WABANAKI WOMEN RELIGIOUS PRACTITIONERS

by

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Abstract

In the following thesis I examine Wabanaki (with an emphasis on Maliseet) women's role as religious practitioners in the written historical documentation and in the oral traditions as *mətewələn*. I do this by reviewing the historical documentation, as well as the oral traditions and anthropological sources on the Wabanaki using the dialogic approach (Brettell, 2000). I also examine aspects of interpretivism, postmodernism and feminism to understand the source material that I am using and to guide my analysis of the material. Through comparing these sets of information I found that women religious practitioners existed and that they were involved in many of the areas that have been described for male religious practitioners. Furthermore, through examining the oral traditions and anthropological materials I found that women had all the characteristics of *mətewələn* in general and that they are connected to the practices of the religious practitioners. Thus, my research suggests that Maliseet women have important roles as religious practitioners/*mətewələn* in their society that have endured from at least the time of the earliest written records of them.

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CHAPTER 1.0 - Introduction

This thesis is an examination of the descriptions of Wabanaki (Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Abenaki) women's roles as religious practitioners in the written historical documentation and in their roles as *mətewələn* in the oral traditions. I will compare Wabanaki women's roles as described in historical documents with the descriptions found in Maliseet oral traditions with respect to women *mətewələn*. In the course of my research on Native women's roles, I was often dismayed by ethnocentric descriptions of Native women in the early records. The Jesuit priest Pierre Biard described Native people as 'savage' for a variety of reasons, including that "... the women only serv[e] them as slaves ... " (1895, vol. 1: 173). Ethnocentric descriptions of women, when women were even discussed in the historical record, has made it difficult to understand the roles of Native women. Therefore, in addition to the standard historical sources, I felt it was necessary to explore sources with a different point of view. With this in mind, I also examine the oral traditions and anthropological sources on the Wabanaki. I initially realized the importance of the oral traditions while reading through a collection of Maliseet stories. There were stories that depicted women in vastly different ways from the historical sources and these depictions were what led to the topic that I have chosen. I was particularly struck by the stories about women *mətewələn*owək.[1] *Mətewələn* is the Maliseet term for a "... person with

[1]Mətewələnowək is the plural form of mətewələn.

extraordinary spiritual power ... " (Francis and Leavitt 1998). Immediately intrigued by these stories, I reexamined early documentary references relating to Wabanaki women in this role. I found references to women in the role of religious practitioners (usually referred to as shamans). There are also sources which conclude that Wabanaki women were shamans.[2] I am interested in focussing specifically on the role of women religious practitioners. Accordingly, I will examine the descriptions of women as *mətewələn* in the oral traditions, anthropological sources, and the specific references to women as religious practitioners in the written historical material. Demonstrating that women have had continuing roles in these areas, this thesis will focus on women's roles as religious practitioners.

I begin with a discussion of the theoretical and methodological perspectives that have influenced my analysis. Chapter Two presents a discussion of the main written historical sources and oral traditions, and the sources found in history, anthropology and linguistics. In Chapter Three, I discuss issues arising from the terminology used in the historical documents concerning religion and national identity. Chapter Four is a review of my interpretation of Wabanaki women's status historically. In Chapter Five, I survey the information on religious practitioners in the historical documents, with specific attention to the references pertaining to women as religious practitioners. Following this in Chapter Six, I look at similar information, but in

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[2]For example, see Nash 1997: 242 and Gonzalez 1981: 19.

the context of the oral traditions. In the final chapter, Chapter Seven, I present a review of my thesis and a discussion of my conclusions.

Throughout the centuries since contact, Native women have been marginalised, and the same can be said for the recognition of their roles. The early historical materials do not describe Native women's roles in great detail. The act of writing allowed the creators of the historical record to interpret the actions of the Native peoples they met. I am employing these historical sources with the understanding that they had cultural biases which are reflected in how Native societies were described in those sources. I aim to be sensitive to the negative perceptions of Native society and women evident in the historical documents, through attempting not to perpetuate those biases (and the related terminology) in my own exploration of the material. I use the oral traditions because, if I am to write on Native women's roles, these stories are a vital aspect of such research in that they demonstrate a different interpretation than that presented in the written documents. This is an important function in reclaiming our history, which "...is a critical and essential aspect of decolonization" (Smith 1999: 30). In my theoretical framework, interpretive anthropology and postmodernism contextualize my concerns with the representation of history, the interpretation of historical documents and the use of oral traditions. Finally, issues concerning Native women and gender are highlighted. Postmodernism, polyvocality and feminism are all ways of approaching and analysing sources of information that help validate my attempt to re-interpret historical material through the use of oral traditions.

1.1 Interpretivism

The concern with the interpretation of culture by anthropologists, especially in the writing of ethnography, raises points that can be applied to the understanding of the historical record. Clifford Geertz asserts "... that what we call our data are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to..." (1973: 9). In colonial society, primarily men of European descent held positions that enabled them to record written information on Native peoples, positions such as government administrators and missionaries. Subsequently, their interpretations have been reinterpreted in the secondary literature. There are layers upon layers of interpretation present within the historical record. However, this concern with layers leads to the point that everything written down has been done so through a lens. In terms of the historical record, the interpretations of Native peoples and their culture were contemplated through the lens of the early observers' opinions and understandings of the world. I am reinterpreting the written historical sources, oral traditions, anthropological and other sources through focussing on women as religious practitioners and *mətewələnowək*.

1.2 Postmodernism

Postmodern anthropology expresses my concern with the historical record and the interpretation of it. In a brief introduction to the subject of postmodern anthropology, McGee and Warms state that the postmodernists "... believe that objective, neutral knowledge of another culture (or any aspect

of the world) is impossible" (2000: 517). This applies not only to the previous treatment of interpretation through a lens, but also to the removal of the invisibility of the author in the text. I make my presence known as the author and do not attempt to present myself as the final source on this topic, or the only voice. This is tied to the postmodern concern with polyvocality. I am presenting my interpretation, but through the use of a wide variety of sources including anthropologists, missionaries, and - through the oral traditions - Native people themselves.

The majority of the historical records are from European male perspectives which, due to the circumstances of colonialism, are now used to research and write history. However, this version of history is not complete, as Native people's voices have been silenced and marginalised by the interpretations of those who were in positions of power. The silencing can be perpetrated in the very act of conversing, as Trinh T. Minh-ha notes: "[a] conversation of 'us' with 'us' about 'them' is a conversation in which 'them' is silenced" (1989: 67). The 'other' is outside of the conversation, talked about but not included. Native people were not considered to be consumers of most anthropologists', missionaries', explorers' or historians' information. Thus, their work was a conversation between insiders about the silenced outsider. However, speaking as a Native woman, it is important that we have control over how we are represented. Linda Tuhiwai Smith, author of Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, explains, "[i]ndigenous communities have struggled since colonization to be able to exercise what is

viewed as a fundamental right, that is to represent ourselves" (1999: 150). It is important to reclaim our history through a re-representation of ourselves. Our perspectives on our history balance out the historical record. Contemporary Native women are providing different perspectives:

> [c]ontrary to those images of meekness, docility, and subordination to males with which we women typically have been portrayed by the dominant culture's books and movies, anthropology, and political ideologues of both rightist and leftist persuasions, it is women who have formed the very core of indigenous resistance to genocide and colonization since the first moment of conflict between Indians and invaders (Jaimes and Halsey 1992: 311).

Polyvocality is important in promoting different perspectives and shedding new light on issues that were predominantly controlled by a certain portion of society. Representing, as defined by Smith, is a fundamental right (1999: 150) and is also a practice in decolonization which can project a different perspective from the mainstream.

1.3 Oral Tradition

The previously mentioned concerns with polyvocality and interpretation can be applied to the use of oral tradition. When conducting research that is historical in nature, a plurality of voices can only be achieved through the use of sources that represent a predominantly Native perspective, such as the oral traditions. Smith asserts, "[t]he pedagogical implication of this access to alternative knowledges is that they can form the basis of alternative ways of doing things" (1999: 34). Oral history presents information on women's roles and how they were perceived in their own society. Smith also notes, "[f]amiliar

characters can be invested with the qualities of an individual or can be used to invoke a set of shared understandings and histories" (145). Oral traditions represent the shared values of the culture from which they originated and the information contained in them is very valuable.

Julie Cruikshank (1996) has worked with oral traditions of Athabascan groups. Cruikshank demonstrates that there is a plurality of voices evident in oral history and written records and how varying interpretations from each source can occur. She discusses how Native descriptions of events surrounding the life of a Tagish prospector, Snookum Jim, differ from those of Euro-Canadian descriptions. The Euro-Canadian accounts focus on Snookum Jim as "an idealized frontiersman" (Cruikshank 1996: 449) and as a gold prospector, while the Tagish account focuses on his concern with finding his sisters. Thus, Cruikshank states that comparing written and oral accounts indicates "...how culturally distinct ideas about family and community organization may influence *interpretations* of events" (1996: 434). Oral traditions and historical accounts, "... both ... have to be understood as windows on the way the past is constructed and discussed in different contexts, from the perspectives of actors enmeshed in culturally distinct networks of social relationships" (Cruikshank 1996: 435). Therefore, the contexts of the creators of each type of record are important in understanding how people understood the past. Each group is 'enmeshed' in their cultural networks, and these networks provide an understanding of how society functions, and ultimately frames people's interpretations of the events. The

unique perceptions of each group are placed in the context of their different interpretations based on their cultural networks. In my experience, reading the oral traditions provided insight into the understanding of the role of women in Maliseet society. I believe that the interpretations of women's roles held in the oral traditions are valid, as they are the stories of people from their own culture. There is no one source that one can call *History*. However, there are many voices that need to be heard in order for those who are seeking to learn about the past to come to a greater understanding.

1.4 Feminism, Gender and Native women roles

Increasingly it is recognized that the concept of gender is something that is culturally constructed. In terms of understanding the historical record it is important to note that it is the European cultural notions of gender and perceptions of Native women that have been privileged in the Western tradition. Understanding gender as something that is "... the result of a process of socialization that defines roles and characteristics in varying and changeable ways" (Gould 1997: xvii) is crucial. I will examine the Maliseet conception of gender as evident in the Maliseet language, as a precursor to understanding Maliseet women's roles as religious practitioners. I will also explore the implications of and reasons for the denigration of women's roles. I am influenced by anthropologist Eleanor Leacock who recognizes that Native women's roles were greater than what was initially understood in the historical documents.

Linguistics and oral history provide significant sources of information

concerning the conceptions of Native women. Algonquian languages, including the Wabanaki languages, demonstrate a construction of gender that is different from English. For example, the Maliseet word 'nekəm' is a pronoun for she and he. Linguist Robert Leavitt states that "... in some ways having a single pronoun reflects the non-sexism of Maliseet and Micmac culture" (1995: 50). The use of pronouns that are not specific to a gender is apparent in a collection of oral traditions titled Malecite Tales (1914) compiled by anthropologist William H. Mechling. Mechling noted that there were instances in which the gender of the character referred to in the story was unknown, even to the storyteller (1914: 79, fn). At the very least this indicates a different conception of gender between Algonkian and English speakers.

Accepting that Algonkian languages comprise a different concept of gender, compared to present-day English, leads me to question the nature of my research in focussing solely on women. By focussing on women am I perpetuating sexism by not including men? Nevertheless, I think it is important to offset the manner in which Native women's roles have been denigrated which, in the present context, is by no means arbitrary. Originating in the 1980's the concept of 'double colonization' was used to explain the position of Third World women who were colonized by both "imperial and patriarchal ideologies" (Ashcroft et al. 1995: 250). This notion has been applied to Native women in North America, who experience both racism and sexism on various levels. One aspect of this is the colonization of history: as anthropologist

Silverblatt states, "[t]he academic traditions that denied colonial peoples their histories also refused women theirs" (1991: 142). The historical records concerning women are sparse and ethnocentric in content. Thus, I feel that my research in this area is justified when considering the effects of colonization.

However, this does not mean that the negative conceptions of Native women have gone unchallenged. Eleanor Leacock challenged the notion that women's subjection was universal. An anthropologist with an historical materialist perspective, Leacock was influenced by Friedrich Engels' The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State (first published in1884). Leacock's examination of Native women's roles was situated in the changing economic system of colonial times and Leacock argued that the devaluing of women's roles was correlated with a new economic system, brought by the colonizers. Leacock used the historical record concerning the Montagnais-Naskapi [Innu] women to substantiate Engles' position "that women's oppression developed as an historical process in conjunction with the emergence of class inequalities" (Leacock 1981: 5). Engles viewed the loss of women's status as occurring in an evolutionary perspective, which was followed by male dominance. Leacock found that the roles of Native women were contextual to the changing economic system. Therefore, the devaluing of women's roles was correlated with colonization.

Although Leacock's work is a great influence on me, I do not necessarily explore the same theoretical stances that she does. Anthropologist Irene Silverblatt (1991) criticizes Leacock's evolutionary trajectory, which is based on

the work of Engles. The model for Leacock's evolutionary trajectory states that "gender relations were transformed from egalitarian relations, typified by the Iroquois; to the institutionalization of sexual antagonism found in ranking societies, like Melanesia; to full blown patriarchy" (Silverblatt 1991: 147). According to Silverblatt, Leacock hypocritically criticizes Engles for using an evolutionary framework. With that said, Silverblatt also notes that "Leacock's enduring contributions to studies of gender are rooted in a steadfast insistence on historical process" (Silverblatt 1991: 147). The "insistence on historical process" is very important, especially when examining a colonial situation where change is a huge factor. Despite Leacock's use of an evolutionary trajectory her work on the Montagnais has provided an important template for understanding Native women's roles and the effects of colonization.

