

PAYCHEQUES & PAPER PROMISES
COAST SALISH AND MI'KMAW WORK AND FAMILY LIFE
UNDER CANADIAN SETTLER COLONIALISM

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By

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Abstract

Using Community-Engaged research and an intersectional approach, this dissertation examines and interprets the ways two different Indigenous communities – The Tla’amin of British Columbia and the Mi’kmaq of Pictou, Nova Scotia –responded to the challenges and opportunities associated with settler colonialism, the creation of Indian Reserves, and the establishment of a capitalist wage labour economy in Indigenous territories. It primarily situates this discussion within the context of colonial efforts to geographically anchor Indigenous families in specific places while they struggled to retain meaningful connections with their broader territories. This dissertation provides critical analysis of the utility of using ‘settler colonialism’ as a catch-all to explain the various types of colonialism that impacted Indigenous people in Canada. Various types of colonialism contributed to a process where Atlantic Mi’kmaw and Pacific Coast Salish people with complex understandings of their territories and resources based on seasonal procurement and kinship systems, became geographically anchored on reserves as part of Indian Bands in the late nineteenth century. Within this confusing and often contradictory colonial world, the Tla’amin and the Mi’kmaq built adaptive and flexible economies that emphasized multiple occupations and relied on labour inputs from women and men to function. I argue that these new markets for Indigenous labour and commodities played an as of yet underappreciated role in the historical understanding of Indigenous motivations for securing specific reserve lands during the colonial survey of Indigenous lands in Canada. This dissertation adds to a growing body of literature that celebrates and historicizes Indigenous contributions to the labour history of Canada, and does so in ways that express how Indigenous people developed dynamic and responsive economies within emerging settler colonial economies in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

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This project began nearly a decade ago, when I was an undergraduate student at Simon Fraser University. I had the opportunity to spend several weeks living and learning in Tla'amin territory as part of an Ethnohistory Fieldschool. Despite growing up a mere stone's throw from a reserve in Nova Scotia, this was the first time that I spent any considerable time on an Indian Reserve. Since that summer in 2013, I have learned and benefitted from the knowledge, support, and friendship of so many.

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Glossary of Terms

A'Se'k: *The Other Room.* A tidal estuary that was the site of a Mi'kmaq village for centuries. It was turned into an effluent treatment facility in the 1960s by Scott Paper, which has recently closed in 2020.

čən: *Dog.* A Tla'amin village and productive clam garden on the Malaspina Inlet. It was appropriated by settlers in the early-twentieth century.

Fisher's Grant: The name applied to the Mi'kmaq of Pictou County's Indian reserve at the mouth of Pictou Harbour in 1864. The name is a reference to the original settler who claimed the land but never actually lived there.

Maligomish: An island in the Northumberland Strait that is the site of a key Mi'kmaq village and gathering place.

Mi'kma'ki: The territory of the Mi'kmaq, includes Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, P.E.I, and parts of Maine and Quebec.

Mi'kmaq: Indigenous people in what is now known as the Atlantic Provinces of Canada, and in the Gaspé region of Quebec and Northern Maine. Mi'kmaq is plural and refers to a collective (family, relations, community).

Mi'kmaw: The singular of Mi'kmaq. Is also used as an adjective to precede a noun (Mi'kmaw people, Mi'kmaw history).

Pictou Landing: The name of the community on the southern shore of Pictou Harbour. The name refers to the former presence of the Intercontinental Railway's terminus.

Pictou Landing First Nation: The name of the Mi'kmaq community living at what was previously known as Indian Cove, Moodie Cove, and Fisher's Grant.

Piktuk: *The Explosive Place.* Mi'kmaq term that refers to what is today called Pictou Harbour and the surrounding region.

Pine Tree Gut: Site of a Mi'kmaw village Merigomish Harbour.

Sliammon: The anglicized corruption of "Tla'amin." Used commonly in the colonial period to both describe the village of Tišosem and the people who lived there. It is also the name of the Tla'amin's main reserve- Sliammon I.R. 1.

Tis'kwat: *Fast Moving Water.* Site of an ancient Tla'amin fishing village that was destroyed to construct the Powell River Pulp and Paper Company paper mill in 1910. Tis'kwat is the river that was renamed to Powell River in the late-nineteenth century.

Tišosem: *Water White with Herring Spawn*. A Tla'amin winter village that was renamed Sliammon in the 1860s. It is the site of the Tla'amin's main village today.

Tla'amin: An Indigenous Nation whose homeland is in the Northern Salish Sea, the northern Sunshine Coast of British Columbia.

Chapter One: Introduction

In the spring of 1921, Chief Matthew Francis of the Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve (known today as Pictou Landing First Nation, Nova Scotia) wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs to complain that local game wardens were preventing Mi'kmaq hunters from shooting waterfowl within their traditional territory. Chief Francis explained that these hunters "were not doing it for pleasure nor for market but it was a case of something to eat for themselves and families."¹ Citing the 1752 Treaty between the Crown in Right of the Colony of Nova Scotia and the Mi'kmaq, Francis claimed these hunters were within their rights to use the resources in their territories to feed their families.² Francis asked J.D. McLean, the Secretary for the Department of Indian Affairs to send him a letter confirming the Mi'kmaq right to hunt for sustenance so he



Figure 1.1: Agnes Francis and Chief Matthew Francis, 1923 (Courtesy of Nova Scotia Museum)

could "present it in court in case anyone should be called up for that offense."³ Francis not only wanted clarification, he wanted the tools necessary to protect Mi'kmaq families from the confusing and often contradictory laws that governed Indigenous people in early twentieth century Canada.

¹ Chief Matthew Francis, Chief of Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve, to J.D. Maclean, Secretary and Assistant Deputy of Indian Affairs, May 30 1921, LAC, RG10, Reel C-8101, Vol. 6743, File 420-7.

² Chief Francis referred to the 1752 Treaty signed by Peregrine Thomas Hopson (Governor of Nova Scotia) and several Mi'kmaq delegates: *Treaty of 1752*, Nova Scotia Archives, RG 1, Vol. 430, No. 2.

³ Ibid.

Nearly 6,000km away on an Indian Reserve on Canada's Pacific coast, Tla'amin Chief Tom Timothy, from the Coast Salish community of Sliammon, faced a delegation of Indian Reserve Commissioners in 1915 as part of a Royal Commission whose mandate was to bring an end to what officials called "the Indian Land Question" by adjusting the size of Indian Reserves. Chief Timothy expected more. He requested clarification on Tla'amin's right to manage resources on their reserved land. Chief Timothy pushed the Commission on logging, fishing, hunting, and agricultural rights, and wanted to know how Tla'amin families could navigate their way through the conflicting laws that governed not only their ability to maintain their economy but also to put food on their tables.⁴ Chief Timothy knew that participation in the commercial logging and fishing industries, both as wage labourers and as independent brokers of Tla'amin resources, was



Figure 1.2: Chief Tom and his wife Mary Timothy (Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)

essential to the future well-being of Tla'amin families, and he was determined to ensure that his community had access to an economy that went beyond sustenance.

Chief Tom Timothy and Chief Matthew Francis were pragmatic leaders who had spent decades navigating the complicated morass that was Canadian Indian Law and settler racism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. They stood as Indigenous people with

⁴ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, "Meeting with the Sliam-mon Band or Tribe of Indians at their Sliam-mon Indian Reserve", February nineteenth 1915, in *Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs*, "Our Homes are Bleeding – Digital Collections", pg. 283-285.

particular understandings of their worlds. But they were also colonized people remaking their identities in the shadow of powerful colonial forces. Regardless of the fact that these Chiefs represented different cultural communities on the opposite sides of Canada, they found themselves battling for the same rights. By the 1920s, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County had been living in contact with Europeans and settlers for over a century, while the Tla'amin had only witnessed the first non-Indigenous settlement in their lands a few decades earlier. Both the Tla'amin and the Mi'kmaq had remade their economic world to incorporate new opportunities that came with the emergence of capitalism in their lands. However, no matter how hard they worked – the inner functioning of Canadian settler colonialism kept them from developing independent industries that were equitable with settler industries. In response, the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq created dynamic and adaptive economies that were both based in their traditional economic systems, but also adaptive to new opportunities, such as wage labour and selling goods in settler towns, that came as colonialism spread across the Indigenous world.

As colonial settlement increasingly challenged Tla'amin and Mi'kmaw land use, Indigenous leadership looked to the colonial, and later Canadian, Government to acknowledge their rights to their lands and the resources that existed on them. And despite the existence of paper promises in the form of treaties and legal precedents that required the colonial government to respect Indigenous rights to their land and resources, the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq constantly battled the government to survey their lands and protect them from the hordes of settlers who came to make new lives in Canada.⁵ The result was a system where Indigenous people worked in the settler economy, but rarely as independent stakeholders who managed their own resources on

⁵ For more on Treaty Making in Canada, see: J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, and Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2009); William Wicken, *Mi'kmaq Treaties on Trial: History, Land, and Donald Marshall Junior* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2002).

the open market. It was a system full of hypocrisy, where Indigenous labourers were relegated to harvesting resources for wages and found themselves running afoul of legal authorities when they tried to do so independently.

As a community-engaged ethnohistorical project, this dissertation is a study of the unfolding of Canadian settler colonialism within the histories of two Indigenous Nations. As such, it inverts the classic scholarly gaze that for too long situated Indigenous people as minor characters in the unfolding of the history of the nation state. In this dissertation settler colonialism is not deployed as a broad brush that explains the totality of the Indigenous experience with settlers in Canada, but rather as an informative theoretical framework that has provided direction to dig deeply into the lived experiences of two distinct Indigenous communities in different parts of Canada. This dissertation contributes to a growing body of scholarship that recognizes that settler colonialism has a plethora of expressions that take on different forms depending not only upon the chronology being examined, but importantly, the unique culture of the Indigenous peoples it sought to displace. Indigenous people have agency within settler colonialism, and Indigenous responses to settler incursions work to shape the expressions that settler colonialism inevitably assumes. Who the Indigenous people are (Mi'kmaq or Tla'amin in this dissertation study) is just as important as who the settler colonists are and what resources they seek to exploit to support various economies (mercantile, capitalist, industrial, commercial, etc.). Situating my study within the context of Mi'kmaq and Tla'amin historical consciousness enables an analysis that accounts for Indigenous people's increasingly sophisticated understandings of settler colonial forces over time – even within the context of centralizing settler capitalist wealth and power.

Settler colonial theory developed from Patrick Wolfe's distinction between extractive colonialism (that is, the extraction of resources and wealth, and the exploitation of Indigenous labour by a colonial force) and the type of systems that developed when settlers came to occupy Indigenous lands. Wolfe argued that for settler society to succeed, Indigenous people had to be 'eliminated' (i.e. either killed, removed, assimilated) to make space for mass colonial settlement and the development of a settler colonial economy.⁶ Wolfe asserted that settler colonialism is a structure, not an event, because the process of alienating Indigenous people from their lands is ongoing. Therefore, settler colonialism is not just something that happened to Indigenous people in the past but is a system of dispossession that continues today. Non-Indigenous populations, therefore, are not merely beneficiaries of historical dislocation and marginalization, but participants in sustaining an ongoing system of colonialism.

Helping to bring nuance to settler colonial studies, historians such as Jeffrey Ostler, Nancy Shoemaker, Jerry Bannister, and Alan Greer have recently observed that despite its popularity and common use, the rubric of settler colonialism often obscures more than it reveals.⁷ Ostler and Shoemaker warn that the nearly ubiquitous rise in the use of Settler Colonialism as an analytical theory that describes the entirety of the Indigenous-newcomer historical relationship, comes at a cost, especially for our understanding of the history of localized regions and cultural communities. Applied too broadly and too loosely, it risks the term becoming a synonym that becomes so diluted that it loses its analytic power.⁸ Settler colonialism is too often deployed as a

⁶ Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol. 8, No. 4 (2006), 387-409.

⁷ Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, "Forum - Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction", *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 76, No. 3 (2019), 361-368; Alan Greer, "Settler Colonialism and Beyond", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2019), 61-86; Jerry Bannister, "Settler Colonialism and the Future of Canadian History," *Acadiensis* April 18th 2016.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 364.

hegemonic and homogenous juggernaut that destroyed every aspect of Indigenous life.⁹ Despite all the power accredited to settler colonialism and its ability to destroy Indigenous life, Indigenous people not only still exist, but have found new ways to resist, to subvert, and to transform settler colonial control.¹⁰ In over using ‘settler colonialism’ to define the entirety of the long and complex relationship between those who were here first and those who came later, too many scholars have embraced a paradigm where the term has come to cover everything even while it explains little.

Several ethnohistorians have provided complexity to the application of settler colonial theory, and I am pleased to have been part of this discussion. In 2017, Keith Thor Carlson and I outlined some of the limitations of using settler colonial theory to understand violence in pre-colonial settlement-era British Columbia history. We argued that settler colonialism was preceded by different projections of colonial power, and that these pre-settler colonialisms held the potential of being every bit as violent and disruptive as the settler colonialism that followed.¹¹

⁹ For example, Daniel Richter provides an excellent discussion of settler colonial theory in Indigenous Studies and post-colonial and poststructural theory, which “do not easily travel across the disciplinary divide to history... The problems multiply with chronological distance from the present. To the extent that settler colonialism is rooted in postcolonial theory, the prepostcolonial, and perhaps even the precolonial flux of the seventeenth-century North America makes for an uneasy fit” (“His own, Their Own: Settler Colonialism, Native Peoples, and Imperial Balances of Power in Eastern North America, 1600-1715, in *The World of Colonial America: An Atlantic Handbook*, Ed. Ignacio Gallup-Diaz [New York: Routledge, 2017], 209-234). Ian McKay’s excellent article on settler Nova Scotia’s obsession with genealogy and attempts to find connections to the first settlers, simplifies settler colonialism to make a point about its connection to genealogy, and in so doing, equates settler colonialism with the arrival of people like Edward Cornwallis in 1749 (the founding of Halifax) – even though most Mi’kmaq lived free from the grips of settler colonialism for the better part of a century after that (“The “Morals of Genealogy”: Liberal Settler Colonialism, the Nova Scotia Archives, and the North American Ancestor-Hunters, 1890-1980”, *Acadiensis* Vol. 48, No. 2 (2019), 43-89.

¹⁰ Two examples relevant to the scope of this project are the signing of the Tla’amin Final Agreement in 2016 – a modern treaty signed under the British Columbia Treaty Process which gives the Tla’amin control over their government and all treaty settlement lands, and the Pictou Landing First Nation’s protests over the existence of an effluent pipeline that polluted parts of the Fisher’s Grant 24 Reserve and surrounding land, which resulted in the removal of the pipe and the shutting down of the local mill that had been polluting the reserve for decades. These examples are discussed fully in the Conclusion of this dissertation.

¹¹ Keith Thor Carlson and Colin Murray Osmond, “Clash at Clayoquot: Manifestations of Colonial and Indigenous Power in Pre-Settler Colonial Canada: (The Overlooked 1792 Journals of David Lamb and Jacob Herrick)”, *Western Historical Quarterly*, Volume 48, Issue 2 (2017), 159.

We concluded that Indigenous history and Canadian history alike need to be understood in the context of their times, taking into account the waxing and waning of power and the intentions of those involved in the encounters.

More recently, Carlson has worked with Indigenous knowledge keepers to document, describe, and interpret particular expressions of settler colonialism that have failed to garner attention from scholars working strictly from archival records. Carlson examines the specific ways settler colonialism operated to displace Indigenous people from sacred historical sites in order to justify the internal logic of settler colonialism. As Carlson and his Stó:lō partners explain, the internal logic of settler colonialism – that is, the justifications that brought foreigners to settle on Indigenous land – required settlers to be “ontologically blind to values that that would have disrupted or challenged the colonial incumbency to displace Indigenous people from their lands and resources.”¹² Regardless of whether it happened in British Columbia, Ontario, or Nova Scotia, settler colonial resource extraction required a blank slate – and Indigenous people provided (and continue to provide) an obstacle to this founding principle of settler colonialism.

