possible to guide the questions and probe for a deeper understanding of the participant's experience, interpretation and meaning of phenomena. Furthermore, the interview process allows the participant to be in control of what information is conveyed and how it is expressed. Therefore, participants feel valued and respected (Seidman, 1998). I believe it was important for the participants to guide the interview so that they controlled what information was shared. This was especially important regarding Mi'kmaq sacred knowledge. By having control over the relayed information, participants were able to withhold information that they would not want made publicly available.

### *Sampling*

The basic characteristics of the participants in the sample were: Mi'kmaq, registered as on-reserve BRFN band members, and 18 years of age or older. I chose to not interview youth under the age of 18 since that would require guardian consent prior to the interview, and since the community population was small I chose to only interview adults.

To identify interview participants, I utilized a selective snowball sampling technique, wherein I asked each interview participant to suggest three other people within the community whom they thought I should interview. I held my first interview with an individual whom I considered (from my time spent volunteering) to be very

knowledgeable and passionate about their relationships with animals. I then asked that person to recommend three community members; this question was asked at the end of each interview. From the list of recommended participants, I employed a non-random, purposive sampling technique to identify participants representing what I perceived as a wide range of various relationships with animals, varied in age and gender, and belonged to different family clans. Interviewing participants who represent different cohorts and viewpoints is an important element in Aboriginal research. Specifically, as stated by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, report (1993, p.38), “[i]n research portraying community life, the multiplicity of viewpoints present within Aboriginal communities should be represented fairly, including viewpoints specific to age and gender groups”.

I contacted potential participants personally by visiting their homes or workplace, which was suggested by the other community members as the best and most effective method to approach potential participants. I interviewed 15 participants in total. The total population of the BRFN reserve (101 people) (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2007, no page number) minus the number of youth in the community (approximately 20, at a minimum) (Pers. Comm. Chief Frank Meuse, Nov 12, 2007), indicates that roughly 19 percent of the adult population was interviewed. By the end of the interview process, most participants were recommending the same community members; this suggested there was a group of people that the community considered to be the most knowledgeable and experienced with respect to various relationships with animals. The age of participants ranged from 25 to 86 years old. The average age was 44 years old. Of the 15 interview participants, nine were female and six were male.

### *Informed Consent*

According to Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples - Integrated Research Plan, informed consent should be obtained from all participants and should be obtained in writing or recorded (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1993, p.38). Before each interview, participants signed a consent form which confirmed their voluntary participation in the study and their permission to audio-record the interview. I was concerned that some individuals may not be comfortable signing a consent form, so I provided the option of written or verbal consent (Appendix II and Appendix III); all

participants chose the written version and each individual received a photocopy of the consent form for their records.

### *Procedures*

The interview questions were pre-tested with three different individuals: an individual from the Maliseet Nation, and two non-native individuals. It would have been ideal to have pre-tested the interview questions with individuals from the Mi'kmaq nation who were not members of BRFN, however due to time constraints this was not possible. Pre-testing the interview questions was important in order to ensure that the questions were easy to understand and that the information obtained would reflect the objectives of the study. The order and wording of the questions were determined in collaboration between me and one of my supervisors, who is Mi'kmaq.

The interviews were semi-structured and based on an interview guide so that specific information was solicited from each participant (Appendix V). Semi-structured interviewing involves developing pre-determined questions the researcher asks of each participant in a systematic order. The wording and follow-up questions, however, are flexible to facilitate answers that are beyond the scope of the predetermined questions.

The interview questions were open-ended, with a small number of close ended-questions. I chose to ask mostly open-ended questions so that I could indicate the general subject matter to be explored while allowing the participant to take any direction that they wanted. Open-ended questions do not presume a specific answer, as appropriate for questions related to experiences, understandings, interpretations and significance. It was explicitly stated in the interview consent forms that participants should not disclose any sacred information that they would not want to be publicly available.

Interviews took place during the last month of my stay with the community (August 2005). The interviews occurred in a place that was comfortable and familiar to the participants, such as the Community Centre, the Band Office, or in the participant's home. The process involved one face-to-face interview with each participant that lasted approximately 90 minutes in length and was audio recorded. According to Seidman (1998), audio-recording interviews is important for in-depth interviewing since tape recording ensures that the participant's actual words, tone, and pauses are preserved. In



addition, audio recording ensures that meaning is not lost through paraphrasing which can occur during note taking. Notes were also taken during the interview in a notebook to document physical gestures and other observations that correlated to the participant's spoken words, which could be indicative of mood, reaction and emotion.

An offering of sage and tobacco, which are two of four sacred herbs to the Mi'kmaq, was given to each participant at the end of the interview. The offering was given at the end of the interview rather than at the beginning in order to ensure that the participant did not feel compelled to participate because of the gift.

### *Confidentiality*

Interview participants were given the option of selecting whether or not they wanted to have their identity protected throughout the course of the study. This option was made available on the consent forms (refer to Appendix II). Approximately half of the individuals choose to have their identity disclosed and wanted to be acknowledged. Participants were given this option because it is appropriate that individuals regarded as experts or knowledge holders be acknowledged for their expertise.

Although I provided the interview participants with the option of non-confidentiality, I was unable to correlate interview quotes to specific individuals in the final written thesis. Due to the small sample size, acknowledging half of the interview participants in the text would increase the chances of the other participants being identified by the community at large. I contacted the participants who chose the non-confidentiality option and asked for permission to assign a number to their quotes instead of their name. All participants agreed. To address this issue, I refer to the participants, who chose to have their identity disclosed, by name in the acknowledgements, but not in the text of the thesis.

### **Data Analysis and Interpreting the Data**

The data analysis was based on the three forms of data collection, which were integrated and compared to enhance and corroborate the information gathered from the various techniques. As suggested by Seidman (1998), formal analysis did not begin prior to the completion of interview data collection in order to minimize the possibility of

imposing meaning from one interview onto the next. Once the interviews were completed, they were transcribed, word for word. To protect the identity of the participants I did not assign names to the audio-tapes, instead they were assigned a number. I personally transcribed eight of the 15 interviews and I hired a transcriber with no connections to the community to complete the remainder. The interviews that I personally transcribed were the participants who wished to have their identity remain confidential. The participants whose tapes were transcribed by someone other than me were the individuals who wanted to be acknowledged. For the purpose of transcribing the audio-tapes, however, I did not reveal their identity to the hired transcriber. The transcriber did sign a confidentiality form (refer to Appendix IV). Once the interviews were transcribed, each participant was given the opportunity to review their transcribed interview before data analysis began to ensure accuracy of the transcribed data. During this time participants could remove any information that they did not want included in the final thesis. I also asked the participants to fill in the words that could not be deciphered on the audio tape.

The interview transcripts and participant observation notes were read thoroughly to obtain an overall sense of the information and to reflect on its meaning. While reading the textual data I began the analysis by searching for emerging ideas and themes, and ways in which ideas fit together or differed from each other. Once initial and preliminary themes were identified, I used text analysis software QSR NVivo 2.0 to formally code the interview data. I chose to use the software because it was an effective tool to organize the data and it allowed me to easily recall quotes and themes for further analysis. The software does not do the analysis, rather I combed through the transcripts using the software program and personally developed and assigned codes to the text. Once the data were coded, I began to group the codes into larger themes which were reflective of frequently occurring codes from several sources.

Once the interview data were coded, I connected the participant observations, interviews data and documents to each other to gain a holistic perspective of the themes. During this time I began to hypothesize about the significance and meaning of the data, which was aided by assessing the data for similarities/differences and theorizing about

why these exist. I also began to compare the findings to historical accounts of the Mi'kmaq to identify changing conditions from within and outside of the community.

The presentation of information in this thesis relies on approaches that are commonly used in anthropology and ethnographic studies. Such methods involve a rich detailed description of the identified themes, reinforced and supported using direct quotations from the participants, in their own words, in addition to observations. I have made an effort to address the plurality of voices of the participants by presenting a range of perceptions and opinions, including contradicting and related findings.

The Mi'kmaq worldview holds that all of life and creation are cyclical and interconnected. It is difficult, if not impossible, therefore to configure the findings into a logical, linear format. Through writing about the inter-relationships and connections within and between topics it is inevitable that there will be some repetition of topics that were previously discussed since all of the findings are in some way related to each other within varying contexts.

### **Limitations**

Reflexivity is the “acknowledgement of the role of the researcher in the construction of knowledge” (Bryman and Teevan, 2005, p.361). A limitation of this project pertains to my interpretation and expressions of meaning and significance across cultures. Since I am not Mi'kmaq and I lived in the community for only three months, there are limits on both what I understand of the culture and what information was shared with me that influenced my interpretations. Consequently, I present the “results” of this study as my “interpretations” which are based on my understanding, my personal views and my experiences within the community. To the best of my ability, I have presented the participants voices as told to me in a way that is respectful and honest. To ensure that my interpretations are accurate and reflect the reality of the community, I had many informal discussions about interesting and emerging themes with a variety of community members during return visits to the community.

There are many aspects of relationships between humans and animals that could not be discussed between people; rather they had to be experienced by individuals themselves. These relationships were non-tangible in the material sense - they were

difficult, if not impossible, to be felt, shown, heard or explained. Rather, they were spiritual relationships that developed with individuals along a path of learning shaped by personal experiences. It is important to recognize that these relationships are part of the holistic web that integrates the physical and spiritual world, both of which form the roots of BRFN Mi'kmaq culture, worldviews and cosmology. These experiences are difficult to capture in words since they are not discussed but rather experienced. For example, I was able to participate in several events and ceremonies that were of great cultural and spiritual significance to the community. For these events and ceremonies I am only able to convey what I personally experienced as it is not appropriate to discuss other individuals' experiences; they will remain with the people to whom they belong. To address this, I discuss the activities themselves, but the private nature of the experiences of others is withheld.

The results of this study cannot be generalized to the Mi'kmaq community at large, nor can it be generalized to the BRFN community, since it is possible that other relationships and viewpoints exist within the community that are not included in this thesis. However, I believe that an in-depth exploration with a knowledgeable sample was the most effective approach to meeting the objectives of this study within a limited time frame; a general survey would have reached a larger sample but would have lacked intensive understanding of meaning and significance.

Another limitation of this study is derived from the personal struggles I experienced as being both a researcher and a friend with individuals in the BRFN community. During my time in Bear River, and since, it has been difficult to distinguish my role as a researcher versus a friend. While living in the community, I attempted to delineate my role as a researcher to include time spent during interviews, during informal discussions about the research project and during times that community members were showing me and/or demonstrating aspects of their relationships with animals for the purpose of complementing their interviews or conversations. During some ceremonies/events I was present as both a friend and a researcher. While this may be considered a limitation because of my personal involvement and connections with the participants, I consider it one of the strengths of this study.

## Chapter 5: Conceptualizations of Nature and Animals

The findings discussed in the following chapters (five, six and seven) is based on formal interviews, informal conversations, participant observations, meetings, archival/literature research and cultural gatherings with community members at large. I include a number of quotes to support the interpretations and to present the voices and words of the respondents. Perspectives and stories shared by the participants are deeply rooted in cultural contexts, education, lived experiences, and spiritual worldviews. Presenting the participant's perspectives and opinions in a coherent academic narrative required an integration of multiple issues. In many cases, participants voiced inconsistent opinions among each other, which reflected the uniqueness of each individual as well as the diversity in the community. The task of bringing together multiple opinions on issues was at times difficult, and required critical analysis and personal interpretation.

In this chapter, I explore the conceptualization and articulation of 'nature' and 'animals' as expressed by the BRFN community members. I recognize that nature as a word does not exist in the Mi'kmaq language. However, the concept of the world and environment does exist in both the Mi'kmaq language and culture. In the BRFN community, very few individuals speak Mi'kmaq – all community members speak English on a day-to-day basis, thus, nature is not an unfamiliar term. For the purpose of this thesis, I will use the term nature, while acknowledging it is not a perfect translation. This chapter describes the participants' feelings and perceptions about nature, which offer insight into their empathy for natural ecosystems and their concern for damage caused to those systems. I have identified three dominant themes: (1) the balance of nature; (2) nature as a 'community of life'; and (3) human nature versus ecological nature. Finally, the conceptualization of animals as intelligent beings is described and discussed. In this study, the term 'animal' refers to mammals, amphibians, reptiles and aquatic fauna, birds and water fowl.

The narrative accounts of BRFN's conceptualizations of nature appear similar to some western philosophies and views of the environment (i.e. deep ecology, ecofeminism, social ecology, etc). While there may be some similarities, many essential differences exist. Western philosophies such as deep ecology, eco-feminism and social ecology flow

from, and in response to, western structures and euro-centric thought. BRFN philosophies, however, flow from Mi'kmaq tribal consciousness. This is not to suggest that BRFN has not adopted and reacted to Western structures, but the philosophical foundation of the BRFN community is based upon thousands of years of Mi'kmaq cultural evolution and practices. Further, First Nation viewpoints are different in that they are legally distinct from all other viewpoints in Canada. First Nation people's culture and knowledge vis-à-vis natural resources form a distinct group of resource users with inherent and legal rights entrenched in the *Constitution Act of 1982* under section 35 (Fleras and Elliot, 1992; Constitution Act, 1982, Section 35).

### **Conceptualizations of Nature**

Nature is the birds, the bees, the trees, the land and the water, the sky, the people. (09)

Many interview participants see nature as sustaining Mi'kmaq identity, in both material and spiritual realms. Participants used a variety of terms to describe what they perceive as 'nature', 'natural areas' or elements of nature. Elements mentioned by the respondents as components of the 'natural' environment include, but are not limited to: air, water, rocks, woods, sky, fish, sun, moon, stars, plants, herbs, land, humans, animals, wind, God, Creators, and/or Mother Earth. All of these elements, together, comprise nature. The BRFN Mi'kmaq respondents believe that all animate and inanimate things have a spirit, or *mntu*, including rocks, water and fire. Interview participants made reference to 'nature' not only as elements, but also as a feeling that is generated among individuals when in nature:

Nature is peace, calmness, tranquility. It's actually peace in your own mind. To be able to see these things right. See the animals, their habitat. (05)

Phenomena such as wind, sky and Gods or Creators are also said to be a part of nature. Half of the respondents mentioned God as the Creator of nature. This is related to the Catholic influence in the community that originated from missionaries and was reinforced through residential schools. During my participant observation, I noticed that many community members who are Catholic also incorporate traditional form of

Mi'kmaq spirituality into their relationships with the natural world. For example, an interview participant stated that he was Catholic, yet I observed him giving a tobacco offering to a tree that they were going to cut to use for baskets (offerings will be discussed in greater detail in the following Chapter).

Nature themes underpin everyday activities of the BRFN community. Many community members live and work within spiritual and cultural values that incorporate nature. For example, artwork often includes images of animals, forests, sky, water and other natural scenery. Many stories told to me by Elders and community members have a nature-based plot. Further, themes related to the natural world are embedded into teachings and community activities, which are designed to reinforce a broad-based link between Mi'kmaq culture and nature. Many of these activities will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

### The Balance of Nature

Interview participants described nature as a complex system comprised of networks of biological, ecological and spiritual interactions. Most respondents believed interactions between and among the physical and non-physical worlds unite to sustain the well-being and functioning of the whole, thus leading to a natural balance. Indeed, participants stated the spiritual world plays an important role in shaping the balance of the natural world.

Interview respondents described the balance of nature as in flux and not stagnant or consistent over time or space. Fluctuating systems, such as predator-prey, disturbance (fire, wind), climate, drought, and populations were said by many respondents to be inherent within nature and necessary to maintain the natural balance. During an informal conversation, natural phenomena were described by one middle-aged male community member as factors that contribute to the “fluctuating-balance” of nature because “it is through change and flux that nature self-organizes”. For instance, competition and cooperation are both necessary to maintain a changing, yet balanced state among flora and fauna populations, and ultimately within nature.

The general principles of balance and fluctuation within ecosystems demonstrate structural similarities between BRFN knowledge and euro-centric knowledge of ecology.

However, there are also differences. For example, according to many BRFN community members, ceremonies, rituals and spirituality play an important role in maintaining the natural balance, which is not often the case in euro-centric disciplines or State resource management systems.