Leacock's examination of the historical process has shown the importance of not relying on the assumption that women were subordinated as an inevitable result of their gender. There has been much work that furthers the historical understanding of women's positions in Algonkian societies, for example, the previously mentioned work of Leacock. Specific to the Wabanaki are Ellice B. Gonzalez's (1981) Changing Economic Roles of Micmac Men and Women: An Ethnohistorical Analysis and Alice Nash, The Abiding Frontier: Family, Gender and Religion in Wabanaki History (1997). Both of these sources will be discussed later. As well, Robert Grumet (1980) examines the role of Middle Atlantic Coastal Algonkian women as shamans, as well as sunksquaws (women leaders) and tradeswomen. Grumet's research led him

to the conclusion that in coastal Algonkian societies that "... were not so stratified and did not have full-time priesthoods" women "... persisted in possessing religious authority and controlled the rights to their abilities" (1980: 54). These sources have all furthered the understanding of the roles of Algonkian women, beginning with colonization. It is in this context of better understanding Native women's roles that the following analysis of Wabanaki women's roles as religious practitioners may be helpful. I believe that it is important to continue to further understand the roles women played in their societies.

1.5 Methodology

I aim to compare two types of sources: oral traditions and written historical documentation. The use of these two sources coincides with anthropologist Caroline B. Brettell's (2000) description of the dialogic approach. The aim of "... this dialogic juxtaposition of oral history and the written record is to access different voices and different interpretations of the same historical experience" (528). While I am not examining 'the same historical experience' in terms of a specific event, I am examining a particular set of Native people's customs that were gathered by Non-Native peoples. I also use oral history because it provides 'different voices and different interpretations' of the roles of women. The 'juxtaposition' of the two sources of information is important for this thesis. As well, there are many sources such as anthropology that provide information on Wabanaki culture and history, which elaborates further on what

was mentioned in the oral traditions. Thus, all these sources combined provide a greater picture of the roles of women, as religious practitioners and *mətewələn*.

I would like to now apply Geertz's discussion on the hermeneutic circle to the methodology of this thesis. However, I will first review the terminology used in Geertz's work pertaining to his conceptualization of emic and etic points of view. As previously stated the interpretations of missionaries, the oral traditions, and the work of anthropologists will be used to understand Native women's role and I will further clarify how I relate these sources to Geertz's discussion of the hermeneutic circle. Geertz outlines the concepts of experience-near and experience-distant to clarify how different people understand or frame certain concepts. An experience-near concept is "one that someone - a patient, a subject, in our case an informant - might himself naturally and effortlessly use to define what he or his fellows see, feel, think, imagine, and so on, and which he would readily understand when similarly applied by others" (Geertz 1983: 57). Therefore, I contend that the oral traditions fall into the experience-near category. Geertz's definition of an experience-distant concept is; "one that specialists of one sort or another - an analyst, an experimenter, an ethnographer, even a priest or an ideologist - employ to forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims" (1983: 57). The historical written documentation and contemporary academic sources fall into experience-distant category. Although Geertz applies the experience near

and distant concepts to ethnography, I feel that they are relevant to my work despite the historical focus of this thesis. The oral traditions represent experience-near concepts, while the works of the missionaries, historians, etc. represent experience-distant concepts.

How does this discussion apply to this analysis when the sources are from the 17th century and 20th century? I argue that it is through Geertz's description of what is called the hermeneutic circle. Geertz applies the hermeneutic study of text to the study of culture, through understanding a culture as a whole as well as in reference to its specific parts. Geertz's application is explained in the following quote;

> [h]opping back and forth between the whole conceived through the parts that actualize it and the parts conceived through the whole that motivates them, we seek to turn them, by a sort of intellectual perpetual motion, into explications of one another (Geertz 1983: 69).

One cannot fully understand something without knowing what its parts are and how they apply to the whole, and vice versa. Following the previous quote Geertz gives an example using the game of baseball:

> In order to follow a baseball game one must understand what a bar, a hit, an inning, a left fielder, a squeeze play, a hanging curve, and a tightened infield are, and what the game in which these 'things' are elements is all about (Geertz 1983: 69).

In terms of my analysis, understanding the role of women as religious practitioners involves understanding women's roles in their society and the role of a religious practitioner through using sources that can be classified as experience-near and experience-distant, that is academic sources and oral traditions. Thus, I will be using experience near and experience distant

sources. Unlike Geertz's application of the hermeneutic circle, I will be moving back and forth between written historical documents (experience-distant) and contemporary sources - academic and oral traditions (which are both experience-distant and experience-near). This, I postulate, is the best way to understand the role of women as religious practitioners. I will be 'hopping back and forth' between the various sources - experience-near and experience-distant sources - and the idea or 'whole' of women as religious practitioners, to fully understand that role[3]. By using different reflections on the same topic, I seek to better understand women's role as religious practitioners. The use of the historical sources combined with more contemporary sources provides a complete picture, especially considering that there are no historical sources that provide a Native point of view on the topic. That is, no one source from a certain time period can be used in this particular hermeneutic circle.

In Geertz's discussion of the hermeneutic circle he uses the analogy of an advancing spiral (1983: 69), which I found intriguing. The advancing spiral analogy is apt because a spiral can be seen to chronologically move forward like a time line. However, unlike a time line, events on the spiral can relate back to one another. I make connections and comparisons between sets of information over time because the spiral loops. These loops aid in conceptualizing the connections in the information (or traits) that are repeated over time, the loops bring information closer together than a straight time line

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[3]This discussion also harkens back to Cruikshank's previously mentioned treatment of how actors are 'enmeshed' in their cultural networks which influences their interpretation of events.

would. A spiral seen from another angle appears to be a circle. All of the curves in the spiral, when seen as a whole, link together to form my analysis and conclusions about women's role as religious practitioners/*mətewələn*.

CHAPTER - 2.0 Literature Review

I now turn to the authors and the works that have been examined in the course of writing this thesis. I am employing historical documentation, oral traditions and anthropological, historical, and linguistic sources. The oral traditions are previously recorded, transcribed and translated oral traditions. The historical sources that I used are the accounts of John Gyles (1896), Abbé Pierre Maillard (1758), Chrestien Le Clercq (1610), The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents (1895), and the oral traditions. Excluding the oral traditions, these sources are all the works of outsiders who are not Wabanaki, and who put their own interpretations on their work. However, issues of interpretation are also raised in conjunction with the oral traditions due to the use of English words that are used to express Maliseet concepts. The other sources I use concern women, gender, Wabanaki history, linguistics, ethnohistory, oral traditions and anthropology. These materials correspond with Silverblatt's definition of ethnohistory as "... the use of documents, archaeological findings, oral histories, and ethnographies to construct the histories of non-Western peoples..." (1991: 140).

2.1 Historical Documentation

One of the written historical sources that I use is The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents. Originally, The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents[4] was a series of annual missionary reports, written from 1610 to 1791. They

[4]From here on I will use the shortened, Jesuit Relations.

were published in France from 1632 to 1673. Generally, the missionary reports began as letters written while in the field. The letters would then be transferred to a superior (in Quebec) who compiled and edited the documents. The letters were then sent to the headquarters in Paris where they were re-edited and finally printed (Greer 2000: 14). The edition that I have used was compiled and edited into 71 volumes by Ruben Gold Thwaites and published in 1895. This version contains both the original French or Latin with the English translations side by side.

The Jesuit missionaries were reporting on their successes and trials in converting the Native inhabitants in New France to an audience of "pious well-wishers, potential donors, and simply curious readers" as well as priests and nuns (Greer 2000: 14-15). It has been proposed that the anticipated readership of the relations influenced how events were described in the Jesuit Relations:

> ...their need to create a favourable impression in the minds of potential financial supporters, as well as their need to gain points against their critics, cannot be overlooked in any consideration of the ideals of Christian piety and devotion represented in the *Relations* (Blackburn 2000: 7).

Concerns such as these raise the point that one must carefully review what is written in these documents. My use of the Jesuit Relations focuses on examining the role of religious practitioners, and specifically women as religious practitioners.

In the Jesuit Relations, the authors that I primarily cite are Pierre Biard (1578 or 9-1622), Jerome Lalemant (1593-1673), Paul Ragueneau (1608-

1680) Paul Le Jeune (1594-1664) and Marc Lescarbot (c.1570-1642). Pierre Biard arrived in Dieppe in 1610; he made it to Port Royal in 1611, and returned to France in 1614. Biard primarily wrote about the Mi'kmaq at Port Royal; however, he did specifically mention visiting the rivers St. John, St. Croix, Penobscot, and Kennebec, which is an indication that his work probably also referred to groups such as the Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, and Abenaki. Biard's work provides further clarification of the term Etechemin (which will be discussed in the next chapter), information on marriage customs and the practices of the religious practitioners. The quotes attributed to Jerome Lalemant described the experiences of Father Gabriel Druillettes (1610-1681). These quotes concern the Sillery mission in Quebec and the activities of the Native religious practitioners in that region. Similarly, the quotes attributed to Paul Ragueneau[5], in volume 38, pertain to the experiences of Father Gabriel Druillettes among the Abenaki of Norridgewock (in Maine). Paul Le Jeune was not known to have served among the Wabanaki. However, I cite his writings on the Innu[6] when there are interesting parallels between the practices of the Innu and the Wabanaki. They indicated that these practices were common, or at least possible for other Native groups of the Northeast. Historian Andrea Bear Nicholas (1994) compares Le Jeune's writings on the Innu with others on the Maliseet because they: share cultural traditions; had similar hunting based

[5]Ragueneau was at the time the superior of Jesuits in Canada.

[6]In the Jesuit Relations, Montagnais was the term applied to the people now known as the Innu.

economies; had similar "... experiences with the fur trade ..." (1994: 224), are Algonquian speakers, and because there was "... steady contact and intermarriage between Innu and Wabanaki people at missions and trading posts on the St. Lawrence River from Rivière-du-Loup and Tadoussac to Chicoutimi and Sept-Isles" (Bear Nicholas 1994: 224).[7]

Another author whose work is included in the Jesuit Relations is Marc Lescarbot. However, his main works are published independently of the Jesuit Relations. Lescarbot was a Paris lawyer, traveller, and writer. He came to Canada in 1606 and left in 1607. He spent most of his time at Port Royal (now Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia) but, as Biggar notes, Lescarbot also took trips to the St. John and St. Croix rivers (Lescarbot 1928: x). Lescarbot's works that I refer to are "La conversion des Sauvages" and "Relation denière de ce qui s'est pass'e au Voyage de Poutrincourt," both from the Jesuit Relations. Lescarbot's other works that I refer to are Nova Francia and The History of New France, volume three. Initially Nova Francia was published in 1909 and translated into English by Pierre Erondelle. The edition that I have used was published in 1928. The History of New France (vol. 3) was translated by W. L. Grant, and published by the Champlain Society in 1914. I cite Lescarbot's work when he refers to the role of the religious practitioner, prediction, treatment of sickness, the importance of dreams, and marriage customs.

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[7]Rogers and Leacock in the article Montagnais-Naskapi (1981) state that the Montagnais-Naskapi "have inhabited the greater portion of the Labrador Peninsula, the land mass east of Hudson and James bays that is divided politically between the Canadian provinces of Newfoundland and Quebec" (1981, vol. 6: 169).

Acadian trader and fisherman Nicolas Denys (1598-1688) wrote The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia), which was published in France in 1672. It was later translated and edited by William F. Ganong and republished by the Champlain Society in 1908. Denys arrived in Canada in 1632, and as noted by Ganong in the introduction, "[h]is business was fishing, trading with the Indians, farming a little, building small vessels, and making some timber" (1968: 13). Denys' intentions in publishing his work were "... because he obviously felt that it would focus favourable attention on the country and stimulate settlement here" (MacBeth 1966, vol. 1: 258). Denys had 40 years of contact with the Native people of Acadia, "...with whom he had lived and traded..." (Axtell 1981: 9). I am interested in Denys' observations on marriage customs and methods of curing among the Mi'kmaq.

Another early written historical source that I consult is the New Relation of Gaspesia, with the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians, by Recollect missionary Chrestien Le Clercq.[8] Le Clercq first came to Canada in 1675 and in 1676 began his mission in the Gaspé, which lasted for eleven years (Axtell 1981: 10). His work was written after his return to France and was published in 1691. The Champlain Society republished his work in 1910, with William F. Ganong as translator and editor. For my purposes Le Clercq's material provides information on the customs of religious practitioners.

The writing of John Gyles provides a glimpse of Maliseet marriage

[8]According to G.M. Dumas, Le Clercq lived from 1641 to at least 1700, when Le Cler cq was last know to be alive (1966, vol. 1: 438).

customs and sweat lodge practices. John Gyles was taken captive from his home in Massachusetts (now Maine) at the age of nine, in 1689. He was brought to the Maliseet village of Meductic where he spent six years. Gyles stated that he initially recorded his experiences at the request of his wife, "...for the use of our family, that we might have a memento ever ready at hand...." (1896: iii) and later, due to his friends' encouragement, he published his memoirs in 1736. His account relates his capture, his treatment and the treatment of other captives, aspects of Maliseet religion, feasting practices, the years spent with a French family, and his eventual release.

Pierre Maillard (*c.*1710-1762) wrote An account of the customs and manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets savage nations, now dependent on the government of Cape-Breton. This document was published in 1758 in London and consists of a letter and memorial written by Maillard. Maillard was a French Abbé and missionary among the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. He is reputed to have had an exceptional understanding of the Mi'kmaq language (Johnson 1974, vol.3: 415). The quotes I use all arise from the first letter, written by Maillard in 1755. His letter has provided information on religious practitioners, the status of women, and women religious practitioners.