Stephen Warren’s study of Shawnee migration and responses to colonial incursion likewise distinguishes between various type of colonialism that impacted the Shawnee over centuries of dealing with Europeans of a variety of imperial backgrounds. Indeed, Warren explains that it was not until the 1720s – after over a century of engagements with European explorers, traders, and limited colonial settlement on the eastern edges of colonial America – that the Shawnee began to feel the specific impacts of settler colonialism.¹³ Similarly, Laura Ishiguro’s study of settler

¹² Keith Thor Carlson with Naxaxalhts’i (Sonny McHalsie), “Myth Making and Unmaking: Indigenous Sacred Sites, Settler Colonial Mobility, and Ontological Oppression.” In Gesa Mackenthun, ed., *Decolonizing Pre-History* (University of Arizona Press: 2021). *Forthcoming*.

¹³ Stephen Warren, *The World the Shawnees Made: Migration and Violence in Early America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2014), 156

colonialism in British Columbia posits that in the context of Canada's Pacific province, "although the parameters of settler colonialism can be more complicated in practice than in theory, British Columbia was radically reconfigured by a general shift to these priorities between 1858 and 1914."¹⁴ Ishiguro reminds us that despite the presence of several Hudson's Bay Company forts and settlements, it was not until the arrival of permanent settlers (over several decades) that Indigenous people in what is now called British Columbia began to feel settler colonial pressure. Some Indigenous Nations in British Columbia, such as the Tla'amin who are a focus of this dissertation, experienced little settler colonial incursion until the 1910s.¹⁵

Seeking to contribute to the growing body of knowledge that recognizes that the local context always matters when discussing the various types of colonialism that came to Indigenous lands in what is now Canada, this dissertation uses community-engaged ethnohistorical research methodologies and an intersectional analytic lens, to examine and interpret the ways in which two different Indigenous communities on different coasts of Canada responded to challenges and opportunities associated with various types of colonial incursion. It primarily situates this discussion within the context of colonial efforts to geographically anchor Indigenous people in specific places while they struggled to retain meaningful connections with their broader territories. Colonial processes took Atlantic Mi'kmaq and Pacific Coast Salish people with complex understandings of their territories and resources based on seasonal procurement and kinship systems, and rooted them on reserves as part of Indian Bands in the late nineteenth

¹⁴ Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Family Correspondence and the Settler Colonial Everyday in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2019), 4.

¹⁵ Historian Glenn Icton's research on northern British Columbia and the Yukon similarly reveals that many Indigenous people in rural British Columbia did not experience settler colonialism until the mid-twentieth century, and in ways that were much different than other places in southern (and especially south-western) British Columbia. See: Glenn Icton, "Many Families of Unseen Indians: Trapline Registration and Understandings of Aboriginal Title in the BC-Yukon Borderlands", *BC Studies* Vol. 201 (2019), 67-91.

century. Through the various manifestations of colonialism, Indigenous people recreated aspects of their identities along newly emerging colonial lines, but often not in ways that the government anticipated.

The Coast Salish and Mi'kmaq actively shaped the reserve creation process in ways that allowed them to maintain certain aspects of their pre-reserve lives and cultures, while also integrating new economic opportunity within the emergent colonial system. The placement of reserves were not merely desperate efforts to retain tiny patches of their original territory, but part of complicated Indigenous efforts to mobilize tradition with the aim of connecting to land and managing resources. Moreover, this adaptation was neither universal in its application nor uni-directional in its trajectory. Cultural differences between Atlantic and Pacific Indigenous people, and unique understandings of class and gender within these same groups, resulted in significant differences in Indigenous adaptation and resistance. These dissimilarities compel us to think more critically about Indigenous people and the ways they negotiated different types of colonial incursion. By recognizing the similarities in socio-political marginalization and economic deprivation facing Indigenous people across Canada (as has been well examined within the existing historiography), we can also see how individual Indigenous Nations found ways to be distinct, and did so in ways that were, and remain, guided by ancestral traditions and local cultural norms.¹⁶

Over the past two centuries, Mi'kmaw and Tla'amin economies were built by mobilizing family units that embraced a variety of industries with the aim of providing for family and

¹⁶ Examples of this historiography are, to name a few: Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2004); James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina, 2013); Martha Walls, *No Need of a Chief for This Band: The Maritime Mi'kmaq and Federal Electoral Legislation, 1899-1951* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010); Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

contributing to community function. Contrary to assimilationist policies that aimed to remake Indigenous families into nuclear units with a male breadwinner (even though many settler families did not operate in such rigid ways), archival sources and oral histories reveal that the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq relied on earnings from both men and women in their economies in the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹⁷ In these ways, wage labour served as one element of a complicated Indigenous socio-economic strategy that was rooted in decisions to either embrace and/or reject certain elements of colonial society. Some of the impetus for this system was based in Indigenous mobility and knowledge of the land, while other aspects were based on colonial opportunity and, although often to a lesser extent than one might at first anticipate, colonial incursion.

In this vacuum – restricted from much of their larger territories, geographically anchored on reserves, and unable to access traditional forms of sustenance due to settlement and the subsequent increased demand on forest and marine resources– wage labour became increasingly important to both family and reserve community economies. Coast Salish and Mi'kmaq labourers earned wages on par with their white neighbours and found readily available work in industries that were often close to home. When local markets diminished, both Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq labourers migrated as family units temporarily to other regions, as far as Washington State for the Tla'amin, and Maine or Quebec for the Mi'kmaq, where ample work in agriculture (hop picking in Washington, potato and blueberry farming in Maine, logging in both) would provide enough cash to justify uprooting the entire family for several months. Seasonal wage labour, in many ways, served to replace and replicate the seasonal migrations that marked pre-

¹⁷ Joy Parr found similar histories in her study of female industrial workers in two towns in Ontario. See: Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990).

contact Indigenous systems in Nova Scotia and British Columbia. And while seasonal labour migration was not unique to Indigenous people (many rural settler families relied on seasonal migration for work) working for wages became a central component in both the Tla'amin and Pictou Landing Mi'kmaq's economies in ways that were based on adaptations to their traditional economies and on the integration of the settler world into their social and economic realm.

The Mi'kmaq, part of the larger Northeastern Woodlands cultural group and speakers of a dialect of Eastern Algonquin, lived over a broad territory, accessing a variety of resources based on kinship and family connections. Living primarily in family units, the Mi'kmaq migrated and harvested resources as they became seasonally available across Mi'kma'ki, the traditional homeland of the Mi'kmaq that encompasses Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and parts of New Brunswick and the north-eastern Maine. Anthropologist Frank Speck explained that the Mi'kmaq understood their territories as divided into regions that were owned by certain family units. Speck defined the Mi'kmaq family unit as “a kinship group composed of folks united by blood or marriage” and that Mi'kmaq territories were “subdivided into tracts owned from time immemorial by the same families and handed down generation from generation.”¹⁸

Anthropologists Wilson D. Wallis and Ruth Sawtell Wallis, who conducted fieldwork at Pictou Landing First Nation in 1911 and in the 1950s, described Mi'kmaw social organization as single family units that hunted throughout the winter, before moving to seaside river-mouth villages for the summer fishing season.¹⁹ These family units were typically made up of a husband and wife, their children (and some of their children's spouses and children), grandparents, and

¹⁸ Frank G. Speck, “The Family Hunting Band as the Basis of Algonkian Social Organization”, *American Anthropologist* Vol. 17, No. 2 (1915), 290.

¹⁹ Wilson Wallis and Ruth Sawtell Wallis, *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 226.

sometimes more distant relatives and non-related members of the group.²⁰ Although some anthropologists claimed the Mi'kmaq were patrilineal and patrilocal, most concur that the Mi'kmaq follow a bilocal and bilineal social organization.²¹ Regardless, the family unit was the main level of social organization for the Mi'kmaq, and they understood their territories through this cultural lens.

Pictou, a settler corruption of the Mi'kmaq word *Piktuk*, the “explosive place” aptly named for the presence of coal seams in the region, was part of the Mi'kmaq district Epekwitk aq Piktuk, a vast area including much of the Nova Scotia peninsula, Prince Edward Island, and part of the Northumberland Shore.²² Mi'kmaq occupied the harbour that would later be called Pictou primarily in the summer months, before moving out into the Northumberland Strait for fishing, and before settling further inland during the winter. The main Mi'kmaq village at the mouth of Pictou Harbour was adjacent to a place called A'Se'k, “the other room” in Mi'kmaw, a

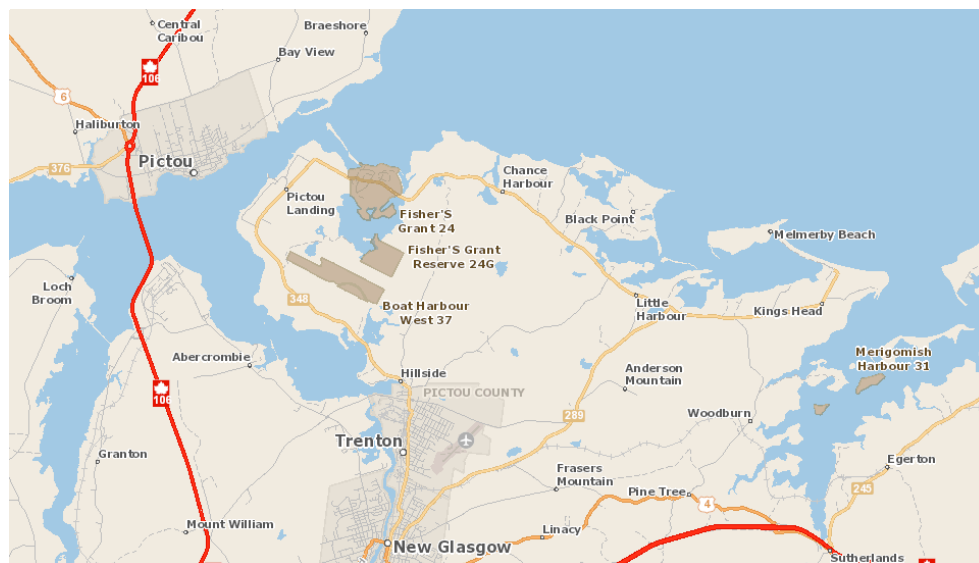


Figure 1.3: Indian Reserves in Pictou County, Nova Scotia (Courtesy of GeoNova)

²⁰ Michelle Lelievre, *Unsettling Mobility: Mediating Mi'kmaw Sovereignty in Post-Contact Nova Scotia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 62.

²¹ Wallis, 230. Michelle Lelievre engages in an excellent discussion of Mi'kmaq family units and property ownership in *Unsettling Mobility*, 61-66.

²² Please see: *Ta'n Weji-sqalia'tiek Mi'kmaw Place Names Digital Atlas*, <http://mikmawplacenames.ca>

small tidal lagoon directly across from the present town of Pictou. A'Se'k, known today as Boat Harbour is where the Mi'kmaq of this area were granted a reserve in the 1860s, Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve No. 24 (today, Pictou Landing First Nation). A'Se'k was an extremely productive area for Mi'kmaq. It provided a safe harbour from adverse weather, direct access to fisheries, shellfish, fresh water, and ample supplies of hardwood for making various implements and for use as firewood.

French traders and missionaries operated in *Piktuk* since the seventeenth century, and the presence of a fur trade with Europeans had remade many aspects of traditional Mi'kmaw life in along several important lines.²³ By 1600, as many as 1000 ships had visited the Mi'kma'ki shoreline to trade with Mi'kmaq groups. This inevitably resulted in a remaking of some traditional Mi'kmaq societal elements along new lines that prioritized hunting and fur trading with French traders.²⁴ By the mid-eighteenth century, French traders found the Mi'kmaq at "Pigto" ready to barter for "goods suitable for the Indian trade."²⁵ One merchant ship from France traded for "above 4000 lb. weight of furs" in Pictou Harbour in 1765.²⁶ Historian Julian Gwyn argues that the fur trade in Mi'kma'ki remained a constant market for Mi'kmaq furs well into the nineteenth century.²⁷

²³ David V. Burley, "Proto-Historic Ecological Effects of the Fur Trade on Micmac Culture in Northeastern New Brunswick," *Ethnohistory* Vol. 28, No. 3 (1981), 211. Burley summarized the ethnological and archaeological evidence for various aspects of cultural and ecological change in Mi'kmaq society after the fur trade with Europeans developed in the seventeenth century. He suggests several key ways that the fur trade remade aspects of Mi'kmaq life, such as the increased focus on hunting (especially out of traditional seasons), inland migration and a lesser focus on marine resources, increased mobility, and the incorporation of European trade goods such as cooper kettles.

²⁴ Burley, 211.

²⁵ An excerpt from *The Leeds Intelligencer*, November 5 1765, reported that a merchant ship from France visited 'Pigto' in the Spring of 1765 and traded for "furs &c." The article noted that the Mi'kmaq preferred trade with the French, so much so that the English could obtain furs only by purchasing from the French traders.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Julian Gwyn, "The Mi'kmaq, Poor Settlers, and the Nova Scotia Fur Trade, 1783-1853", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, Vol. 14, no. 1 (2002), 65-91. Gwyn's study of the Mi'kmaq fur trade argues, in part, that the Mi'kmaq fur trade was less substantial than previous scholars have asserted. He does argue that the fur trade, even if not as central to the larger British and French fur trade efforts

After the mass settlement of Mi'kma'ki by European settlers, beginning in the 1760s but in earnest in the early-to-mid nineteenth century, Fisher's Grant became a central hub for resource extraction and Mi'kmaq engagements with the emerging settler-colonial economy. By the time Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve was established in 1863, the Mi'kmaq had lived for nearly a century with non-Indigenous people. However, it was not until the 1830s that settler populations began to have an increasing influence on Mi'kmaq mobility and access to resources. Several generations of Mi'kmaw families in Pictou County had lived in close proximity to settlers before having any of their lands protected by the colonial government.²⁸

The Tla'amin are a Northern Coast Salish community, who in turn are a subset of the larger Coast Salish cultural group that extends southward from Tla'amin territory to include large portions of Washington State.²⁹ The modern Tla'amin Nation descends from the Tla'amin tribal group that maintained exclusive hunting and fishing rights in the Tla'amin traditional territory (ranging from the southern part of Texada Island in the south to Desolation Sound in the North, encompassing several islands in the Malaspina Inlet and bound by the Coastal Mountains to the east). The Tla'amin are closely related with the neighbouring Klahoose, Homalco, Comox, and Sechelt Nations. Of this group, however, the Tla'amin have particularly intimate historical connections with the Klahoose and Homalco – and this itself is in part a product of colonial efforts to relocate children and families from the more remote Klahoose and Homalco to Sliammon homes in the late-nineteenth through mid-twentieth centuries in order to access education and employment opportunities. The modern Tla'amin Nation is the result of several

in their maritime colonies, continued well beyond what previous scholars have seen as the end point in the late eighteenth century. Regardless of the debate, it is clear that the fur trade remained a consistently important avenue for Mi'kmaq labour from the seventeenth century onwards until the mid-nineteenth century.

²⁸ For an excellent account of the settlement of Pictou County, see: Rev. George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877).

²⁹ For an excellent geographic representation of the Coast Salish world, see: Keith Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas* (Vancouver: Douglas & MacIntyre, 2001), 3.

extended families choosing to identify as the “Sliammon Indian Band” in the 1870s – a moniker which came to partially eclipse the older tribal affiliations.³⁰

Traditionally, as anthropologist Wayne Suttles described, Coast Salish family groups undertook seasonal migrations in extended family units based on resource availability.³¹ In winter, Coast Salish families gathered with kin and other culturally related families in winter villages to conduct important cultural and social ceremonies that maintained kinship ties and social bonds.³² While the Tla’amin tribal identity was important for establishing resource rights in Tla’amin lands, northern Coast Salish people typically identified by family and kinship connections that emphasized connections across broad geographies. As Homer Barnett described after conducting fieldwork with Coast Salish elders in the 1930s (including Tla’amin Chief Tom Timothy), family units were the “highest unit of common allegiance” in Coast Salish society.³³ Marriages were patrilocal, and arranged to create social and economic bonds between families from different areas (thus expanding economic access to resources).³⁴ As historian Paige Raibmon explains, building from her lengthy scholarly relationship with Tla’amin elder Elsie Paul, “individuals and families are the building blocks of Coast Salish societies. Coast Salish societies cohere over time through interconnected geographies of individual and family relationships.”³⁵ Even after the disruptions caused by colonialism, the family unit continued to be integral to the operation of the Tla’amin community.

³⁰ I discuss the ethnogenesis of the Sliammon Indian Band in more detail in Chapters 2 and 4.

³¹ Wayne Suttles, “The Persistence of Intervillage Ties Among the Coast Salish”, *Ethnology* Vol. 2, No. 4 (1963), 513.