### Nature as a Community of Life

One perception of nature, as explained by some BRFN interview respondents, is based on a shared belief system that places humans as one equal part of a wider community of life, that of nature. Within Mi'kmaq culture and worldviews, human consciousness and behaviours adapt to and reflect the state of the natural environment. According to Johnson (1991, p.27), "respect for nature is an extension of tribal awareness, for the Mi'kmaq knows that nature is an integral part of his existence". Most interview participants articulated the conceptualization of nature as a foundation for human existence. For example, one female participant (11) stated that nature is both human's 'sustenance' and 'being'. Many other interview participants, both males and females who vary in age, see humans as a part of the natural balance:

I guess nature would be all the birds and animals. All living creatures from, from snakes to worms, toads, everything, combined with Mother Earth and all working together to keep living, with humans (10);

Nature involves all animals, all walks of life, insects, fish, so I'm in there, too (09).

According to most interview participants, no single component in nature is more or less important than the other elements. All elements within the system of nature contribute equally, but differently, to the community of life. Many respondents believe that humility should form the foundation of how humans relate to nature. Since all elements within the natural world exist equally, humans should not perceive their role in nature as set apart, or as more significant than any other being: "We're an animal, too, ain't we? We have to co-exist with everybody else" (05).

According to most participants, the recognition that humans, animate and inanimate elements in nature all work in symbiosis is the first step needed for large-scale ecological and social reform. Furthermore, the role of humans in nature should be to



participate positively in the community of life through demonstrations of respect: “I guess my part of nature would be respecting the lands and animals around me” (10).

### **Human Behaviour and Ecological Nature**

Individuals in the BRFN community identify and conceptualize human-nature relationships in varying ways. While many interview participants believe humans are a part of nature (as discussed in the previous section), others disagree with the holistic unity of humans within nature. According to one middle-aged male participant, humans are a part of “two-worlds”, that of ‘ecological nature’ and ‘human nature’. The intrusion of modern culture underlies the distinction:

Do I see myself as a part of nature? No, not really. [Because] I’m wearing clothes and I live in a house, I live on a main street, I got a car. You know, I don’t classify myself as living in nature. If I was back in the woods with no house, just with material that I made from what Mother Nature has given me to build my house, you know material to wear buckskin clothing. Stuff like that, then yes, I would be in with nature. So I basically, I live in two worlds. (06)

According to another middle-aged male participant, many humans do not work with nature, but rather transform it to fit their needs, regardless of the impact on the environment:

We (humans) do not do things naturally or with nature. Ah, the nature of the beast, they say, and we are the beast; we make things fit us. We don’t go into the forest and try to fit in with the forest, we go in there with our camping gear and all of the comforts of home and try to make the forest fit our way. A tree in the way, we cut it down; oh, that tree’s blocking my view, cut it down. That limbs sticking up, I can’t put my tent up; cut it off. That rock’s right in my way; move it, get it out of there and move it. There’s not enough grass here, bring some grass seed in the next time you come. Things like that; that’s upsetting that nature, the natural balance. (01)

A few participants strongly voiced their opinion that manufactured products, such as cars, and technology, consume natural resources in an unsustainable manner, which contributes to short and long-term environmental problems. The destructive consequences of some products, and the demand for them, were said by some interview respondents to exclude these products from what is perceived as ‘natural’. As I observed, all community members do use goods and services that, according to the previous

narratives, are deemed as “unnatural” and harmful to the environment. For example, most community members have vehicles and/or off-road utility vehicles, and they all alter the landscape around them to build houses and centers, put in a community pools, and cut trees to make lawns.

Areas that were described as the most ‘natural’ were said by many participants to be lacking in harmful human impacts and alteration, but not altogether void of human presence. At the most extreme, one female participant stated that, “man-made areas are not natural; they’re man-made” (07). According to other respondents, natural areas can include human presence, but not human interference:

A piece of land that never had a human being on it. Had never been in, never went in and cut a tree cut out, nothing. It only maybe had one person or a couple people walk straight through, you know what I mean. No paths. Just old dead trees fell over and moss growing all over it, rocks with moss all over it, trees bigger than we couldn’t put our arms around them, you know, that’s natural. (06)

Natural area. An area where it’s undisturbed by man. Its like walking through a forest and see a tree that fell down and is decomposing from time, that’s a natural area. (09)

Most participants’ narrative accounts suggest that nature is a space where humans should aim to achieve a balance between ecological nature and human behaviours. Certain activities may be necessary, such as needing a vehicle to get from place to place, or cutting trees to build a center, however minimizing the destructive impact of those activities is compulsory for the well-being of the environment. As noted by one young male interview respondent, this seemingly harmonious relationship requires individuals to be cognizant of their impact on nature, as well as the will and desire to mitigate any harmful impacts:

I suppose [I am a part of nature] because I’m always out there doing different things. Gathering supplies. There’s always a right and a wrong way to do things and, hopefully, every time you go out to collect, you’re doing it right and you’re not going to hurt the environment in any way. I try not to, and if I make a mistake, then I try to rectify anything that I do. (15)

When asked how individuals define nature, most respondents alluded to the notion that nature should be regarded as the sustenance base of society. Nature provides for humans

all that we need: physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. In the next section, perceptions of the natural world today are explored.

### **Perceptions of the Natural World Today**

Most of the interview participants view the current state of the natural world as “sick”, “unhealthy” and in need of “healing” and “repair”. Respondents believe the primary cause of this “sickness” in the natural world is from human activities that place human needs and wants as more important than the well-being and health of nature. Participants who drew correlations between the health of the natural world and the fate of humans voiced fear and concerns about a dismal future. According to one female participant, destroying nature may lead to the demise of the human species:

[n]ature is very powerful. It's our means to survive, it's our means to live. But I look at it right now, well I'd still say it's powerful; like it seems powerless now because of the pollution and so forth, but we're really destroying ourselves. That's how I look at it, because if we destroy that then there's no more nature. You know, I guess its more environment broad perspective. But if we look at nature, once that's gone we're gone. Or we live in oxygen masks or something.  
(12)

It is clear that the above interview participant considers humans as a part of nature since she believes that if we destroy nature then we destroy ourselves. Her final comment, however, is interesting. She notes that humans may have to use technology once nature is gone to provide the necessities for life that nature supplies. From this perspective, humans may be able to physically survive without nature through the use of technology; however, human quality of life would be significantly compromised, especially for individuals who rely upon nature for spiritual, mental and emotional well-being. The conceptualization of animals and their role in nature will be discussed in the following section

### **Conceptualization of Animals**

Many interview respondents who viewed themselves as one part of the natural system did not disconnect animals as “others” to humans. As noted by one community member, animals, like humans, have spirits that are capable of cognitive decision-making.

According to interview participants, both males and females who vary in age, the intelligence of animals is obvious through everyday observations. Many of those interviewed describe the intelligence of animals in terms of how they act and behave like human beings:

So, in doing so [spending time with animals], you'll learn so much about that animal. You'll learn about their habits, you'll learn about where they sleep, when they rest, you'll learn about their relationship with the, the family, with their other counterpart, you'll, you'll learn about their spirituality: not much different than yours and mine. (01)

A lot of people think animals are just a dumb animal; they don't know anything. I read a piece in the paper a couple weeks ago where somebody said that the deer was very stupid, but they're not, they're very, very intelligent. (11)

[...] part of who they [animals] were as being kind or being gentle, or either being vicious. It made me believe that they have personalities like they're human beings, like us. (03)

Participants stated animals display their intelligence through their temperaments and behaviours in response to external stimuli (i.e. threats, weather) which are deemed and recognized by BRFN interview participants as rational behaviours. Temperaments and behaviours of animals mentioned by interview respondents include accounts of being protective of their young when faced with a threat, the ability to recognize seasons and thus prepare and harvest food for the winter months when food will not be readily available, and social organizations such as lifelong mating partners:

I guess it was mainly with the bears, it was how they treated their young. Their protection of their young. (11)

Because some animals mate for life. They do. And, ah, and like they're, yes, they're here for a purpose. To breed, you know, have babies, and grow old together. (02)

From this perspective, animal behaviours can be considered a sign of intelligence, instead of mere instinct since many actions demonstrate a social and environmental understanding (i.e. preparations for winter, manipulating the environment such as dams, using objects as tools, etc). To see how these conceptualizations of 'nature' and 'animals'

are manifested into the everyday lives of the BRFN Mi'kmaq community, we must examine how Mi'kmaq in Bear River see their relationships with animals.

## Chapter 6: Expressions of the Relationships Between Humans and Animals

This chapter describes contemporary relationships between BRFN Mi'kmaq humans and animals in nature. In particular, this chapter will begin by describing the importance of concepts such as respect and reciprocity. Following will be a discussion regarding the ways community members manifest these concepts in everyday life through teachings, codes of conducts and resource distribution. Finally, the significance of human-animal relationships will be explored through hunting, crafts and Mi'kmaq spirituality.

For the purpose of this thesis, the term 'tradition' and 'traditional' does not mean an inflexible connection to the past. Rather, I use the term traditions as knowledge and activities that are passed from one generation to the next. It implies persistence and expression of First Nations survival and resilience. Leroy Little Bear, *et al.* (1994, 47), described values as "those mechanisms put in place by the group as a whole that more or less tell the individual members of the society 'if you pursue the following, you will be rewarded or given recognition by the group'. But there are also negative values which indicate to the members of the society that if you pursue them, they will be ostracized or punished by the group". This is the definition of values that will be adopted for the purpose of this thesis.

Categorizing and isolating one single component in the larger context is inconsistent with Mi'kmaq values. To respect Mi'kmaq values means it is necessary to make clear that although the topics discussed in this chapter are categorized for narrative coherence, they are, in fact, overlapping rather than separate categories. Participants made it clear that individuals must understand and communicate the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things in nature, as illustrated in the following passage:

I know it's relationships between humans and animals but there's so much other stuff between that. There's so many bridges that connect that whole web of life and the animals is just one small component of it, but it's a very important component. And so you get spiritual, physical, mental, the environment, it's all connected and we need to understand that. (01)

It is important to note that while I am attempting to describe the BRFN respondents' stewardship practices and principles, I am not suggesting that these

perspectives are held by all community members. Rather, the interpretations are constructed based on the descriptions of 15 individuals and informal conversations with other community members. Further, it is important not to misconstrue the described stewardship principles and practices as absolutes since there are many underlying factors that largely influence personal experiences and behaviour (as is evident throughout this chapter). As within any group, variation occurs.

### **BRFN Stewardship and Worldview in Relation to Animals in Nature**

The BRFN community does practice and refer to environmental stewardship principles such as never taking more than is needed, taking care of nature for the generations yet to come, and not being wasteful. Such principles are ingrained in the daily functioning and worldview of the community. The members of the Mi'kmaq community in Bear River are not perfect environmental stewards, nor do they pretend to be. Rather, the community goes through cycles of learning and adapting (similar to all other cultures and societies) that are derived from, and applied to the modern realities of the community. Further, external and internal pressures (i.e. politics, poverty, health) largely influence how individuals behave. For the Mi'kmaq these pressures can include impacts of colonialism, the Euro-Canadian legal system, residential schools, and contemporary social, economic and political influences from within and outside of the community. Pressures can be temporary and elastic or far-reaching and multi-faceted. Regardless of the external and internal pressures, BRFN cultural values continue to be explicitly discussed by community members and are reinforced through formal structures. Today, the BRFN community is largely influenced by complex, long-standing relationships with the environment and animals. Long-standing relationships and values demonstrate the strength and resilience, to this day, of BRFN culture.

According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p.183), “[t]he Aboriginal concept of equality rests upon the inherent sacredness of all creation. Since all creation is sacred, all creation is equal. Aboriginal peoples infuse this connecting principal of love and sacredness into all things and animals and people”. A middle-aged female interview participant described relationships between humans and animals as being “intricate in

everything” (12). These relationships are demonstrated in all aspects of Mi’kmaq life and can be observed through a wide array of activities and events, as will be discussed later.

### **Seasonality and Mi’kmaq Language**

The natural environment is an influential factor regarding relationships between humans and animals. Seasonality, for example, largely influences the temporal and spatial relationships that BRFN people have with animals. In Bear River, hunting game takes place in the fall, trapping in the winter and fishing in the summer. Other activities such as crafts are made continuously throughout the year; however, access to resources may vary depending on the season:

We still do a lot of seasonal activities. [...] If you take a look at some of the boys they will be hunting at certain time of the year, they’ll be fishing at a certain time of the year. Then you have those that are multi-tasking that also do crafts that also depend upon the forest or whatever to collect their materials to make certain crafts and what have you. And it’s still very much seasonable. (12)

The significance of animals, natural environment, and seasonality is evident in the Mi’kmaq language. Specifically, the months of the year are described as changes that occur in the animal and plant worlds in relation to the environment and human survival (Johnson, 1991, p.27). For example, October (Wikewiku’s) and August (Kisikwekewiku’s) mean respectively, berry and fruit ripening month and animal-fattening moon; they describe actions and events within the animal and plant worlds which are vital for human survival (Johnson, 1991, p.27).

In Bear River, very few community members speak the traditional Mi’kmaq language. One elder, who is fluent in the traditional language, said that “culture is embedded in the language” because the Mi’kmaq language not only links the Mi’kmaq to their culture and values, it also describes the relationships with the land (14). Yet, according to another community member, culture is not lost if individuals do not speak the traditional language since Mi’kmaq concepts and worldviews are communicated as much through modeling as through words. Both viewpoints describe the current reality of BRFN. Even with the absence of fluent Mi’kmaq speakers in the BRFN community, the culture still survives and continues. The community at large, however, does see the value in learning the traditional Mi’kmaq language and has made a conscious effort to bring the



language back. Today, the community offers Mi'kmaq language courses for community members to learn and speak traditional Mi'kmaq.

To understand the social dimensions of human relationships with animals and the significance of animals to the BRFN community, it is first important to explore the values and worldview that underlie BRFN Mi'kmaq people's actions. The following sections will explore reciprocity and respect as concepts that give meaning to human relationships with animals.

### **Reciprocity**

Animals and the environment form a central frame of reference for BRFN Mi'kmaq cultural identity. Specifically, animals provide a variety of essentials (material and non-material) for the Bear River people such as food, materials for crafts and jewellery, hides for drums, healing medicines and guidance. According to most BRFN community members, animals also ensure human survival indirectly in several non-utilitarian ways. That is, animals comprise a part of the web of life that supports and sustains life for all other living things, including humans. All spirits are connected, and thus they collectively share the Earth.

The concept of community in Bear River extends to include humans as well as animals, plants, rocks; indeed, all living and non-living things. According to several interview participants, the BRFN worldview conceives human relationship with animals and nature not as a sense of entitlement and control, but rather they contend that relationships are founded upon interdependence, partnerships and cooperation among all living things. Such concepts accentuate notions of accountability and reliance with others, rather than notions of individualism. Since all living and non-living entities rely upon one another, the degradation of the environment or declining animal populations will have detrimental consequences for all other beings. In order to ensure that harmony with the earth is maintained, a number of members of BRFN believe that all living and non-living entities must cooperate and work in partnership.

Many community members and interview participants acknowledged that the relationships between humans and animals must be reciprocal to achieve a balance between humans, animals and the environment. The reciprocal element is illustrated in

the partnership between humans and animals: animals provide necessities for humans, and in return humans give honour and respect to the animals. Several interview participants expressed the belief that responsibility to the relationship through respect and good intentions will ensure that animal populations are sustained, and thus, animals will continue to offer themselves to humans. One community member emphasized this point in the following passage:

[...] they'll [the animals] be attracted to you knowing that if you decide that you need that animal today to feed yourself, to feed your family, to clothe you, to keep you warm, that animal will just come begging you: please take me. But on the other hand they want to be assured that you will respect that; that their life is just not being taken needlessly. (01)

Respect is one of the most important concepts in the BRFN community's understanding of human relationships with animals. Through respectful behaviours, the reciprocal relationship is maintained. This will be the focus of the following section.

## **Respect**

The social protocol that respect and appreciation must always be given to animals for the numerous provisions they provide continues to govern the BRFN community's worldview. Similarly to other Canadian First Nation cultures, the relationships between humans and animals involves a reciprocal obligation for humans to provide the conditions necessary for animals to thrive and survive on Earth (Feit, 2004, p.102). Many community members said commitments and responsibilities to animals were vital to human survival since it is through demonstrations of respect, to the Creator and to animals, which ensure animals continue to offer themselves to humans. One middle-aged female participant draws important correlations between respectful interactions, healthy animal populations, animals offering themselves and a balanced cycle:

If we learn to live in good spirit with the animals they can continue to reproduce and that they will always be offering themselves; there will always be enough. You know, keep a nice cycle going (09).