Sieur de Dièreville, author of The Relation of the Voyage to Port Royal or New France, was, according to John Clarence Webster in his introduction to the work, a "surgeon, merchant and officer" (Dièreville 1933: 2). Dièreville came to Canada for a year in 1700 "... to dispose of a trade consignment and

to collect specimens for the Royal Botanical Gardens in Paris" (Axtell 1981: 62). Dièreville wrote about his experiences and observations, in prose and poetry. His work was initially published in 1708 and republished in 1933 by the Champlain Society. The translation was provided by Mrs. Clarence Webster and the book was edited by John Clarence Webster. Dièreville's work provides information on religious practitioners, and his trip in general, beginning with his voyage to Canada.

2.2 Oral Traditions

The oral traditions that I refer to are primarily from a collection entitled Maliseet Stories, told to linguist Laszlo Szabo at the Kingsclear, Oromocto, St. Mary's, Tobique, and Woodstock Reserves in the 1970's and 1980's. These twelve volumes, over 5000 pages of material, were deposited at the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Szabo states that, "I wrote down all of those stories as they were told to me, transcribing the Maliseet texts phonetically and supplying a translation of each text into English" (Szabo 1985: 29). From this collection I refer to about ten stories that speak to the roles of women and the role of the *mətewələnowək*. This collection represents people's stories and memories of the previous 100 years to Szabo's recoding of the oral traditions. When mentioning a particular story, I reference not only the collection, but also who told the story. Although I have not used it as much as the first collection, I do briefly refer to the work of anthropologist and folklorist Elsie Clews Parsons (*Micmac Folklore,* 1925). I refer to one story Parsons collected from Isabelle

Googoo Morris in 1923, on a trip to Nova Scotia by the author to compile folklore.

2.3 History, Linguistics and Cultural Anthropology

I draw on a variety of sources from history, linguistics, and cultural anthropology, concerning the customs of Wabanaki peoples and the anthropology of religion. In the following section, I will discuss the sources which are mentioned the most, and their specific relevance to this thesis.

To understand aspects of Algonquian religion and the anthropology of religion, I examine the work of anthropologists Kenneth Morrison and Morton Klass. Morrison's The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Religious Encounter (2002), is a collection of essays published by Morrison that "... seek primarily to uncover Algonkian ways of assessing missionary truth claims, and not the other way around" (Morrison 2002: 5). This work also informs much of the section on terminology by illuminating how certain terms are embedded in a particular worldview. Secondly, I look to Klass who wrote on the topic of the anthropology of religion in Ordered Universes: Approaches to the Anthropology of Religion (1995). I use this work mainly in the area of terminology, but I also use Klass's operational definition of religion.

In my discussion on aspects of Wabanaki history and society I again refer to Morrison, as well as Bruce Bourque, Alice Nash, and Andrea Bear Nicholas. I quote from Morrison's The Embattled Northeast (1984), which is a

history of Eastern Algonkian and European relations in the colonial period. Archaeologist Bruce Bourque's "Ethnicity on the Maritime Peninsula" (1989) aids in my discussion of the terms Etechemin and Souriquois. I refer to the PhD thesis of Alice Nash, The Abiding Frontier: Family, Gender and Religion in Wabanaki History, 1600-1763 (1997). Nash explores Wabanaki concepts of gender and family during the colonial period. I reference Nash's thesis concerning aspects of Wabanaki culture as it relates to women, specifically gender, prestige, marriage, and bride service. Concerning Bear-Nicholas' article, "Colonialism and the Struggle for Liberation: The Experience of Maliseet Women" (1994), I refer to her descriptions of women in the oral traditions, Maliseet women's autonomy, and the Maliseet descent system.

In terms of translations and understanding specific aspects of the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy language, I refer to an online Maliseet - Passamaquoddy dictionary edited by Robert Leavitt and David Francis to define *mətewələn* (http://www.lib.unb.ca/Texts/Maliseet/dictionary/index.php). I also refer to Leavitt's work Passamaquoddy-Maliseet (1996) for an understanding of the animate/inanimate distinction in the Maliseet language.

In order to aid my understanding of the *mətewələnowək* I use a variety of sources most of which are anthropological. Frank Speck was a student of Franz Boas, and his published works demonstrate an interest in many Native American nations. I have used Speck's work as a source of information concerning Wabanaki accounts of *mətewələnowək*. I have primarily gathered

this information from Speck's American Anthropological Association memoir, "Penobscot Shamanism" published in 1919.

A student of Frank Speck, William Mechling wrote "The Malecite Indians, with notes on the Micmac" which provides much information concerning the *mətewələnowək*. This article was based on Mechling's field research among the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq, from 1910-1913, but was not published until 1959.

Anthropologists Wilson D. Wallis and Ruth Sawtell Wallis are primarily known for their work among the Mi'kmaq. They did however, publish a short account of the Maliseet, The Malecite Indians of New Brunswick (1957). This work provides only a glimpse of the Maliseet people at Tobique, as the authors spent only ten days on the reserve. However, the information that they do provide is useful, as it presents information on *mətewələnowək*; such as who can become a *mətewələn* and what a *mətewələn* can do.

Nicholas Smith is an historian who has published many articles on the Wabanaki. I refer to his work, "Notes on the Malecite of Woodstock, New Brunswick" (1957) which is an overview of the Maliseet of the Woodstock First Nation. I have consulted this work mostly in relation to Smith's references to the *mətewələn*. I also cite his article on *mətewələnowək* and chiefs, "The Changing Role of the Wabanaki Chief and Shaman" (1977). Both articles aid in my understanding of what a *mətewələn* is, and what they are capable of doing.

In this thesis, I also refer to anthropologist Vincent Erickson's work on the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy. His entry in the Handbook of North American Indians, "Maliseet-Passamaquoddy" (1978), provides much information on Maliseet-Passamaquoddy culture. I refer to this work mainly in terms of understanding the relationship between Maliseet and Passamaquoddy, social organization and customs relating to *mətewələnowək*.

Linguist Philip LeSourd specializes in the Maliseet-Passamaquoddy language. LeSourd's article, "The Passamaquoddy 'Witch Tales' of Newell S. Francis" (2000), is an analysis of oral traditions collected by John D. Prince. Because the stories are 'witch' stories, LeSourd gives detailed background information on the *mətewələnowək* and it is this area of his paper that I refer to in this thesis.

CHAPTER 3.0 - Terminology

In this chapter I examine the area of terminology on two fronts. The first area concerns the terms used to describe Native religious customs, and the second area pertains to the terms used to describe national identity. Each area presents it own set of problems. The first problem is that the Native traditions have been devalued by those documents upon which we now rely, and which is reflected in the choice of language that described Native customs. The second problem is that throughout the historical literature the names of the nations that are subsumed under the term *Wabanaki* have gone through changes; therefore, I will clarify the term Wabanaki and the nationality of the people described in the historical literature, in sections 3.2 and 3.3.

3.1 Terminology and Religion

Clifford Geertz finds that "finished anthropological writings" (1973: 9) are, as previously mentioned, constructions of other people's constructions. That is certainly the case with the historical documents on the Wabanaki. The missionaries' interpretation of Native descriptions of their religion, is just one arena in which such an issue can be viewed. An attitude of disrespect can be seen in the historical documentation as early as the Jesuit Relations. The Native religious practitioners were representatives of a religion that the priests were trying to replace. Tension existed between the two groups, priests and

religious practitioners.[9] The impression communicated by the missionaries was a biassed one that depicted the religion of the Native people as evil, based on lies, magic, and trickery, and involving the devil and demons. As Morrison explains,

> Europeans identified these beings [other-than-human persons] as demons, claim[ing] that Native Americans were religiously deluded in 'worshipping' them, and began immediately an enduring effort to replace them in Indian peoples' hearts and minds. (2000: 23)

These designations were related to the missionaries' goal of conversion.

I am examining Native women's roles as religious practitioners in the areas of healing and their communication with non-human persons and I am aware that these areas are fraught with terminological difficulties. The devaluation of the practices of Native peoples is still evident in the terminology employed to describe Native culture. Writing on the anthropology of religion, Morton Klass states that "...most of the terminology upon which we must draw is heavily weighted with ethnocentric, or at least culturally specific, baggage" (1995: 65). Certain definitions or customary usages of terms in the Western academic tradition have negative connotations or at least have a certain amount of 'baggage' attached to them. For example, Klass discusses the difficulties with the use of the term 'supernatural' (a term commonly used in the definition of religion) as something that,

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[9]For instance, Morrison notes that Jesuit priests among the Innu "...ridiculed the powers of the Montagnais world, pitting themselves against other-than-human persons and the shamans as they did so" (2002: 125).

> ... predisposes the data: It remorselessly, inescapably categorizes all the information the ethnographer collects in terms of one consideration only what the *ethnographer* considers to be part of reality and what the *ethnographer* personally excludes from this reality (1995: 30).

Thus, there is another level of ethnocentrism that is in the form of what is considered to be 'part of reality,' which reflects the writer's beliefs and degrades the practices they are describing. I will try to be conscious of these concerns with terminology, and how I employ terms, in order to be respectful of the people and practices that I will be describing (i.e., it is all drawn from the 'experience-distant').

I will first attempt to discuss the term religion in a manner that is consistent with my goal of being respectful. In this regard religion has been variously defined over the years in ways that are problematic, beginning with Tylor's "minimum definition of Religion, the *belief* in *Spiritual* Beings" (Tylor 1970: 8, emphasis added).[10] Specifically, the terms *belief* and *spirit* are particularly problematic and I draw on the discussions of Kenneth Morrison and Morton Klass (which is, to some degree, parallel to Geertz's discussion of construction of data) concerning these terms. *Spirit* is associated with "non-physical beings" who are supposed to belong in the realm of the "supernatural" (Morrison 2002: 23). As Klass has noted, the designation of a religion as supernatural is ethnocentric, as it makes a distinction between the people whose religion is described as supernatural and those who are doing the

[10] I recognize that issues I consider here are relevant to a larger discussion concerning the anthropology of religion, however the issues here considered are only meant to relate to what is in this thesis.

describing. Also, the word *belief* "... sometimes points to some posited aspect of reality that is construed variously as non-empirical and imaginative objects of fantasy, or of faith" (Morrison 2002: 23). Both terms reflect a duality that is not present in Algonkian religion. Instead Morrison promulgates the idea that Algonkian religion can be described in "... everyday, real, interactional terms..." (Morrison 2002: 29). He states that "Algonkian people focus on a relational causality in which humans interact reciprocally with other-than-human persons" (Morrison 2002: 24).[11] Hence, influenced by Morrison, and in order to dismantle this imposed dichotomy, I use the term non-human person. I also follow the operational definition of religion proposed by Klass:

> [r]eligion in a given society will be that instituted process of interaction among the members of that society - and between them and the universe at large as they conceive it to be constituted - which provides them with meaning, coherence, direction, unity, easement, and whatever degree of control over events they perceive as possible (1995: 38).

This definition provides a way of understanding religion in a society without presenting a preconceived notion within the very definition itself that devalues the society in question.

With religion defined, I now look at the terminology concerning the translation of *mətewələn* as shaman, and the applicability of the term *shaman* for this thesis. I will first review two different definitions of shaman. Victor Turner describes a shaman as someone who performed curing rites, communicated with deities and spirits in a person to person manner, and who

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[11]Klass also notes that "[s]erious problems arise when an ethnographer attempts to distinguish the natural from the supernatural in a society in which no such distinction is made ..." (1995: 28).

is either possessed or controlled by a 'spirit' (1968: 439). He also notes that "[t]here is evidence that mediums, shamans, and priests in various cultures have practiced divination" (Turner 1968: 440). Piers Vitebsky, an anthropologist with an interest in shamanism and who also specialises in Arctic and Siberian cultures, asserts that "[b]y strict definition 'shamanism' should perhaps be used only for religions of the non-European peoples of the circumpolar north, and especially of Siberia..." (2000: 56). While, as Vitebsky notes, a more general form can apply to religions around the world, he also notes that "[t]here is less agreement about how far the term should be applied to indigenous religions in ... North America south of the sub-arctic... " (Vitebsky 2000: 56). Thus, I explore alternate terms to use instead of shaman because the general application of the word shaman may not be appropriate for usage in this paper due to the previously mentioned cultural specificity of the term as outlined by Vitebsky.

Many alternative terms that have been used in the place of shaman do not seem sufficient due to their negative connotations. In his introduction to a chapter on religious practitioners, anthropologist David Hicks suggests that a "[m]ore discerning usage might require that the designations *sorcerer* and *magician* be regarded as synonyms for practitioners who engage in magical rituals without going into trances"[12] (2002: 160). However, in the same text, sorcery is defined in the glossary as "[b]ad magic, performed to achieve ends

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[12] I can not absolutely determine if women, as described by the sources I have looked at, went into trances.

that society regards as bad or evil" (Hicks 2002: 522) and magic is defined as "[a] ritual or set of rituals intended to bring about some relatively immediate practical benefit, usually without the intervention of spirits" (Hicks 2002: 521). These definitions conflict with Morrison's description of Algonkian religion as constituting a relational causality between humans and non-human persons. The term magician brings to mind the ideas of trickery and illusions, which imply that what a magician does is fake. The word *witch*, while not suggested by Hicks, has been used in some instances as a translation for the term *mətewələn* in the oral traditions. Yet, *witch* can also have negative connotations in a derogatory sense and an association with evil that is not appropriate for the practices that I am examining. Assigning the terms just discussed to the practices and institutions of other cultures, degrades the meaning inherent in the words for the people who originated them.

For the purposes of this thesis, I will define religious practitioner as a person who communicates with non-human persons and who can heal, although in the historical documents the two actions are not always specifically linked in the descriptions of the religious practitioners.[13] I use the term religious practitioner, then, when discussing the information in relation to written historical sources. When I am discussing information from the oral traditions and anthropological sources I use the Maliseet term *mətewələn*, which will be explored in greater detail in chapter 6.0.

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[13]This is true for the descriptions of women religious practitioners in the historical documentation, which are quite brief.