³² Ibid.

³³ Homer Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon, 1955), 241.

³⁴ For more on Tla’amin marriage customs, see: Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1983), 52-54.

³⁵ Paige Raibmon, “Introduction”, in Elsie Paul, *Written as I Remember It: Teachings (?ams ta?aw) from the Life of a Sliammon Elder* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015), 35.

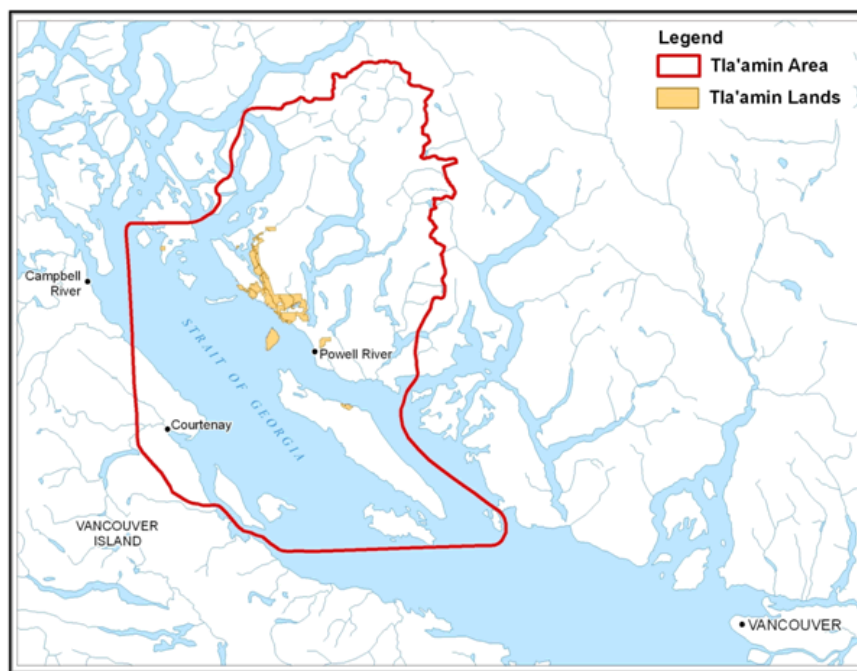


Figure 1.4: Tla'amin Traditional Territory (Courtesy of the Tla'amin Nation)

This project began nearly a decade ago, when I first conducted Community-Engaged research with the Tla'amin as part of the Tla'amin Ethnohistory Field School that was jointly offered by the University of Saskatchewan and Simon Fraser University (SFU). As an SFU undergraduate student, I was provided the opportunity to spend five weeks in the summer of 2013 living in the Tla'amin community at Sliammon working on a research project that the community had identified as a priority – the history of their community's engagement with commercial logging. I spent weeks in the living rooms and kitchens of retired loggers, listening to them and their families talk about logging, and more generally about their experiences as Indigenous people. Ultimately, my summer project provided me with more questions than it answered, and the Tla'amin Band Council (now the Tla'amin Nation) encouraged me to continue working with them to examine the topic more deeply as my Master's Thesis research.

Drawing on connections my academic advisor Keith Thor Carlson had built throughout the Coast Salish world, I expanded my thesis to include several Stó:lō communities in the Fraser

Valley. I then participated in a second, graduate-level ethnohistory fieldschool³⁶ where I additionally had the opportunity to mentor under John Lutz (University of Victoria), and Naxaxalhts'i Albert "Sonny" McHalsie (Stó:lō Historian and Cultural Advisor for the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre). This honed my skills as an ethnohistorian, and enabled me to approach my research into Indigenous agency in the wage labour economy from the perspective of multiple Indigenous voices. Having these relationships allowed me to learn the 'ins and outs' of community-Engaged ethnohistorical research, while working under strict graduate degree timelines.

When it came time to do my Doctoral research, however, I decided that it was important to demonstrate my abilities as a new scholar by creating a new relationship from the ground up. Ever since I began my work with the Tla'amin, I was drawn to the similarities and differences between Indigenous people in British Columbia and those of the Mi'kmaq – the Indigenous people whose land my ancestors occupied in the late-eighteenth century, and whose land I was raised on. I was curious if the Mi'kmaw experience was similar or different to the Tla'amin's. I questioned whether the differences in the chronology of European settlement mattered, or if the differing cultural and environmental factors played a role in Indigenous experiences within settler Canada. This line of questioning pushed me to reach out to the Pictou Landing First Nation – the ancestors of the Indigenous people whose land my Scottish ancestors settled on in the late eighteenth century.

I contacted Michelle Francis-Denny, Pictou Landing First Nation's Community Liaison, to discuss a possible partnership for my doctoral research and beyond. After receiving approval

³⁶ For an excellent discussion on North America's only Graduate level Ethnohistory Field School, see: Keith Thor Carlson, John Sutton Lutz, David M. Schaepe, "Decolonizing Ethnohistory", in Keith Thor Carlson, John Sutton Lutz, David M. Schaepe, Naxaxalhts'i, Eds. *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship Among the People of the River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 1-38.

from Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW) – an organization based out of Cape Breton University that ensures all projects working with Mi'kmaw people follow ethical procedures and protocols – I travelled to Pictou and met with Francis-Denny and Pictou Landing First Nation's Director of Education Sheila Francis to discuss the next steps. Throughout these discussions, it was clear that some of the information I was identifying in the archival sources told stories that were relatively unknown to, or forgotten by, the community. And yet they spoke to issues that I felt were important and that could contribute to the larger goals and aspirations the Pictou Landing First Nation had identified as priorities. As part of my research and as part of my commitment to making my work valuable to Pictou Landing First Nation in ways that went beyond my doctoral research, I offered to build and make available at no cost an online database to house the primary research I was collecting from various archives across the country. This database provides community-members and approved researchers with access to over 300 historical documents – letters, maps, Department of Indian Affairs Reports, and census data (to name a few).³⁷ The primary documents are digitized and provided in a PDF format, and each entry also includes citation information, historical context, and for most, a full transcription. It is my goal to continue developing this database into a comprehensive source of documents that relate to the history of the Pictou Landing First Nation, where it can be used for a multitude of community purposes beyond my research, such as for education and research, and for practical applications like court cases and land claims.³⁸

³⁷ I was able to build this database with the gracious help and support from the University of Saskatchewan's Digital Humanities Centre. I cannot thank Craig Harkema, Joel Salt, and Jon Bath enough for their guidance and support throughout the construction and maintenance of this database.

³⁸ The database can be accessed via this link: <http://pictoulandingmikmaq.usask.ca>. During my doctoral research, the database was not shared widely to protect my research. My goal, however, is to make this website broadly available in the future.

My mentored engagement with the Tla'amin and Stó:lō communities over the period of my academic work prepared me well to begin a new autonomous partnership with the Mi'kmaq. I conducted three individual research trips to Mi'kma'ki to build my relationship, meet with the community, conduct oral history research, and visit the provincial archives in Halifax, Nova Scotia. My community-engagement began with a trip that was solely focused on meeting people in the community and learning about their perspectives and questions on their community's history. During this first trip, I did not attempt to do any oral history, nor did I give any formal presentations. I wanted to spend time with the community's Elder Group, and I participated in several functions where I was able to take part in the scheduled weekly activity. I sat with the Elders, our hands busy weaving leather into beaded keychains, and casually chatted with them about history and their experiences growing up at Pictou Landing – we discussed where people worked, where they travelled, what life was like on the reserve, and so much more. These meetings were central to building and designing the next stages in my research.

When I returned to begin the formal research stage of my project, I worked with Michelle Francis-Denny and Marileeze Denny (Elders' Group Coordinator) to design a series of events that were focused on knowledge sharing. The first event was a presentation of my research findings to date, followed by a general discussion and question period. The second event was a follow-up conversation to the one started during the first meeting, and was designed as a roundtable style event where I provided a series of questions (and a set of historical photographs) to help inspire conversation. However, the roundtable followed no specific plan, and people were free to steer the conversation beyond the provided documents and questions. The final event of that week was a combined session where community members attended and learned about how to use the digital database that I had showcased throughout the week, and also another general

conversation where community members could provide with me direction on my research and analysis of Pictou Landing First Nation history.

The third trip of my research plan was built around attending the provincial archives in Halifax, while also travelling to Pictou Landing to meet with individual community members to gain guidance and advice on my research as I entered into the writing stage of my dissertation. My goal was to continue this into the spring of 2020 with another trip that would allow me to workshop chapter drafts with a panel of community members, but this was cancelled due to the outbreak of Covid-19 in March of that year. Despite this, I was able to digitally circulate my chapters to several community members for feedback and comments.³⁹

My research with the Tla'amin involved conducting new oral history interviews on three trips to Sliammon, as well as completing a deep dive into the large body of previously recorded oral history available at the Tla'amin Nation archives. The bulk of archived oral history work was collected in the 1990s and 2000s, as the Sliammon Treaty Council conducted a Traditional Land Use study that would be used as the Band negotiated a Treaty through the British Columbia Treaty Process (BCTP). These interviews cover many aspects of Tla'amin history, and I was able to use them to push my oral history research back several decades and generations. Another key part of my community research with the Tla'amin was working with Drew Blaney (the Tla'amin Nation's Culture and Heritage Manager) on my trips to Sliammon (and over phone calls, texts, and emails while back at home) to discuss new findings and to get his perspective on his community's past. My trustful relationship with the Tla'amin even allowed me to reverse roles with my dissertation supervisor and be the one who introduced him to new people in Tla'amin as he worked to expand his own network of research relationships.

³⁹ Thank you to Don Francis, Michelle Francis-Denny, Sheila Francis, and Diane Denny for reading these drafts.

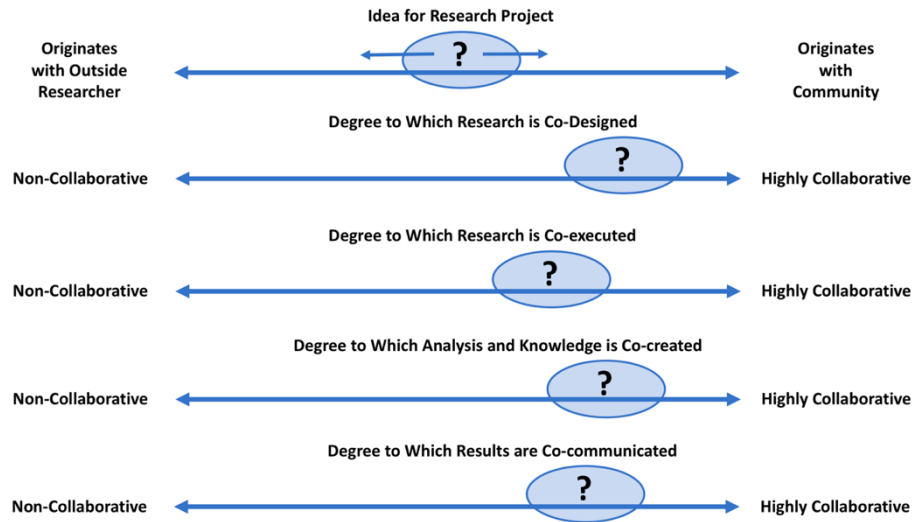


Figure 1.5: The Collaboration Spectrum (taken from Carlson et.al “The Collaboration Spectrum”)

My existing relationship, and the body of archival material and scholarship available for my Tla’amin research allowed me to write and develop a historical narrative in ways that are simply not possible at this time for the Mi’kmaw section of this dissertation. The Pictou Landing First Nation does not have a large body of collected oral history, and relatively few people have done extensive archival research into the Nation’s past.⁴⁰ This has resulted in a different structure, flow, and body of research for the Mi’kmaw chapters in this dissertation. The Mi’kmaw chapters (especially Chapters 5 and 6) rely heavily on archival documents, and contain much less oral history than their related chapters in the Tla’amin section. Regardless of this difference, the Mi’kmaq focused chapters provide focus on a largely unexplored area of Mi’kmaw history, and they set up the final chapter of the Mi’kmaw section, where I incorporate more oral history and knowledge gathered through my community-engagement.

⁴⁰ Anthropologist Michelle Lelievre conducted archival, archaeological, and oral history research with the Pictou Landing First Nation in the early 2000s, which is detailed in her 2017 book *Unsettling Mobility: Mediating Mi’kmaw Sovereignty in Post-Contact Nova Scotia* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017). Ella Bennet crafted an excellent MA Thesis, titled “We Had Something Good and Sacred Here: ReStorying A’Se’k with Pictou Landing First Nation” as part of the Environmental Studies program at Dalhousie University in 2013.

This project benefits from recent scholarship that defines Community-Engaged Scholarship (CES) as a range of collaborative activities that exist on a spectrum that allows for variable levels of engagement depending on each project's goals and parameters, and each partners capacities and enthusiasm. In a forthcoming article, Keith Carlson, Sonny McHalsie, Tsandlia Van Ry, and myself put forth a model for understanding the varying degrees of collaboration in a community-engaged project, based on the intricacies and dynamics of each project's specific goals and focuses.⁴¹ CES, we argue, "recognizes that each component of every research project and activity exists on a spectrum that necessarily adapts and adjusts across projects and within projects depending upon circumstances."⁴² The "collaboration spectrum," as Carlson coined it, allows for CES to operate in ways that permit each project to be defined by its own parameters but still fit with the broader goals of working with community partners.

The Collaboration Spectrum provides a descriptive model for outsiders seeking to work with Indigenous communities to use to evaluate their relationships to ensure that they are meeting community needs, as well as their own. In terms of my own dissertation project, my work with the Tla'amin began with a community created project during the field school, where community leaders and elders picked the topic and guided the research, and developed into a MA thesis where I expanded the research into new areas. My long-term relationship with the community has allowed me to discuss my research and work with various community members to find ways to make it meaningful to historical questions that exist within the community. Some of the bubbles in the spectrum move back and forth depending on the project, but ultimately my

⁴¹ Keith Thor Carlson, Albert "Sonny" McHalsie, Colin Osmond, and Tsandlia Van Ry, "The Collaboration Spectrum: Reflections on Community-Engaged Scholarship in a Historical Study of Gendered Territoriality among the Stó:lō", in Benjamin J. Barnes & Stephen Warren, eds., *Replanting Cultures: Community-Engaged Scholarship in Indian Country* (New York: SUNY Press [expected publication 2021]).

⁴² Ibid.

work with the Tla'amin remains heavily favoured to the "Highly Collaborative" side of the spectrum.

My newer relationship with the Pictou Landing First Nation, however, began largely with my own interests in expanding the historical research I had been conducting in British Columbia to my home province of Nova Scotia. When I reached out to the Pictou Landing First Nation in 2016, I did so with a variety of historical questions in mind, and many ideas for how the project could proceed. However, this does not mean I simply applied the same ideas and frameworks from my Tla'amin research onto my Mi'kmaq research plans. Rather, I began my work by allowing for ample time for Mi'kmaq elders and community members to share their historical knowledge and provide me with questions they had about their history. During these meetings, I shared my research with them, and worked to incorporate their questions into my research platform. Throughout the researching and writing of this dissertation I have continued to work with elders and community members to gather their opinions and insights on my research to better allow for their perspectives to be part of my analysis. Several of the questions that arose out of my doctoral research will provide the basis for my upcoming appointment as a Post-Doctoral Fellow at Mount Saint Vincent's University in Halifax, Nova Scotia, where I will continue to develop my research with the Pictou Landing community.

Scholars have spent much less time trying to understand the ways that Mi'kmaq people have engaged with wage-labour and settler economies than is the case regarding the Coast Salish. Historian Andrew Parnaby, who has conducted excellent research on both Coast Salish and Mi'kmaq nineteenth century wage labour, called attention to the lack of scholarly focus on Mi'kmaq wage labour and engagement with settler economies.⁴³ Parnaby notes that the

⁴³ Andrew Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival: The Mi'kmaq of Cape Breton in the Mid-nineteenth Century," *Labour* vol. 61 (2008), 73.

Mi'kmaq, after nearly two centuries of European colonialism, entered into wage labour largely (and reluctantly) due to increased competition for resources and being disconnected from their broader territories. Parnaby argues that the “stark” differences between Coast Salish and Mi'kmaw experiences with settler economies mostly disappeared by the end of the nineteenth century.⁴⁴ I agree with Parnaby's broader theories about the ways that the Mi'kmaq engaged with wage labour, but my community-engaged research reveals that access to wage labour, as part of a varied sustenance system, played an increasing role in Mi'kmaw lives in Pictou County much earlier in the nineteenth century.