The fulfillment of respectful obligations and responsibility to human relationships with animals is expressed through various codes of conduct which constitute a form of community-based governance. For example, many community members stated that

respect is given to animals by never taking more from animals (or the environment) than is necessary, and that the animals must always be given thanks for the gifts they provide for humans (these ideas will be discussed in greater detail in a later section). From this perspective, the community inherently strives for an environmental state that maintains and nourishes animals' and humans' well-being through time:

We've been taught that if you were going to take the life of an animal that you ask that it's spirit be released in a good way. You know, that in maybe some cases you may want to take that spirit on, and you be the protector of that animal. And it's kind of like a garden; if you prune your garden in a certain way it will last a long time, and actually to the point where it can almost sustain itself to certain types of species. It will always constantly be producing. (...) the spirit of those animals is as important as the spirit that lies within us, and we have to make sure that that is properly looked after and respected. (01)

The continued well-being of animals requires individuals to personally and collectively exercise self-control and respectful stewardship practices. According to one middle-aged male respondent, community-based-responsibility starts with teaching the younger generations how to be respectful to animals:

[...] if I decide to only shoot the animals I eat I'm teaching my young fella a lot of responsibilities, so when he grows up I know that he's just going to shoot what he wants to eat, when his kids grows up, they can be able to go out and shoot what they want to eat, and there's going to be animals left behind. And if we don't do that, and we don't think about doing that, then the time they grow up, my son grows up, there ain't going to be no animals left. (06)

The concept of respect of animals and the Earth was supported with what I learned from my participant observations. During many interactions with community members, I regularly overheard or witnessed adults explaining to youth that you should never take an animal unless you need it, and when you do kill an animal you should use all parts. On one occasion in particular, I observed a young boy prepare to shoot a bird with a pellet gun. His father warned him that if he shot the bird, then he was going to have to eat it and use the feathers to make a gift for someone in the community. He explained that to shoot an animal without a purpose or use was disrespectful to both the animal's spirit and to Mother Earth.

Respect is an important component of the circumstances under which individuals and the community interact with, and adapt to, their surrounding environment. The

Mi'kmaq in Bear River show respect to the animals and the environment through a variety of ways. In particular, respect and reciprocity are communicated by the BRFN community members through teachings, and are reinforced through codes of conduct, ceremonies and resource distribution. These concepts will be the focus of the following sections.

### **Teachings**

Teachings reflect Mi'kmaq values. Teachings, including both oral and modelling appropriate behaviour, are the dominant way in which Elders and older adults encourage younger generations to act responsibly, respectfully and thoughtfully with the environment, and animals. In this thesis, Elders refer to the individuals in the community who were commonly referred to by all community members as "Elders". However, there are very few Elders in the BRFN community, and as such I often make reference to 'adults' who are not Elders per se, but who are respected as having valuable life experiences and who hold knowledge that is invaluable to the community. Within the BRFN community, Elders and adults have the responsibility to pass on cultural knowledge and codes of conduct to the younger generations.

Elders and adults transmit teachings through oral explanations, storytelling and modelling behaviour. One middle-aged interview participant reminisced about his experience with Elders as a young boy:

[...] we would travel with the Elders and the older people of our community and they would teach us how to hunt and fish, and it was always fun learning; cause we were out in the woods and they were teaching us all of these wonderful skills that we didn't even realize they were doing. And they were just teaching us and showing us how to walk in the forest quietly, they told us when to fish, how to fish, how not to let your shadows cast on the waters to scare the fish, and things like this that made us more successful and more skillful gatherers. And also taught us about how to gather things in a respectful way (01)

Through the Elders and older-adults' teachings about Mi'kmaq values and behaviour, younger generations learn to develop a sense of respect for the environment and thus perpetuate the principles set forth by their ancestors. An example of teachings as a means to foster sustainable practices in younger generations was described during an interview by a female Elder through her personal story:

My father always took us trout fishing and he always taught me just take what you need for today. And sometimes I'd say, "dad why don't we get a few more?" And he'd always say, "no, we have to wait for the next time because we have what we need for today". So, he always taught me about conserving. (13)

Elders and adults expect that the younger generations will eventually teach their children and grandchildren so that the reciprocal relationship of respect between all living and non-living things will continue.

On many occasions, I observed Elders and adults modelling behaviours and teaching younger community members about Mi'kmaq cultural values and activities. During gatherings, adults would take the youth on walks through the woods and talk about Mi'kmaq relationships with the land. During such walks, one male adult in particular would often discuss the difference between Mi'kmaq relationships with the environment as compared to non-native relationships. His teachings would often be communicated in the form of a story. In the story, he and a non-native were the two main characters in a forest discussing the 'value' of the trees. The non-native saw the trees as money, while the Mi'kmaq man saw the trees as homes for the birds and animals, and as linking himself to the activities of his ancestors through basket-making. The lesson of his story was always that people value things differently, and that sometimes you have to put yourself in other people's shoes to see where they are coming from; but he always reminded the Mi'kmaq youth to never forget their cultural values, as they connect individuals to the land and to Mi'kmaq tribal consciousness.

On another occasion, I observed a Grandmother explaining the significance and symbolism of the dream catcher to her grandchild. She explained that the dream catcher represents the web of life that unites us all, including animals, plants, water and humans. The importance of teachings by Elders and older adults exemplify BRFN Mi'kmaq values of paramount respect for Elders and their knowledge. Today, in the BRFN community, Mi'kmaq methods of transmission of oral teachings and modelling appropriate behaviour continue to be valued by both youth and adults.

## Codes of Conduct

There's a whole sacred process, from the hunting to the processing, every bit of that animal is used. (12)

Individuals in the community are expected and encouraged to follow certain codes of conduct and principles of respect, reciprocity and community. Protocols, or behaviours, are based on social norms, values and traditions, some of which are longstanding and have been passed down through generations:

It's like, the Mi'kmaq People have always had their own set of laws, customs, rules, and it was to sustain themselves and future generations. And I believe that that is just part of our tradition, which should be upheld for time infinity. (11)

Codes of conduct in the BRFN community are still clearly defined as they once were. Several participants expressed the importance of codes as an obligation to the community, which makes people accountable for their actions. As a consequence, social ties bond each member of the community to each other. For example, many interview participants said one long-standing code of conduct is that individuals must use all parts of the animals that they hunt. An older female respondent reaffirms this point:

My father had a saying. He said; 'you eat all you can boys, but don't pocket none [...] you just take what you can eat. And don't take something and let it go to waste' [...] I just think it comes from hereditarily, you know, or, something that your families did and you just automatically followed the same trail, right. (05)

To waste parts of animals that have been killed is considered disrespectful to the animal's spirit, to Mother Earth and to the Creator. On many occasions I heard community members speak disapprovingly about leaving the organs and other useful parts of hunted animals in the woods to rot. Other interview participants, however, said they would intentionally leave the guts of moose, deer and fish in the woods as food for other animals. This act was deemed to be appropriate behaviour by hunters because it was left behind for a specific respectful purpose; to feed other animals and therefore it was not wasteful (this will be discussed further in the following sections). Most interview participants referred to wasting parts of an animal as 'wrong', 'not the proper way' and 'disrespectful'. For example:

That you're going to take something from the earth, be it an animal, a tree, a fish, a bird, whatever it may be, that if you're not willing to commit yourself and to be accountable for your actions and to use that animal to it's fullest, then you are being very disrespectful. (01)

Another code of conduct commonly discussed by individuals in the BRFN community is humans should never take more than is necessary from the environment, including animals. Humans must never kill an animal unless it is needed, and in return animals will continue to offer themselves to humans. In a very important sense, it is through developing strong reciprocal relationships with the environment, animals, and amongst each other that the BRFN actively constructs not only their codes of conduct but also their identity. The exact nature of these social rules is passed on from one generation to the next:

Like I said, my grandfather was never cruel to animals. He would try to help them in any way he could, but he would never deliberately try to bring an animal home. You'd never seen him shoot or killing anything that he didn't need. He just told you over and over again, never kill anything that you're not going to eat. (10)

And in a protection way, I'll voice to children, our people, from any age, normally you don't have to tell adults, but any age group, that you don't bother or hurt animals. You don't kill them. If you kill them you have to use them. They're just like human beings to me, so. They have a heart beat and spirit. (03)

Codes of conduct are in part a moral and political governing structure that states how individuals should behave, and they exist in all cultures. In comparable First Nation communities, similar social structures are apparent. For example, according to Feit (2004, p.107),

The Cree have a distinct system of rights and responsibilities concerning land, resources, community, and social relations – a legal system of land and resource tenure, and of self-governance. This system enables hunters to fulfill their responsibilities to animals and spirits and contribute to the conditions necessary for their mutual survival.

Responsibilities of the individual to the community and animals inherently cause the dynamics of the relationship to be political in nature. The Mi'kmaq society of the BRFN is organized around concepts of community, responsibility, and reciprocity, all of which have socio-political obligations that are expressed through a network of social

reciprocities and cultural rules. According to Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (2001, p. 183), “respect of the earth provides the spiritual basis for the parameters of conduct and government”. Within the Bear River Mi’kmaq community, actions and behaviours are delineated by cultural codes that are monitored and enforced by the community at large. For example, taking the life of an animal should not be taken lightly, for fun, or for sport, as evident in the following section.

### Perspectives on Sport Hunting

One clear example of how codes of conduct are manifested in everyday behaviours is evident in how some members of the BRFN perceive hunting for sport. Although in the late 1800’s and early 1900’s, the Mi’kmaq in Bear River used to guide non-native sport hunters (as discussed in Chapter 3), guiding activities no longer take place by BRFN community members nor were they discussed during interviews or informal conversations. Contemporary perspectives regarding sport hunting, however, were discussed by half of the interview participants. According to one young male participant, animals should only be killed if needed, not just for fun or recreation:

Usually if I was to kill an animal I was doing it for a reason, not just for play. Either for food, or for crafts, skins, depending on what I was, myself, hunting for.  
(04)

While half of the interview participants did not discuss their perspectives on sport hunting, the other half stated hunting for sport was unacceptable. Primarily, respondents stated hunting for sport implies that animals have less value than humans and that the outcome of the hunt is based solely on the hunter’s efforts. In other words, animals are caught by humans rather than offering themselves; and the fate of the hunt is entirely dependant on humans. Interview participants and other BRFN community members criticized sport hunting as removing the animal from being a partner within the relationship, which conflicts with BRFN Mi’kmaq beliefs regarding co-operation, respect and reciprocity, all of which contribute to the survival of each other. According to one participant, the community frowns upon sport hunting because it not only goes against the spirit of human-animal relationships, but it also goes against the expectations and codes of appropriate conduct of BRFN community members. For example,



I feel that that [sport hunting] is something that kinda goes against the spirit of the relationship between humans and the animals. It means that one is more dominant and it's using the other one for sport or recreation to kill and take the life of.

(01)

Although the animal may be used after it is killed (i.e., eat meat, use parts for crafts, etc.), it is the intent of the hunt (i.e. for sport or for food, etc.) which determines the dynamics of the relationship. According to most interview participants, individuals should only kill an animal when it is needed for survival. Thus, hunting for sport negatively affects the integrity of the respectful relationship between humans and animals.

Participants from all age groups and genders discussed spiritual relationships with the land that connects human to non-human beings. In particular, Mi'kmaq people in Bear River acknowledge the sacredness of human-animal relationships through spiritual ceremonies. It is to these ceremonies that I now turn.

### **Ceremonies**

Caring for animals and the land is a vital component of Mi'kmaq stewardship practices that integrate the environment and spirituality. Many ceremonies that are practiced by many BRFN community members are an expression of cultural and spiritual obligations to animals and the land. Ceremonies express Mi'kmaq worldviews of connectedness, respect and reciprocity. The ceremonial use of animals is also inherently political for the Mi'kmaq in Bear River. That is, ceremonies not only reaffirm and maintain important cultural values and practices, but ceremonial use of animals is also an expression of treaty rights to animal resources. As confidently expressed by many community members, the Mi'kmaq people have Aboriginal and treaty rights that protect their use of animals for food, fish, commercial, and ceremonial purposes (as discussed in chapter 2). One middle-aged female respondent reiterates this point:

There's that clause, the food, fish and ceremonial. Food, fish and ceremonial. That's basically just taking from nature what you need for your food, whether you need to fish it, or a ceremony that's like a gathering. It's in the Treaties. My mother taught me about it. (09)

The BRFN community continues to celebrate human-animal relationships through a variety of rituals and ceremonial events, including giving offerings to animals. Giving

an offering to an animal is an important ceremony which embodies many Mi'kmaq stewardship beliefs into a single ceremony. Many interview participants consider animals as beings that have given their lives for human needs and in return hunters must perform ceremonies, such as offerings, to demonstrate respect and appreciation for the sacrifice. Offerings are regarded as important physical actions that communicate the gratefulness of humans for the gift of animal life.

Participants described offerings as being one, or a combination, of the four sacred herbs: sage, cedar, tobacco and sweet grass. In some cases, however, participants said that individuals could offer any gift they thought was fair in exchange for what they received from the animal. One participant had offered gold:

Any time that you take any part of an animal you make an offering for it, whether it be something that you have or tobacco. I've actually given gold jewellery in trade, fair is fair. (09)

Most participants said that offerings should take place after an animal is killed. Some community members, however, also give offerings at times when they feel it is appropriate. For example, I observed a middle-aged male community member offer a gift of tobacco to an eagle in a tree just outside of the BRFN reserve because of the strong personal connection the individual has with eagles. On another occasion, I observed a young female offer tobacco and sage to an eagle she saw in the sky. According to this individual, it is important to offer something to the eagle because it is a sacred bird to the Mi'kmaq culture (this will be discussed in greater detail in later sections). Another community member told me that she makes an offering to all road kill that she collects parts from for crafts, such as quills from porcupines for jewelry.

Offerings are not only made to animals, but as a thank-you to all spirits. According to one middle-aged male participant, "it's [offerings are] for every living thing on the earth. And that's the trees, the rocks, because in the Native culture we always say that everything has a living spirit". (06)

During offerings, prayers are made to the Creator and/or to the animal, to ask that the animal be used in a beneficial and respectful way, and that the animal's spirit enter into the spirit world:

[...] we make sure that the spirit of that animal is respected and celebrated and that it is released in a good way, that it goes into its spirit world, that its going there feeling that its left the earth, and done something really important, that something really good has come out of their life. (01)

There was some variation among participants regarding to whom the prayers were made at the time of the offering. Some participants said they prayed to the animal that was giving itself, whereas other participants said they made prayers to the Creator. Some participants said they prayed to both. Although there was some variation among participants regarding to whom the offerings were made, the procedure and intent of giving an offering was similar among most interview participants. That is, the procedure and intent was almost always described as putting an offering on the ground as either gratitude or to give something back to the animal and/or Creator:

After they kill an animal, they would put, they would take tobacco or some kind of sacred herb, like either tobacco, cedar, sage, or sweet grass, and they would sprinkle a little bit on the ground right beside the animal or somewhere and, and thank that spirit, like the moose spirit, thank them for giving them the meat and giving up their life for us to eat and whatever we need from them. They say a little prayer. (07)

Well, in my culture when you take something from nature you must give something back. And, you always offer tobacco. To the spirits of, well, we'll take for instance, if I wanted to take some birch bark from a tree to maybe make a birch bark drum, I would leave tobacco at the base of the tree, right. And say a prayer to the Creator who provided the tree with the bark, that provided me with the bark so that I could make whatever it is wanted to make from the birch bark. (11)

Participants see spiritual rituals as important in maintaining a holistic balance within nature through acknowledgement of connections between the spiritual and physical world. According to one middle-aged male community member, the correct treatment of animals through offerings and respectful interactions can help to ensure continued success in hunting, since animals will continue to offer themselves. Success in hunting is important for the social organization of the BRFN community through networks of sharing, trade and barter. It is to this topic that I now turn.