3.2 Wabanaki

Since I am examining the information on Wabanaki women's roles I will elaborate on the term Wabanaki, for the purpose of clarification. The word Wabanaki[14] encompasses the groups who are now known as Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, and Abenaki (Prins 1994: 96). In the 1600's, these groups inhabited territory from the Kennebec to Cape Breton that was known as Wabanan'kik (Bear-Nicholas and Prins 1989: 22). The Wabanaki all belong to the larger Algonkian language family,[15] and speak "closely related languages" (Prins 1994: 98). Maliseet and Passamaquoddy are particularly close as they "... speak mutually intelligible dialects of the same language" (Erickson 1978: 123). Ives Goddard, a linguist who specializes in Algonquian languages, notes that "each Eastern Algonquian language shares features with each of its immediate neighbours..." (1978: 70). Wallis and Wallis find that; "... it is obvious that the [Maliseet] culture was part of the Eastern Algonkin area and almost identical with that of Penobscot and Micmac, between which tribes their territory lies" (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 46). Linguistically, "... the differences in the respective dialects of Malecite and Micmac are sufficient to

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[14] Isabelle Knockwood, a Mi'kmaq author, states that the word Wabanaki is related to the Mi'kmaq term wejuapeniak, which means "the light is coming forward" and refers to the coming of the dawn. Knockwood also clarifies that the Wabanaki are the easternmost people in North America and are the first to see the dawn (personal communication, March 2006). Similarly, in the Maliseet Passamaquoddy dictionary Francis and Leavitt define "Waponahkew" as "person of the dawnland" (2005).

[15] "The Algonquian linguistic family encompasses those languages spoken aboriginally and currently in regions stretching from the plains to the eastern seaboard, as far south as present-day North Carolina and as far north as the Canadian subarctic" (Bragdon 1996: 21).

establish a feeling, otherwise unjustified, of separateness. Speakers of Micmac and of Malecite are mutually understandable, though not easily..." (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 46). Therefore, these groups were apt to share customs because of language similarities and close physical proximity. Maliseet peoples are geographically somewhat in the middle, between the Mi'kmaq and the rest of the Wabanaki. They would have shared characteristics with the Mi'kmaq to the northeast and the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot and Abenaki, to the southeast. Incorporating information from these nations into my research will enable me to gain a better understanding of the northeastern Native cultures described in the written historical sources.

3.3 National Identity

The designations for each nation varied widely between authors and time periods. For example, Etechemin was a term commonly used in the early historical source literature. The peoples associated with the word Etechemin have changed from the 1600's until the term faded from use. Because the terminology used to described different Native nations can be confusing, I will attempt to examine the terminology relating to national identity in the sources that I use for this paper.

Samuel de Champlain,[16] one of the first people to record their observations concerning the Native peoples of the Northeast, was also the first

[16] Champlain's work, entitled The Works of Samuel de Champlain, was published by the Champlain Society. Champlain's voyages began in 1609 and after his 1633 voyage he remained in Quebec until his death.

person to use the term Etechemin. The "early-seventeenth-century French sources" described the Etechemin as being "... between the Kennebec and St. John..." (Bourque 1989: 258). Jesuit priest Pierre Biard encountered a gathering of 300 Etechemin at the meeting of the rivers Chiboctous and "Pentegoët" [Penobscot] (1895, vol. 2: 49). To add to this, Biard later noted that "[t]o the West and north [sic], from the river of St. John to the river Potugoët, [Penobscot] and even to the river Rimbequi, [Kennebec] live the Etheminiqui" (1895, vol. 2: 69). A definition consistent with the former was given by Father Morain, who was at the mission of the Good Shepherd in Riviere du Loup. In volume 60 of the Jesuit Relations, Morain wrote;

> [t]he Etechemins are a tribe of about 4 or 500 souls, as far as I can judge, whose country consists of 3 rivers on the south Side as regards the river st. Lawrence —namely, pemptegwet, pessemouquote [Passamaquoddy], and the River st. John [*sic*] (1895, vol. 60: 263).

The Etechemin were also associated with the Sillery mission,[17] as indicated by Lalemant's reference to "a very sick Ethechemin" at Sillery (1895, vol. 32: 221). In 1685, Bigot stated that two Etechemin men and one woman were imprisoned for drinking at Sillery (1895, vol. 63: 109). Etechemins were recorded as living in a large area that stretched from the St. John River to the Kennebec River and they were also associated with the mission of St. Joseph at Sillery, Quebec.

[17]The mission primarily consisted of Algonquians and Montagnais (Innu).

Before I delve into the use of the term Maliseet, I will first note that Etechemin is generally believed to be an early term for the people now known as Maliseet. Bruce Bourque notes that, "[t]he Maliseet, like the Canibas, can be linked to people formerly called Etchemin by biographical data as well as territorial congruence" (1989: 268). The word Maliseet was not used by Champlain or Lescarbot and appears later in the historical record. The first time a word resembling Maliseet was used was "... in 1692 by Cadillac (1930) when he referred to the Marisiz" (Erickson 1978: 135). Dièreville noted that the "Mairicites likewise dwell there [along the St. John River], & they are more numerous than the others [the Mi'kmaq]" (1933: 184). Maillard [1758] wrote that the "Maricheets[18]... form[ed] a distinct nation [from the Mi'kmaq], chiefly settled at Saint John's and are often confounded with the Abenaquis, so as to pass for one nation with them, till lately...." (1984: 184). According to the sources that I have used, the Maliseet people are primarily identified with the St. John River.

Discussing the historical references to the Abenaki is confusing due to the fact that the location of the peoples subsumed under the term changed with time and with different authors. Therefore, I will pay particular attention to the use of the term by the people whose work I quote. Kenneth Morrison defines the Abenaki as "... the various tribes that inhabited the river basins of New Hampshire, Maine, and New Brunswick. From west to east these peoples were

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[18]Maricheets and Mairicites were alternate spellings of Maliseet.

the Pennacook, Saco, Androscoggin, Kennebec, Wawenock, Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Maliseet" (Morrison 1984: 5). Elsewhere, it has been stated that "the Abenakis included the Sokokis,...the Cowasucks,...the Missisquois..., the Pennacooks..., the Pigwackets..., the Androscoggins...., and the Penobscots, Norridewocks, Wawencoks, and Kennebecs..." (Calloway 1996: 1). In 1721 [19] Father Loyard, a missionary at Meductic, stated that the 'Abnaquis' nation, "is composed of five Villages" (1895, vol. 67: 121). 'Medoktek' (a Maliseet village) was one of the 'Abnaquis' villages listed, the rest are: Becancour, St. Francis, 'Nanrantzwak (Norridgewock) on the Kennebec and Panawaniské on the Penobscot (Loyard 1895, vol. 67: 121). I also quote from Lalemant, who was referring to the work of Druillettes among the "Abneaquiois" at Kennebec, and from Ragueneau, who was referring to the Abenaki at Norridgewock. In the early sources, the locations associated with each term discussed (Abenaki, Etechemin, Maliseet) were not usually fixed; the locations of each group have overlapped with each other throughout time.

One of the earlier terms for the Mi'kmaq was Souriquois. Champlain (1922, vol. 1: 170) noted that the Souriquois wintered on Cape Breton. As explained by W. F. Ganong, Nicholas Denys was "... describing the Micmac tribe of Indians who occupied all of Nova Scotia, and the entire extent of his [Denys] government from Canso to Gaspé" (Ganong in Denys 1968: 399). Chrestien Le Clercq wrote about the Mi'kmaq of the Gaspé. Maillard used a

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[19]There is only a rough date for Loyard's piece in the Jesuit Relations, 1720 to 22.

"memorial furnished by the French Ministry, in April 1751" (1984: 10) to introduce the "Mikmakis" which states that the Mi'kmaq had villages in Cape Breton, St. John Island (now P. E. I.) and on both coasts of Acadia (Maillard 1984: 11).

Almost every author gives a different geographic locality for each Native group mentioned. It is important to note that there was a massive upheaval of Native peoples that ensued after contact. The spread of diseases, warfare and land encroachments were all responsible for massive movements of people. Epidemics began around the 1600's and from 1613 the Wabanaki were involved in wars up to and including the American Revolutionary war of 1777. The identity of the Native peoples in the early colonial records is often difficult to establish because of the previously mentioned movement of people. For this reason, it is unlikely that the early records described something akin to a static group. Another factor that complicates the identification of Native groups in the historical record is that "[a]mong seventeenth-century sources the descriptions of Lescarbot, Champlain, and Biard, who were in both Etechemin and Mi'kmaq territory, do not always separate the two groups" (Erickson 1978: 135). Therefore, it is impractical to exclude the historical documentation which refers to the various nations of the northeast. At times the terminology is too broad to give an exact idea as to who was being written about, and the massive movements of people complicate the situation especially when the terminology constantly changed. This is one of the reasons why I have used information

from sources that are not identified solely as Maliseet, but include information on the Wabanaki as a whole.

CHAPTER 4.0 - Native Women's Status

As was mentioned in the introduction, the early documents at times refer to women's role in society as one of slavery. However, in order to understand women's roles in this context it is important to come to a fuller understanding of their status at the time of contact. Thus, I will begin this chapter with a general description of Wabanaki women's roles and status at the time of the historical documents. Finally, I will discuss some sources that demonstrate that women's status and roles have suffered since colonization first began.

Women's role in production and labour is one area that demonstrates their status in Wabanaki society. Ellice B. Gonzalez determined that "Micmac men and women were dependent upon each other for labour and this interdependence was a requirement for success in the Micmac aboriginal subsistence cycle" (1981: 19). Women were free to divorce, participate in feast dancing and to become shamans (Gonzalez 1981: 19). Control of food allotment among the Wabanaki is one area where women's autonomy is well demonstrated. Gonzalez found that "[s]ince women did control most of the food preparation, and were caretakers of the stored goods, it seems likely that they were involved in the distribution of the food on a daily basis" (Gonzalez 1981: 20). According to Nash, Wabanaki women "... owned the products of their own labour and did not have to depend on their husbands for meat..." (1997: 163). This is also mentioned in the written historical sources, "[t]he women cut up, slice off, and give away the meat as they please..." (Le Clercq 1910: 263). Women's control of the distribution of meat is an example of how

women had autonomy in their roles and also contradicts Biard's statement reproduced at the beginning of this thesis (that Native women were slaves).

Maillard's paraphrasing of the speech of an elderly 17th century Mi'kmaq woman is an interesting source of information on women's roles. The woman was addressing men at a feast and began by stating "...the Creator has given to my share, talents and properties at least of as much worth as your's [sic]" (Maillard 1984: 16). She then goes on to extol her capacity in bringing the warriors and hunters into the world, her role in the torture of prisoners, and in rousing the men to achievements that bring them honour. She "...often brought about alliances, which there was no room to think could ever be made" (Maillard 1984: 17). The woman also brought about successful marriages and stated that, "...I have still within me wherewithal to attract the attention of those who know me" (Maillard 1984: 18). The elderly Mi'kmaq woman's speech demonstrates the autonomy of women in their roles, and that they were an active and vital force in their communities.

Language and oral traditions are also important sources, that, in this case, demonstrate the status of women. Bear-Nicholas cites Peter Paul,[20] who explained "that the root word in Maliseet for the female principle is also the root word for 'love,' 'tree' and moose,' which, not coincidentally, are all sources of life and regenerative power" (1994: 230 fn). Incidentally, the previously

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[20] Peter Paul, a Maliseet man, was well known for his knowledge and interest in Maliseet history, culture and language. He worked with many anthropologists, researchers and linguists. For more information on Paul see, In Memorandum Peter Lewis Paul 1902-1989, edited by Karl V. Teeter.

mentioned elderly Mi'kmaq woman noted that she gave life to warriors and hunters. Bear-Nicholas also states that women in the oral traditions "exemplify wisdom, sharing, and humanity as flowing from their natural gifts and original instructions as women" (1994: 230fn). Some examples of women from oral traditions, given by Bear-Nicholas, include; the grandmother and teacher of Kluskap, another woman who gave her body so that her people could have corn, and a woman who was able to stop a cannibal giant[21] (1994: 230fn). The importance and value of women is established in the language and the mythological representations of women in the oral traditions.

Women were extremely resourceful and had to be in order to survive. If men were off hunting and gone for a long time, it stands to reason that women had to be able to support themselves. Similarly, men had to be able to survive while they were away from women. For example Margaret Polchies, a Maliseet woman from Oromocto, discussed trapping muskrat and also provided a drawing of the trap (Szabo 1976, vol. 6: 56-59), while John Sacobie spoke about making Indian bread, outside in the ground (Szabo 1980, vol. 10: 390). Women made economic contributions in the form of their labour and skills. They prepared hides, and made beadwork, quillwork, baskets and brooms.[22]

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[21] Morrison describes a cannibal giant thus, "[o]f all the forces that threatened the delicately tuned social order of Algonkian kin groups, none were more powerful, more dangerous, or profoundly anti-social than the beings various named Kiwakwe, Chenoo, or Windigo, the dreaded cannibal giants" (2002: 62-63).

[22] See Ellice B. Gonzalaz (1981) for a detailed account of Mi'kmaq women's and men's economic contributions through the centuries; Changing Economic Roles for Micmac men and Women: An Ethnohistorical Analysis.

Even if they became too incapacitated for this labour they still contributed their knowledge to the society, as did elderly men, through the passing on of their knowledge.