This dissertation responds to several themes in the historiography. Building on earlier works by historians such as Alexandra Harmon, Keith Carlson, John Lutz, and William Wicken, this dissertation argues that Indian Reserves and Indigenous identity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries are best understood within the context of the dynamic push and pull of tradition (cultural continuity) on the one hand, and innovation (cultural adaptation) on the other.⁴⁵ Of particular interest, and where I see my greatest contribution, are the ways that Indigenous families adopted wage labour into their social and economic systems, and how working for wages in a colonial system shaped Indigenous family and community life. But alongside these changes we see stark cultural continuity.

Situating Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall's “Two-Eyed Seeing” – a theoretical framework that shows how Indigenous people understand the world around them with one eye focused on traditional Indigenous knowledge, the other focused on colonial ideology – within the

⁴⁴ Parnaby, “The Cultural Economy of Survival”, 97.

⁴⁵ Alexandra Sasha Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 3-5.; William C. Wicken, *The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794-1928* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); John S. Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relation*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008; Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2010).

insights of Homi Bhabha's theorizing about the mutual (though uneven) hybridization of colonial and colonized societies in contact with one another, I examine the ways Indigenous identity necessarily adapted and changed in the face of colonialism.⁴⁶ But I am careful to trace the ways in which changes were sometimes reformatted along Western notions of nuclear families with male bread winners and heads of households, and at other times the change was shaped and informed by the deep cultural structures within Indigenous society. Not surprisingly, as Joy Parr has unveiled in other contexts, family economics and gender roles were rarely as 'nuclear' as one might assume about Indigenous communities in the mid-twentieth century.⁴⁷

While I argue throughout this dissertation that Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq built dynamic economies that allowed for women and men to work in adaptive ways in order to maintain both their traditional and colonial economies, I am aware that this focus on harmonious labour threatens to gloss over tensions or conflicts between partners and families. Certainly, the fact that Indigenous people built these economies by pulling together inputs from a variety of people's labour does not mean that it functioned perfectly all the time. Surely, some people's labour was exploited, some families did not balance as well as others, and some did not contribute at all. Regardless, the broader theme throughout the historical record shows that most people engaged in this dynamic economy in order to provide fulsome lives for themselves and their families.

While it may not always read like a traditional work of labour or social history, this dissertation is inspired by Labour Historian Craig Heron's observation that studies of labour in Canada have been "too insensitive to race and the colonialism that sustained racial

⁴⁶ Albert Marshall, "The Silence of Humility", paper presented at the *World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education*, New Zealand Nov. 27 – Dec. 1, 2005; Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

⁴⁷ Joy Parr, *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990).

oppression...[for Indigenous people] whose history does not fit easily into our Marxist paradigms.”⁴⁸ Heron admits that the field has fallen short in recognizing the contributions of Indigenous people to Canada’s working history, and his impressive work to document a wealth of Canadian labour history in *Working Lives* almost completely (and self-admittedly) fails to engage with Indigenous wage labourers – a symptom of Labour History’s tendency to sacrifice race in order to highlight worker and class solidarity. Recognizing Heron’s insight that wage labour is best understood in a complex familial and communal system where women and children are equal actors (not just a supporting cast for the “breadwinner”), this dissertation is an attempt to answer his call for new work that can bring these previously overlooked voices and perspectives into the discussion over the role of wage labour in family history. Likewise, I also recognize that just as Labour historians have admitted to minimizing race in order to examine class, ethnohistorians have too often failed to engage with Marxism and capitalism in their discussions of race and culture.⁴⁹ My work is an effort to bring together insights from labour history with those from other fields, such as ethnohistory, gender, and environmental history, to construct a new history of Indigenous families and communities in twentieth century Canada.

Much of what this dissertation argues about family and community life in the twentieth century is predicated on the isolation of Indigenous people from their resources and marginalization from their broader territories through the processes of colonialism. The dislocation from territory and resources (which was not an immediate result of colonization – both Mi’kmaq and Coast Salish people continued to use their broader territories and resources in

⁴⁸ Craig Heron, “Introduction” in *Working Lives: Essays in Canadian Working Class Histories* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2018), xvii.

⁴⁹ Exceptions to this are John Lutz’s seminal book *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), and Andrew Parnaby’s, “The Cultural Economy of Survival: The Mi’kmaq of Cape Breton in the Mid-nineteenth Century,” *Labour* vol. 61 (2008), both of which include engaging insights of class, and social interpretations of Indigenous wage-labour in nineteenth and twentieth century British Columbia.

a variety of ways well into the twentieth century) resulted in Indigenous people placing more emphasis on integrating waged labour and settler markets into their social and economic systems. This meant that while they continued to use things like forest resources in ways that were similar to the ways their ancestors had, they now mobilized them to sell things like timber or wooden products in a cash economy. I engage with similar notions of Indigenous incorporation of wage labour as scholars like Nancy Shoemaker, who argued that understanding the contingencies and fluctuations of identity in Indigenous commercial whalers in the nineteenth century requires examining Indigenous understandings of resource extraction within the various stages of the colonization process.⁵⁰ Indeed, scholarship presented by Joshua Reid situates how Indigenous resource management in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries needs to be understood within the context of the colonial laws that bound Indigenous resource use, as well as within the longer history of Indigenous resource extraction and environmental management of their traditional territories.⁵¹ This dissertation builds from these histories by analyzing not just how Indigenous people negotiated and managed resources in the emerging colonial world, but also how Indigenous ideas on resource management use were adapted over time, and how this impacted Indigenous family and community structures into the twentieth century.

Indigenous resource use and management was challenged by the industrialization of their territories. This dissertation uses the histories of the creation of massive industrial pulp and paper mills in both of my partner communities to analyze not only the ways that Indigenous communities rejected (or perhaps embraced) the construction of industrial factories on their territories, but also to analyze the ways that Indigenous people have become the victims of

⁵⁰ Nancy Shoemaker, *Native American Whalers and the World: Indigenous Encounters and the Contingency of Race* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 2015).

⁵¹ Joshua Reid, *The Sea is My Country: The Maritime World of the Makahs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

pollution and effluent from these entities while often benefitting the least from economic opportunity.⁵² Despite government and corporate promises that these industrial facilities would benefit local Indigenous people, the creation of pulp and paper mills had major environmental impacts on the Tla'amin and the Pictou Landing First Nation, which had important consequences that determined how Indigenous people accessed and managed their resources over time. Moreover, the mills never even provided significant wage labour opportunities to Indigenous people (outside those of the associated resource extraction activities of logging that supplied the mills with timber). Thus, while some Tla'amin and Mi'kmaw loggers sold timber to the mills, the economic benefit from this labour was far out shadowed by the environmental degradation of their territories. I analyze how these facilities (and the broader processes they operated within) impacted the way Indigenous men and women made their living and built their homes in the twentieth century – a time when their lives were defined by paycheques and paper promises.

This dissertation is an example of CES, and is first and foremostly a community-engaged history that draws upon and advances best practices in decolonizing ethnohistorical approaches and techniques.⁵³ This project builds on what Carlson, Lutz, McHalsie, and Schaepe have called “The New Ethnohistory.” ‘The New Ethnohistory’ is founded on the same principles as ethnohistory, but where the research is co-designed and co-executed with communities so that

⁵² I draw inspiration from environmental historians like Brett Walker (*Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), Jim Clifford, *West Ham and the River Lea: A Social and Environmental History of London's Industrialized Marshland, 1839-1914*. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2017), and Linda Nash (*Inescapable Ecologies: A History of Environment, Disease, and Knowledge*. Los Angeles: University of California, 2006) whose works show that marginalized populations often bear the brunt of ecological and environmental damage, while they receive little benefit and often lack political power to pursue change.

⁵³ Simply defined, ethnohistory is the ethnographer's use of oral history and field work, paired with a historian's gaze for temporality and ability to delve deeply into the archival material.

the scholarship can be genuinely co-created by communities.”⁵⁴ Anthropologist Julie Cruikshank also champions the use of engaged oral history as a key means for finding Indigenous perspectives that are often elided from the written documentary records in most archives.⁵⁵

While oral historical methods will provide Indigenous perspectives for the more recent decades of my research, the earlier chronologies require a different approach. I aim to construct Indigenous voices from earlier periods through pertinent primary sources, such as Indian Agents’ Letterbooks, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, the correspondence and notes from several land commissions, dairies, and from the published works and fieldnotes from ethnographers and anthropologists.⁵⁶ Historian Mary-Jane McCallum explains that researchers must find ‘glimpses’ of Indigenous voices by ‘reading against the grain’ because most colonial records are written by and for non-Indigenous people.⁵⁷ Indeed, as Winona Stevenson argues, applying a post-colonial lens to the history of colonialism in Canada provides more opportunities

⁵⁴ Keith Carlson, John S. Lutz, David M. Schaepe, eds., *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship Among the People of the River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 2018), 26. I also draw inspiration for working closely with Indigenous people from historian Maureen Simpkins, who argues that historians need to engage with Indigenous people’s unique perspectives by “listening between the lines” and by looking “beyond and between the words to recognize the personal, historical, cultural, and community specific context” of community perspectives. See Maureen A. Simpkins, “Listening Between the Lines: Reflections on Listening, Interpreting, and Collaborating with Aboriginal Communities in Canada,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* vol. 30, no. 2 (2010), 324.

⁵⁵ Julie Cruikshank, “Oral History, Narrative Strategies, and Native American Historiography,” in Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly, eds. *The Canadian Oral History Reader*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 2015. 181.

⁵⁶ Such as Franz Boas, *Indian Myths and Legends from the Northwest Coast of America* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 2002); Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, 1955; Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia* (Victoria: Provincial Museum of Natural History, 1969); Wayne Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1987); Silas Rand, *Legends of the Micmacs* (New York: Johnson Reprinting Corporation, 1971); Wilson D. Wallis and Ruth Sawtell Wallis, *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955); Frank Speck, *The Beothuk and the Micmac* (New York: Museum of the North American Indian Press, 1922).

⁵⁷ Mary McCallum, “Laws, codes, and informal practices: Building Ethical Procedures for Historical Research with Indigenous Medical Records” in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, Eds. Chris Andersen and Jean M. O’Brien (New York: Routledge, 2017), 280.

to engage with Indigenous perspectives and voices from the past.⁵⁸ Viewing colonial records through this interpretive lens allows me to engage historian Daniel Richter's call for non-Indigenous scholars of Indigenous history to "look over the shoulders"⁵⁹ of historical Indigenous people in an attempt to see the world from their perspective. What distinguishes my scholarship as part of the "New Ethnohistory," however, and differentiates it from an earlier generation of ethnohistorians who attempted to 'read against the grain,' is that I have conscientiously involved Indigenous people in conversations where we have reviewed evidence together and thus co-created interpretations of the past.

One methodological challenge for this project is the lack of female Indigenous voices in the archival and ethnographic records dating from the late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth centuries. This dissertation heeds historian Jean Barman's call to write history that does not view Indigenous female identity as analogous to that of Indigenous men.⁶⁰ I seek to better understand how Coast Salish and Mi'kmaq women reshaped their societal and familial roles in the rise of wage-labour in resource extraction industries. Historian Sarah Carter assessed the difficulty of attaining female perspectives in the colonial period as attempting to find the "real" when we only have access to representations.⁶¹ Joan Sangster recently reminded us that using oral history to

⁵⁸ Winona Stevenson, "The Journals and Voices of a Church of England Native Catechist: Askenootow (Charles Pratt), 1851-1884" in Jennifer Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds., *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 237-262.

⁵⁹ Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁶⁰ Jean Barman, "Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900," *BC Studies*, no. 115/116 (1998), 238.

⁶¹ Sarah Carter, *Capturing Women: The Manipulation of Cultural Imagery in Canada's Prairie West* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1997), 9. To get as close as possible to female perspectives, Carter advocates using a broad range of sources from "others who claimed the authority to write and who disseminated information." (Ibid, 6-9). McCallum's work with female Indigenous workforces in early-to-mid-twentieth century Ontario combines archival research with oral history to find these narratives (Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History, 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014). Anthropologist Heather Howard-Bobiwash reminds us that Indigenous female perspectives on things like wage work and labour are often hidden behind notions of "symbolic opposition" that obscure female engagements with what are typically seen

research female perspectives provides “a potential counterbalance or additive to predominantly text-based archives, which had tended to reinforce the prevailing inattention to women’s lives.”⁶² Sangster’s ideas become even more powerful when applied to Indigenous women’s perspectives, which were also marginalized within the context of settler-colonialism.

To develop a better understanding of Mi’kmaw economics, I have also mobilized quantitative methods to examine the function of the mixed Mi’kmaw economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Using data gleaned from over forty consecutive years of Indian Agent reports, I created charts that highlight Mi’kmaw economic adaptability and the function of wage labour opportunity alongside a traditional sustenance system. These charts, found in Chapter Seven, illuminate the increasing importance of wage labour and mercantile trade with settlers in the late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth century, while simultaneously showing the continuation of the traditional economy (especially when economies slowed and wage labour became scarce). Collectively, these charts provide us with a better understanding of the function of wages and mercantile opportunity within Mi’kmaw society at a time when many wrongly assume that government relief was the main source of income for Mi’kmaw families.

The following chapters are organized to follow my journey through community-engaged history. This dissertation is organized to allow for two parallel histories to be discussed in their

as activities traditionally suited to men (Heather Howard-Bobiwash, “Women’s Class Strategies as Activism in Native Community Building in Toronto, 1950-1975,” *American Indian Quarterly* vol. 27, no. ¾ (2003), 570). Further, Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morill argue that historicizing the perspectives of Indigenous women is a key avenue towards breaking down antiquated notions of indigeneity that hinder scholars from fully engaging Indigenous people as “within, instead of outside of, modernity” (Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill, “Decolonizing feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy,” *Feminist Formations* vol. 25, no. 1 (2013), 26).

⁶² Joan Sangster, “Politics and Praxis of Working-Class Oral Histories,” in Kristina R. Llewellyn, Alexander Freund, and Nolan Reilly, eds. *The Canadian Oral History Reader*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s, 2015. 120.

own right before weaving them together to reflect on the ways that Canadian settler colonialism functioned in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Section One focuses on the Tla'amin Nation on the Pacific Coast of Canada, beginning with Chapter Two's discussion of the history of the creation of the Sliammon Indian Reserve on the site of the ancient northern Coast Salish village Tišosem. I explain how the creation of Sliammon brought together a population of people who had previously identified and affiliated in a variety of ways (Tla'amin, Klahoose, Homalco, and Comox, or as part of smaller integrated kinship systems) to create the Sliammon Indian Band. I argue that the well-studied story of the conversion of Tišosem into Sliammon reveals more about Indigenous agencies, understandings of space, and adoption of commercial logging, than it does colonial incursion.

Chapter Three discusses the industrialization of Tla'amin territory in the early twentieth century. When the Powell River Company built a massive industrial paper mill in Tla'amin territory in 1910, they did so on the ancient Tla'amin village Tis'kwat. Tis'kwat (known today as Powell River) hosted an annual salmon spawn that was an important part of the Tla'amin system. The construction of the mill was the spark that fueled the instantaneous settlement of the Tla'amin territory by non-Indigenous people. The Tla'amin responded to massive change in their lands by embracing certain aspects of settler society (wage labour) while also retaining their distinct cultural identity.

The final chapter on the Tla'amin examines how, in the twentieth century, the Tla'amin embraced the commercial logging and fishing industries in a variety of ways that provided incomes for Tla'amin families but also important new services for the Sliammon community. Of particular interest to this chapter is the role of logging in providing collective funding for the Sliammon Day School in the early 1910s. Wage labour and local resource extraction provided

families with the option to not send children to residential school until the 1950s and 60s. I also explore how other industries, such as fishing, worked to provide Tla'amin families not only with a steady income (and food) but also with the ability to maintain family structures and community systems.

Section Two switches geographic focus to the Mi'kmaq of Pictou County, Nova Scotia. Chapter Five provides the history of colonial settlement in the Mi'kmaw region *Piktuk* (Pictou County, Nova Scotia) in the late eighteenth and early-to-mid nineteenth century. This chapter highlights how the Mi'kmaq actively pursued the colonial government to create a reserve at their village near A'Se'k (Boat Harbour), despite the land having been granted to Loyalists from the American Revolutionary War.