### **Animal and Resource Distribution: Sharing, Trade and Barter**

The Mi'kmaq word for sharing is 'utkunajik'. The sun shares its warmth; the trees share their wind; and the Mi'kmaq share in the same spirit, be it in their material goods or in their life experiences. (Johnson, 1991, p.27)

An important social dimension of the BRFN Mi'kmaq community is the sharing and distribution of meat and animal parts. Some interview participants recognized sharing, trade and barter as being an important traditional activity among their ancestors, and it continues to be as important today as it was in the past. One young female respondent conveyed this point well:

I've actually traded meat with my mother and stepfather. We had moose meat, and they wanted moose meat, and they had beef, and we wanted beef, so we would trade. And I've traded with my brother. I've given him moose meat in trade for clams, because he's a clam digger. I'd rather trade than sell anything. Trade or give. That person would have something that they're willing to trade with you; something that they want for something you want, or need. It's the bartering system. Our ancestors used to barter the furs for farm supplies, garden supplies, for meat, potatoes, materials for sewing. So it still goes on. (09)

Many BRFN community members consider the distribution of meat among family and community members as an integral part of hunting itself. From this perspective, the code of conduct that individuals should only take what they need, can be extended to include the community's needs as well.

While there are no formal written rules that dictate how animal parts should be distributed within the community, I did observe that trading and sharing of meat did occur most often within and among one's own extended family. Acts of sharing function as a principle of social organization since hunters assume a societal role (of providing food) within the community and among family. Often individuals volunteer to hunt for families and/or community members who are unable to hunt for themselves. According to one young male in the community who hunts for moose in Cape Breton, he, as a hunter, has a responsibility towards his family and Elders:

I would shoot mine; if my mother ain't got one and I'm coming home I'll get her one. And then I'll make another trip for my sister if she don't got one. And then if [xxx] takes me up with him because he's an Elder and needs help, I'll go with him. (08)

Sharing and trade of animal parts, other than meat, were evident both within and outside of family lines. As noted by one participant who discussed sharing with community members, “what is garbage to one person is precious to another” (15). Animal parts that were shared and traded among community members include hoofs, hides, feathers, bones, teeth, claws, fur and antlers. According to one young female interview participant, sharing and trading with others ensures that individual success becomes community success because everyone gets what they need:

You should only take what you need, but then use everything that you can from what you kill. What you can't use you should give away and share, so that nothing is wasted and everyone gets what they need. (09)

Participants said that sharing encourages community prosperity and wealth, rather than individual prosperity and accumulation. Since most community members receive parts of hunted animals, everyone benefits equally and nothing from the animal is wasted. Many of those interviewed stressed that sharing ensures the use of the animal to its fullest potential since parts they do not need are given to individuals who will use them. As a result, the individuals who receive the unused parts do not need to go out and kill an animal to attain those parts. Reinforcing this social protocol can help to ensure that not too many animals are taken since many people rely on the products of a small number of animals; sharing and using all parts of the animals also demonstrates respect to the animals.

The act of sharing and receiving extends beyond the human realm into the animal realm. The remains of hunted animals are not only given to humans; some individuals believe it is important to give the unused remains to other animals to eat/use. This reinforces the Mi'kmaq view that in nature, nothing is wasted because everything gives of itself to meet the needs of other living and non-living things and to sustain the whole:

They (parents and family members) just put it up on the tree for other birds, or other animals to eat. They'd never, you know, people taking fish guts and throwing them out. He wouldn't do that. He'd take them out and put them on a tree. (14)

And then, normally, what I would do is take and bundle up what we don't use, I shouldn't say bundle but put it in a spot in Cape Breton, cause then the birds, the

eagles, they're all soaring, just waiting, so they're eating, you know, a part of it, some food. (03)

While there is a notion of pride associated with the continued tradition of sharing within the community, some participants expressed concerns that the amount of sharing within the community is in decline, as compared to a century ago, due to the influence of money and greed. Historically, there are stories of the Mi'kmaq trading amongst themselves, and with other nations, for goods and services (Paul, 2006; Wallis and Wallis, 1955; Ricker, 1998). Today, however, the integration of market economies and a capitalist structure has transformed subsistence economies based on trade and sharing into economies that require cash. Consequently, this has led to an increased dependency on outside markets for the generation of money. Today in Bear River, community members use animal parts to make products that are sold, thereby generating cash from external markets.

We make earrings and necklaces, and jackets and stuff like that and then we sell them. They come from the animals. Whereas before, we would trade, right. If you seen I had a necklace [...] you might have more carrots than what you need, so you would come up and trade me some carrots for this necklace. (06)

Despite the changes in aspects of economic structures over the past centuries, many individuals in the BRFN community have remained largely dependent, but not solely, on game meat for food. While most community members do buy some meat from stores, wild game still constitutes a large proportion of meat consumed in the community. Game meat is also used at gatherings and ceremonial events.

As a visitor in the BRFN community, it was impossible to ignore the importance and social dimensions of sharing and trading meat and animal parts. Everyday individuals talked about their hunting experiences, who they gave meat to and whom they received it from. The distribution of animal parts through sharing and trade is an integral part of hunting itself. Today, hunting is every bit as important to Mi'kmaq identity as it was in the past. This is the focus of the following section.

## **Hunting and the Survival of Identity**

Years ago they had to (use animals) for food, clothes and crafts, too, and tools that they use. Because even to this day, you can see some of the old bone tools and stuff that they used years ago. That's gotta be culture. (02)

Hunting animals for survival has been a part of Mi'kmaq life since the beginning of time. Today, many BRFN men and women of various ages continue to hunt and rely heavily upon animals to meet their needs. The importance of hunting to Aboriginal peoples in Nova Scotia is evident in a study conducted by Owen (2006, p.75) regarding the values associated with old-growth forests. The results of the study showed that Aboriginal peoples in Nova Scotia ranked fishing and hunting as the second most important value related to old-growth forests. The values associated with old-growth forests, as ranked by the Aboriginal participants, were (in order of importance): medicine, hunting/fishing, heritage, exploration/adventure, soil conservation, bio-diversity, majestic surroundings, and carbon sequestration.

Today, BRFN community members hunt mostly off reserve, although some small game such as rabbits and occasionally deer are hunted on reserve. Off-reserve hunting areas include Cape Breton for moose, on local crown and on private land where permission has been obtained from the land owners. According to one middle-aged male community member, the local areas in the Bear River region used for hunting today are the same areas hunted by their ancestors. The Mi'kmaq worldview recognizes that all entities on earth are inter-dependent; therefore, humans need not apologize for using animals for food and necessities, since the use of animals for survival is a part of the natural process (Marshall, 1997, p.53). Some interview participants believe that hunting for one's own food connects people to the land and specifically connects Mi'kmaq people to their culture:

I believe it's (hunting) been a tradition of the Mi'kmaq people from beginning of time. It's a part of a tradition and it's a part of the culture. (03)

Because it's (hunting) been passed down generation to generation. And it should be important; because that's what they did in the past: they hunted and fished, and they still do it now. (07)

Some of the animals hunted for food on the reserve and in the local area include rabbit, deer, bear, partridge, and a large variety of fish such as trout, eel, bass, smelt, and lobster. Moose are hunted by BRFN community members in Cape Breton where they are not endangered. According to the Department of Natural Resources (2006, no page number), hunting of mainland moose in Western Nova Scotia has been illegal since 1936.

When asked if certain animals were more important than others to the environment, most participants stated that because of the interconnectedness of all living and non-living things in nature, all animals are equally important. Some participants, however, explicitly said the animals that they hunt and eat were more important to them personally than the other animals, as evident in the following interview passage from a middle-aged male community member:

The ones I eat are more important to me than the other ones. But, the other ones are almost as important because a lot of the animals will eat other animals, right. So it's just, it's like a cycle and to break that cycle then everything comes unbalanced. (06)

Participants, including hunters and non-hunters alike, identified moose and deer as an important food source. Although these animals were mentioned as being more important personally to individuals, they were not said to be favored as compared to other animals. To illustrate this point, hunters indicated that they did not interact with the 'personally more important' animals any differently than they did with other animals. For example, the participants who gave offerings to hunted animals ensured that an offering was given to all the animals that they hunted, and not just deer and moose.

According to a middle-aged female participant, hunting practices have been passed down from some of the most famous hunters; this is a source of pride for individuals in the community:

Moose hunting, and deer hunting and, and I'm amazed that we've kept up those skills. And our young fellows do that because they've learned from the older guys that have died off now; and like some of the people that still hunt here are the descendants of some of the most famous hunters. (12)

In the BRFN community today, not all community members engage in the actual hunting activities. However, almost all individuals do receive game meat from hunters within their family or from other community members (as described in the previous



section). Some community members also raise chickens, pigs and rabbits that are killed and eaten. From my observations and interviews I found that most community members eat both store bought and game meat. While most people do purchase some meat from stores, these changes are not correlated with a decreased reliance on game meat since many households still eat large amounts of wild meat. One older male respondent, who does not hunt, prefers the taste of game meat above store bought meat:

(I get my meat from) Sobey's. But then, like I say, XXX brings me over deer meat and moose meat, and my nephews do. I eat it, but I wouldn't go kill it. But yeah, I'll send brothers or nephews, friends like XXX, they come, they keep me supplied. Which is good, because they all know I don't hunt. So they, so they keep me well supplied. I'm glad, too; because I like the taste of the meat but yet I don't have to go do it. I don't have to go shoot them or nothing. (02)

On the other hand, one older female participant expressed concern about the taste of certain game meat, such as rabbit. According to this participant, the taste of some game is changing due to all of the contaminants in the environment. I did observe this same community member, however, eating moose and deer:

I haven't eaten rabbit for a good many years. I don't know what wrong with the rabbits now. I don't think I'd want to eat them. There's so much, they [industry, companies and people in general] put out so much chemicals, you know, and it's kind of destroyed the animals taste. They don't taste right – most of the animals (07).

As noted by one middle-aged male participant, the idea of not being able to hunt for meat, due to environmental pollution and contamination of meat, makes him sad and concerned about the ability to pass on important cultural beliefs and practices to the next generations:

You know, we're starting to see the signs that we are no longer to, as a community, rely solely on wild animals to provide part of our livelihoods to us. I'm afraid that our next generation, we're going to have to teach them how to hunt in Superstores and Sobeys and stuff like that, which is a sad thing (01).

Access to game meat for subsistence purposes is becoming increasingly difficult in Nova Scotia due to a variety of factors (i.e., state conservation, pollution, access to resources). In comparable First Nation territories, Nadasdy (2003, p.71) points out that "hunting today requires a significant degree of capital; one needs vehicles, fuel, guns, ammunition, binoculars, knives, packboards, stoves, tents, and an array of other

equipment". Bear River hunters face similar financial obstacles in Nova Scotia. In particular, Bear River community members must travel to Cape Breton in order to hunt for moose because it is endangered on the mainland and is therefore illegal to hunt. This prohibition has had many impacts on the local residents within the BRFN community because hunters must have both a vehicle appropriate for hunting and transporting a moose, the money to travel to and from Cape Breton, and the time to do so. As a result, hunting trips often become joint ventures between a few people who each contribute to the costs (gas, food, etc.) and share equipment (vehicles, sleeping accommodations, etc). In many cases, individuals plan their vacations from work around hunting trips. Despite the high costs associated with moose hunting in Cape Breton, participants expressed that in the long run it is still financially advantageous to hunt rather than purchase more meat products from stores. That is, individuals get greater amounts of game meat for a comparable amount of money spent on store purchased meat:

...because they like the wild meat. Then they keep it for themselves to keep so they ain't got to buy the meat, saves money. It may costs them a couple hundred, three hundred bucks to go moose hunting up in Cape Breton, but in the long run over the winter, you know, meat is so expensive in some of the stores here. Like for me, the kids would eat meat every day, three times a day if I let them. (04)

Hunting and consuming game meat is not only a source of food, but rather it is, metaphorically, a symbol of the social and cultural systems that link the BRFN Mi'kmaq people to the land, animal, and to each other. Hunting trips provide the opportunity for Elders to pass on their knowledge to younger generations. In the BFRN community, young hunters will often accompany older hunters to Cape Breton. During these hunting trips, the older generations instruct younger generations how to hunt, including what signs to look for when tracking an animal, how to tell if the animal is a pregnant female, and methods to dress and remove a dead animal from the woods. Hunting trips with Elders and older adults also differentiate proper and improper ways to hunt. According to one young-adult male community member, an Elder taught him that it is improper to hunt for moose in Cape Breton by driving up and down a road until one is spotted and then shot. Proper ways were described as tracking the moose in the woods, which requires that the hunter have both skill and patience. These qualities were explained to the young-adult

community member to be an important part of the hunt because it shows respect to the moose more so than sitting in a vehicle until one is spotted.

The teachings associated with hunting are not limited to the time spent hunting, but also take place when individuals return home. In the community, Elders and older adults teach youth and young-adults how parts of the hunted animals can be used to create traditional and contemporary art forms and crafts (as discussed in the following section). Youth are also taught techniques regarding how to clean and use hides to make drums. According to one young-female community member, drums are very sacred in the BRFN community because they represent the heartbeat of the earth. Without hides from hunted animals, making drums would not be possible. An older-female participant described the complex process of passing knowledge and cultural values to a younger family member regarding the sacredness of drums and it's relation to the natural world and animals:

Like I said to my grandson the other day, he came up and I showed him my drum. He said, 'what's it made of, nanny'. And I said, 'well, two trees and two animals gave their life up for my drum'. I said 'the spruce tree gave it's life up so that I could have a rim. The sumac tree gave it's life up so I could have the handles for the drum stick. The deer gave it's life so that I could have the hide and the moose gave it's life so I could have a piece of the horn to hold on to my drum with'. And I said to him, 'if we didn't have any trees, I couldn't even make a drum. There would be nothing to make it with because I have to have the rim; I have to have trees'. (11)

Hunting trips also provide an important occasion for socializing and rekindling relationships with family and friends. According to many community members, socializing is one of the most enjoyable and anticipated components of hunting trips. Stories of past trips were shared throughout the community as a regular part of daily conversations and individuals eagerly discussed trips planned for the next season.

Throughout the time I spent in the community, I observed no separation of gender roles between men and women in regards to hunting or cleaning the animals. Both males and females, within a wide range of ages, said they hunt for moose, deer, rabbit, bear and other game. Both men and women, of all ages, told me many stories of cleaning hides, gutting animals, and preparing the meat. I also observed both men and women cleaning and preparing raw moose hides to make drums.

In summary, there is no doubt that the Mi'kmaq in Bear River conceive of hunting as an important cultural activity. Hunting informs BRFN identity as a means for transmitting cultural knowledge, providing food security, encouraging sharing and resource distribution, making arts and crafts, telling stories, as well as reinforcing Mi'kmaq spirituality and relationship with animals and land. I now turn to the use of animal parts as crafts.

### **Crafts and Economics**

Using parts of animal for crafts has been a part of Mi'kmaq culture for many centuries (see: Denys [1672], 1971; Wallis and Wallis, 1955). Today, making crafts from animal continues to be an important activity in the BRFN community. According to one middle-aged male, all non-meat parts of a moose can be used for various crafts:

And then finding out as I went along, how you could use everything else. Different parts of the animals for different things. Like in a moose you got the tendons you can use for thread. You can split that apart just like the sinew and use it for sewing. Bones, you'd use all different kinds of things for the bones: beads and tools, make knives, and handles. Bone marrow, they make that into a butter; horns you can use for knife handles, and you cut them up for buttons, and drawers. [I learned this] from different people. I've done a lot of hunting with a lot of people, and a lot of the Elders used to tell different stories of what it was used for and how it was made. (04)

Use of animal resources for income is seen as not only an economic necessity, but also an important step towards overcoming obstacles of integrating Mi'kmaq products into external markets through Mi'kmaq control and approval, rather than through cultural appropriation by outsiders. An example of this would be dream catchers, Aboriginal art, and traditional jewelry that are not made by First Nation peoples, but which are sold in many stores. In Bear River, Mi'kmaq cultural skills are used to produce crafts that supplement primary employment:

Well, the porcupine, I use the quills to make earrings and necklaces with. I'd say about six porcupine quills, like, could make five dollars. (05)

Supplementary income. I do pretty good; I don't know, between three and five thousand dollars a year. And that's not really working right at it (crafts). (04)

Presently, many community members produce and sell crafts and jewellery made from parts of animals (i.e., antlers, claws, teeth, feathers). For example, figure 6.1 shows a pair of quill earrings made by one of the BRFN community members:

**Figure 6.1:** Earrings made with Porcupine Quills – Made by Tanya Warrington



The primary market for such products is to tourists who visit the reserve, but some individuals do sell their work off of the reserve, such as at local farmers markets, craft fairs and local shops. In some instances, community members have told me that they have sent their crafts to people around the world who visited the reserve and then called the cultural center to order more. Some visitors to the reserve buy crafts to send as gifts to family and friends in other countries.