4.1 Wabanaki Marriage

Wabanaki society has been described as a "...relatively egalitarian society, without fixed rank or social hierarchy. Social distinctions were based on age, sex, and ability" (Nash 1997: 152). Maliseet-Passamaquoddy social organization was described as being based on the "...bilaterally extended family" (Erickson 1978: 130), and Bear-Nicholas also describes Maliseet social organization as bilateral (1994: 229). Concomitantly, the proto-historic Wabanaki social organization has also been described as bilateral by McGee (Wherry 1979: foreword) while Wherry characterized the proto-Algonquian organization as matrilineal (Wherry 1979). Other sources have stated that these societies were patrilineal (Speck 1915 and Paul 2000 [concerning the Mi'kmaq]). These differing assessments may have to do with changes that occurred over 300 years of contact. Whatever the case, there was probably a tendency toward matrilocality (that is residency with the wife's family for at least the first year of marriage), as the early historical sources reveal that there was a system of bride service[23] in which people were involved in choosing their

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[23] For example, Biard wrote that "[c]ontrary to our custom, in their marriages the father does not give a dower to his daughter to establish her with some one, but the lover gives beautiful and suitable presents to the father, so that he will allow him to marry his daughter" (1895, vol. 3: 99). Other accounts of bride service are given by Denys (1968: 407), Le Clercq (1910: 260), and Gyles (1869: 45).

potential spouses.[24] The bride service usually consisted of the husband living with the wife and her parents for the period of about one year, during which time he contributed to the family's economic activities. Nash states that men "... gained the consent of the woman and the approval of her family by demonstrating exemplary behaviour" (Nash 1997: 162). Thus, the freedom women had in marriage and divorce[25] added to a man's prestige if he could attract and keep a wife through demonstrating that he was a good hunter and able to perform the necessary tasks of a husband (Nash 1997: 163).[26] Marriage, as described by Nash, was a meeting of two people who made their decision to live together based on the qualities that they looked for in a partner, and both would contribute to the relationship. The woman's ability to choose is an indication of Wabanaki women's autonomy and is "another indication of the shared nature of decision making" (Bear-Nicholas 1994: 229)

The concept of gender is not static, it is something that can change over time. Many recognize that contrary to the historical documentation, Native

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[24] Gyles wrote (1869: 44-45) that if a young man wanted to marry, his relations or a Jesuit advised him on a girl. The young man then goes to the girl and throws a chip [a wooden chip?] in her lap, if she likes him she throws the chip back, if not she throws it away.

[25]Perrault found that they"...pay no attention to the indissolubility of marriage" (1895, vol. 8: 167), Le Clercq stated that "...if any natural antipathy exists between husband and wife, or if they cannot live together in perfect understanding, they separate from one another..." (1910: 242), and "...the young married folks change their inclinations very easily when several years go by without their having children" (1910: 262).

[26]The following quotes demonstrate the duties of a man during bride service, "it is meet, moreover, that he show himself valiant in hunting, ..." (Lescarbot 1928: 216), "his duty was to go a hunting, to show that he was a good hunter capable of supporting well his wife and family. He had to make bows, arrows, the frame of snowshoes, even a canoe - that is to say, to do the work of men" (Denys 1968: 407). This was also confirmed by Le Clercq (1910: 260).

women held important and egalitarian positions within their society which, subsequent to colonization, became harder to notice. However, the understanding of how women's status was affected varies. Leacock found that the presence of male dominance was due to either:

> (1) the effects of colonization and/or the involvement in market relations in a previously egalitarian society; (2) the concomitant of developing inequality in a society, commonly referred to in anthropological writings as "ranking," when trade is encouraging specialization of labour and production for exchange is accompanying production for use thereby undercutting the collective economy on which egalitarian relations are based; or (3) problems arising from interpretations of data in terms of Western concepts and assumptions (1981: 5).

Leacock's three points are apt for this thesis, particularly the third, which is related to the problems that I have been addressing. Interestingly, in an article on Tsimshian women's status and colonization, anthropologist Jo-Anne Fiske links the decline in women's status to a number of factors. Fiske finds that the fur trade's effect on the change in the relations of production led to women's loss of "rights over their own resources" (Fiske 1991: 530). She also finds that the "erosion of women's social place continued under the intervention of resident missionaries, the operation of commercial industries and the interference of the state" (530). Karen Anderson (1991) demonstrated in her work on the Huron and Montagnais [Innu] that missionary influence led to the subordination of women's status. The common link is that women's roles are seen to have been impinged upon, through colonization.

Five hundred years of colonialism has done a lot to the understanding of, as well the actual roles of, Native women. However, people's responses

and change itself are dynamic: because women's status was affected negatively does not mean that all the information on their roles was obliterated in the historical record, or the oral traditions. The understanding of women's autonomy over their roles in their society is a necessary precondition for understanding that women, as well as men, were religious practitioners, which will be demonstrated in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 5.0 - Religious Practitioners in the Historical Documents

I will now focus my analysis on a review of the description of religious practitioners in the written historical documents. In relation to the religious practitioner, these documents describe: causation of sickness, prediction, consultation with non-human persons, the importance of dreams, methods of healing, and extraordinary feats. In order to understand the role of a religious practitioner it is important to review all the information on that role, especially since most of the descriptions of religious practitioners do not refer specifically to women.[27] In relation to my application of Geertz's hermeneutic circle, the information contained in this chapter would be located very early on the advancing spiral and this information will be drawn upon when looking at women's roles as *mətewələn* in the oral traditions.

The first area in the historical sources that I examine is the instances where prediction was described. According to Le Clercq the religious practitioners of the Gaspé Mi'kmaq "...meddle[d] with predictions of future affairs..." (1910: 223). In one instance, Membertou[28] was asked if an absent person was dead. Membertou responded that the person would either return in fifteen days, or the missing person had been killed by the Armouchiquois (Lescarbot 1928: 174). John Gyles recorded an instance in which Maliseet

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[27]The only descriptions of women religious practitioners that I could find I discuss in the next section, 5.1.

[28] Membertou was a Mi'kmaq chief and healer who died in 1611 at Port Royal (Campeau 1966, vol. I: 500).

people predicted the outcome of their hunting while in a sweat lodge. On this occasion, Gyles was hunting with unconverted Meductic Maliseets who,

> ... after several days ... proposed to inquire, ... what success they should have. They accordingly prepared many hot stones, and laying them in a heap, made a small hut covered with skins and mats; then, in a dark night two of the powwows went into this hot house with a large vessel of water...

which they poured onto the hot rocks (1896: 35-36). Gyles noted that the response to their inquiry was; "[t]hey said they had very likely signs of success.... A few days after, we moved up the river and had pretty good luck" (Gyles 1896: 36).[29] The 'Abnaquiois' religious practitioners were recorded as having the ability to predict the future as well. Jesuit priest, Jerome Lalemant, described how a religious practitioner on the Kennebec predicted the future,

> the Father's host having fallen sick, the sorcerers said that he was dying, and that even if he should be cured, he would not see the Spring: that a spell or a Hiroquois [Iroquois] would take away his life, in punishment for having brought a black robe to their country (1895, vol. 31: 199).

Among the Wabanaki, there are references to the prediction of the future that lead to the assumption that the ability to foresee the future was commonplace and an important function of the religious practitioner.

Non-human forces were involved in aiding the religious practitioner foresee the future, as the following examples demonstrate. According to Biard, religious practitioners consulted with non-human persons concerning "...life and

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[29]The Innu used the sweat lodge as a method of healing, "[t]hey sing and make noises also in their sweating operations. They believe that this medicine, which is the best of all they have, would be of no use whatever to them if they did not sing during the sweat" (Le Jeune 1895, vol. 6: 189-191). Le Jeune also stated that "the women occasionally sweat as well as the men. Sometimes they sweat all together, men and women, pell-mell" (1895, vol. 6: 191).

death and future events...," vengeance, enemies, success in hunting (1895, vol. 2: 75), wars and execution (Lescarbot 1928: 161). Lescarbot noted that Membertou consulted a "demon" to learn of the future, and of people absent (1895, vol. 1: 75). A possible explanation for what the historical documenters meant when using the term *demon* is contained in Le Clercq's description of the '*Oüahich.*' According to Le Clercq, the Mi'kmaq of the Gaspé learned from the "...Oüahich, the best places for hunting... " (1910: 216). Le Clercq stated that the Oüahich was "their demon"[30] (1910: 90). The description of the *Oüahich* and the previous examples all demonstrate that non-human persons were often involved in aiding the religious practitioner with prediction of future events.

An important element is the religious practitioner's ability to communicate with a non-human person; the communication directly related to the well-being of the group. The ability to predict the future was a method consulted and acted on by the Mi'kmaq, Abenaki and Maliseet as described by the written historical documentation. Prediction of the future was important for the religious practitioners and their society due to the religious practitioner's involvement in locating game and in the ability to give information about future events.

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[30] In this instance (the first in which Le Clercq mentioned oüahich), Le Clercq wrote that if a woman in labour, "...feels it a little too severely, she calls on the jugglers [religious practitioners], ... They say that this [tobacco] is a present which they ask for their Ouahiche [sic], that is to say, their demon, in order that he may chase and remove the germ which hinders the accouchement" (1910: 90). A juggler is defined by the Canadian Oxford Dictionary as "a trickster or imposter" (Barber 2004: 818).

The early documentary records on the Wabanaki also indicated another method of foreseeing the future that involved dreaming. Lescarbot stated, "[t]hey believe also that all their dreams are true; and, indeed, there be many of them which do say that they have seen and dreamed things that do happen or shall come to pass..." (Lescarbot 1928: 161). This is corroborated by Biard (1985, vol. 2:75 and vol. 3: 131) and Le Clercq: "[o]ur Gaspesians are still so credulous about dreams that they yield easily to everything which their imagination or the Devil puts into their heads when sleeping..." (1910: 227). Among the Wabanaki, a religious practitioner's interpretation of dreams would have been very important as they "... integrated the bonds between ordinary and other-than-human persons into the entire ritualistic structure by interpreting the dreams in which such persons appeared" (Morrison 2002: 86). Hence, their role as religious intermediaries was extremely important in guiding daily affairs by connecting humans with non-human persons.

In addition to functioning as a religious intermediary, religious practitioners were involved with healing.[31] Biard described the role of a religious practitioner by stating that "... those among them who practice medicine, are identical with those who are at the head of the Religion, i.e.

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[31]As background information, I will quote Heagerty's (a physician and historian) descriptions of French medicine at the time that Biard and Le Clercq were writing about the religious practitioners; "When the French reached Canada they found that the Indians were possessed of a knowledge of medicine and surgery that was in some ways the equal of their own. In their application of the medicinal properties of the vegetable kingdom the Indians were probably superior to the French physicians" (1928: 268), and "At the time of their arrival in Canada the practice of medicine among the French consisted largely of sweating, purging, starving and bleeding" (Heagerty, 1928: 271).

Autmoins, whose office is the same as that of our Priests and Physicians" (1895, vol. 3: 117). Sickness was caused by a 'worm' or 'germ,'[32] which had to be removed by the religious practitioner in order to cure the illness. The method for removing the 'worm' appeared to have involved blowing (Le Clercq 1910: 218) on the patient. Lescarbot noted that "[i]f they are sick, they first make incisions into their stomachs, from which Pilotois,[33] or sorcerers, suck the blood" (1895, vol. 2: 151). Likewise, "[i]n regard to the cure of sores, the Autmoins...suck the wound and charm it..." (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 125).[34] Mi'kmaq chief Membertou practised similar methods in his healing procedure;

> ...he maketh invocations on his devil; he bloweth upon the part grieved; he maketh incisions, sucketh the bad blood from it: if it be a wound, he healeth it by the same means, applying a round slice of the beaver's stones[35] (Lescarbot 1928: 173).

After the procedure, gifts of venison or beaver skins were given to Membertou. Correspondingly, Denys also described how religious practitioners healed though blowing on the pained part (1968: 417).

Another method involved catching whatever caused the sickness. Biard furnished a long description of such a healing method, in which the first step was determining if a person would eat. If the patient would not eat, they sent

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[32]The word used by Le Clercq was "tchougis," which is explained by Ganong (the editor to mean worm (1910: 219).

[33]Biard explains this to be a Basque word meaning sorcerer (1895, vol. 3: 117).

[34]In another instance among the Innu, Le Jeune wrote that two religious practitioners "...draw from their bag a great butcher knife covered with blood, which they show to those present" (1895, vol. 9: 81), which was attributed to be the cause of the patients' sickness.

[35]According to the Oxford English dictionary, beaver-stones are "the two small sacs in the groin of the beaver, from which the substance 'castor' is obtained" (Murray et al.1961, 1: 745).

for the religious practitioner. After studying the patient, the religious practitioner then "... blows upon him [the patient] some unknown enchantments" (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 119). Biard writes that if the cure was not effective, it was considered that there was something inside the sick person, which had to be forced out and killed (1895, vol. 3: 119). Next, "... after various chants, dances, and howls..." (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 119), the religious practitioner "...takes a naked sword and slashes it about..." (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 121). He then "... redoubles his roars and threats that they must take care, that Satan is furious and that there is great peril..." (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 121). The religious practitioner stated that he could see 'him' in a ditch and the people attending would pull at a cord until some "decayed and mouldy bones, pieces of skin covered with dung, etc" (Biard 1895, vol. 3: 121) came out. The 'devil' died or was injured and the patient could return to good health.[36] However, a dream was needed to determine the patient's diagnosis. Lescarbot described a similar procedure, also involving a string and a 'devil:'

> ...they fix a staff in a pit, to which they tie a cord, and, putting their head into this pit, they make invocations or conjurations ... and this with beatings and howlings, until they sweat ... When this devil is come, this master Aoutmoin makes them believe that he holdeth him tied by his cord, and holdeth fast against him, forcing him to give him an answer before he let him go (1928: 174).

[36] The term devil is not an appropriate term for the description of this event, hence my quotations when the term is used.

From the various descriptions it appears that the active role the religious practitioners took in healing people in their societies was similar for all of the Wabanaki.

Sickness was generally described as something that could be the result of a deliberate intent to cause harm and was sometimes perpetrated over a distance. Religious practitioners could give "...the blow of death to Indians, even if forty to fifty leagues distant..." (Le Clercq 1910: 217). The "Abnaquois" people of *Naranchouak*'[37] have been attributed, by Ragueneau, to have stated the following;

> The sudden death of one of our Captains, following upon a quarrel that he had had with the Captain of the people living at the mouth of our River, made us believe that that man, who is regarded as a great Sorcerer, had killed him secretly by means of his sorcery (1895, vol. 38: 35).