Chapter Six analyzes the social history of the spatial growth of Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve (Pictou Landing First Nation) over the next fifty years. This growth was based largely on Mi'kmaq refusal to be bound by the reserve limits, which forced the government to purchase settler land in an attempt to avoid conflict between the Mi'kmaq and their settler neighbours. Fisher's Grant became a hub for Mi'kmaw engagements with wage labour and for selling commodities at settler towns like Pictou. I complicate the colonial agenda in reserve making to highlight Mi'kmaw agency and adaptability during a time of increasing colonial efforts to assimilate Indigenous people.

The reorganization of the Mi'kmaq economy to include wage labour and work in resource extraction had important consequences not only for Mi'kmaw families, but also for Mi'kmaw gender roles. Indeed, the emerging settler economy provided opportunity for both men and women to earn money. This final chapter on the Mi'kmaq explores how Mi'kmaw women

accessed social power in their homes and communities in ways that was similar to traditional Mi'kmaw society, but derived from engagements with settler economics.

This dissertation concludes by situating the ongoing legacies of colonialism in the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq communities. The final chapter reflects on the similarities and differences in the ways that settler colonialism expanded in these communities to argue that settler colonialism needs to be evaluated within specific temporal, geographical, and cultural lenses in order to fully appreciate the ways that Indigenous communities negotiated (and continue to negotiate) colonialism in their lives and on their lands.

When Chief Tom and Chief Francis wrote letters to the Department of Indian Affairs in the early twentieth century, they did so to better ascertain the rights that the families who lived in their communities had to manage local resources. These resources had provided Coast Salish and Mi'kmaq families with sustenance for centuries, but in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries increased European settlement caused competition and ultimately dislocation from the resources that Indigenous families relied on to put cash in their pockets and food on their tables. The stories told here are those of family and community, of adaptability and ingenuity. They are histories of Indigenous people that worked hard, embraced change, and also maintained cultural continuity in a complicated colonial world.

Chapter Two: The Ethnogenesis of the Sliammon Indian Band, 1860-1900

In the frigid winter waters of the Malaspina Strait, on March 16 2020, a pod of dolphins splashed frantically in a circular formation in front of the Tla'amin village Sliammon. These dolphins, pursued by a pod of hungry killer whales, sought refuge in the shallower waters of the bay. In the process they became trapped in a large circle of boulders that had been stacked by Tla'amin ancestors hundreds of years earlier. Fish Traps such as these were designed to corral fish as the tide dropped, creating tidal pools where fish could be easily speared and netted at low tide. These innovative traps provided northern Coast Salish families with an important food source for centuries, and today can still be seen in bays up and down the coast.



Figure 2.1: Members of the Tla'amin Nation work to rescue dolphins trapped in an ancient fish trap. March 16, 2020. Photo Credit: Michelle Moir

As the tide dropped several members of the Tla'amin Nation, an Indigenous Nation whose main community lives at Sliammon (just north of the settler town of Powell River), gathered at the beach to rescue these endangered dolphins. Using blankets and tarps, and a lot of muscle, they carried the dolphins out of the trap and placed them back into deeper water several meters away. Lee George, a member of the Tla'amin Nation and manager of the Tla'amin salmon hatchery on nearby Sliammon Creek, reported that although he used the trap in his younger years to fish for herring, this was a spectacle such as he had never seen before: "All my life, living on the ocean growing up a son of a fisherman and a fisherman myself, I've never seen anything like it."¹ In the end, all of the dolphins were rescued and released into the Strait. The harrowing event had an inspiring outcome, and George reflected on what he saw as an excellent example of how "people and communities can come together to do something good for mother nature."²

The trap serves as an excellent analogy to understand the reshaping of the Tla'amin world over the last 150 years. Indeed, the village now labelled as Sliammon had been known as Tišosem (which means "Water white with herring spawn" in the Tla'amin language) by northern Coast Salish people for centuries. The village was a key part of Coast Salish seasonal resource harvesting systems, and an important winter village where tribal populations from the northern Coast Salish world congregated to reaffirm kinship and hold important cultural gatherings and ceremonies. Tišosem had for countless generations been a part of the Tla'amin world, but in the late nineteenth century it found new importance as a hub for interactions with colonial officials and Catholic priests. The village became registered in the colonial lexicon as the 'Sliammon

¹ Vanessa Bjerresskov, "Dolphin Pod Rescue at Tla'amin Beach," *Powell River Peak*, March 19 2020; Karin Larsen, "Killers whales hunting dolphins amaze onlookers near Powell River," *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation News*, March 18 2020.

² Bjerresskov, "Dolphin Pod Rescue at Tla'amin Beach," *Powell River Peak*, March 19 2020.

Indian Reserve' in 1888. 'Sliammon' was the rough English translation of Tla'amin, and came to eclipse the Tla'amin name for the village. Although based on traditional Indigenous ways of identifying, these new monikers represented a new era for northern Coast Salish people who had previously identified in more complicated ways than simply 'Sliammon' in the past. These new labels had important consequences for the Tla'amin, and some Homalco and Klahoose families who now became collectively known in the colonial world as the 'Sliammon Indian Band.'

Although on this day in 2020 the Tla'amin, somewhat ironically, mobilized to rescue trapped marine life, it reminds us of the connections between people, place, and resources in ways that complicate the history of the village known as Sliammon I.R. 1. The reserve, much like the fish trap, is part of an Indigenous world that persists despite the best efforts of the Canadian colonial system. Tišosem was part of an Indigenous land management system that was severely compromised with the creation of Indian reserves and the settlement of Tla'amin territory by settlers. However, the trapped dolphins in the ancient structure remind us that Indigenous management systems and technologies persist and have influence today. Much like the fish trap still functions, Tišosem exists despite the many attempts to remake it into Sliammon. The Sliammon Indian Band was a colonial creation, but it exists over a foundation of Indigenous tradition and understandings of the world and that protects places like Tišosem. Placing too much focus on the colonial aspirations and systems of control in creating Sliammon risks obscuring the Tla'amin efforts and reasons to protect Tišosem from colonial settlement. The trapped dolphins give us chance to reflect on the ways the northern Coast Salish used their world, and reminds us of the historical and modern persistence of Tišosem.

This chapter engages with a variety of colonial attempts to redefine and reorganize Tla'amin territory into a colonized space – a space that would allow the newly formed federal

Department of Indian Affairs and the Province of British Columbia marginalize a population of Indigenous people who embraced a variety of geographic and cultural identities into a single manageable unit anchored at a single geographic place - the Sliammon Indian Band at the village of Sliammon - a regulated space and population under the Indian Act. The government, through the process of surveying small reserves out of vast territories, created the roots of the modern Tla'amin Nation in an effort to free up land for settler resource extraction, settlement, and industrialization. The 1860s and 1870s saw few settlers arriving in Tla'amin territory, but international industrial interests, and provincial and federal government aspirations and speculation set in motion a process that would result in the marginalization of the Tla'amin from their land. The Tla'amin resisted in many ways, including the use of violence, to protect their land from the forces that converged on them in the late nineteenth century.

These Tla'amin battles for their lands and resources show Tla'amin agency during a tumultuous time in Tla'amin history. Even though the processes that led to the creation of Sliammon were highly colonial and meant to destroy the Tla'amin culture and their connections to their broader territory, a careful examination of the historical records reveals how Tla'amin perspectives and decisions were an integral part of the reserve making process. As government agents attempted to disassemble the Tla'amin world, the Tla'amin engaged in a series of efforts that would allow elements of their traditional world to survive the onslaught of colonialism. I complicate the notion that the colonial agenda was the most important factor in efforts to decide where, when, and why reserves were created in Tla'amin territory, and for deciding who lived on them at what times of year. Indeed, even well into the twentieth century, the Tla'amin continued

to live for extended portions of the year throughout their territory, not just at Sliammon.³

Sliammon became a hub – increasingly important for a variety of reasons, but they continued to use different areas throughout their territory in ways that demonstrate continuity of older systems and integration of new opportunities that came with the colonization of their lands. Tla’amin agency and motivations played an important role in these decisions. Regardless of this agency, forces beyond Tla’amin control made jurisdiction over certain parts of their territory precarious, and set in motion the foundations for the industrial development and settlement of Tla’amin territory in the twentieth century.

This history highlights not only the ways that the colonial and later provincial/federal governments worked to isolate Indigenous people from their broader lands to protect settler and corporate interests, but also to highlight how the Tla’amin had embraced certain aspects of the settler world into their own culture and social-economic systems. The Tla’amin, for reasons that had just as much to do with Tla’amin agency as with colonial incursion, were quick to adopt Roman Catholicism as early as the 1860s, and many Tla’amin men strapped on cork boots and plied their skills in the woods not only locally as handloggers but also in logging camps up and down the coast.⁴ In part on the advice of visiting missionary priests, but largely due to Tla’amin

³ The historical record has many references to a large portion of the Tla’amin being away from Sliammon at various times of the year. For example, in 1927 Indian Agent C.C. Perry had difficulty obtaining signatures on a petition (he required a majority of the male members of the band to pass a motion) for several months until people returned. He did not state what kept them away, but given the timing it was likely work in logging (C.C. Perry to W.P. Beaven, January 19 1927, RG10, C-9654, Vol. 8088, File 987/31-4-6-1-2, pt. 1). Similarly, in 1932, Indian Agent F.J.C. Ball could not pass a band resolution as “the Chief and principle men were absent fishing” until the end of the summer (F.J.C. Ball to T.R.L. MacInnes, Sect. of Indian Affairs, September 14 1932, RG10, C-9654, Vol. 8088, File 987/31-4-6-1-2, pt. 1).

⁴ I argued extensively in my Master’s Thesis that logging became an essential part of Coast Salish economics, and understandings of masculinity, in the late nineteenth to mid twentieth centuries. See: Colin Osmond, “Giant Trees, Iron Men: Masculinity and Colonialism in Coast Salish Loggers’ Identity,” Unpublished Master’s Thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 2016. I also published on the importance of logging to Coast Salish people in the following: Colin Osmond, “I was Born a Logger: Stó:lō Identities Forged in the Forest,” in *Towards a New Ethnohistory: Community-Engaged Scholarship Among the People of the River*, eds. Keith Thor Carlson, John Sutton Lutz, David M. Schaepe, Naxaxalhts’I (Albert ‘Sonny’ McHalsie) (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press,

motivations, the Tla'amin (and their closely related kin in neighbouring northern Coast Salish tribal villages) remade part of their semi-seasonal rounds to include lengthier stays at Tišosem – an important Tla'amin winter village that served as the meeting place with Roman Catholic Priests and government agents, and as a base for engagements in commercial logging and fishing. Ironically, the Tla'amin were actively engaging in the sorts of activities the colonial and Canadian governments wanted (but not always for the same reasons, the Tla'amin did so with their own agencies and motivations). Yet, they still fell victim to the sort of oppression that was typically justified by colonial ideologies that saw Indigenous people as primitive and therefore their land expendable to those who would use it “properly.” This fact was not lost on people like Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, who, during the 1870s spent many hours pushing for the protection of Tla'amin lands and rights.⁵

Among other sources, this chapter analyzes letters and reports from the Indian Reserve Commissions that attempted to define and demarcate Tla'amin land in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. I pay particular attention to the letters left by Sproat, a down-to-earth government agent who had spent years working amongst Indigenous people in British Columbia.

2018), pp. 215-235; Colin Osmond, “Logging, Laughing, and Staying Alive: The New Ethnohistory and Coast Salish Reflections on Dangerous Work in the Woods in the Mid-twentieth Century”, *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 109, No. 3 (2018), pp. 120-134.

⁵ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat has been seen by historians as a government agent who was sympathetic to Indigenous land claims and rights to property, but was ultimately hampered by the British Columbia government's refusal to recognize that Indigenous people had a valid claim to the spaces they occupied. Cole Harris described Sproat as a pragmatic and hardworking man who left an important legacy, even if he largely failed to achieve his goals: “he stands out now as a brave and remarkable failure, a poignant reminder that colonialism speaks with many voices, that native people were working out their own adaptation to the new world that colonialism had thrust upon them, that a few whites, Sproat the most notable among them, were listening, and that there were alternatives to the dark path we have taken” (Harris, *Making Native Space*, 137); John Lutz described Sproat as “a sympathetic observer of Aboriginal people” (*Makuk*, 258); Keith Carlson reflected that Sproat's approach to listening to Indigenous people and assigning their land claims was “refreshingly respectful” (*Power of Place*, 20); Robin Fisher praised Sproat's ability to engage with Indigenous culture and resource management at a time when most settlers were ignorant to any sort of Indigenous land use systems (*Contact and Conflict*, 90). In sum, Sproat has been seen as a complicated person who both served as the ‘boots on the ground’ for colonialism in the 1870s, but did so in ways that show he cared about Indigenous people and attempted to have their rights recognized. My read of the letters left by Sproat agrees and builds on these understandings.

Sproat quickly recognized that several major international and national factors were pushing their influence over government officials in Victoria (the capital of British Columbia), and he minced no words in calling them out in his defense of the Tla'amin. These records are used to understand the ways that the Tla'amin pushed back against forces that were ultimately too far removed from their control.

Although some of my original oral history research appears in this chapter, the bulk of oral history that I use in this chapter comes from a Traditional Land Use Study (TLUS) conducted by the Tla'amin Nation in the 1990s and early 2000s. This study, which gathered Tla'amin Elders' histories to provide substantive data for the Tla'amin Nation's modern treaty within the British Columbia Treaty Process (BCTP), was focused largely on where people lived, how they accessed and used resources, and how Tla'amin life was impacted by settler colonialism. The elders whose voices make up the history in this chapter spoke at length about the histories they learned by listening to their elders' stories. These elders spoke with authority about these histories by providing what academics have labelled 'oral footnoting.' Oral footnoting, as defined by historian Wendy Wickwire, is the process of giving legitimacy to your knowledge by verbally explaining who you learned it from.⁶ Keith Carlson compared oral footnoting to the rigorous academic standards for citing your sources, claiming that those who failed to establish proper authority when speaking would be considered "conveyors of poor history" who faced consequences for failing to back up their claims.⁷ The Tla'amin elders' knowledge used in these chapters followed this protocol, with elders giving extensive family information to back up their

⁶ Wendy Wickwire, "To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'mux Contact Narratives", *Canadian Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (1994), 19.

⁷ Keith Thor Carlson, "Orality about Literacy: The 'Black and White' of Salish History", in *Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*, eds. Keith Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), 57.

claims. Each interview includes a lengthy discussion of who the speaker's parents, grandparents, and great-grandparents were, and frequently in the interviews, elders will stop to provide oral footnotes by saying phrases like "I heard this from my grandmother/father." Tla'amin elders had to demonstrate several generations of ancestral knowledge to gain legitimacy, and when disagreements arose, protocol existed to address them.⁸ Such a system worked as a check and balance to keep information accurate and properly cited – markedly similar to the same standards academics apply when conducting peer-review or reviewing written historical sources.

Pairing these oral histories with documents found in archives is a revealing process, but one that I take with caution. Sometimes, the oral history and the written record contradict or are inconsistent. For example, several oral histories tell that Israel Wood Powell, the namesake of Powell River and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia in the 1870s and 1880s, was the first white man to ever visit the Tla'amin. However, the documentary record contains no actual reference to Powell visiting the area – the closest he came was travelling past Tla'amin territory on a steamship. Given that we know explorers, traders, and missionaries travelled to Tla'amin territory before Powell was even in British Columbia, Powell was not the first white man to visit the Tla'amin. However, Powell played such a big role in Tla'amin history (as the head of British Columbia's Indian department at a crucial time in Tla'amin history, and for his name being applied to a large chunk of traditional Tla'amin territory), it is not surprising that his name is used to describe the beginnings of the historical relationship between the Tla'amin and settlers. In fact, it matters very little to the following information who exactly the first white

⁸ In one interview, a conversation between Eugene Louie, Agnes McGee, and Katherine Blaney provides some insight into the function of oral footnoting and its ability to provide authenticity to historical information. McGee and Blaney, after explaining their familial relations at length, told that if any dispute arose around the legitimacy of what someone had said, the Elders would gather and have a lengthy discussion to parse out the details and figure out where the misunderstanding arose. McGee described this as a highly respectful process (Agnes McGee and Katherine Blaney, interviewed by Eugene Louie, July 16 2002, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat 1 (Quote edited for space and clarity).

person was – the more important information that deals with the Tla’amin response to the arrival of settlers in their territory corresponds with, and often provides more detailed information, than the written record.⁹ As Wickwire has shown, these records can be used together to provide nuanced, complicated, and more complete understandings of the past than either one used independently.¹⁰ Further, integrating the Indigenous perspective into historical writing serves to give more agency to Indigenous populations – both living and past – that have typically been cast in supporting roles to the non-Indigenous actors in the telling of Canadian history.