Using parts of animals for crafts ensures that very little of the animal hunted for food goes to waste. In most cases animals are not hunted for craft parts, rather animals are hunted for their meat and craft parts are produced as by-products. One young-adult female participant referred to using the parts of hunted animals for crafts as a form of ‘recycling’. Recycling animal parts into crafts is not only important for economic revenue, but such actions also demonstrate respect to the animals:

If someone killed a bear, I wouldn’t want to see anything just wasted. Like there’s always a use [...] I do have a craft business but that’s only because I recycled; if somebody kills a bear, or kills a deer, if they’re not going to use their hide, I’ll speak for it. I’ll ask for the antlers. (09)

In some cases animal parts used for crafts do not require the animal be killed. For example, porcupine quills can be gathered using only a towel which is rubbed on the porcupine encouraging the release of quills after which the porcupine will grow new quills. Individuals often use parts from animals that have been killed by vehicles or by other animals. In such circumstances, individuals often give an offering to the animal as a sign of appreciation and respect for their gift, even if they did not kill the animal themselves.

To varying degrees, individuals also use materials purchased from stores, such as leather, beads, sinew and metal clasps, for crafts and jewelry. The demand for store-bought products signifies dynamic changes within the community; that is, many community members no longer engage in certain processes and therefore certain products have been replaced by manufactured goods. For example, tanning hides to make leather is something that most community members no longer do, although it was recorded by Wallis and Wallis (1955, p.43) as a regular part of reserve life in the early 1900's. Although the tanning process was not explained to me, one young-female interview participant told me during an informal conversation that tanning hides to make leather is a much more involved process than cleaning and stretching hides to be used for drums (09). Since tanning hides to make leather is no longer done by most community members in Bear River, many crafts people will order commercially-manufactured leather to be used for clothing, moccasins, jewelry, etc:

Usually we [at the Cultural Center on the BRFN reserve] order in hides [for crafts and leather], or people will buy what they want and give it to me and I'll just do what they want done. Ah, I'd like to be able to tan our own hides, that would be really neat. (04)

See years ago our people used to use the insides. They used to use the, ah, sinew, but we don't anymore. We can buy the sinew now. (11)

Recently, many younger community members have been employed at the visitor's center to demonstrate their craft work, as well as the process of making the crafts, to tourists. The products made at the cultural center are sold and the profits go to the cultural center itself. Individuals in the community who sell their own crafts retain the money as income. Crafts that are sold at the Cultural Centre are all made by community

members and include, but are not limited to, quill boxes (made from porcupine quills), quill earrings, necklaces (made from quills, deer antler or animal bones), leather pouches, baskets (made from ash), moccasins, key chains (made from leather), wooden flowers, and dream catchers (with feathers from hunted animals, as well as store bought feathers).

As noted by some participants, craft-making strengthens the BRFN social system through retaining and acquiring skills and knowledge related to the land. Further, the transmission of skills from one generation to the next produces an educational environment where individuals learn and teach cultural activities, while generating a cash income. Selling crafts, as one sector of a mixed economy, encourages activities which reinforce cultural and environmental sustainability:

Because it (crafts) is a real good way to make money, and most people love, well, a lot of people up here do crafts. More so, the younger generations are starting to get back into it. And some of the stuff we do is a lost art. (04)

Although many participants from all age groups said crafts reproduce tradition, they also said it is important that skills be dynamic and evolve to meet modern needs. Since contemporary demands have changed, then too must the products and crafts. For example, some community members make ashtrays out of bones, which was said to be a relatively recent phenomena. Another male middle-aged community member, who does tan his own hides, uses bones to make drawer handles:

I use mostly all the meat parts and everything from the front legs, to the neck, to the back, the ribs to the hind quarters. And we use the hair for making flies and different lures for catching fish. The hides are used for tanning, making drums and other leather crafts. Ah, what else? The hoofs that are used for, I don't normally, but I usually collect them for other people that want them, the hoofs, they use them for different types of rattles. And necklaces used for traditional attire. So we just try to think about the different uses, some traditional, some more modern uses. We don't like taking a leg and making a lamp out of it or anything like that, ha, ha, not much of that. (01)

It is not enough simply to recognize the socio-economic aspect of craft making, but rather it must be emphasized that there is a strong sense of pride among the crafts people regarding their work and abilities. Through craftwork, BRFN Mi'kmaq pride and culture is spread throughout the world:

I used to make a lot of quill boxes; I got quill work all over the world. Ah, I've been doing crafts for 18 years, so I can pretty well do it all. Flowers,

garments, I just made a dress here not too long ago for a chief over in Newfoundland. Um, and moccasins, muckluks, you name it, I can pretty well do it. (04)

### **Mi'kmaq Spirituality and Animals**

Mi'kmaq individuals in Bear River believe that the ties binding humans and animals require an integration of social, ecological and spiritual understandings. This section will discuss the inclusion of outside beliefs into Mi'kmaq spirituality, and modern Mi'kmaq spiritual relationships with animals through animal meanings and spirit guides.

According to some BFRN community members, the spiritual aspects of human-animal relationships have evolved from age-old traditions that, in some cases, have been integrated with cosmologies of other nations. Even so, borrowed traditions and amalgamation of worldviews/principles and practices does not decrease the authenticity of traditions and identity. As noted by Nagel (1997, p. 47), cultural revisions and innovations have long been a part of the repertoire of Native American cultural survival. Borrows (2002, p.148) echoes this perspective, "Aboriginal values and identity develop in response to their own and other culture's practices, customs, and traditions". For example, in BFRN, one older female participant suggested that the significance of the eagle to the Mi'kmaq culture is not a part of historical traditional beliefs. Rather, it is a trend that originated in the west and was recently brought to the Mi'kmaq nation on the east coast:

Lately the eagle is important. See they only started in Nova Scotia with the eagle and all that, here, must be 30 years maybe. Before that people didn't; see they brought all this out from the west country. And they brought it down here. And so that's where they got all this nature, spiritualism, whatever. (14).

In the Wallis and Wallis (1955) ethnography of the Mi'kmaq, the eagle is not discussed as a sacred bird to the Mi'kmaq. Rather, it was recorded by Wallis and Wallis (1955, p.118), that "[a] large eagle, hawk or crow circling about is a spy looking over the country, maybe a Mohawk in disguise". Other mentions of the eagle, or *Kitput*, as recorded in Wallis and Wallis (1955, p.433), include stories where the eagle, like all other animals and birds, speak the same language as humans. There is no doubt, however, that



today the eagle is very important to the BRFN community, as will be discussed in the following section.

The evolution of Mi'kmaq spirituality can be conceptualized within the context of colonialism. Since the time of European contact Mi'kmaq culture has incorporated European belief systems, including the introduction of Catholicism in the fifteenth century (Paul, 2006). Today, the Catholic religion continues to be prevalent within the Bear River community and, to varying degrees, it continues to affect the way individuals relate to, and view, animals. This is evident in the following passage from a middle-aged female interview participant; for this BRFN individual, her perception of the snake is an combination of Catholic philosophies and Mi'kmaq teachings:

[...] the snake, because of Catholicism and so forth, well it's the serpent, it's the evil. I think that's pretty well universal and stuff and I'm terrified of them. But I've [also] had encounters with them where they've actually brought teachings. (12)

Another individual explicitly stated that there was a time, not too long ago, that the Mi'kmaq were subject to governmental regulations that did not allow individuals to practice their cultural spirituality. The Residential School System of 1930-1967 prohibited the practice of traditional spiritual beliefs and deprived Aboriginal peoples of their rights, culture, and language (Paul, 2006, p.283). According to one female Elder:

When I was young there was a time that they [children] wasn't allowed to practice their spirituality. [...] I think they [Government] just wanted to sort of phase out the native people. (13)

During my observations, I learned that modern spirituality in Bear River appears to be an amalgamation of traditional Mi'kmaq and Catholic beliefs. To varying degrees, community members go to church on Sundays, get married by priests, hang crosses in their homes, and have Christian funerals. St. Anne's Chapel was also built on the BRFN reserve in 1831, and many events continue to take place there today (i.e., funerals, community events) (BRFN Heritage and Cultural Centre, 2004, no page number). The same community members will participate in Mi'kmaq spiritual ceremonies such as giving offerings to animals, sing Mi'kmaq songs that praise the Earth, and teach traditional Mi'kmaq spiritual values to youth. From this perspective, most community

members incorporate both Catholicism and Mi'kmaq spirituality in their daily lives. A few community members, however, said they are not Catholic at all and follow only Mi'kmaq traditional spirituality. During informal conversations, many community members emphasized the importance of their lived experiences in relation to their spirituality. Reflections on education, family, and upbringing were all factors that individuals said influenced their understanding of Mi'kmaq and Catholic spirituality.

Within the BRFN community, it was common for participants and community members to highlight certain animals that were said to be culturally and spiritually significant to the community today. The notion of animal meanings reflects a collective cultural consciousness; that is, at the level of community certain animals have socially constructed meanings associated with them that form an integral part of Mi'kmaq spirituality. At the level of the individual, participants believe animals can become spirit guides who help to provide direction for one's self. Implicit in this understanding is that animals can be called upon for guidance, teachings, healing and prayers. The two categories of 'animal meanings' and 'spirit guides' are not separate spheres, but rather they inform and complement each other.

Mi'kmaq Bear River culture communicates the importance and role of spirit guides, as well as animal meanings through stories, ceremonies and teachings. A brief introduction of the meanings and sacredness associated with specific animals and the way in which humans learn from animals should provide the foundation for understanding the contemporary cultural/spiritual significance of animals to many of the Mi'kmaq BRFN community members.

### Animal Meanings and Spirit Guides

According to Hunn (1993, 20) animals have multiple meanings which include both culture-specific and referential meanings. For example, as discussed by Berkes (1999, p.45); "*dog* means *Canis familiaris*; but *dog* can also mean 'man's best friend' in one culture, 'sled-puller' in another, and 'dinner' in a third". Within the BRFN community all animals are said to be equally important within nature; however, certain animals have specific meaning to the Mi'kmaq culture that distinguish them from the other animals. As mentioned previously, today the eagle is one of the most culturally-

important spiritual animals. The eagle was discussed by most participants as a very sacred bird because it can fly the highest and closest to the Creator and carry prayers upon its wings. According to modern Mi'kmaq cosmology, the eagle's meaning is culturally significant as an animal that binds together the physical and spiritual worlds.

The eagle is the, the one bird or animal that can go the highest to, to the sun and the moon. And because of that, it takes our messages to the Creator on its wings. (10)

The sacredness and significance of the eagle to the BRFN Mi'kmaq people is evident in both everyday and ceremonial activities. For example, talking circles are a ceremony whereby people sit in a circle and pass around an item which indicates whose turn it is to speak. The holder of the item is able to talk for as long as they would like about the discussion topic or about anything on their mind. During my participant observations at gatherings, I noticed that in some cases an eagle feather was used as the official symbol that indicates whose turn it is to speak. Furthermore, some interview participants and community members explained that receiving an eagle feather from another person is a great honour:

The eagle was quite important. For an example, to be given an eagle's feather was so important, it was the greatest gift you could receive or give to another person. And we [the Mi'kmaq] believe that it had such great vision [that] it could take our prayers up to the Creator. (13)

According to many community members, an eagle feather is something that people earn from doing good and helpful things:

An eagle feather is something that you earn. You're honored with an eagle feather. You don't have to do anything in particular; it could even be a good guidance or somebody who can teach a lot. Anyone that has an outstanding part in your life. If anyone deserves an eagle feather we honour them with it. (09)

BRFN community members who have given eagle feathers to deserving people said that eagle feathers can be found on the ground, especially in Cape Breton where community members believe to be an abundance of eagles, or from wildlife parks (i.e., Shubenacadie Wildlife Park), or from under an eagle's nest. When an eagle feather is picked up from the ground, one community member reiterated the necessity of giving an offering to thank the eagle, and Creator, for the feather.

The sacredness of eagle feathers is also manifested through protocols regarding the storage, treatment, possession and use of the feathers. According to one interview participant, an eagle feather should never be sold for crafts or any purpose. Another community member said an eagle feather must never touch the ground and it must be securely placed in an area where it will not fall. One young female interview participant emphasized that an eagle feather, received as a gift, must never be on display within one's home:

I have a few at my house, and somewhere it's stated that you don't display your feathers to the open. It's like it builds on your ego if it's sitting around or hanging on your wall. So I have mine in a little special container. (09)

Prior to giving an eagle feather there are ceremonies that must take place. The most commonly discussed ceremony was to smudge the feather prior to giving it to someone. A smudging ceremony involves burning sage and allowing the smoke to circle the feather and the person to ensure that all bad energy is removed from the feather and the person who is giving the feather:

Usually when you give an eagle feather it's smudged to make sure there's no bad spirits/energy that's running through it. (07)

Less formal, but equally important as culturally constructed animal meanings, is the notion of spirit guides. The spiritual community is founded upon the belief that all entities on earth have a spirit; rocks, plants, animals, water and even weather, have spirits which must be respected. According to eight of the 15 interview participants, including males and females of various ages, the spirit of each entity has the ability to teach lessons to humans and offer guidance. Interview participants used more than one term to refer to the concept of 'spirit guides' such as "'spirit animal' and 'animal guide'. The term spirit guide was the most frequently re-occurring term and was described by one individual as,

A spirit guide is an animal or a bird that you see a lot of throughout your life time, and you know, it's just intuition, you just know that that is your guide throughout life. And you know that when you see them that you are staying on the right path. They're always there to guide you (11).

Some individuals who said they had animal spirit guides indicated that their relationship with those animals differed from their relationships with other animals in nature. For

example, during an informal conversation with one young male community member, he told me he was more spiritually connected to his spirit animal than other animals. Because of this, he would ask his spirit guide for guidance and direction in difficult situations, but he would not ask other animals. He explained that spirit guides can be asked for guidance and direction at anytime or anyplace since their spirit is always present. According to one middle-aged female interview participant, she would not shoot a deer because it was her spirit guide, but she could eat the deer:

I guess [the relationship with a spirit guide differs from other animals] because I don't like to shoot the deer. If we need deer meat here, XXX will shoot the deer. I won't do it, I can't do it. I just can't because I think, well that one might be the one that came in my life right now, at this particular time, for a certain reason, and I'm going to take its life, so I can't do that. I just can't do that. (10)

Spirit guides were not discussed by all participants. One reason for this could be due to the true absence of such relationships, or it is possible that participants did not wish to share their experiences with spirit guides because it was too spiritual and personal to discuss. To communicate such personal experiences was discussed by one middle-aged female participant as 'inappropriate', and it was explicitly stated that she would "prefer to not talk about such personal experiences" (12). Thus, it is possible that other participants felt the same way but did not explicitly explain their lack of responses and knowledge about spirit guides.

While culture provides a guiding framework that influences one's perspective of the world, the specific interpretations of the world often differs for each individual. This is especially true of the teachings associated with spirit guides. According to some interview participants, cultural teachings are said to guide individuals insofar as to be aware and mindful of the teachings animals can offer, but specific individuals' interpretations of the teachings themselves, and what they mean, are based on personal experiences and understandings.