Non-physical attacks, where the victim was not physically touched, could also cause illness and sometimes death.

Medicinal plants were employed by the religious practitioners. Denys noted that if a person had a cut, "[t]hey [the Mi'kmaq] had knowledge of herbs, of which they made use and straightway grew well" (1968: 415). Biard mentioned that the religious practitioners had a knowledge of "... laxatives, or astringents, hot or cold applications, lenitives or irritants for the liver or kidneys..." (1895, vol. 3: 117). Le Clercq wrote: "[t]hey are all by nature physicians, apothecaries, and doctors, "through their knowledge of "...certain

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[37]One of the 5 "Abenaki" villages listed by Loyard on page 38.

herbs, which they use successfully to cure ills that seem to us incurable" (1910: 296). A herbal cure of epilepsy was also documented by Dièreville (1933: 181), but this will be explored in greater detail later, in section 5.1. The composition of the remedies used by Native peoples were generally not described in the early documents.

The ability to perform amazing feats was another aspect of the religious practitioner's capacity. Biard wrote that the religious practitioners could call "...forth spirits and optical illusions to those who believe them, showing snakes and other beasts which go in and out of the mouth while they are talking; and several other Magical deeds of the same kind" (1895, vol. 3: 131-133). Another feat was to "...mak[e] trees appear to be all on fire, and to burn visibly without being consumed..." (Le Clercq 1910: 217). Dièreville described two amazing feats, the first of which involved chewing a piece of flintstone, spitting it out in pieces and then swallowing it. The next step in this feat involved smoking a stick and offering "the fumes of the Tobacco, murmuring some words," then putting the stick down their throat. They then pulled the stick out of their mouths with the piece of flint attached, back in one piece. A second feat involved making an otter skin walk (Dièreville 1933: 182-3). While amazing feats were not attributed to women in the documentary sources, they are in later recorded sources (these will be reviewed on pages 73-74).

This section has detailed the role of a religious practitioner as described by the written historical documentation. It is necessary to first understand the more general description of the abilities of religious practitioners before

analysing the references to women which are few and sparse in detail. The next loop on the advancing spiral is the exploration of the specific references to women as religious practitioners as also described by the written historical documents.

5.1 Women as Religious Practitioners

The references to women as religious practitioners in early historical sources are few, only four in fact, but they are very important. They consist of the evidence that indicates women's involvement in religious and healing activities. These references relay information from sources that are representative of most of the Wabanaki.

The first quote is from a chapter in the Relation of 1652-3 (volume 38), entitled, 'Of the good disposition shown by the Abenaquiois toward the faith of Jesus Christ' by Ragueneau. This quote was no doubt intended to demonstrate the success that the Jesuits were having in converting the Abenaki. It is attributed to an unnamed 'Abenaquiois' person who is speaking of customs that they purportedly no longer practice. This person stated; "the Demon who gives us fear of our Sorcerers and faith in our Pythonesses,' who divine future events and have knowledge (according to their own account) of things absent, 'this Demon has lost his credit" (Ragueneau 1895, vol. 38: 37). The quote is interesting because in the Canadian Oxford Dictionary a

pythoness is defined as a witch (Barber, 2004: 1260).[38] This indicates that the priest understood this woman to be a religious practitioner. This quote clearly states that women were involved in foreseeing the future and involvement with non-human persons.

The next quote comes from the work of the Sieur de Dièreville, who related an incident in which a soldier at a fort on the St. John River suffered an epileptic attack. An unnamed Native woman,[39] who was present at the time of the attack, gathered some "root scrapings" and proceeded to make, "... him take one [dose] when his attack had passed off, & had him well covered, making him understand that he would sweat profusely & that he would void a great amount.." (1933: 181). The next day the patient rested and the day after he was instructed to take the second dose. The woman left the fort and, following her instructions, the patient was completely cured (Dièreville 1933: 181). When the captain at the fort realized that the woman's cure worked, an unsuccessful search ensued for her. Dièreville was not present at the time of the occurrence or, as he states, he would have attempted to determine what the cure consisted of. In this instance, the woman cured the man through her knowledge and application of medicinal plants. While short in detail, this is an

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[38]Although this quote is attributed to a Native person, pythoness is the term most likely used by the priest. In recording the statements of the Native peoples, the priest most likely placed ideas expressed by the Native people in terms that were familiar to himself or his readers. It also demonstrates the missionaries' categorization of women religious practitioners.

[39] Dièreville did not mention which nation she came from or her name, but considering the incident occurred on the St. John River, it is plausible that she was Maliseet, or from a nearby Wabanaki nation.

interesting picture of an independent woman who took control of the situation, cured a person, and moved on.

The following quote by Abbé Pierre Maillard describes women as religious practitioners, as well as instances when women, during menstruation, went to religious practitioners;

> [t]heir women have always observed, not to present themselves at any public ceremony, or solemnity, whilst under their monthly terms, nor to admit the embraces of their husbands.
>
> At stated times they repair to particular places in the woods, where they recite certain formularies of invocation to the *Manitoo*, dictated to them by some of their oldest *Sagamees*, or principal women, and more frequently by some celebrated Juggler of the village, that they may obtain the blessing of fruitfulness (Maillard 1984: 51).

This quote leaves much to be explained, such as the term "Sagamees, or principal women." Sakəm is a chief, so this term must denote female leadership, but is this in a purely religious area, or connected to women's biological conditions? Are they the same as the "Jugglers" mentioned in the quote, or is their position different? However, this quote does state that women were able to go to religious practitioners who aided them in their relationship with non-human persons. This quote also indicates that both women and men religious practitioners were involved in communication with non-human persons.[40] This example also presents the intriguing possibility that during

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[40]Among the Innu there was a more direct example of women's participation in a religious ceremony. A woman was noted to have conducted a shaking tent ceremony; "Not only the men, but even the women, enter this fine Tent. At the three Rivers, a juggler having called the Maintou, or some other Genius, and not having succeeded in making him come, a woman entered and began to shake the house and to sing and to cry so loudly, that she caused the devil to come" (Le Jeune, 1895, 9: 113). This quote makes evident the direct participation of a woman in a ceremony, while the other references do not indicate in what manner women predict the future or act as intermediaries.

menstrual seclusion women were involved in religious practices that men, particularly missionaries from outside the culture, would not be involved in or know little about.

Recollect missionary Chrestien Le Clercq noted that some Mi'kmaq people, specifically men, "... have given themselves in respect and reverence the title of Patriarch..." performing the functions of the missionaries (1910: 229). He also noted that this occurred among the Mi'kmaq women;

> [i]t is a surprising fact that this ambition to act the patriarch does not only prevail among the men, but even the women meddle therewith. These, in usurping the quality and the name of *religieuses*, say certain prayers in their own fashion, and affect a manner of living more reserved than that of the commonality of Indians.... They look upon these women as extraordinary persons, whom they believe to hold converse, to speak familiarly, and to hold communication with the sun, which they have all adored as their divinity (Le Clercq 1910: 229).

Le Clercq continued with an example of an elderly woman in such a role, who possessed a set of unstrung rosary beads which had "...the power and property not only of succouring the Indians in their sicknesses and all their most pressing necessities, but also of preserving them from surprise, from persecution, and from the fury of their enemies" (1910: 230). In this instance, the woman was acting in a role that appears to have been traditionally open to her in so far as she was seeking the same goals as a Native religious practitioner would have sought without the Catholic implements, that is 'communication with their "divinity.'" In The Indian Peoples of Eastern North America, historian James Axtell noted that;

> [i]t was therefore typical of the natives to incorporate Christian beliefs, deities, or ceremonies into their own religious corpus when looking for

> ways to remain traditionally Indian, just as the ancient female patriarch used unstrung rosary beads (1981: 193).

Kenneth Morrison noted that "Wabanaki Catholicism represents a syncretic intensification of their ancient religious life" (2002: 81). Native women and men incorporated new religious iconography while maintaining the traditional aspects of a religious practitioner.

The common theme in these quotes is that women were involved in healing and as intermediaries between humans and non-human persons. Women could heal and acted as intermediaries through prediction of the future, giving 'invocations' and otherwise communicating with non-human persons. Such a position signifies that women had access to non-human persons, which allowed religious practitioners to perform their duties. These positions can be considered powerful, yet in terms of leadership, power was based on the ability to perform certain tasks that were vital for the maintenance of the community. It has been written that the 'chief' was someone who "... is generally the one among them who is the best warrior or the best hunter" (Cadillac 547: 1692). The hunter's success "... was determined by his capability to supply his hunting group with sufficient food to prevent starvation" (Smith 1977: 214). This can also be applied to the religious practitioners; "[l]egitimate power–whether that of the hunter, warrior, shaman, or any persons engaged in socially productive domestic tasks–existed only for people's welfare" (Morrison 2002: 82). What mattered most was the success with which they operated their particular roles. The women previously discussed must have been powerful in order for

outsiders to recognize that they acted in the role of a religious practitioner. The fact that women were operating as religious practitioners indicates that they had power in terms of contributing to the welfare of their people as religious practitioners. It is important to recognize that women held significant roles in their societies and these roles were also shared by men.

The previous paragraphs represent the information that is, conceptually, at the beginning of the (hermeneutic) advancing spiral. The information from the historical sources that will be important for comparison later, on the advancing spiral, is that religious practitioners could carry out amazing feats, had access to the animal helpers, (men and women) used herbal cures, were not different from those who used herbal medicine, could predict the future, and could communicate with non human persons.

In this section, there has been nothing that refers specifically to the Maliseet. However, there are Maliseet oral traditions that have elements in common with the general Wabanaki description of religious practitioners and women as religious practitioners. I will review the oral traditions and then compare the two sets of information - documentary and oral traditions - about Native women as religious practitioners. More than just supplementing the written documentation, the oral traditions present a Native point of view. I contend that the slight historical evidence for women's roles in this area can be strengthened when looking at the more recent practices of the Wabanaki. When two sets of sources from different time periods on the same topic repeat,

it is a possible indication that there is a connection between the past practices and the recent ones.

CHAPTER 6.0 - Oral Traditions and the *Mətewələn.*

In the previous chapter I discussed the references to women's participation in the role of religious practitioner drawn from the written historical sources. I will begin this chapter with an analysis of the word *mətewələn*, in terms of how it, as a Maliseet word, corresponds to the rest of the Wabanaki languages and, in this context, its possible meaning. I will then proceed to a description of the *mətewələnowək* from the works of anthropologists and researchers among the Wabanaki. Finally I will look at the correlations between women as '*mətewələn*' from the previously mentioned sources and women as 'religious practitioner' in the historical records, which represents another loop on the advancing spiral.

6.1 *Mətewələn*

When examining the roles of women *mətewələn(owək)*, as described by the oral traditions and in various anthropological studies, it is important to understand that there are similarities between the practices of the Wabanaki concerning the role of a *mətewələn*. Frank Speck recorded the linguistic similarities concerning the term *mətewələn* for most of the Wabanaki. According to Speck, the Penobscot term is "mədə'linu" (1919: 240), the Abenaki at St. Francis use "mədaulinú," and the Maliseet and Passamaquoddy use "m'déulin" (Speck 1919: 242 fn). In addition to the linguistic similarities there are cultural similarities, as well:

> ... the characteristics of Penobscot shamanism are shared alike by the

> Abenaki, Wawenock, Malecite, and Passamaquoddy, even in respect to the terms involved. The characteristics, too, are the same in the case of the related Micmac, though here we have a different term designating the shaman (Speck 1919: 242) (the term given by Speck is "buówin").

The Mi'kmaq term "bouhinne" was used by LeClercq in his writings from the late 17th century, demonstrating that this term and role has had long use among the Mi'kmaq. Interestingly, Mechling found that he "could find no difference between the Micmac ideas about the buowin[41] and the Malecite ideas about medeulin" (1959: 174). Among the Mi'kmaq "...the exploits of shamans and their helpers are almost identical throughout with those of the Penobscot, Malecite, and Passamaquoddy" (Speck 1919: 250). Even though there is differing terminology among the Mi'kmaq, the roles of *mətewələn* and *buowin* are almost identical.

Frank Speck stated that the word *mətewələn* is connected to drumming, "... the derivation of the first part of the term (*mədə*) is from the "sound of drumming" (1919: 240-241). Furthermore, "Dr. Peter Paul amplifies Speck's observation by explaining that the root meaning of the word 'drum' refers to the act of begging, or beseeching the powers for help" (Morrison 2002: 90). In the Jesuit Relations and the works of Le Clercq and Maillard, drumming is not mentioned in connection with rituals among the Mi'kmaq or Maliseet

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[41] Isabelle Knockwood indicated that there are two terms, puoin (spelled buowin above) and ginap, which "refer to spiritually powerful persons who have many amazing abilities to heal and predict. "However, the ginap performs only good deeds while the puoin performs deeds that are not always beneficial to others (Knockwood personal communication, March 2006). In this sense the puoin/buowin is similar to the *mətewələn*, who can perform helpful and malevolent deeds.

(Etechemin). However, there is one reference to a religious practitioner among the Abenaki, at 'Kinibeki,' who was asked by a priest for the "tools of his Juggler's trade," his "drum and his charms" in order to convert to Christianity (Lalemant 1895, vol. 31: 195-7). Francis and Leavitt translate *mətewələn* as shaman, or a person with spiritual power (2005). The ties between *mətewələn* and seeking help from the powers through drumming, indicates there was a connection between the role of a *mətewələn* and acting as an intermediary. The connection between the translation of the term *mətewələn* and the actual practices of the religious practitioners described in the written historical documentation is another point that is important for the advancing spiral.