Historians often look to Indigenous agency as a means to understand the many complex ways that Coast Salish Nations remade their worlds in the colonial period. Historian Alexandra Harmon’s focus on identity formation and indigeneity in the Puget Sound has shown that Coast Salish Nations found new ways to express their community and individual identities within a strengthening and rapidly expanding colonial system.¹¹ Disease, and the subsequent demographic and cultural instability that came from epidemics and settler colonialism, required the formation of new identities and socio-political unions amongst shattered populations. Keith Carlson’s *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time* provides an excellent platform to engage in a study of Indigenous historical collective identity. Carlson situates Coast Salish collective identity as fluid over time – that is, new opportunities and changing circumstance required Coast Salish identity to be adaptable.¹² Carlson highlights how collective identities are forged in relationships, but

⁹ An excellent example of this can be seen in the introduction to Chapter 7, where Tla’amin oral history is used to provide detail about the Tla’amin’s logging efforts to build their new church. The Indian Agent reported that the Tla’amin pulled the logs from forest to sea using their own muscle, not animal power. The Tla’amin account, however, provided interesting new details about the way that the whole Tla’amin population mobilized to get the trees to market.

¹⁰ Wickwire, 19-20.

¹¹ Alexandra Sasha Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 3-5.

¹² Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2010), 24-25.

what is less understood is the ways that the presence (or perhaps lack) of resources, and the integration of wage labour and settler economics, served to contribute to the formation of Indigenous collective identities in the colonial period. This chapter focuses on this latter point by showing how engagements with the commercial logging industry shaped Tla'amin motivations for settling more permanently at Tišosem, and to show how the Tla'amin adoption of commercial logging served as a focal point for commissioners like Sproat who used it as a way to demonstrate Tla'amin use and occupancy of their lands.

The creation of an Indian Reserve at Tišosem contributed to the village being a central hub for resource extraction activities and engagement in industries like logging. The Tla'amin actively remade parts of their social and economic systems to integrate wage labour into their seasonal cycles. In the 1860s and 1870s, when few settlers lived in the region, the Tla'amin could move about in similar ways as they and their ancestors had for centuries. While there were few white people living in their lands, the Tla'amin were not ignorant to the potential dangers that came with the presence of settlers. Certainly, they had already suffered the consequences of epidemic diseases that had spread through the region as early as 1782.¹³ Roman Catholic Missionaries had also found a captive audience at what they called the “Sliammon Indian Mission” in the 1860s.¹⁴ Tla'amin people had travelled the coast, visiting places like Victoria,

¹³ Historical Geographer Cole Harris provides a thorough discussion of the 1782 epidemic, and notes that the disease spread to the Northern Salish Sea (as far as Cape Mudge) before petering out. See: Cole Harris, “Voices of Disaster: Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia in 1782,” *Ethnohistory* Vol. 41, no. 4 (1994), pp. 591-6

¹⁴ Father Leon Fouquet arrived in British Columbia in 1859, where he worked extensively in the New Westminster region and also travelled up the coast. Fouquet recorded one visit to the “Tlahyamen” in 1868, where his canoe was trapped in ice and people from “Tlahyamen Baie” ventured out in the snowstorm to rescue the stranded Father. The people at the village, likely Tišosem, would not allow Fouquet to leave until they all had a chance to give their confessions, even though Fouquet was determined to leave the following morning (R.P. Fouquet to T.R.P Superior General, Mission de Saint-Michel, December 20 1868, pp. 122-132, in *Missions De La Congregation Des Oblates De Marie Immaculee* No. 33, March 1870. <https://www.omiworld.org/wp-content/uploads/missions9.pdf>). Father Chirouse of the O.M.I. reported attending Sliammon in the 1870s, and Tla'amin oral history records him as “Sheelowis.” When the Tla'amin petitioned the government for logging permits to build a new church in 1898, they reported that the one they currently had was in great disrepair. This suggests that the original building was likely 20-30 years old, and built sometime in the 1860s.

Nanaimo, Comox, and Vancouver. They had seen the types of processes that would likely spread northwards into their lands. This spread began with the survey of a large part of central Tla'amin territory in the late 1870s, but the Tla'amin continued to be mobile in their broader territory, for reasons that were both traditional and based on colonial change, well into the twentieth century. Historian John Lutz's work on early Indigenous-settler relations and the formation of economic partnerships demonstrates the ways that Indigenous people in British Columbia saw not just challenges but also opportunities within the changes that came with the onset of colonialism.¹⁵ In similar ways, historian Joshua Reid argues that historians seeking to understand colonial relationships need to focus on how Indigenous people in the Pacific Northwest incorporated Europeans into their existing systems and economies.¹⁶ The Tla'amin had an active role in the transformation of Tišosem to Sliammon, even if this process was heavily focused on colonial aims and agendas.

It is important to remember that when the Tla'amin were recast as "Sliammon" in the 1860s, Tišosem was a key winter village that was part of a northern Coast Salish seasonal system based on resources and kinship. Indeed, populations of northern Coast Salish people visited and resided in the village for a variety of purposes. Before contact and the arrival of colonial officials, the Klahoose, K'ómoks, Tla'amin, and Homalco were highly integrated based on family and kinship connections. Tla'amin elder Agnes McGee explained that before the white man came the northern Coast Salish were like "brothers and sisters" in a large family.¹⁷ These groups had territories, but there were porous and overlapping. They were defined by kinship

¹⁵Lutz, *Makuk*, 23.

¹⁶ Joshua Reid, *The Sea is My Country: The Maritime world of the Makahs* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

¹⁷ Agnes McGee and Katherine Blaney, interviewed by Karen Galligos, July 16 2002, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 1.

systems, not survey maps, which meant that northern Coast Salish families and kin groups travelled extensively based on resource availability. Their access to resources depended on kinship and family connections, which resulted in a system that, as Keith Carlson has explained in the context of the Fraser River, resulted in people identifying in ways that depended on where they were, what they were doing, and how they could explain their connections (and thus permissions) to be where they were, doing what they were doing.¹⁸ That is to say, a Tla'amin family fishing in Toba Inlet would identify in ways that explained their Klahoose connections and thus justify their reasons for being in Klahoose territory. Villages were therefore collections of autonomous segments of extended families that travelled across tribal boundaries and connected tribes via kinship relationships. Elder Mary George explained that travelling throughout the territories provided a wide access to resources, but it also provided a means to reconnect with family and maintain kinship:

It was to pray and it is what they call it today, go on a holiday, to go and have fun in another place, different land. Like to see their relatives or something, when the other people came to renew their relationship, get to know their relatives again.¹⁹

Places like Tišosem were an important gathering grounds for reaffirming kinship, and continued to be such a place after government officials began to draw firmer boundaries between the northern Coast Salish tribes based on band lists, central reserves, and surveyed lands.

The implementation of reserves over the northern Coast Salish region had drastic implications on Indigenous lifeways. Through surveys and the creation of band membership lists, the Canadian government geographically anchored the Tla'amin (and some Klahoose and Homalco) at Sliammon. The creation of Sliammon, and the ethnogenesis of the Sliammon Indian

¹⁸ Carlson, *The Power of Place*, 10.

¹⁹ Mary George, interviewed July 18, 2003 by Karen Galligos and Eugene Louie, transcribed and translated by Karen Galligos.

Band, indicated a major shift in Tla'amin lives. Indian Agents and government officials now associated this population with that particular place, which facilitated the appropriation of Tla'amin space for colonial settlement and industrial development. Although it still remained an important part of Tla'amin territory, Tišosem had taken on new meaning as Sliammon. Indian Reserves, although based on ancient Indigenous notions of territory and resource use, prioritized a distinctly European understanding of collective identity.²⁰ The people who called Sliammon home as the colonial grip strengthened its hold over the region, remade their identities in ways that both maintained traditional Indigenous society and also embraced aspects of colonial change.

When government land surveyors came to Tišosem in 1877 to hear Tla'amin perspectives on their land, they encountered a population that was already angered with the ways that their concerns about their lands had been handled by colonial and Canadian officials. Just three years earlier, in 1874, several Tla'amin, Homalco, and Klahoose village Chiefs signed their names to a petition calling for the Canadian government to recognize Indigenous land and resource rights in British Columbia. Invited by Peter Ayessik, the Chief of the Hope Band of Indians on the Fraser River, the assembled chiefs crafted a petition that raised nine key points addressed to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs. The petition expressed the anxiety these communities felt over the encroachment of white settlers, and to the government's lack of attention to Indigenous land rights. The petition highlighted the frustration of Coast Salish people who had embraced a western wage economy by purchasing farming implements, tilling the soil, raising cattle and other livestock, and engaging in industries like logging and commercial fishing, yet often found

²⁰ Carlson, *Power of Place*, 8.

their labour to be wasted when the government pre-empted land to settlers and left them without adequate land to grow crops, graze cattle, or harvest timber.²¹

Historians have described this petition as a watershed moment in Coast Salish history – one of the first times that people from the Coast Salish region came together in such a unified form without government or missionary coercion. Indeed, Cole Harris stated that “given the distances, former animosities, and variety of languages involved, the meeting itself was an extraordinary achievement, a measure of the seriousness of the situation as the Chiefs saw it and of an emerging sense of common interest in the face of white expansion.”²² This petition shows that from the earliest years of the province of British Columbia’s history as a Canadian province, the Indigenous people from the northern Salish Sea actively pursued their territorial and resource rights in the face of a growing settler presence and influence on their lives and lands. What is most interesting about the signatures on this petition is that they show that in 1874, the northern Coast Salish (people who would later identify as Tla’amin, and register to the Sliammon Indian Band) identified in separate villages under separate chiefs, not living year-round at what would later become Sliammon Indian Reserve No. 1, a place that would become the main village for many northern Coast Salish people who remade their lives under the shadows of Colonialism.

For several years after signing the petition, the Tla’amin visited Indian Reserve Commissioner Gilbert Malcolm Sproat in his Victoria offices, and on a few occasions paddled their canoes to places where they heard the Commission was headed. The Tla’amin understood

²¹ The petition was penned by Peter Ayessik, a well-known political advocate of Coast Salish rights and the Chief of the Hope Indian Band in the 1870s. Ayessik had been at the forefront of several political movements, and he was instrumental in bringing together leaders from all over the coast to discuss Indigenous rights and title to land. Ayessik had organized a similar petition in 1873, after Indigenous leaders had met in New Westminster to celebrate the Queen’s birthday. Indeed, these early petitions are of the earliest known written examples of a collective Coast Salish identity.

²² Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2002), 85.

the goal of the commission was to survey and protect their village sites and resource areas, and frequently pushed the Commissioners to come and do the work to protect their lands. However, unbeknownst to the Tla'amin, industrial and colonial interests located far beyond their lands began to influence the ways that Indian land was surveyed and protected in British Columbia.

This occurred in two fundamental ways on Tla'amin territory. At the relative center of Tla'amin territory existed a short but powerful river- known today in its modified form as Powell River. This river, called Tis'kwat (fast moving water) by the Tla'amin, was pegged by early colonial officials as a key place to develop the new technology of hydroelectric power and develop a mill to process the abundant logs in the region. For the Tla'amin, it was a central village site that provided sheltered access to the resource rich lake above, and served as a base for travel further inland. Tis'kwat also had an annual salmon spawn, which provided many calories for the Tla'amin. As early as 1873 speculators and other industrial interests began to make plans for Tis'kwat that would challenge Tla'amin attempts to maintain control over their village site at the mouth of the river.

The other challenge that the Tla'amin faced came from the east - over the Coastal Mountains. Bute Inlet, in the northern extents of Tla'amin territory, was one of the locations that competed to be the terminus for the Canadian Pacific Railway. Before Vancouver was decided as the terminus in 1884, many believed that Bute Inlet might be the spot where the rail met the Pacific Ocean. The Governor General of Canada, Lord Dufferin, reported in an 1876 speech in Victoria that the Dominion Government's favoured route for the cross-continental tracks terminated in Bute Inlet.²³ The Bute Inlet route was favoured as it was part of a scheme that

²³ Lord Dufferin, Governor General of Canada, "Speech to Vice-Regal in Victoria, B.C., September 20 1876," George Stewart Jr. *Canada Under the Administration of the Earl of Dufferin* (Toronto: Rose-Belford Publishing Co., 1876), 476.

would see an assortment of bridges or ferries that would connect the rail line with the provincial capital at Victoria.²⁴ This would ensure that Victoria, rather than New Westminster, would remain the economic commercial center of the province. Government officials seemed weary to survey Indian land anywhere near where the terminus might be, in fear that they would lock up valuable land near the largest hub on Canada's Pacific coast in Indian land. Speculation kept the Tla'amin from getting fair treatment over their lands in both the south and the north, and officials like Gilbert Malcolm Sproat were quick to recognize the unjust situation that the Tla'amin found themselves in.

Sproat wrote several letters on the Tla'amin's behalf to officials in Ottawa and in Victoria, yet he received few replies. He suggested that the provincial government's refusal to engage in discussions about Indian land in the region had more to do with protecting speculators and future settlers than it did with surveying Indian lands. Sproat was flabbergasted by the blatant disregard shown by government officials in Victoria. The Tla'amin were, in Sproat's words, "hardworking, well-behaved Indians who pay their way,"²⁵ and he called out the hypocrisy of Victoria officials who refused to do the work necessary to protect their lands.

It is clear that the government did more than just ignore the Tla'amin's requests for the survey of their land, however. The British Columbian government actively manipulated the Indian Reserve Commission to avoid the Tla'amin's land issue in an effort to protect Victoria's elite investors who had their eyes on the resources and potential for industry in the Tla'amin's lands. The Indian Reserve Commission was under-staffed and unable to be in more than one

²⁴ For more on the several routes considered as terminal ports in British Columbia, see: W.M. Fraser Tolmie, M.P.P, *The Bute Inlet and Esquimalt Route No. 6, and the Fraser Valley and Burrard Inlet Route No. 2, Compared as to the advantages afforded by each to the Dominion and to the Empire* (Victoria: Colonist Steam Presses, 1877).

²⁵ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Land Commissioner, to the Secretary of Indian Affairs, August 29th 1879, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 2, pg. 398.

place during a season, which meant that no commissioner was able to attend to the Tla'amin in 1876 (when the commission was engaged in the interior of the province). Sproat continually wrote to the government and the department of Indian Affairs reporting the Tla'amin complaints and asking for surveys to be withheld in their territory until the Commission was able to survey their lands.²⁶ However, the government took no action. Sproat was told by the Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works that he should avoid the Tla'amin's territory and focus on work elsewhere, as surveying the Tla'amin's lands was "impolitic and calculated to do more harm than good."²⁷ When he announced that he would begin his 1879 fieldwork in Sliammon, there was an "outburst of spite in the Victoria press."²⁸ Sproat accused the British Columbia government of protecting speculators and investors to the detriment of the Tla'amin:

...several influential persons in Victoria are interested in land speculations in connection with new discoveries on Texada Island, and a possible railway terminus at Bute Inlet, and they would rather that the Indians, even at this late period in the history of the province were left out in the cold for some time longer.²⁹

²⁶ The Indian Land Commission formed in 1876 and was first made up of three commissioners, Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, A.C. Anderson, and Archibald McKinley, and then reduced down to Sproat as the sole commissioner in 1878. In September of 1876, the Commission requested that all land in from Sechelt to Bute Inlet be protected from pre-emption until they were able to attend and survey Indigenous lands (Moffat, Secretary of Indian Affairs, to F.G. Vernon, Commissioner of Land and Works, September 8 1876, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1273, file 286). The Commissioners wrote again in April of 1877 to specifically ask Vernon to protect various parts of Tla'amin and Klahoose territory: "Sir, It would, in our opinion, be well if the provincial government reserved Harwood, Savary, and Cortes Islands in the Gulf of Georgia until the land claims of the Klahoose and their neighbouring Indians are settled" (Archibald McKinley, A.C. Anderson, and Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Reserve Commissioners, to F.G. Vernon, Commissioner of Land and Works, April 27 1877, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1273, file 286). Sproat continued to write letters to the government about the Tla'amin land issues, on February 19 1879, August 19 1879, September 4 1879, October 11 1879, October 28 1879, November 11 1879, November 24 1879, February 7 1880, and February 18 1880 (RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274). Clearly, the Tla'amin land issue dominated much of the Commission's time until Sproat was replaced by Peter O'Reilly in 1880.