Each animal has its own spirit and each animal has a different effect on each person, and each region, each heart. (01)

I find that they're forever teaching us; it's just trying to have an open mind and try to be aware of the teachings. (12)

The spirit guide(s) present within a person's life can either be in flux or consistent over time. This largely depends upon the individual, his/her personal needs, his/her experiences and what s/he has been taught by other community members, family members and Elders. Some participants, including one adult male and a young female who are quoted below, believe spirit guides constantly evolve throughout one's lifetime as the need for guidance and teaching changes:

[...] which spirit guide is the most prominent in my life, and which one is guiding me, which one is my protector, which one is my healer [identifying them] is something that I'm constantly working on. And lots of times it's constantly evolving, too. You know one day it might be one animal or a bird or something that is most prominent that day and the next it might be something else. But just trying to figure out, you know, which ones are quite consistent, which one shows up at certain times when certain issues come up in my life. You know, which ones are there to protect me, which ones open what doors up for me, which ones neutralizes things for me, ah, which ones help me when I'm feeling lonely. [...] And I don't think that's something that you ever, will ever, get to understand totally because it's totally, constantly evolving. (01)

It [spirit guide] could even change depending on the season or, or whatever time, in your life. Could even change like, you could have an animal maybe as a child and then maybe a different animal when you become an adult or something. (07)

Another middle-aged female participant, however, believes people's spirit guides can change when needed, but individuals will always return to the guidance of one particular animal as a constant guide:

Yah, they [spirit guide] can change, but not for very long. Others come into your life at a certain time when they're needed. (11)

Bear River Band members who participated in interviews expressed a variety of ways in which guidance or teachings from animals can be obtained. Examples include direct interactions, visions quests, books, dreams and 'medicine cards' as mediums through which individuals identified their spirit guide and their teachings. Through direct interactions, animals make themselves and their lessons known to humans through behaviour. For example, one middle-aged female community members said that she noticed a certain animal 'hanging around' her on a regular basis, and took that to indicate that the animal had a teaching for her. In order to identify the meaning of the animal, some individuals said they would refer to new-age books that identify the significance of

animals. These books were not described as written by a Mi'kmaq person. Medicine cards were described as similar to horoscopes where people could pick a card at random that signified a certain animal which would predict what the day would be like for the person, what difficulties they may experience, and how to best address the day:

I work with medicine cards a lot, and they're to do with the animals. I usually try to pull one or two of those a day, and by that I can pretty well tell what the day is going to bring, and know how I'm going to have to handle it, and it gives me positive feedback and approaches to what I might (do). If I hadn't had that and was centering myself every day I wouldn't probably respond the same way [...] but it's just positive feedback, I guess. For guidance. (10)

Another way to identify one's spirit guide or an animal teaching is through a vision quest. A vision quest was described by one community member as a journey, or traditional ceremony, conducted by a single individual who has to fast for four days. The individual must remain outside, with few amenities. Vision quests, as explained by a young female, were said to assist individuals in identifying their spirit animal:

And when you go on your vision quest you would ask a few questions like, you'd ask for a spirit name, a spirit animal, and you might not find it through the vision quest what your animal is or your name until one day it will just come. And once you found out then you would have to go look up that animal and see what the animal is like, and if it's part of you and you ask it for guidance. And you just ask questions and use their power to help you. (07)

During my time spent in Bear River I did not hear anyone speak of a vision quest that they had done, nor did I observe anyone preparing for one. It is possible, however, that individuals did, or had, embarked on a vision quest, yet due to the private nature of the journey I was not informed about it.

The ties to animals as spirit guides and teachers bind the Mi'kmaq people to an obligation to care for the animals. Therefore, taking care of the animals is important for more than just ecological reasons; animal teachings are considered vital to human well-being and survival. As noted by one participant, "[t]he animals are the greatest of all teachers. So, therefore, we need them as much as they need us" (11).

In summary, the BRFN community members identified animals as teachers, providers and an essential part of nature. A reciprocal relationship between animals and humans, based on respect, forms the responsibilities BRFN community members feel

towards animals. BRFN community members, however, expressed concerns about modern land-use activities on and off the reserve. Their concerns about possible disruptions of fundamental relationships are the topic of the next chapter.



## Chapter 7: Environmental Change and Impacts on Relationships between Mi'kmaq People and Animals

There's a perimeter around the Reserve where there's companies that come and they cut the trees down. So that leaves the animals with no place to go. And where are they going to run? Right straight to the Reserve. And along with the clear cutting there's spraying of trees before they clearcut. And those are those chemicals that go into the water and leak into the ground so the bugs eat them, the animals eat them, and then they end up sick. (12)

Based on Mi'kmaq beliefs, values and culture, the BRFN community has long established relationships with the land and animals. These relationships, however, face possible erosion due to changes in the biophysical and social world within and around the reserve. The purpose of this chapter is to examine participants' perceptions of negative impacts to the environment and subsequently possible changes to socio-cultural mechanisms of the community. In particular, community members' perceptions regarding the impacts of nearby off-reserve timber extractions on the environment and animals will be explored. The consequences of these impacts on the community will then be investigated through community members' changing perceptions of, and relationships with, animals.

According to the Department of Natural Resources report titled "'Fast stats' about Nova Scotia's forests" (2007, no page number), sixty-nine percent of Nova Scotia forests are privately owned. A study conducted by GPI Atlantic (2001, p. 8), states "the majority of the province's forests are privately owned, making regulation and forest protection initiatives more challenging than in jurisdictions with higher rates of public ownership of forestland". The report (GPI Atlantic, 2001, p.7) also shows "[t]he rate of cutting in Nova Scotia has doubled over the past two decades by *volume*, and in the last decade alone the actual *area* clearcut annually has doubled". In particular, the area of wood harvested annually via clearcut methods in Nova Scotia increased from 39,310 hectares to 50,864 hectares in 2005 (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 2007, no page number). Of the 50,864 hectares harvested in 2005, 9077 hectares were clearcut on Provincial crown land, while 41,787 hectares were clearcut on private lands (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 2007, no page number). In comparison, in 2005, the total area harvested

through selection harvesting, on both crown and private lands, was 838 hectares, and commercial thinning was 2624 hectares (Canadian Council of Forest Ministers, 2007, no page number). Thus, clear-cut timber extraction was largely the dominant method for timber harvesting in Nova Scotia in 2005.

Table 6.1 illustrates the volume of timber harvested, on both crown and private lands, per county surrounding the Bear River area, in 2000 and 2005. These three counties were most often discussed by the community members in relation to the large-scale clear-cuts. It does not indicate what portion of the timber comes from clear-cut land, but from the previous discussion, it is reasonable to assume a large proportion is from clear-cut timber extraction methods. The final column shows the changes in total harvest per county from 2000 to 2005. As evident in the table, the amount of timber harvested may have decreased in the Annapolis and Yarmouth counties over the past five years, however the BRFN community is registered as in the Digby county, and in that area the amount of timber harvested has increased from 2000 to 2005 by 81,118 cubic meters (Natural Resources Canada, Registry of Buyers Report, 2001, no page number; Natural Resources Canada, Registry of Buyers Report, 2006, no page number).

**Table 6.1:** Timber Extraction in Annapolis, Digby and Yarmouth Counties, Nova Scotia, for the Years 2000 and 2005.

County in Nova Scotia	Timber harvested (cubic meters) in 2000	Timber harvested (cubic meters) in 2005	Change in Timber Harvest from 2000 to 2005 (cubic meters)
<b>Annapolis</b>	Hardwood – 386,535 Softwood – 47,675 <b>Total – 434,210</b>	Hardwood – 309,683 Softwood – 27,874 <b>Total – 337,557</b>	- 96,653
<b>Digby</b>	Hardwood – 356,423 Softwood – 24,613 <b>Total – 381,036</b>	Hardwood – 395,486 Softwood – 66,668 <b>Total – 462,154</b>	+ 81,118
<b>Yarmouth</b>	Hardwood – 123,952 Softwood - 7551 <b>Total – 131,503</b>	Hardwood – 121,267 Softwood - 6865 <b>Total – 128,132</b>	- 3,371

Sources: Natural Resources Canada, Registry of Buyers Report, 2001, no page number; Natural Resources Canada, Registry of Buyers Report, 2006, no page number)

All BRFN interview participants voiced concerns about large-scale logging practices adjacent to the reserve land that they perceive to have caused detrimental impacts on both the community and on animals in the region. Much of the land neighboring the reserve, according to BFRN members, has been leased by private land owners to logging companies who have harvested the timber through large-scale clear-cut extraction. All interview participants stated that they believe the large-scale clear-cuts have negatively affected animal health, habitat, and distribution patterns. Because the land being clear-cut does not fall under the jurisdiction of the reserve, community members said they have had no control or input regarding the logging practices on the private land adjacent to the reserve.

Participants' observations of changes within the environment and of animals derive from their interactions within the local environment and from resource use activities. The community depends upon on the land and resources, and any environmental change can greatly affect Mi'kmaq life on the BRFN reserve. It is not clear as to how much of the area in Southwestern Nova Scotia has been clear-cut, however according to participants the clear-cuts extend from Bear River to Yarmouth, Nova Scotia:

I can take you, we leave 8:00 tomorrow morning, and we can drive all day tomorrow, and you still wouldn't see all the clear-cuts that's back here. It's, it's terrible. Well, I can leave my house on my four-wheeler and go to Yarmouth, just on roads where they put in for clear-cutting. That's not right. (02)

According to most participants, the impacts of large-scale clear-cut timber extraction are believed to be very harmful to the environment, animal and humans. Many participants have observed logging companies spraying chemicals on the replanted trees and leaving garbage and machine waste behind. Several participants stated that since all living and non-living things are interconnected, the consequences of spraying the trees and polluting the land must have a negative impact on all other animals and plants.

In contrast, the BRFN reserve has developed and implemented a silviculture program, led by community members, which follows selective logging practices on the reserve land. According to one middle-aged male community member, the purpose of the BRFN program is to promote sustainable forestry practices while increasing the health of

the forests. According to another middle-aged male interview participant, such conservation efforts, however, are negatively impacted by the adjacent clear-cut timber harvests:

The way they [companies off reserve] cut land, I mean here is the reserve, 1600 acres and they've clear cut all the way around [...] Whatever conservation we do inside this boundary, it doesn't matter because what's going on around us is having such a major impact on our small parcel of land that it can't sustain nothing. (01)

To date, the forestry program on the BRFN reserve has focused on hardwood release treatment, which, according to one middle-aged male community member, involves thinning out the lower-grade trees to let the hardwoods grow in the area. The wood harvested each year, approximately thirty to forty cords, is used as firewood by community members, or for baskets. The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq has helped to implement such programs in its member communities.

Participants suggested that the timber harvesting methods off reserve need to be reformulated by companies and the Province to address ecological concerns in a more effective manner. Specifically, many participants expressed a more favourable attitude toward selective logging and/or leaving larger buffer zones and habitat patches on the harvested land. In their view, such practices would alleviate at least some of the impacts such as habitat loss, siltation of waterways, and soil aeration.

Broader areas of conflict also arise from the logging activities within the area. Many participants suggested that they often feel marginalized and powerless regarding land-use decisions on the nearby land that largely affect the reserve and their livelihoods. According to one older male participant, companies have as much power and say as government regarding land-use activities:

I'd like to see it stopped, tell you the truth, but that ain't gonna happen. I think big companies, well, they're the government and they have say. And they gonna do what they want in there, so. (02)

Some participants said that non-native concepts of land ownership and land use places boundaries around 'property' without any consideration to trans-boundary impacts. Since only the reserve itself is under direct control of the Mi'kmaq community, the

private land owners in the area and logging companies are under no obligation to consult with the Mi'kmaq regarding timber harvesting extraction.

According to one middle-aged female participant, the logging companies “cut right up to the boundary, but it’s going to impact several feet in - it’s impacting our land” (12). During informal conversations with community members, some individuals suggested that a policy change is needed to develop a “good neighbour clause” so that adjacent land is considered in land-use decisions and measures are taken to mitigate the impacts. In addition, community members often discussed the unrestrained cutting of forests as a demonstration of industrial capitalist concern for immediate financial gain, no matter what the long-term costs. The community does not receive any benefits (jobs, compensation, or increased quality of life) from the timber harvest, yet they, and the animals, are forced to deal with the consequences of what is perceived as short-sighted logging practices. All interview participants expressed concern about perceived impacts on the animals and on the socio-cultural mechanisms of the community. It is to these topics that I now turn.

#### Perceived Impacts of Logging on Animals and the Environment

Observations of animals within the Bear River area have led all participants to believe the large-scale clear-cut timber extraction has profound negative effects on the animals in the region. Participants believe the clear-cutting activity itself destroys large parcels of habitat outside of the reserve, fragments the landscape, and forces animals to leave the areas they inhabit to look for alternative feeding grounds, water sources, shelter, and breeding locations. One middle-aged male participant expressed concern that the lack of appropriate habitat to meet specific species’ needs may result in the permanent loss of certain animals from the region:

And the loss of habitat means the loss of different animals. Because they need certain things to survive on, and if they don’t have it then they can’t survive.

(04)

A middle-aged female participant expressed similar concerns about animals leaving the local area. According to this participant, the re-growth of the forests and the return of certain animals may take many years:

Because their vegetation is being destroyed along with the chain of, food chain, because if one animal leaves another animal is going to follow it, because that's what it needs to survive on. So, eventually, they'll all leave. And they depend on the re-growth in order to go back to where they're used to. [...] The re-growth, where the clear cutting is, you're probably looking at twenty to thirty years to put it back the way it was, or more. (09)

In addition to the loss of habitat, animals have many other obstacles to overcome as a result of the cleared landscape. According to some community members, clear-cutting large areas of trees and vegetation leaves the land exposed to the sun which heats the surface and, thus, reduces sources of water:

I think just the destruction of the animals and the smaller critters in those clear cuts is incredible. There's probably never been a real thorough study on that. I mean just the temperature of inside a wooded area, you walk out into the clear cut it's like ten, fifteen degrees difference, and so whatever's out there is just baked, dried, burnt, and that includes animals, too. (01)

The impacts of the large-scale, clear-cut timber harvesting on animals may be understood more fully when considered alongside the social, cultural and spiritual impacts on the community. While BRFN and industry may be interested in different resources within a given area (i.e. animals versus timber), the use of lands and resources by industry has demonstrated the ability to largely affect the BRFN community. In particular, the use of forest resources by industry in the Bear River area has led to changes in the BRFN community member's perceptions of animals. This will be the focus in the following section.

### Changes in Perceptions of Animals

Most participants drew strong correlations between the large-scale, clear-cut land adjacent to the reserve, the increasing influx of animals on the reserve land, and the changing valuation of certain animals among community members. The BRFN community does not extract a large amount of timber through its selective harvesting forestry program (approximately thirty or forty cords per year), and therefore much of the reserve is heavily forested. The timber harvested on the reserve was not noticeable within the forests of the reserve from my observations; I did not see any forested areas on the reserve that appeared to have large amounts of timber extracted. When I did observe

individuals harvesting trees for basket making or for tepee poles, they went to places that did not appear to have any other trees recently harvested. Since the reserve is heavily forested, many participants believe that animals have migrated from outside the reserve into the reserve's forests.

We're almost clearcut all the way around the reserve actually. If you was to see it on the map and then have another map that shows every place that's been cut, you would find that we're almost the only place within miles, of any thick wood. And a lot of animals like thick wood to hide in. (04)

Take away their habitats is what it [clear-cutting] does. But then right now, that's kinda good, because we still have our forests and so the animals come to our reserve for protection. It's like they have a little sanctuary, right. (05)

While some participants take comfort in knowing that the animals have the reserve to go to, another participant asserted that the reserve land base is too small for the large increase of animals, which exposes the animals to other difficulties:

'Cause whatever comes in there (the reserve) its just there's not enough land base, there's not enough food to sustain larger animals for any length of time. So they can only stay there for a short period of time and it makes them very exposed to hunters and anything else, other animals and prey. You know, it not a big enough sanctuary for the animals to sustain themselves. (01)

The influx of animals in the community seems to have an effect on the community member's perceptions and valuation of animals. A recurring theme, discussed by most participants, was that many of the animals coming into the community to find food or shelter were now looked upon as either pests or threats to humans. Many participants commonly made reference to an influx of animals such as bobcats, skunks, raccoons, deer, and porcupine:

Well, we have animals on this reserve that we never had before. We, well about three years ago, I seen two bobcats. We never had them on the reserve before. Skunks we never had here before. The bears, the deer, raccoons all coming out around houses now around the reserve. (06)

Almost all participants said that since the clear-cutting started in the region the number of unwelcome bears in the community has increased. As a result, individuals are worried about the safety of the children in the community and perceive the bears as a threat:

Well, it's dangerous for the community, dangerous for the children. You can't leave them play out alone, you know, little ones, 'cause you never know when a bear's going to come out of the woods and grab them or not. (14)

A number of participants said they have witnessed bears in their backyard looking for food, which one middle-aged male community member described as "too close for comfort".

Changes in the relationships between humans and bears in Bear River are largely accompanied by changes in human perceptions of bears. A few community members described how bears were traditionally respected as the protector of the Mi'kmaq people, but now bears are seen as a threat/pest. When perceived as a threat, one participant said community members would shoot the bear for protection, and not for need.