Commonly, in the written versions of the oral traditions, the word *mətewələn* has been translated as a witch, wizard or sorcerer (LeSourd 2000: 453). The terminological difficulty with certain words has already been discussed in Chapter Three. However, it is appropriate here to add LeSourd's comments on the matter, "none of these terms [witch, wizard, sorcerer] really conveys what it means to be a *motewŏlòn*, however, since the power involved is a personal power, not a capacity achieved by harnessing some occult external force" (2000: 453). On account of the difficultly in finding a completely acceptable substitute term for the word *mətewələn*, I will retain the use of the word *mətewələn* for this thesis.

6.2 The Abilities of a Mətewələn

The following is a summary of the abilities attributed to the mətewələn

among the Wabanaki.[42] Frank Speck found that the mətewələn had the

> ... functions ... of causing sickness or misfortune, of removing the same, and contesting his power with that of rivals, while occasionally we learn of more altruistic services rendered in warfare and in ridding the world of monsters (1919: 243).

Speck also found that the mətewələn could foretell events (1919: 243). Wallis and Wallis, in reference to the Maliseet, stated that,

> [t]he human possessor of this power can see events happening in a distant place and can perform good deeds, or at least harmless ones; but most of the tales about witches describe the bad wish sent in animal form, usually in a dream to one whom the witch wishes to harm (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 31).

They can "also harry or destroy livestock and the pets of those who refuse their requests" (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 31). Mətewələnowək could control the weather (Smith, 1957: 34), provide food, retaliate, find game, and produce food items that were not readily available (Smith 1977: 219). When a mətewələn has caused harm, only the mətewələn who caused the harm, or the family members of that mətewələn, can save the injured person (LeSourd 2000: 454) and "... only someone with sufficient power can cure an injury that a *motewŏlòn* has inflicted" (LeSourd 2000: 454). These sources indicated that the abilities of the mətewələn were wide ranging.

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[42]When considering the characteristics of the mətewələn, it is important to take into account syncreticism and acculturation. Wallis and Wallis list traits that are found among the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq that are either French, British, both or Native in origin: "respect for animals; specific pregnancy taboos; the feeding of colostrum to the newborn; beliefs in the source, form, and behaviour of will-o'-the-wisp; adoption of European ideas of witchcraft; faith or hope of supernatural retribution visited on Whites who harm Indians: and the power of those born with a caul, are still topics of sufficient interest to be introduced spontaneously by Malecite and Micmac (Wallis and Wallis1957: 49). The preceding quote speaks to both acculturation and common traits between the Maliseet and Mi'kmaq.

A vital component for all mətewələnowək was the aid of a *pohikən*, a Maliseet term commonly translated as animal helper. The *pohikənək*[43] were instrumental in helping the mətewələn complete the tasks that were central to their role. A *pohikən*,

> ... takes the form of an animal species specific to the individual shaman. An especially powerful shaman may have more than one such puwhíkon. The *motewŏlòn* is sometimes described as sending the *puwhíkon* to do his or her work, and sometimes as transforming himself or herself into the *puwhíkon*[44] (LeSourd 2000: 454).

Two mətewələnowək can even battle each other while they are transformed into their *pohikənəmowa*.[45] If a *pohikən* is injured, then the mətewələn is hurt as well.[46] Erickson noted that the *pohikən*, "... was sent by the shaman in a dream to acquire the necessary information or to follow the shaman's bidding" (1978: 132). A *pohikən* can also indicate to the mətewələn who is working against them, and can aid the mətewələn in retaliation. The mətewələn's "... relationship with a *baohi'gan,*[47] or spirit helper, retained and funneled power from the mythical era[48]" (Morrison 2002: 85-86). A *pohikən* was an important

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[43] -ək is the plural ending.

[44] This is corroborated by Wallis and Wallis (1957: 32), and Mechling (1914: 96).

[45] This is the ending for plural possessors.

[46] In the story "Witches, Ghosts, Forerunners All Over and Everywhere", by Margaret Polchies, a mətewələn dies when someone kills her *pohikən* (Szabo 1975, vol. 6: 380-382).

[47] I use the spelling '*pohikən*,' however baohi'gan and puwhikon are variant spellings.

[48] As the "mythical era" is not something that has been discussed in this thesis, I will include an excerpt of Morrison's discussion of the mythic era: [i]n the Wabanakis' mythic age, men and animals were not cooperative, but they were essentially alike" (Morrison 2002: 83).

asset for a mətewələn as they helped the mətewələn acquire information, realize their wishes, and connect the mətewələn to a past era.

The mətewələnowək were described as being able to execute amazing feats. The feats attributed to mətewələn can appear to be miraculous; however, the mətewələnowək "are [also] depicted as malicious or evil, others are helpful or humorous" (LeSourd 2000: 454). The feats are all beyond the normal bounds of the ability of those who were not mətewələnowək. Smith noted that mətewələnowək could sink into the ground, hang objects from sunbeams, rainbows, moonbeams and smoke, leave imprints on hard surfaces, and throw their voice (1977: 220). J.D. Prince (1899) reproduced six stories obtained from Newell S. Francis[49] in which Francis also related that mətewələn could sink into the ground and be heard singing over great distances (Prince, 1899: 185). Speck, writing on the Penobscot, stated:

> ...shamans are accredited with the power to kill or injure creatures by pointing the finger at them, to prove their strength over rivals either in combat or in contest, to escape from their enemies by magic means, to spy on enemies, to imprint their footsteps in hard surfaces, to increase or diminish their size, to spoil the luck of trappers and hunters, to cause thick ice to heave, to pass through barriers (doors and the like), to roll away a heavy rock, to lift themselves from the floor, to foresee the approach of strangers, to remain beneath water, to force rivals to throw off their animal disguises, to render themselves invisible, and so on (1919: 256).

In a Maliseet story, there was a twin who could "... hang his hat on a sunbeam, could let people in through locked doors, and could fasten ropes on a burdock

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[49]This is the collection of stories that LeSourd refers to in his article "The Passamaquoddy 'Witchcraft Tales' of Newell S. Francis."

plant from which to make a swing for himself" (Speck, 1919: 265). One commonly mentioned feat, sinking into the ground, is explained by Nicholas Smith as "a form of shaman's power that seems to have no contemporary purpose [other] than to prove that one has exceptional power..." (1977: 220). The abilities of the mətewələnowək are vast and while some were a display of power, others had beneficial purposes such as providing food.

From the sources that I have examined, it appears that the capacity to be a mətewələn could either be inherent in a person or acquired. Wallis and Wallis stated that "the power called ma dē wa' hin is inherent in beasts and birds, particularly the saw-whet owl; in the tree burls from which game bowls are made; and in certain men and women, the witches" (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 31). Certain events which were taken as an indication that the child was a mətewələn involved being born as a twin, with a caul, or as the seventh son in a line of sons, or the seventh daughter in a line of daughters. However, Wallis and Wallis noted that the number seven is a European concept and even though "the seventh son or daughter was said to have supernatural gifts... these [gifts] were attributed much more strongly to the caul or to twinship" (1957: 33). They take this to mean that the borrowing of the importance of seven was not as strong or ingrained as the importance attached to being a twin. The following two examples given by Wallis and Wallis indicate how the circumstance of birth played an indirect role. One woman who, "as a child and a young girl ... was always interested in the sick. Noting this, her uncle (a twin who 'owned' the medicine), called her to him when he was dying and gave her

his knowledge and power" (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 30). Another woman was "the second-born of twins, and a seventh daughter. This woman had power, and her daughter believed she learned how to use it from her Malecite husband who had plenty of power too" (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 31). In each of the previously mentioned cases, women were considered to be mətewələnowək; however, one was born a twin, but learned 'the power' from someone else and the other person learned from a twin. Based on these descriptions, it can be determined that the ability to be a mətewələn could be acquired; but only from someone who had an innate ability. Mechling found that people were either born mətewələn or later acquired it, and that those who acquired it later in life, did so in association with other mətewələn (1959: 174). However, in 1977, one Maliseet woman stated that "[e]very Indian is a *motewôlon*, if she will use her power" (LeSourd 2000: 454). Despite the manner in which mətewələnowək acquired their power, it is certain that either men or women could have the powers of a mətewələn and that gender is not a determining factor.

6.3 Women as Mətewələn

To further illustrate the fact that the characteristics associated with mətewələn apply to both men and women, I would like to consider two versions of an oral tradition. The premise of each story is a battle between two mətewələnowək. The first story, relayed by LeSourd (2000: 454), is about a powerful shaman, Sacoby[50] who "...vows revenge on the family of Michel Louis

[50] Sacoby is presumably the man's last name.

only after Michel Louis beats Sacoby's son in a fight" (LeSourd 2000: 454). Sacoby becomes a spider and in that form he attacked the nephew of Michel, causing Michel's nephew to fall and hurt himself. Michel protected his nephew by keeping Sacoby out of the boy's room, until the seventh night. Sacoby entered the boy's room as a snake (LeSourd notes that both the spider and the snake have Sacoby's face), and was about to attack the boy when Michel hit him with a switch. Being wounded, Sacoby begged for help from the nephew. So "[f]ollowing his uncle's instructions, the young man [i.e. the nephew] negotiates with Sacoby to heal him first, and both recover from their wounds" (LeSourd 2000: 454).

There is a strikingly similar story, "Again About an Old Witch," told to Szabo by Solomon Polchies of St. Marys (1972, vol. 2: 78-100). In this story a mətewələn, Monica, attacked a boy named Joseph because he bullied her grandson. Later, a spider with human features caused Joseph to fall and hurt his back. Monica told her grandson that Joseph will have to come to her if he wants help. Joseph did not do so, because his grandfather had a plan to help Joseph. Later that night, Monica came into Joseph's room in the form of a snake with her head, and started to bite Joseph. According to his grandfather's instructions, Joseph hit the snake/Monica with a stick. Monica retreated and ultimately suffered back problems. Thus, Monica needed Joseph's grandfather's help. In order to get help from the mətewələn who hurt her, she arranged a truce with him.

These two versions demonstrate that the role and characteristics of a mətewələn were shared by both men and women. The common storylines in both accounts are that the mətewələnowək attacked in the form of *pohikənək* (in this case a spider and a snake). The victims' relative prevents further harm through causing harm to the mətewələn. In turn a truce is achieved whereby the victims and the mətewələnowək are healed. The only difference in the stories is that the main characters differed in gender and the relationship between the victim and the person who comes to their aid. The difference in gender demonstrates that harmful acts were not attributed solely to women mətewələn. The truce aspect of both of the stories follows Morrison's contention that "[t]he Algonkian believed that social disorder caused disease" (1984: 64). Interestingly, both versions of these mətewələn stories begins with an action that causes social disorder and sickness, but when the truce is established and social order restored, everyone is cured.

6.4 Women Mətewələn and the Role of the Religious Practitioner in the Historical Documentation

Sections 6.2 (the abilities of the *mətewələn)* and 6.3 (women as *mətewələn*) represent more recent 'loops' in the advancing spiral. I will now establish the connection between women's roles as mətewələn and the religious practitioners in the historical documents, that is comparing and connecting chronologically different 'loops' in the spiral. I will review the information from the historical documents, oral traditions, anthropology, and other sources, and draw connections between the practices described in each

source. The specific areas where I see those connections are: prediction of the future, dreams, amazing feats, sickness, healing, and animal helpers.

The works of Lescarbot, Biard, and Le Clercq all demonstrate that the prediction of the future was an important duty of a religious practitioner, which is also true for the mətewələn. Women and men mətewələnowək are also described as having similar abilities. Wallis and Wallis reported the statements of a Tobique woman concerning the abilities of her daughter, one of which was prophecy (1957: 25). Dreams are described as a method of foreseeing the future in a story published by Frank Speck. The story is "A Dreamer Assumes the Form of a Ball of Fire" by Katie Mitchell and was reproduced in Speck's paper, "Penobscot Shamanism" (1919: 288). In summary, this story takes place while a father and son were out hunting, and the mother and wife of the son stayed at camp. When the father and son did not return as expected, the wife (of the son) proceeded to "... dream about where the men were, and what they were doing" (Speck 1919: 288). The use of dreams to foretell the future as described by Speck in the early 20th century is strikingly similar to the practices described in the historical documentation from three centuries earlier. Both the religious practitioner and the mətewələn had the ability to predict the future, and the story recorded by Speck suggests an enduring connection between the two.

Just as the religious practitioners in the early historical records could perform amazing feats, so could the mətewələn of the more recent oral traditions. These feats, described above, include such abilities as walking into

the ground (or other hard surfaces), throwing their voice, and foreseeing the approach of others. Women mətewələn have also been described as performing such feats, for example, they have the capacity to hang objects on a sunbeam (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 25). In the book, Old John Neptune and Other Maine Indian Shamans (1945),[51] Fanny Eckstorm records Clara Neptune's, a Penobscot woman, stories of mətewələn John Neptune and others around him. Clara Neptune indicated that Susansis, the youngest daughter of John Neptune, "...could build a fire on a silk handkerchief without burning it" (Eckstorm 1945: 34). She is also reputed to have "...hanged her twin children to the end of the rainbow" (Eckstorm 1945: 34). Other feats attributed to women mətewələn were, that they could not be shot with a gun, and that they could throw their voice over a great distance (Szabo 1972, vol. 2: 191[52]). These feats may not be the same as described by Dièreville, Biard, and Le Clercq, but they perhaps serve the same purpose, that is to demonstrate the ability of the mətewələn.

Both sets of sources indicate that the mətewələnowək were accredited with the power to kill or injure their rivals, as noted in the following passage;

> [w]henever a shaman grew angry at anyone or was disappointed at being refused something by a certain man he stretched out his arms pointing with his index finger at the person and said, "You will regret it." Shortly afterwards the person either died of some foul disease or was

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[51] In the foreword of this book, Eckstorm writes: "...here is a simple narrative of a family group of Penobscot Indians, friends of my own family, who had the reputation of being medeoulinak, or wizards" (Eckstorm 1945: xi).