²⁷ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Land Commissioner, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs, September 4 1879, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 1-8.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

The situation had become dire for the Tla'amin. They had none of their lands surveyed or protected by the Canadian government, and they rightly feared that without surveys their lands would be quickly taken out of their control.

These fears became the Tla'amin reality in 1878. In a pre-emption involving a tract of land still widely known by Tla'amin people and residents of neighbouring Powell River alike as 'Lot 450', the British Columbia government sold off several thousand acres in the middle of Tla'amin territory to a timber prospector and Victoria business mogul, R.P. Rithet. Lot 450 encompassed several important Tla'amin village sites and a host of important resource areas. The Tla'amin protested the loss of their lands, and complained that land that they claimed for timber and farming had been taken away before they had the chance to deal with the Indian Reserve Commission. The Tla'amin wrote to Sproat several times to voice their concerns, but Sproat was unable to officially visit and replied that he would enquire into the matter.³⁰ Sproat repeated his requests and again asked government officials in Victoria to suspend any pre-emptions or surveys in the Tla'amin's territory until he could visit to survey their lands.³¹ The Land Office refused to grant Sproat's requests, and the Assistant Land Commissioner told Sproat that he had "not been authorized by the land office to attend to [Sproat's] request."³² Curiously, in that same year, Dr. Israel Powell, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for British Columbia and a prominent Victoria business man, told Sproat that efforts to survey the Tla'amin's land

³⁰ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Land Commissioner, to the Secretary of Indian Affairs, August 29th 1879, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 2, pg. 398.

³¹ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Land Commissioner, to the Secretary of Indian Affairs, August 29th 1879, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 2, pg. 398.

³² Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, Indian Land Commissioner, to the Secretary of Indian Affairs, August 29th 1879, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 2, pg. 398.

would be futile.³³ Powell was later on board a ship, the *HMS Rocket* – a military-class cruiser equipped with four heavy cannons and commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Vere Bernard Orlebar – surveying the coast of British Columbia. When the *Rocket* sailed past Tis’kwat, Orlebar named it in honour of Powell, ironically as a way to thank him for his commitment to the development of British Columbia and to his work to treat the Indian population fairly.³⁴ This river was at the center of Lot 450, and it later became the center site of the world’s largest single site pulp and paper mill, and the town of Powell River. Clearly, there was much at stake in the Tla’amin’s territory.

With a sizable tract of Tla’amin territory signed away, the Tla’amin had limited options to protect their lands and resources. The diplomatic route had largely failed them, and they decided to take matters into their own hands. Sproat received word of a “disturbance” at Lot 450 in the fall of 1878. The Tla’amin attended the logging camp that had been constructed at Tis’kwat and commandeered all of the logs cut by white loggers in vicinity of the village. A Tla’amin Chief (unnamed in the document, but likely Chief

³³ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, October 11 1879, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 44-49.

³⁴ The name Powell River was given to Tis’kwat in honour of Israel Powell, then the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, but there is still some mystery in how and why it was attributed to him. B.A. McKelvie argued that it was because of his life’s work to develop British Columbia and because of his service to Indigenous peoples (“Lieutenant-Colonel Israel Wood Powell, M.D., C.M.”, *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* Vol. XI, No. 1 (1947), 50). Tla’amin oral history and historical consciousness remembers that the river was named for Powell who saw the economic opportunity of developing the region for industry. Historian Barbara Lambert credits the naming of the river to Powell because he commented on the “river tumbling over a rocky ravine” four years before the river appeared on a map with his name attached to it (*War Brides and Rosies: Powell River and Stillwater, B.C.* (Trafford North America, 2012), 31). Given Powell’s connections to the political and economic spheres in Victoria, and given that he told Sproat directly that his work to survey land in Tla’amin territory was “futile,” it is not unlikely that Powell had a thorough knowledge of the land issues and industrial potential at Tis’kwat. I think it is highly likely that Powell was honoured with the naming of the lake and the river due to his actions to protect corporate and political interests, but there is little direct evidence that links Powell with any actual interference in the survey of Tis’kwat. That being said, given his government position, I believe that Powell was one of the politicians that Sproat called out in his several letters that claimed certain people in Victoria were denying the Tla’amin land rights to protect corporate speculation for the railroad and industrial development. At the very least, he was a bystander- but that does not explain why his name was chosen for this specific site – a site that within a few short years became a logging hub and an industrial center for the region.

Captain Tii'mo'tey) told a government agent who travelled to Sliammon to investigate the following: "Now Mr. Modello, as you are the foot-agent here, and you have always been our best friend, we now depend on you that you will inform Dr. Powell, our agent, of this matter and hoping that he will settle this. If not, we will protect ourselves."³⁵ Modello also reported that a similar attack on a white logging camp had taken place at Squirrel Cove, a place that was part of both Klahoose and Tla'amin tribal territory. Sproat, who was currently working in the interior of British Columbia, requested to go directly to Sliammon to hear their grievances and settle any disputes between the Tla'amin and the white loggers, but he was unable to travel to the region until the summer of 1879.

When the Tla'amin received news that Sproat had left Victoria for Sliammon in August of 1879, they quickly packed up their canoes and set out to meet Sproat's ship. The Tla'amin paddled over one-hundred miles to meet with Sproat's hired ship, *Thornton*, to escort it to Sliammon.³⁶ Sproat hypothesized that the Tla'amin did so due to their "gratification at the prospect of finally having their land matters seen to."³⁷ However, it is more likely that the Tla'amin were determined to escort the *Thornton* to their territory to ensure it arrived to survey what was left of their lands. Given that the last time he travelled near the Tla'amin territory (in 1876) he travelled directly across it without stopping, and given the nature of the meetings that took place after Sproat had landed, I am inclined to believe the latter.

When Sproat sat down with Tla'amin leaders, such as Chief Captain Tii'mo'tey, Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco from all over the coast gathered in Sliammon. On hearing

³⁵ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, February 9 1880, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 168-177.

³⁶ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, September 4 1879, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 1-8.

³⁷ Ibid.

word that Sproat would soon visit to discuss land surveys, people began gathering at Sliammon weeks before his arrival.³⁸ In his usual custom, Sproat congregated the Chiefs outside of his rain-soaked canvas tent, and listened at length as each presented their opinions and demands for their reserves. Not surprisingly, given the violent events of late, this meeting was no calm affair. After listening and conversing for several hours, Sproat retired to his nearby tent to digest the day's discussions. However, he reported that "among themselves there were land issues which were debated so hotly outside my tent, that I did not get to sleep till past midnight."³⁹ Even after the travel weary commissioner finally found rest, arguments outside of his tent escalated further. One land issue was so contentious that a man drew a knife and attempted to attack another.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the content of the argument, and who wielded the knife, was not recorded in Sproat's writings. But for all of the commotion, Sproat left the Tla'amin with only promises that he would do his best to convince the government to send the official survey party to lay chain to their land. The Tla'amin would have to wait nearly a decade before that happened. Sproat left no detailed records of what was decided on during that meeting, nor did he have the chance to put any of those plans in action.

³⁸ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to F.G. Vernon, October 28 1879, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 53-54.

³⁹ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, October 11 1879, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 44-49.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

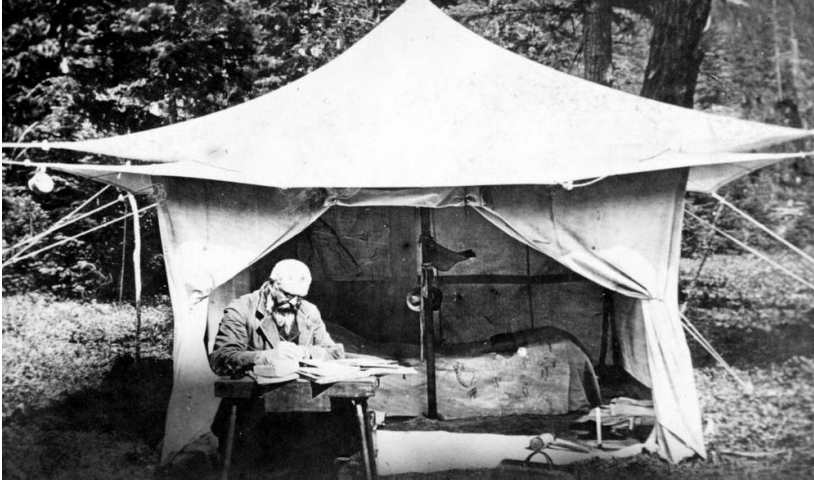


Figure 2.2: Gilbert Malcolm Sproat in front of his tent, likely in the Fraser Valley (Courtesy BC Archives)

Sproat would be soon pushed out of his job as Commissioner, no doubt in part due to his obstinance over the Tla'amin territory debate. A frustrated Sproat was asked on a few occasions to explain why he ignored government advice and pushed to attend Sliammon in

1879. Lawrence Vankoughnet, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs (Powell's right-hand man) asked Sproat in 1880 to clarify his reasoning. Sproat, in a lengthy letter, outlined his intentions. In sum, he showed that he had made every attempt possible in his power to protect Tla'amin lands, even though the government chose to protect its own interests and those of potential investors. Sproat chastised the government for ignoring a group of Indigenous people who had a legitimate claim to their lands and resources. He recapped the ways the frustrated and option-less Tla'amin had attacked a logging camp and seized the logs. These were the reasons he opted for work in Sliammon and not in the interior in 1879. Sproat did not accept the government's excuse that they were unaware of these events- he repeatedly referenced his previous letters that explained the situation, and in one of his final letters to the Department, he called out government ignorance and negligence in the case of the Tla'amin lands: "[I] must beg leave...to say that it is inexplicable to [my] mind that any gentlemen connected with these transactions should have written, as some appear to have done to the Dominion Government, to say that they do not know why the commission undertook work on the coast, or why the

commission began at Sliammon.”⁴¹ Sproat resigned in 1880 after he attracted a slew of criticism for his support of Indigenous self-governance in the interior of British Columbia. His resignation, however, was considered forced – a reflection more of Sproat’s refusal to be the hand of government who was unwilling to recognize Indigenous rights and claims.⁴² He was replaced by a man who would be more malleable to the government’s needs. As Historical Geographer Kenneth Brealey described, “O’Reilly came cheap [as he was already receiving a retirement allowance from the Province], and the provincial government trusted him in ways that it had never trusted Sproat.”⁴³ It did not hurt that O’Reilly was also the brother-in-law to the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, the infamous Joseph Trutch, who in the 1860s had served as the Chief Commissioner of Land and Works and was largely responsible for reducing the size of Indian Reserves in British Columbia.

In early August of 1888, O’Reilly travelled to Tišosem to meet with the Tla’amin for the purpose of surveying and defining sections of their territory into reserves. O’Reilly arrived and met with two Tla’amin Chiefs – one was Chief Captain Tii’mo’tey, the other name is not recorded – to determine the boundaries of their land.⁴⁴ It had been ten years since the Tla’amin protested the government’s failure to survey their lands by seizing the logs that were illegally taken from their territory by white loggers. By the time that O’Reilly visited Tišosem in 1888, the Tla’amin well understood what was at stake. The Tla’amin paid close attention to the surveying of the neighbouring Sechelt territory in 1876, in particular to the Government’s survey of a ‘timber reserve’ that would allow the Sechelt to engage in the market economy by selling

⁴¹ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, February 9 1880, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 168-177.

⁴² Cole Harris, *Making Native Space*, 71-81.

⁴³ Kenneth Brealey, “Travels from Point Ellice: Peter O’Reilly and the Indian Reserve System in British Columbia,” *BC Studies*, 192.

⁴⁴ Peter O’Reilly, Indian Land Commissioner, to Secretary of Indian Affairs, December 12 1888, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 11, pg. 84-88.

their timber at local mills. Indian Reserve Commissioners reported that several Tla'amin men approached them at Comox to tell them that they wanted to reserve timbered lands in the same way that their Sechelt neighbours had.⁴⁵ O'Reilly himself reported that white settlers (mostly commercial loggers) in the region “speak highly of the Klahoose, Homalco, and Sliammon. They are industrious and find employment readily in the logging camps.” They had a keen understanding of the logging industry, and they demanded that the government issue no permits or leases in Tla'amin territory until reserves could be surveyed. However, the government did not listen.



Figure 2.3: Chief Captain Tii'mo'tey and Annie Assu (qaʔaxstales) (Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)

⁴⁵ Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, February 9 1880, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 168-177. Sproat reported that the Tla'amin, in 1876, had travelled to Sechelt and Comox to speak with Indian Reserve Commissioners. They spoke with the commissioners and with the local Justice of the Peace, a man named Modello, and told them their wants and needs for their land.

Tla'amin oral history records that Chief Captain Timothy (Tii'mo'tey) was the sole Chief who escorted Peter O'Reilly and his survey crew around Tla'amin territory. Tii'mo'tey was no stranger to what the government surveyors wanted to do. He had spent years travelling up and down the Pacific Coast on trade schooners (where he earned his moniker 'Captain'), he spoke English, and he understood that he needed to protect future generations of Tla'amin by pushing the survey crew to include as much of Tla'amin territory as possible. He had seen quickly growing urban centers like San Francisco and Seattle, and witnessed dispossessed urban Indigenous populations pushed out of their territories. According to his great-granddaughter Annie Dominic, Chief Tii'mo'tey said that the younger generation of Tla'amin would have "a really hard time" if they didn't survey a sizable Tla'amin territory. He worried that all of his people would be "living in canoes" once settlers took all the Tla'amin's lands.⁴⁶ He had seen what happened at the Fraser River – where thousands of white settlers displaced Indigenous populations seemingly overnight – and he did not want that to happen to his people.

Captain Tii'mo'tey was conversant in English, and when surveyors showed up in Sliammon, according to contemporary Tla'amin elder Eugene Louie, Captain Tii'mo'tey told the surveyors that a large swath of the mainland, and several islands- Hernando, Cortez, Savary, Harwood, Texada, and Lasqueti - were to be surveyed for the Tla'amin.⁴⁷ Tla'amin oral history remembers Tii'mo'tey responding to surveyors who told him to pick a small piece of land to be surveyed by saying, "No, that is not what I want, I want this big place, we are going to have lots of children when they come here, this place, Sliammon is just going to be full. I want to get all this and towards that way, what is going to happen with all the fishing with the generations to

⁴⁶ Annie Dominic, November 30 1998, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS.62.63.64A.

⁴⁷ Linda and Eugene Louie, October 13 1998, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS.57.58.59.

come, the creeks, everything, the lake over here, I want that lake, my children are going to need food.”⁴⁸ Tii’mo’tey was a pragmatic and determined man, and the surveyors took notes and told him that they had confirmed the Tla’amin’s lands. However, when the orders reached Victoria, Tla’amin elders believe the government diminished the Tla’amin territory to six small reserves and just one island – Harwood Island.⁴⁹ Several Tla’amin elders claim that the Commission tricked or lied to the Tla’amin to diminish their broad territory to six small parcels of land.

Tii’mo’tey spent several days with O’Reilly, travelling aboard the SS *Sir James Douglas* and pointing out many villages and several islands that he wanted surveyed as part of the Tla’amin’s lands.⁵⁰ Tla’amin elders claim that he pushed for Savary Island, and for the repatriation of Tis’kwat. Tii’mo’tey reportedly stated, “We are the ones that live here. We were here first,” and attempted to physically fight commissioners when they refused his requests.⁵¹ When he returned to Sliammon, his clothes were “ripped and tattered” from travelling through the bush with surveyors.⁵² Annie Dominic remembers learning that Tii’mo’tey claimed that he did all of this not for himself or for the current generation living at Sliammon, but for the children and next generations: “I say a prayer for him and think of what he went through, for us, the younger generation. He was a proud and determined man. Like I say, he didn’t think of himself, his family, the whole reserve he helped, the rivers, the hunting grounds, he knows where to go. The only place he didn’t get was Savary, he really wanted Savary for the kids.”⁵³

⁴⁸ Annie and Dave Dominic, Interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2003, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 3.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Peter O’Reilly, to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, December 8 1888, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 11, pg. 84-88.