I guess then they forget the sacredness of each individual, each animal. Because then their first intent would be to kill the animal so that it's not a pest anymore. Whereas before it would be killed for food. (10)

A middle-aged female participant who discussed the variation between respect for an animal and personal/family safety stated:

See there's a respect there that you have for the animals, right. We've always had it, and no matter what, you still have to keep that respect for the animal. But at the same time, if you have a wild animal in your back yard, you know, I'm gonna think twice about respecting the animal and thinking about your family, right. (11)

During my time in the community I heard many stories of bears near people's houses, yet I did not personally see one in the community, I did not hear of an instance when a bear did attack a community member, nor was one shot while I was there. On two occasions, however, community members showed me bear droppings on the back roads of the reserve approximately half a kilometer from the nearest house. On another occasion, when I was in a female community member's backyard with her partner and two young children, we heard a noise in the bushes near her house. Her partner grabbed the children and instructed us all to get into the house for fear that it was a bear making the noises. Although we did not see a bear, the concern that it might have been a bear was urgent enough for us all to move quickly into the house.



Most participants stated that if a 'problem' bear was shot, it is customary that all parts of it be used for meat, crafts or ceremonies. Unused parts would be given to other community members for their use. While using all parts of the animal reinforces Mi'kmaq traditions and codes of conduct, some participants worry that the display of killing animals because they are perceived as a threat, and not because it is needed, sends a flawed message to the younger generations regarding appropriate cultural codes of conduct. One older female participant stated individuals should discourage unnecessary killing and humans should put fences up in their yards to keep the bears out rather than shoot them.

You gotta put up fences and stuff [to keep the bears away from food]. It's just like your gardens, you gotta keep the rabbits out of it, right, and then we've always did that. (05)

According to one of the Elders, the bears have no other alternative but to come into the community, and so shooting them is not appropriate. Rather, they should be moved to another suitable location. The cost, method (tranquilizers, sanctuaries, etc) and likelihood of this option was not discussed.

But I can't see them killing them, you know, just because they got no place to go. That's not right. Find a place to put them and get them away from here. They should never be allowed to shoot them or kill them. That's terrible. They have just as much right as anybody else. (14)

On the other hand, one middle-aged male participant believes shooting a bear for safety should not be considered going against Mi'kmaq cultural codes of only taking an animal when needed, because safety is also a need. According to this participant shooting a bear sends a message to other bears that they should not come into the community, and therefore, it may be necessary to kill a small number in order to ensure the long term safety of the community:

Because we have the younger generations walking the reserve; if we allow these bears to stay and run around, they might have a tendency of attacking. So, we kind of have to thin them out, be careful to not over take them out, but thin them out a little bit to show them that, you know, to try and keep them away back a little bit. Like we don't have to kill a whole bunch. You only have to shoot one or two before they get the message 'okay, we can't go out that way'. You know, stay, if they travel through the woods where nobody can see them they're free to run. So they move back and forth that way. But when they come out into the open, I

guess if you take one out that will show them that 'look you can't go that direction, you have to stay in there'. (06)

Although there are different opinions on the issue, ranging from youth to Elders, there did not appear to be any active or visual conflict among community members regarding what the appropriate response should be to the influx of bears. During my time in Bear River, I did not hear of any formal or informal plans, by either the Chief or Band, regarding methods to address the community members' concerns about the bears in the community.

Safety issues were not only raised regarding humans; some participants also expressed concern for the bear's safety: "it's dangerous for them and dangerous for the people, too" (14). Almost all participants expressed sympathy for the bears and other animals because they are forced to relocate into the community and/or other areas in order to find food and shelter:

It just makes me half disgusted [...] seeing animals in hard shape because of something a human's done. (08)

They're losing their only homes that they've ever known. And they're coming out into civilization and sometimes humans are harmed, but it's not our fault and it's not their fault, it's just that they're lost. They don't know. They just want to go back to where they came from. If you take a fish out of water, you know, it's gonna die. If you take an animal out of its natural habitat, and it's hungry, it will do anything that it can to survive. And sometimes if that means killing a human and eating that for its own survival that's what's going to happen [...] And I really feel bad for the animals because I know what it would feel like for me if someone took away my way of living, my way of life. I would have to go elsewhere. The same as the animals are doing, I would have to move somewhere else to feed myself and look after myself right. And they're just doing what it takes to survive. (11)

This happened two years ago. We go to first Clearwater, I think, or it's first Daniels, and the road going down to it was just like a nice tunnel, all hardwood. We went back the following week and they had clear cut on the left. We went down to the lake and we heard these hawks, just a screaming, two of them. Looked up and there they were, circling, circling, just a screaming, for three days, they did that. And what had happened was they cut their nest, and then they had eggs, or little ones in it. And that really hurt me. Because all they did was just soar around where their nest was, of course it was just stumps now. And they did it for two, three days, before they finally left. And so that really, and this was just a couple years ago. From them clear-cutting [...] We went back and they were gone.

All because of clear-cutting. Yeah. So that really bothered me. Imagine what, three or four babies. (02)

It is clear that the community is concerned about the large scale clear-cuts in their region. Since everything is interconnected, any changes to the local forests will have impacts on the environment at large, including animals and humans. For the BRFN community members, the resultant impacts of the clear-cuts in the local area are perceived to be negative, with detrimental impacts affecting not only the environment and animals, but also their relationships with animals. The BRFN community, like most First Nation communities, have been adapting to continuous changes (socially, politically, economically, spiritually) since the arrival of Europeans five hundred years ago. As evident throughout this thesis, in spite of of such changes, the BRFN community continues to communicate and practice a distinct worldview. The fact that BRFN Mi'kmaq human-animal relationships have continued to evolve and persevere attests to the importance of such relationships to the BRFN cultures.

## Chapter 8: Conclusions

### Summary

In this Chapter, I return to the objectives of this study and provide a summary of the reoccurring themes as discussed by participants. The implications of this project are discussed, and the chapter concludes with ideas for further research. First, each of the questions addressed by this research project is discussed in turn:

#### ***(1) How are nature and animals conceptualized by members of the BRFN community?***

Participants conceptualize nature as animate and inanimate, including both human's sustenance and being. Participants described nature as a complex system that includes spiritual, biological, ecological and social interactions. These systems, together, form a balance in nature. Some participants thought that humans were said to be a part of nature, while other community members considered humans as part of "two worlds": ecological and human. Many participants perceived that anthropocentric thought and activities are intruding on the natural balance. The links between anthropocentric behaviours and the "sickness" of the natural world appear obvious, according to community members. During interviews, participants expressed regret and sadness about the destruction of the natural world, and fear about the correlated fate of humans and other species.

Conceptualizations of animals as intelligent beings with their own spirits were observed through everyday interactions with animals. Animals were said to display intelligence through behaviours, which were indicative of social and environmental understandings of their world. The findings of this study indicate that this perception of animals largely influences all Bear River Mi'kmaq relationships with animals, as discussed in Chapter 6.

#### ***(2) What role do Mi'kmaq cultural values play in determining animal resource use, stewardship and distribution in the BRFN community?***

Mi'kmaq perceptions and values of animals continue to delineate and influence human-animal relationships in the BRFN community to a large extent. For the Mi'kmaq

in Bear River, the value of animals is expressed in relation to both historical and contemporary cultural, spiritual, economic and social relationships between humans and animals. Today, Mi'kmaq cultural perceptions largely dictate not only how animals are valued, but also how they are treated.

The findings of this study indicate that for the Mi'kmaq in Bear River animals are not commonly expressed as "other" to humans; perceptions of animals are based on the worldview that all living and non-living things are interconnected and have a spirit which must be honoured and respected. Therefore, animals are regarded as partners in relationships, and humans have an obligation to maintain this balance. Consequently, the BRFN community has a distinct system of responsibility concerning animals, resources and social relations that serve as a means through which humans fulfill their responsibility to the relationship.

Through codes of conduct, community members are encouraged to exercise self-control and maintain social mechanisms that ensure cultural systems remain intact. For example, codes of conduct ensure social controls on greed and misuse, while reinforcing cultural systems such as sharing and trade. Sharing and trading animal parts ensures that nothing from the animal is wasted, and reaffirms community-based social values. BRFN Mi'kmaq values are passed from one generation to the next through teachings in the community.

***(3) In what ways are human-animal relationships significant to the BRFN Mi'kmaq people?***

The themes apparent from information shared by participants and community members regarding relationships between humans and animals and the significance of animals to the BRFN community are related to hunting, crafts and spiritualism. Each is discussed below.

Hunting: As well as supplying community members with food, hunting activities serve to reinforce important Mi'kmaq socio-cultural activities. Firstly, hunting promotes intergenerational teachings through the passing of knowledge and culture from older to younger generations. During the hunt, older generations demonstrate various ways to

track, kill, clean killed animals and give offerings. Upon the return back to the community, younger generations are taught how to use the whole of the animal so that nothing is wasted. Secondly, the meat and animal parts obtained from hunted animals ensure adequate supplies of food for individuals and important cultural events such as feasts and gatherings. Third, the meat obtained through the practice of hunting strengthens socio-cultural resource distribution systems and networks of social reciprocities are maintained, including sharing and trade.

Most hunters were quick to make reference to the factors which affect their ability to hunt. In particular, some participants expressed concern about pollution and resultant contamination of game meat. Furthermore, moose, one of the most important sources of meat, is endangered on the mainland. Thus, BRFN community members must travel to Cape Breton to hunt for moose; these trips require a significant degree of capital and time. As a result, many community members share the expenses of trips and equipment needed to hunt in Cape Breton. Although this presents some challenges, most hunters stated that in the long run it is still advantageous to make the commute to Cape Breton for financial and cultural purposes, as mentioned above.

Crafts: Access to animal resources for socio-economic purposes is of great importance to the BRFN community. Specifically, quills, teeth, bones, antlers, claws and feathers are used from a variety of animals to make traditional and contemporary products that are sold to outside markets as well as tourists who visit the community. Craft-makers use the money from their products to supplement their income from other employment sources.

Participants emphasized that using parts of animals for crafts ensures that very little of hunted animals goes to waste; this demonstrates respect to the killed animals and to the Creator. Today, some of the animal parts that are used for crafts are purchased from stores. Leather, for example, is most often purchased, since tanning hides to make leather products no longer takes place on the reserve. Regardless of such changes, craft making continues to be an important part of BRFN cultural identity.

Spirituality: Taking care of animals is important for spiritual reasons. That is, human ties to animals' spirits bind the Mi'kmaq people in an obligation to care for the animals.

Specifically, one participant explained to me the spiritual aspects of interrelating animals to humans: “you have to look after the animals because they look after you” (14).

At the level of community, certain animals have culturally-constructed meanings associated with their spirit which form an integral part of Mi’kmaq spirituality. For example, the eagle has the ability to fly the highest to the Creator, and so it carries human prayers upon its wings. In return, humans have to respect and give thanks (offerings) to the eagle. At the level of the individual, animals also function as spirit guides who offer guidance and teachings to humans. The spiritual significance of animals to the BRFN Mi’kmaq people is celebrated and manifested through ceremonies, rituals and stories.

Interview participants indicated that the spiritual meanings associated with animals have evolved from traditions that, in some cases, have been integrated with cosmologies of other cultures. Lived experiences and interactions with other tribes and cultures have largely framed contemporary Mi’kmaq spiritual relationships with animals. For example, Catholicism, introduced by missionaries and reinforced in residential schools, is still very much a component of BRFN identity. Today, most BRFN community members straddle both traditional and Catholic spiritual beliefs; many community members engage in Catholic practices, such as church services and celebrating St. Anne’s day, while concurrently engaging in Mi’kmaq ceremonies such as giving offerings to animals.

The findings of this study indicate that understanding the significance of animals and resources requires applied contextual research that examines processes and meanings. As with all cultures, the BRFN Mi’kmaq culture is continually constructed and negotiated. The best approximation of resource and animal significance may be achieved through studies that examine the assumptions underlying resource use; the social, spiritual, political, economic, and cultural context in which they are embedded. I remind the reader that this study does not represent the significance of animals to the BRFN in its entirety. It is unlikely to fully understand and communicate the significance and meaning of animals across cultures. This, research, however can be an initial starting point for future applied research.

***(4) What impacts do the Mi'kmaq people in Bear River experience when resources and animals in nature are affected by other users?***

For the Mi'kmaq in Bear River, of greatest environmental concern is the large-scale, clear-cut timber extraction on the land adjacent to the reserve. Participants expressed concerns that animal health, distribution and behaviours are threatened by increasing externally-driven logging pressure on forest resources. Changes in the environment and in animal resources have resulted in changes in Mi'kmaq social and cultural systems. Faced with large-scale environmental change and an influx of animals, community members voiced concerns that large-scale logging practices have transformed the community's perceptions of, and relationships, with certain animals. For example, for some, bears have changed from that of protector to that of pest due to the increasing presence of bears in the community.

**Implications**

The Mi'kmaq in Bear River and their ancestors have a long history of relationships with animals. Today, as comparable with the past, the BRFN relationships between humans and animal in nature stress respect and reciprocity. Wallis and Wallis (1955, p.106), observed similar relationships with animals in the early and mid-1900's, and reiterate the complexity of describing Mi'kmaq relationship with animals in words: "the pragmatic is most clearly conveyed in their manner of expression, if not in their exact words". The information presented in this thesis indicates that BRFN relationships with animals have remained a significant part of the daily activities and identity of the community. This does not mean that the relationships have remained constant over time, but rather they have evolved in accordance with contemporary pressures and changes from within and outside of the community. According to Vivian (1992, p.63), many factors bring changes to the lifestyles of indigenous communities, "but no tradition has ever been static, and changes can occur without tradition being lost". Borrows (2002, p.147) echoes this perspective, and adds that the evolution of Aboriginal culture is not a recent phenomenon, "[o]ur [Aboriginal] intellectual, emotional, social, physical and spiritual insights can simultaneously be compared, contrasted, rejected, embraced and



intermingled with those of others. In fact, this process has been operative since before the time that Indigenous peoples first encountered others on their shores”.

As evident throughout this thesis, BRFN traditions are not frozen in time; they are rooted in the past, but not frozen and unchanged. Many values in the BRFN community have remained similar over time; however, today they may be practiced differently. The world is constantly changing, and like many First Nation communities, the BRFN faces the difficulty of balancing traditions with contemporary changes and pressures. Natcher (2003, p.169-170) reaffirms this point, “Aboriginal peoples have been adapting to socio-economic change for centuries. Rather than being locked into a static cultural continuum, Aboriginal peoples, as they exist today, have exhibited a cultural dynamism that has enabled them to maintain a distinct cultural identity while coping (to be sure, some more successfully than others) with continuous cultural, economic and environmental changes”.

I return here to a quote by Berkes (1999, p.168) that was presented in the first chapter. Berkes states:

It is often assumed that indigenous peoples have only two options: to return to an ancient and ‘primitive’ way of life, or to abandon traditional beliefs and practices and become assimilated into the dominant society. Increasingly, indigenous groups have been expressing preference for a third option: to retain culturally significant elements of a traditional way of life, combining the old and the new in ways that maintain and enhance their identity while allowing their society and economy to evolve.

Today, the BRFN community is reflective of what Berkes considers the ‘third option’, retaining important Mi’kmaq values while also adopting new practices and responding to the modern pressures of today. Modern factors such as technology, interrelations with non-natives, and land-use activities around the reserve draw the BRFN Mi’kmaq people toward new practices and beliefs. For example, as discussed in Chapter 6, the ability to purchase leather and craft supplies from stores has infiltrated the craft sector in the community, and access to technology has permitted individual to travel further for access to meat, including both to stores and to new hunting grounds. Furthermore, some of the individuals who have retained spiritual relationships with animals, in the form of spirit

guides, look to modern medicine cards and books for the meaning and teaching of their spirit guides.

Land-use activities threaten to change Mi'kmaq relationships with animals, such as the perceptions of bears as indicated in the previous chapter. These factors that influence the BRFN relationships with animals are both voluntary, and forced. For example, purchasing leather from stores is voluntary, while dealing with an increase of bears on the reserve is forced upon the community due to land use-activities off the reserve. Changes to the community's relationships with animals illustrate and reinforces the idea that the BRFN community's relationships with animals are fluid and evolve over time. As noted by Battiste and Henderson (2003, p.14) "Indigenous peoples' forced and voluntary interactions with other peoples and their views of life have created an Indigenous consciousness that is a web of intertwining heritages and thoughts".

Despite the changes in certain practices and perceptions, many of the relationships, values and codes of conduct regarding animals that underlie making crafts, hunting, and spirituality have remained relatively intact since the days of the Wallis and Wallis's ethnography (1955). In particular, values such as respect and reciprocity continue to be prominently discussed and taught within the BRFN community. Further, many community members continue to engage in traditional Mi'kmaq ceremonies such as giving offerings and vision quests. Even when the perceptions of animal change, such as is the case with bears in Bear River, the humans who shoot a bear for safety reason will still use all of the bear for food or crafts, as obligatory by the Mi'kmaq code of conduct that humans must use all of the animal that they kill.