[52] The name of the story is "He Aimed at a Witch and Shot his Own Hand" by Solomon Polchies.

> found in the woods cut and bleeding from a number of wounds which resulted in his death (Speck 1919: 262).[53]

That women could pursue vengeance as well, was demonstrated in the previously mentioned story from the oral tradition about Monica. The religious practitioner, from the descriptions of the early historical sources, had a role in causing sickness and death. However, in the written historical documents, there is no reference to Wabanaki women causing sickness or death.

A very prominent component of the mətewələn is the *pohikən*, or animal helper. References to women having *pohikənək* appear in the works of Smith, Erickson, and LeSourd, as well as in the Szabo collection of oral traditions. The *pohikən* has interesting parallels with the *oüahich* described by Le Clercq. The first to note this similarity was Speck, who stated that the *oüahich* could possibly be derived from the Mi'kmaq word waitci'tc. Speck translated this word as a little beast "meaning an animal helper" (Speck 1919: 272 fn1). The connection between *waitci'tc* and *oüahich*, can extend to the Maliseet word *pohikən* which also means animal helper. The term 'little beast' also correlates to Le Clercq's remark that each religious practitioner had a "...bag in which are all the articles that he uses in his jugglery" (1910: 220).[54] On the bag, "[s]ome have the picture of their Oüahich under the form of a wolverene, others under the form of a monster, or of a man without a head" (Le Clercq 1910: 220). The

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[53] These comments are attributed to Newell Lion.

[54] "Membertou..., as a learned *Aoutmoin*, carries at his neck the mark of this profession, which is a purse trianglewise, covered with their embroidery, *i.e.* with matachias; within which there is I know not what, the size of a hazel nut, which he says is his devil, called Aoutem,..." (Lescarbot 1914: 110).

description of a 17th century religious practitioner's bag is echoed in a story collected in 1923 from Isabelle Googoo Morris. This story concerns the conversion of a male 'witch' to Christianity "[w]hen the priests first came" (Parsons 1925: 91). Morris stated that the man, "...was a heavy witch, he had a bag of little bone animals. If he wanted anybody to be sick he sent an animal to him, if he wanted you well, he sent an animal to you. They wanted to take away his bag... " (Parsons 1925: 91). In this description, the religious practitioner sent animals to those who he wanted sick or healthy. This use of animals is consistent with the concept of an animal helper, and the man's use of a bag agrees with Le Clercq's documentation. There are two sources that connect the animal helper to the religious practitioner during the period of early missionary contact with the Mi'kmaq, showing that the practice has had long use. In Le Clercq's work no reference is made to women in connection with the *oüahich*, but there are many more recent references to women and *pohikənək* in the oral traditions. Based on this information, it seems reasonable to conclude that women were religious practitioners who worked with the aid of animal helpers.

In the early documents there is also a direct connection between the religious practitioner and healing. Of the oral traditions that I have read, none describe healing as practised in the exact manner described in the written historical sources. However, I have noticed that mətewələnowək are present in the oral traditions and that both men and women continued to use medicinal plants. There are indications that the role of mətewələn and healing were

connected, just as the religious practitioner was involved in healing. One story related by Wallis and Wallis is about a set of twins, Peter and Paul, and healing. Paul was a good doctor who could cure by touch; he could also predict the weather and the time of a person's return, carry hot coals without harm, stop a wound from bleeding and stop the pain (Wallis and Wallis, 1957: 33-34). Thus, by occurring in the same person the activities of mətewələn and healing are demonstrably connected. Another example relayed by Wallis and Wallis, is that "[t]his Indian doctor, Mrs. X, was French speaking, the second born of twins and a seventh daughter. She had power...." (Wallis and Wallis 1957: 31). In "The Late Lizzy was a Great Indian Doctor," by Margaret Polchies (Szabo 1977, vol. 7: 292-293), Lizzy was described as an Indian doctor. It was further elaborated in a footnote that Lizzy was thought of as a witch, which is the translation of mətewələn in that collection of stories.

In the early written historical documents there is reference to the fact that Native peoples made use of plants for healing, for example Dièreville's reference to a woman curing a soldier of epilepsy. The use of plants for healing and the ability to cure is present in the oral traditions and Erickson noted that,

> [c]ontemporary middle-aged Maliseet do not distinguish the witch and the herb doctor, implying that anyone who has herbal knowledge has supernatural powers, too. The herb doctor was as often a man as a woman (1978: 133).

One of the storytellers in the Szabo collection, Margaret Polchies, presents a vast knowledge of medicines and remedies, learned from her mother, father

and others. Margaret Polchies' remedies included how to cure ailments such as kidney trouble, the common cold (vol. 6: 162-180), diarrhea (vol. 6: 162-180 and vol. 7: 319-320), diabetes (vol. 10: 283), nausea, sore throat, rash, bone disease, eczema, and treatments for burns (vol. 7: 315-318). John Sacobie, an Oromocto man whose information is also recorded in the Szabo collection, gave remedies for stomach problems, sore throat, mouth sore, cold, headache, worms, rheumatism, scars, mumps, ulcers, cancer, blood poisoning, difficulty breathing, and hair loss ("I am a Medicine Man" -1978, vol. 8: 643-569). Through the accounts of these storytellers we see that both men and women had knowledge and made use of these cures.

There are stories in the oral traditions and evidence from the works of anthropologists and researchers that discuss women as mətewələn. These sources indicate that women could change into animals, send their voices over long distances, withstand being shot, engage in bad-wishing, and interact with *pohikənək.* In other words, women were known to have the abilities associated with mətewələn in general. In addition, there are some interesting similarities between the religious practitioners of the historical documents, as previously noted, and the mətewələn from more recent sources. These similarities are prediction of the future, the ability to perform amazing feats, causing sickness, and healing. The existence of the *pohikən* in the oral traditions has distinct similarities with the *oüahich* as described by Le Clercq. Drawing from all the sources, I can say that women religious practitioners, from the time of the historical documents, cured by using traditional knowledge of plants and could

predict the future. However, other areas of comparison are not so straightforward. Male religious practitioners in the written record were described as having the ability to do amazing feats, while both men *and* women performed amazing feats in the oral traditions. Also indicated in the oral traditions, is the fact that men and women mətewələn had *pohikənək*, while it is not stated in the early historical documents if women used the *oüahich*. The ability of the religious practitioner to cause harm was mentioned in the historical documents. That the mətewələnowək had the abilities to cause harm is described in the oral traditions and academic writing. Thus, while these last three characteristics - amazing feats, animal helpers, and causing harm - are not specifically mentioned in the historical documents as the abilities of women religious practitioners, I contend that it is possible that they were.

I began this chapter by establishing the connection between the Maliseet word mətewələn and similar terms used in other Wabanaki languages. I then proceeded to relay the possible explanation for and origin of the word. Next, I established what the abilities of the mətewələn entailed, i.e., that anyone could be a mətewələn, and that the role is similar between men and women. Finally, I connected the specific feats of women mətewələn with the abilities of the religious practitioners, to establish a long continuing role for women. Each of the connections made in section 6.4 is a connection from different loops on the advancing spiral that will be further reviewed in the conclusion.

Chapter 7.0 - Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to analyse and assess the role of Wabanaki women as religious practitioners and mətewələn. I have examined the role of women religious practitioners as described in the written historical records, combined with an analysis of the mətewələn as depicted in the oral traditions and academic sources. Based on this analysis, I assert that there are connections between these chronologically disparate sources. These connections (which I use a hermeneutic advancing spiral to link together) indicate that women likely held an important role in Wabanaki society, that is of a religious practitioner or mətewələn.

In my use of the historical documents I first reviewed the descriptions of men as religious practitioners. I proceeded to examine the description of women as religious practitioners. Next, I explored more current sources (in terms of when they were recorded) such as the oral traditions combined and scholarly work on the subject. With those sources I followed a similar pattern to the one used when looking at religious practitioners in the written historical documentation, in that I first looked at the general descriptions of mətewələn. Afterwards I examined the instances of women in that role. I compared the roles of men and women mətewələn to establish if there was a difference in their roles, and then compared all the information from the different sources, including the written historical documentation. I concluded that women most likely were religious practitioners who healed, acted as intermediaries, worked

with animal helpers, and performed amazing feats, even if their roles were not described in great detail in the early historical sources.

I feel that my conclusions are supportable, in part, because the role of women religious practitioners was most likely greater than that described in the historical documentation. There are layers of interpretations that exist concerning the practices of Native peoples and the descriptions of them. The recorders filtered what they saw, and what they chose to write about. In a nutshell, these sources were written with the writers' own agendas and concerns. I have earlier discussed my apprehension about the biassed terminology used to describe Native people and their practices in the historical documents (and elsewhere). In review, it is evident that the terminology lacked respect and this was a reflection of the attitude of the people who utilized those terms. Coinciding with the missionaries' recording of Native customs was their efforts to convert the Native population. Another factor that was mentioned was the separation of women and missionaries, particularly during menstruation, which indicates that there is an area where the male missionaries would not have access. Accordingly, all these examples suggest the possibility of a gap in the interpretation of Wabanaki women's roles. Understanding the interpretative nature of these sources is a catalyst to my work, in that it has enabled me to bring in other sources and to re-interpret the material myself.

Thus when I discuss what the missionaries and early observers missed or omitted I can only extrapolate further evidence from what was recorded. For

example, I can learn about the possible role women had as a religious practitioner through having a general understanding of what religious practitioners did. There is much more information in the historical record on the ways that male religious practitioners carried out their duties, thus I reviewed the information about male religious practitioners. I have also provided footnotes on the Innu indicating that there were women who held very important roles (i.e., who could lead a shaking tent ceremony). As well, it is known from the analysis of the language that Maliseet constructions of gender are different from Western constructions of gender. In the section on Wabanaki women's status, I outlined sources that spoke of women's economic and cultural contributions to their society, which indicate that Wabanaki women had autonomy in their society and were valued for their life giving roles. These sources all provide the basis of knowledge to further understand women's ability to have the role of religious practitioner.

The main focus of my thesis is also accomplished by looking at the historical sources, recent scholarly works, and oral traditions. The comparison with those early descriptions is also important because oral history represents an important Native perspective of the past and is relevant to the concern with polyvocality. The oral traditions are a form of shared knowledge and they contain a unique set of values that pertain to the culture from which they originated. The oral traditions communicate the point of view of the insider, which in this case reflects Native ways of life and the use of them is an exercise in polyvocality and representation. Native peoples' voices are missing from

those written historical records, and the documented oral traditions give access to those voices.

The use of the oral traditions has also been methodologically important to this thesis. Brettell's discussion of the dialogic approach advocates for the juxtaposition of oral traditions and historical research which fits nicely with my application of Geertz's description of the hermeneutic circle. Geertz describes the hermeneutic circle as applied to the study of a culture by referring to experience-near and experience-distant concepts. In terms of historical research, the experience near sources are the oral traditions, and the experience distant are the historical documents and academic sources. Therefore, the dialogic approach and my application of Geertz's description essentially call for the same sources.

I will now relay the connections that I have made between the early descriptions of men and women as religious practitioners and the mətewələnowək in oral traditions and scholarly works. I have combined various sources that provide information from different points of views and different types of analysis. One must first have an understanding that this role was open to Native women, hence the analysis of gender and status of women in Wabanaki society. These sources aid in understanding what might be called the 'whole' of my topic. Only then do I delve into the specifics of the role based on the different sources. How my analysis was formed and the connections that I made reflect Geertz's spiral analogy (69: 1983), which was in relation to the hermeneutic circle.

In order to illustrate the advancing spiral I will begin by explaining each connection by starting in the past, or at the beginning of the spiral. Then I will demonstrate the connection to more recent sources, before I move on to the next detail. The first (chronologically) facts apparent on the spiral are the descriptions of men and women intermediaries in the historical documents. These are then connected with the modern day interpretations of the word mətewələn and its association with drumming and acting as an intermediary. Another loop on the spiral is represented by the descriptions of male religious practitioners' amazing feats in the historical documents. This is connected to the information that all mətewələnowək had the ability to do amazing feats. From this point I can see the possibility that women religious practitioners could have had the ability to do amazing feats as well. A third point that presents early on the spiral, is Le Clercq's description of the *Oüahich* (which he did not specifically apply to women). I was able to connect this description to the *pohikən* of the oral traditions, following the work of Frank Speck. This indicates that the *pohikən* is connected to the *outiach* described by LeClercq, perhaps signalling a long history for the animal helpers in the oral traditions. Since it is well documented in the historical sources that women were intermediaries, it is likely that women had animal helpers to facilitate communication with non human entities. Also, the practice of using the *pohikən* is recorded in the oral traditions and academic sources as an ability of women and men mətewələnowək, placing the practice much later on in the spiral and

demonstrates the continued use of animal helpers. Finally, there is Dièreville's description of a woman curing on the St. John River and the numerous oral traditions that described women and men curing though the use of medicinal plants. I contend that these connections are an indication that the role was in some form or another (i.e. the oral traditions) passed down to following generations becoming a cultural inheritance. Based on the connections made between the historical and more current sources, the evidence indicates that women had roles in curing, as intermediaries, using animal helper's and foreseeing the future.

Wabanaki women, and specifically Maliseet women, were centrally involved with their society in important roles. The connections that I have presented reflect my interpretation in arranging and connecting the evidence using the idea of a spiral based on Geertz's description of the hermeneutic circle. There are times when the connections in the spiral are not always strong, but with the nature of this type of research, one can never fully explain the past and I believe that my interpretation presents a valid point on the topic of women's roles. Until more evidence is presented, my interpretation helps document in further detail women's roles. Reworking the historical evidence and presenting it in a better light may help in overcoming the negative interpretations of women that were perpetuated in the historical documents.

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