It is my belief that the BRFN is a community example of cultural survival and perseverance. The values of the community have surpassed the boundaries of time, the boundaries of colonial policies (i.e. assimilation) and the boundaries of the reservation on which they live. Although BRFN Mi'kmaq perceptions and relationships with animals have evolved over time, community members still voice traditional values in the modern context. In the contemporary world, the BRFN Mi'kmaq community engages in a dynamic relationship with animals which includes modern elements while maintaining the very social relations, practices and beliefs that form the bedrock of Mi'kmaq culture.

This thesis places much emphasis on 'relationships' with animals. The reason for this, as noted by Stevenson (2006, p.169), is because “ '[r]elationships', not specific resources, habitats or even ecosystems, however these are defined, were the focus of management and the nexus around which Aboriginal peoples traditionally constructed their knowledge bases and implemented their managements systems and practices”. Today, I argue that this statement continues to reflect the reality of the BRFN community. While management is basically about people managing people, relationships are about dynamics between people, the land and animals. Most community members have a profound respect for animals, which is demonstrated through reciprocity and mutual responsibility to the relationship. From this view, and as illustrated in Chapter 6, respect and reciprocity are both a driving force and integral part of BRFN cultural relationships with animals. According to Anderson (1996, p.72) “[i]n order to persuade people to do what is empirically known to be sensible or necessary, a culture must encode a great many plausible and believable explanations and justifications”. While this may be true in many regards (i.e., they do form the basis for many BRFN codes of conduct), respect and reciprocity are more than simply a way “to persuade people”, rather they ensure a moral exchange between partners in a relationship, in this case between humans and animals.

### **Further Research**

Because this research was exploratory in nature, it has opened the door for further studies. During interviews many participants stressed the need for an impact assessment that measures the effects that clear-cutting and spraying has had, and is having, on the land and animals on the reserve. Are there impacts on animal distribution patterns? Has the spraying affected the health and populations of animal species in the Bear River area? Has the water been affected by the harvesting activities? Is there an effect on fish populations? What should be the minimum requirements for habitat patches and buffer zones in order to address these impacts? Are the current forestry policies addressing animal and environmental well-being and health in the Bear River Region? These are all questions that have developed out of this study.

Complementary to a bio-physical impact study, a social impact study could explore, in greater detail, the impacts of local land-use activities on the BRFN

community. While this study examined the community member's perceptions, another study could examine concrete changes to the social mechanisms of the community. For example, have the hunting patterns of the BRFN community members changed as a result of the logging? Has spaying affected the ability of the BRFN community to eat local game meat? How does the BRFN community suggest the Nova Scotia province best move forward regarding competing land-use interests?

Further research on community social structure could be conducted to explore differences and similarities in perspectives among age cohorts, gender and family clans. It would be especially interesting to conduct a similar study with the youth in the BRFN community to explore the significance of, and their relationships with, animals today. The results from a youth study could be compared to this study to see if meaning or significance of Mi'kmaq human relationships with animals is correlated to age.

Since this study is exploratory, it was designed to incorporate a wide range of demographics and opinions, but it was beyond the scope of this study to draw correlations between the two. Community-based research would assist communities in determining objectives and priorities that are founded upon the direction individuals are moving, and/or any issues that specific demographics may have in the contemporary society. This research could be conducted by the community members themselves.

### **Concluding Comments**

In closing, I return to the narratives of the community members. In these passages, BRFN community members express hope and/or concern about their future relationships with animals. One statement in particular, from a middle-aged male community member, states how he would like to remember his relationships with animals when he leaves this earth.

I guess in the big picture that I wanna leave this earth thinking that I had friends in the animal world. That I've done as much as I could to respect their, their traditions, their values, their families, the environment. And I hope that I left a positive impact instead of a negative. I hope that I spoke on their [animals] behalf as strong as I could, and that I spoke as a friend. (01)

As discussed throughout this thesis, relationships between BRFN Mi'kmaq humans and animals must be understood as social relationships, based upon respect and

reciprocity. The significance of animals to the BRFN community is expressed by community members in terms of spiritual, cultural, economic, historical, and subsistence relationships between humans and animals. These understandings pertain to how the BRFN community members conduct social relationships with animals and the environment. As suggested by one middle-aged female participant, only in the context of respect can one hope to maintain their future relationships with animals:

[People in general] have to start respecting the environment, number one, which in turn respects the animals. We have to respect that an animal is our brother, and we have to stop killing them all; for sport, for pleasure. And taking an animal, really you should only take an animal because you are in dire need of that animal. And that's what we do in this household. (11)

It is difficult to predict the future of BRFN Mi'kmaq relationships with animals. This thesis, however, presents the BRFN contemporary relationships between humans and animals in the early twenty-first century. Even with many changes in the past 500 years since the arrival of Europeans, many BRFN community members continue to base their relationships with animals on respect and reciprocity.

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### **Personal Communications**

Chief Frank Meuse. (2007). Chief of Bear River First Nation, Bear River, N.S, May 16, 2007.

Chief Frank Meuse. (2007). Chief of Bear River First Nation, Bear River, N.S, Nov 13, 2007.

## Appendix I: Introductory Letter for Interview Participants



*Faculty of Management*

### **Title: Mi'kmaq Relationships Between Humans and Animals in Nature**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Lacia Kinnear and I am a Graduate student at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University. I would like to invite you to participate in a thesis research study that is a part of my Master of Environmental Studies degree. Your participation in the study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. You may know me from volunteering within various activities on the Bear River First Nations Reserve, and I would like to assure you that your ability to be involved in such activities will not be affected by your decision to participate in the study. The study is described below. The description tells you about what your participation will involve. Participating in this study may not benefit you, but I hope to learn things that will benefit others. Please discuss any questions you have about this study with me, Lacia Kinnear.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research study is to explore Mi'kmaq relationships between humans and animals in nature within the Mi'kmawey world view of Netukulimk.

#### **Study Design**

The study is a case study which will involve a series of face-to-face interviews with Mi'kmaq individuals who belong to the Bear River First Nation Community. As a participant in the study, you will be asked to share information regarding your relationships with animals in nature. A translator may be asked to assist in some cases. The interviews will be audio-recorded. Upon the completion of the interviews, you will have the opportunity to look at a transcribed copy of the information you have shared in order to make sure that I have recorded everything correctly. At this point you will be asked once again if I have permission to use direct quotes from the transcripts. This will happen a few months from now. The information shared in the interviews will be combined with other data collected from observations, documents and literature.

The results will be presented in the form of a publicly available Masters thesis. A copy of the thesis will be given to the Bear River First Nation Community along with a condensed report. A report will also be made available to other key organizations and individuals who have a vested interest in animals in the natural environment and Aboriginal subject matter in Nova Scotia.

### **Who Can Participate in this Study?**

You can participate in this study if:

- You are Mi'kmaq
- Have knowledge of Mi'kmaq culture
- Are a registered Bear River First Nation member, or are a recognized elder who is a member of another Mi'kmaq Community in Nova Scotia
- Are over the age of 18

### **Who Will Be Conducting the Research?**

I will be the person conducting the research. I am a Graduate student in the Master of Environmental Studies Program at Dalhousie University located in Halifax Nova Scotia. I will conduct the interviews, as well as transcribe and analyze the information collected.

### **What You Will Be Asked To Do**

You will be asked to participate in one face-to-face interview that will be between one and a half to two hours in length. The interview will take place at a location that is convenient for you such as a local coffee shop or the Bear River Band Office. You will be asked questions regarding your experiences, relationships with animals in nature. The interview will be audio-recorded.

### **Confidentiality**

All participants will have the option of selecting whether they want to have their identity protected, or not, throughout the course of the study. This option will be made available on the written consent form.

If you choose to have your identity protected, your identity will be protected throughout the entire study. Your name and statements will be identified by a pseudonym in the final publication so no one will be able to recognize you. Interviews will be audio-recorded to ensure that all information is correctly noted. The original tapes and a copy of the transcribed data will be returned to you for your safekeeping. It is the policy of Dalhousie University that a copy of all information obtained from the study, including tapes, transcripts and notes is kept in a locked cabinet which only I, my supervisor and my committee members will have access to. This information will be kept for five years, after which it will be destroyed.

### **Possible Risks and Discomforts**

The identity of participants in the study will be protected if they so wish. For the participants who do choose to be treated anonymously, their names will not be used in any reports, publications or presentations that result from this study. There is the minimal possibility, however, that the use of direct quotes could allow others to identify you. This is especially possible in small communities, where some people may be aware of your participation in the study. In order to reduce the possibility of this from happening, I will remove any information in quotes that would identify the speaker. In the case of using long direct quotes, I will provide the opportunity for the participant to read and comment on the use of their quote(s) in the case of all publications. This will allow the participant to alter, remove or shorten the quote before any final publication.



**Appendix II: Written Consent Form for Interviews**

Title: Mi'kmaq Relationships Between Humans and Animals in Nature

1. I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered. I agree to take part in this study. However, I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. I give my permission for this interview to be audio-recorded.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

3. I agree to be re-contacted by the researcher, Lacia Kinnear, for future participation in the study should more information be needed. I also understand that I can receive information concerning the research at a later date through contacting the researcher, Lacia Kinnear, or the research supervisor.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

4. By checking one of the following boxes, I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge the following:

*I desire that my identity and the information I provide remain confidential* \_\_\_\_\_

**OR**

*I desire that my identity be non-confidential, and that the information I provide be attributed to me* \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

5. I give my permission for direct quotes to be taken from this interview and be used in the thesis document and/or in any publications or presentation that result from this research. If I wish to remain confidential, then I understand that my name will not be used and that I will be assigned a pseudonym for reporting purposes to protect my identity. If I do not wish to remain confidential, then I understand that my name will be used in reference to my statements and quotes.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Researcher:** Signature \_\_\_\_\_ (Lacia Kinnear)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Appendix III: Script for Verbal Consent**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Lacia Kinnear and I am a Graduate student at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University. This interview is a part of my Masters thesis which is about Mi'kmaq relationships between humans and animals in nature. I have read and given you an information sheet which describes the research study.

Do you have any questions regarding what I told you about from the information sheet?

Do you understand what you will be asked to do as a participant in this study?

Do you understand that you may withdraw from this study at any time?

Do you want your identity and the information you provide to remain confidential?

- If **YES** then: Do you understand that that I will use what you have said in the final research paper, but I will not use your name, and I will do all that I can to ensure your confidentiality?
- If **NO** then: Do you understand that I will use what you have said in the final research paper, and your identity will be non-confidential, including your name, and I will attribute the information you provide to you?

Do I have permission to use direct quotes from this interview and use them in the thesis document and/or in any publications or presentations that may result from this research?

Do I have your permission to tape-record this interview?

Do you agree to be re-contacted by myself for future participation in the study if more information is needed?

Are you willing to participate in this interview?

Please remember that if you have any questions at any time you may contact me. My contact information is on the contact sheet I gave you.

## **Appendix IV: Confidentiality Agreement: Transcriber for Interviews**

### **Title: Mi'kmaq Relationships Between Humans and Animals in Nature**

#### **Introduction**

My name is Lacia Kinnear and I am a Graduate student at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University. I am doing my Masters research which is about Mi'kmaq relationships between humans and animals in nature. I invite you to take part in this study in the role of a transcriber. You will be requested to transcribe interviews that took place with me and an unknown participant. The information in these interviews is confidential and you will be requested not to reveal anything that you hear in the interviews. If you are uncomfortable with this for any reason please let me know. You can withdraw from the role of transcriber at any time. If you have any questions about the study or about your position as transcriber, please feel free to contact me. See page 1 for contact information.

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of the research study is to explore Mi'kmaq relationships between humans and animals in nature within the Mi'kmawey world view of Netukulimk.

#### **Termination**

You may withdraw from the study at any time. I will be able to terminate your role as transcriber at any time if you do not maintain our agreement of confidentiality.

#### **Signature**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered. I agree to take part in this study as the role of transcriber. I understand that I will be requested to transcribe interviews, verbatim, and I agree to maintain confidentiality of all information I hear while transcribing the interviews. I realize that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study and role of transcriber at any time.

Name (Printed) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix V: Interview Guide

### Generic Probes

Can you tell me more about that?

Can you give me an example?

Is there anything else? What else?

### Introductory Questions:

1. How long have you lived in the Bear River area?
2. How long have you been a member of the Bear River First Nation Reserve?
3. What is your involvement with the Bear River First Nation Reserve?
4. What year were you born?
5. What was the last formal school environment that you attended?

### Question Related to Human relationships with Animals

6. As a child, were you interested in animals?
7. Do you recall any experiences with animals as a child that stand out in your mind?  
{Probe: animal parks, pets, farm animals, hunting}
8. Are there any animal characters from stories that you remember? Can you tell me about them?
9. Can you recall any experiences with animals that were particularly negative, either as a child or more recently? {Probe: negative encounters such as being frightened or hurt by animals, problems with animals on your property}
10. Can you recall any positive experiences with animals as a child or more recently?
11. Has the death of an animal ever had an emotional impact on you? Can you tell me about that?
12. Have you ever participated in a wildlife conservation program? {Probe: Given money to, volunteered time, worked for}
13. Do you do anything to attract animals around your home? Why? For what reasons?
14. Do you do anything to deter animals from coming around your home? Why?
15. Are there things that you do or participate in that involve being in contact with animals in nature? {Probe: hunt, fish, trap, art, jewelry, view, feed, study}
16. What parts of animals do you personally use? (Probe: food, crafts, ceremonies)
17. What animals have sacred or spiritual meaning to the Mi'kmaq people?
18. Based on your experiences, have you developed sacred or spiritual connections to any animals in nature?
19. Are there specific Mi'kmaq cultural practices which express human relationships with animals in nature?
20. Which of these activities do you personally participate in?
21. Are some kinds of animals more important to you than others? Which ones? Why?
22. Do you think some animals have a more important role in nature than others?
23. Do you think that animals in nature have value outside of their use to humans?
24. Do you have a special place in nature? Tell me about that place {Probe: what animals are present there? It is special because those animals are there?}

25. If you learned that something you did had negative impacts on animals in nature, would you be willing to change your behavior?
26. What if changing that behavior meant not being able to do something that was really important to you?
27. In your ideal world, how would humans live and interact with animals in nature?
28. What do you think were important experiences that shaped your views toward animals? {Probe: outdoor activities, hiking, hunting, stories from Elders}
29. What is your understanding of totem animals
30. What is your understanding of family clan animals?
31. Do you have a totem animal?
32. How did you come to identify your totem animal?
33. How does your relationship with your totem animal differ from your relationship with other animals?
34. How would you define nature?
35. Do you see yourself as a part of nature?
36. Describe the different types of relationship that you see between Mi'kmaq people and animals today? {Probe co-existence, domineering, spiritual}

#### Questions Related to Pressures on Relationships with Animals in Nature

37. What do you consider to be the biggest threats to animals in nature in the Bear River area? {Probe: What kinds of impacts do the threats have on animals?}
38. Do these threats affect the way you relate to or interact with animals in nature? Can you give me an example?
39. Do you think these threats affect the way the community relates to animals in nature?
40. Have you or anyone you know felt negatively impacted by animal conservation programs {Probe: loss of jobs, property rights, treaty rights}
41. Have you or anyone you know benefited from wildlife conservation programs?
42. Have you or anyone you know felt negatively impacted by any land use activities in the area? {Probe: activities adjacent to the reserve}
43. Has your relationship with animals in nature been negatively affected by any of these land use activities?
44. What do you think about conservation regulations for animals off reserve land? Do you think it is necessary? How?
45. What do you think about conservation regulations for animals on reserve land? Do you think it is necessary?
46. Do you think that laws protecting animals could affect your relationships with animals? How?
47. Are you aware of any animal species in Nova Scotia whose survival is threatened?
48. Do you think that endangered species should be protected in Nova Scotia? Why or why not? If so, how should they be protected?
49. Do you think we should be concerned about the future state of animals in Nova Scotia?
50. What are your major concerns about the future with respect to your relationships with animals? What do you think is the best ways to resolve these concerns?

**Concluding Questions**

51. Is there anything else that I did not ask you that you would like to add?
52. Do you have any questions for me?