⁵¹ Annie and Dave Domnic, Interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2003, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 3.

⁵² Annie Domnic, November 30 1998, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, Tla’amin Nation Archives, MIS.62.63.64A.

⁵³ Ibid.

In the end, the surveyors allotted six reserves for the Tla'amin – Sliammon IR 1, Harwood Island IR 2, Paukeanum IR 3, Toquana IR 4 Tokenatch IR 5, and Kahkaykay IR 6. O'Reilly reported that 317 people lived at the Tla'amin village at Tišosem in 1888.⁵⁴ He recorded “47 substantially built houses,” as well as a large Roman Catholic Church. Ahgykson (Harwood Island) was used for fishing and to raise cattle and sheep, and Paukeanum, Toquana, Tokenatch, and Kahkaykay were all important and productive fishing stations. O'Reilly made specific mention of the massive herring spawn harvest that took place at Klehkwahnnohm (Scuttle Bay), which provided the Tla'amin with a key trade commodity in local markets (Tišosem, as explained earlier, in the Tla'amin language, translates to “water white with herring spawn”). He also recorded that several parts of the Tla'amin's reserves hosted tracts of valuable timber.

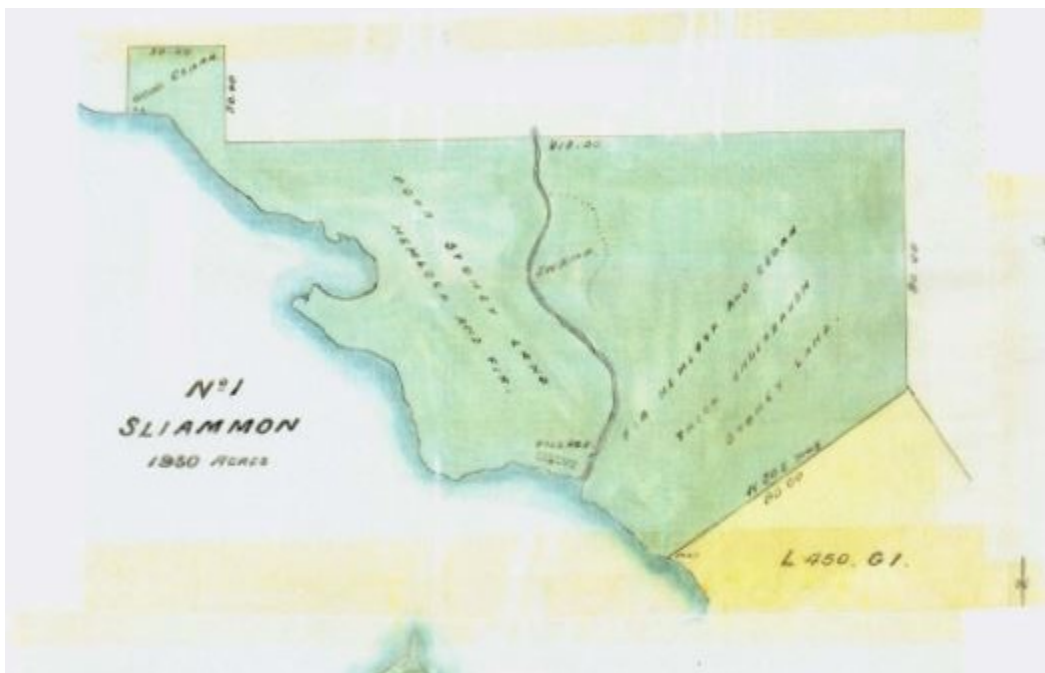


Figure 2.4: Survey of Sliammon I.R. 1, 1888 (Source: Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Archives, Joint Indian Reserve Commission, Federal Collection, Vol. 11, pg. 84-88)

⁵⁴ O'Reilly, to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, December 8 1888, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 11, pg. 84-88.

Tla'amin oral histories clash with the record penned by O'Reilly, who claimed that Tla'amin were satisfied with their newly surveyed holdings. Indicative of the integrity of the oral histories, within a few years of the reserves being surveyed, the Tla'amin are recorded in the written record as having pursued the government to survey more land for their exclusive use. They claimed that the surveyors had missed important Tla'amin lands across their territory.⁵⁵ The Tla'amin wrote several letters and approached their Indian Agent many times in the early 1890s, but by 1895 the Indian Land Commission reported that they had exhausted their funds and were unable to continue surveying Indigenous lands.⁵⁶ These surveys signaled a significant shift in Tla'amin history. Regardless of the actions of people like Captain Tii'mo'tey, the Tla'amin traditional territory had been carved up, and those who had once utilized and accessed a large productive territory became part of a system that made them geographically anchored at one main village site. Tišosem had become Sliammon IR1, leaving all Tla'amin lands outside of these reserves legally open to settlement and resource extraction.

The creation of the Sliammon Indian Reserves, on the sites of ancient and long used Tla'amin villages, was the culmination of the ethnogenesis of the Sliammon Indians- a group of people who chose to identify under this new moniker for a variety of reasons, some cultural, some economic, some religious. This was not a new group of people, yet they were increasingly defined within the context of colonial pressures and bound by external laws that shaped who could identify as 'Sliammon,' and when and where they could do so. This collective was based on newly solidifying colonial laws that required Indigenous people to have identities that were rooted in the particulars of place, and bound by newly drawn reserve boundaries. But it was also

⁵⁵ Peter O'Reilly, to Department of Indian Affairs, September 24 1895, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 14, pg. 126-128.

⁵⁶ Peter O'Reilly, to Department of Indian Affairs, September 24 1895, JIRC, Federal Collection, Vol. 14, pg. 126-128.

based on ancient Indigenous understandings of their territories and resources. The Tla'amin had fought for all of their lands to be protected, and they likely believed that when the commissioners left they might have had their desires met. However, factors well beyond the control of the Tla'amin proved to be too powerful, and much of their land was freed up for settlement, industrialization, and commercial resource extraction.

Early in the 1890s, the Tla'amin asked the government for permission to log at Sliammon and sell the timber at a local sawmill. The government ultimately denied the request, but the Tla'amin found innovative ways to harvest their resources to provide funds that would contribute to the Tla'amin community. In 1898, the Tla'amin gathered in their old and decaying church to sign a petition that would allow them to use the proceeds from logging at Sliammon to build a new Roman Catholic church. As Indian Agent Frank Devlin gathered signatures on the petition form, he recalled that “there was not one dissident voice.”⁵⁷

Indeed, logging became much more central to Tla'amin life in the late nineteenth century. As their movements and resource became increasingly monitored by the Department of Indian Affairs, the Tla'amin found new avenues for wage labour as a way to replace some aspects of their old system that was based on semi-seasonal movement based on resource availability. This transformation became much more important to Tla'amin lives in the early twentieth century, when large-scale industry and settlement began in earnest in their territory, but certainly by the 1890s many Tla'amin family relied at least partially on income from wage labour and selling things to settler markets for their subsistence. Sproat commented in 1880, after he had worked with the Tla'amin for half a decade, that he noticed a remarkable transition in their lives:

Certainly none of the Indians were dirtier or meaner. They are now moral, industrious, and well behaved and it is interesting to hear of their various ways of

⁵⁷ Frank Devlin to A.V. Vowell, February 14 1898, National Archives, RG10, reel C-14264, volume 1451, file 530-533.

making a living, by fishing, hunting, or by logging. This change is largely owing to the catholic church, but there is no resident missionary. This shows what these Coast Indians are capable of, and suggest that with the government agent and the missionary working to the greater progress would have been made. These examples are good, and it is easy to see signs of improvements keeping along the coast; even some of the Euclataws [Laich-kwil-tach] said they wished to do like the sliammons. A few of the latter have a head or two of stock, and one of them asked the commissioner what he thought of a piece of land for sheep.⁵⁸

Many Indigenous people living in the northern reaches of the Malaspina Strait came to live at Sliammon for increasing times of the year, and this was noticeable by people like Sproat who began to pay increasing attention to their seasonal movements and whereabouts:

The [Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco] people, who, owing to the nature of the country, have to find their living by hunting and fishing over a hidden extent of the coast, are so scattered in summer that it would be difficult for the priest to visit all of them. But they come together at their winter quarters [Tišosem], where they have a village of good houses and a church, and there they are visited and receive religious instruction. The effectiveness of this may be ascertained by conversation with traders and woodmen on the coast, who state that the women are moral, and that the men do not thief. The canoe's crew I had with me sang their hymns night and morning, and respectfully reminded me that a day on which, forgetfully, I proposed doing something, was Sunday. This is a sort of improvement among the Indians which will probably have very good effects in the next generation, both as regards the physical and moral health of the people.⁵⁹

Sproat credited Roman Catholicism for these “improvements” yet readily admitted that there was no consistent or persistent presence of an actual Priest in most Tla'amin lives. He also noted the limited impact that government officials had on the Tla'amin. This is also evidenced by the fact that when the Tla'amin seized the logs from white loggers at Tis'kwat they had to travel to Comox to speak with the “local” Justice of the Peace (Comox is nearly fifty kilometers across the Malaspina Strait from Sliammon). Sproat mentioned that the Tla'amin were inspiring other Indigenous groups on the coast, suggesting that the government's reach was even more limited further north than it was in Tla'amin lands. Those who had remade their identities at least

⁵⁸ Gilbert Malcom Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 183-191.

⁵⁹ Gilbert Malcom Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 44-49.

partially to identify as “Sliammon” had explored a variety of new opportunity, including fishing and trapping for trade, but mainly handlogging and commercial logging. The Tla’amin, and their Klahoose and Homalco kin (many of whom also chose to inhabit Sliammon for increasing portions of the year) had built a trustful reputation with traders and loggers. This reputation, as Sproat mentioned in another letter, was built around work – logging and trading – elements that were increasing in frequency as more white people came to the Tla’amin’s territory.

These new elements were adopted by Tla’amin people who were embracing certain elements of the newly emerging economy in ways that John Lutz has argued should be understood as “Moditional” (*modern* and *traditional*), a dynamic mixing of pre-contact social and ceremonial practices complimented by the accumulation of wealth through strategic engagements with the wage labour economy.⁶⁰ In addition to the ways that the Tla’amin made their living before the arrival of white folks in their lands, they incorporated new opportunities that both supplemented traditional activities and enhanced others. This had important consequences not only for the emerging Indigenous economy in the colonial system, but also for the ways that Indigenous people understood their land and resources. The Tla’amin moditional economy now placed new importance on the village of Sliammon in ways that were different in this modern economy. Using Sliammon as a hub, Sproat reported to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1878 that Tla’amin, Klahoose, Homalco loggers, “get out a good many millions of feet of logs yearly by hand logging, and as they have to sell them at the regular prices, their addition to the sawmill supplies of the province...is very useful.”⁶¹ Sproat was quite pragmatic when he discussed Indigenous logging, and he was a firm believer that large tracts of timbered land for

⁶⁰ Lutz, *Makuk*, 23.

⁶¹ Gilbert Malcom Sproat to the British Columbia Chief Commissioner of Land and Works, October 21 1878, Provincial Collection, Binder 2, File 2383-78, “Materials produced by the Joint Indian Reserve Commission and Indian Reserve Commission, 1876-1910,” *Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs Archives*, pp. 1-7.

the explicit purpose of commercial logging should be secured for people like the Tla'amin. Sproat explained to his colleagues in Victoria and Ottawa that "trees cut by [Indians] are just as good to saw mills as trees cut by anybody,"⁶² which, apparently, was a shocking revelation to government officials far removed from the coast of British Columbia. Sproat identified the need to "Find timber areas for the use of these Indians who may be likely to follow the industry of 'logging' eg. Sliammon, Klahoose, Se-Schells [Sechelt], Euclataws, Etc." as one of the main priorities of the Indian Commission, and he frequently requested that Coast Salish people be given ample tracks of land so they could pursue a key part of the economy.⁶³ Sadly, Sproat's ideas never came to fruition for the Tla'amin, who lost hundreds of acres of key timber land to Rithet's Lot 450. They also now had to battle the Department of Indian Affairs for permission to log on their own reserves.

In the period of less than half a century, the Indigenous people of the Northern Salish Sea went from experiencing very little settler presence in their territory to having their lands divided and largely taken from their direct control. The late nineteenth century witnessed a significant change for these Northern Coast Salish people, who, in the face of the darkening shadow of colonialism, pushed to remake their identity along several new lines- economic, religious, cultural, and geographic. People who had travelled their territories based on resource availability and kinship were increasingly pushed to reshape their identity to fit within a quickly emerging settler-colonial system. And although this system was largely devoid of settlers in the Northern Salish Sea in the late nineteenth century, the gears were set in motion for a large-scale settler colonial push into the Tla'amin territory in the first decades of the twentieth. International and

⁶² Gilbert Malcolm Sproat, "Memorandum," January 30 1880, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 142-150.

⁶³ Gilbert Malcom Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 183-191.

National interests had their eyes on this region, and the foundations for resource development, industrial expansion, and settlement required that all those Indigenous people who called the region home needed to be out of the way for the next stages of settler colonialism unfolded.

Tiŝosem was an important winter village for centuries before it became reborn as Sliammon IR 1. As people like Captain Tii'mo'they watched the surveyors' chains carve an Indian Reserve out of their broader territory, they witnessed the ethnogeneses of a new population of people – The Sliammon Indian Band. And while those who came to identify as Sliammon (for at least some of the time) had previously identified in myriad ways based on Indigenous understandings of their world, these new identity would serve to remake their lives in new ways.

Sliammon became a hub for finding work in logging, and it was a central location that offered independent handloggers access to sawmills along the Malaspina Strait. It also allowed Tla'amin fishers to sell fish and other wares at the small settlements that were popping up around their territory.⁶⁴ As Roman Catholicism became a bigger part of the Tla'amin society, Sliammon became a place where priests would visit, and a church was built at the village as early as the 1860s to provide a place to hold religious ceremony. Further, government agents, such as Sproat and O'Reilly, and later Indian Agents, recognized the village at Sliammon as the heart of the

⁶⁴ Linda and Eugene Louie, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 13 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS.57.58.59. Eugene remembered travelling with his Grandparents to places like Wildwood, Townsite, and Westview (all Powell River Neighbourhoods) in the 1940s, a practice that his grandparents and great-grandparents had maintained for decades. Katherine Blaney, who was born in 1928, remembered selling Coho salmon and other fish with her grandparents (Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS.59B.60). Mary George explained, "It wasn't long time ago, when there got to be lots of white people, there came to be a lot of white people and they would go and sell the fish and they would make us kids pack the fish on our backs and we would go and sell the fish when Tis'kwat (Powell River) when it first became a settlement. They sold things or over here in Southview, Lund, but they went by boat, rowing" (Interviewed July 18, 2003 by Karen Galligos and Eugene Louie, transcribed and translated by Karen Galligos).

Tla'amin reserves, and a council house was constructed as a place to meet and for the Tla'amin band council to operate.

But we cannot forget that many of these 'new' realities were based not solely on colonialism. Tišosem had always served as a central wintering village for northern Coast Salish people, and it was a place where people came together to hold important ceremonies, reaffirm kinship, and discuss news and events in the broader region. Tišosem was chosen as the central Indian Reserve largely because it was already a central place in the Indigenous world. White government officials and priests did not create a central hub, they embraced and accentuated the existing hub and the Tla'amin incorporated them into their system. The Tla'amin coalesced as 'Sliammon' at Tišosem in part based on colonial incursion, but it was not entirely different from how they might have identified before colonialism began to encroach on their lives. Sliammon still hosted people who now identified as residents of Sliammon Klahoose, or Homalco (the government had little control over who lived where until the mid-twentieth century, and regardless of the increasing influence of colonial control, the 'Sliammon Indians' still recognized the authority of their hereditary Chief and continued to elect hereditary Chiefs as their leaders until the 1940s. Tišosem now appeared on survey maps and in colonial papers as Sliammon, but in many ways it was still the central Indigenous hub that it had been for centuries.

Chapter Three: Turned Away from Tis'kwat: The Powell River Company Mill and the Remaking of the Tla'amin World

There were lots of houses and when the white man came, they tore them down, they settled there, our people moved over here [to Sliammon], they got scared of the white man... they ruined their houses, they didn't tell them, they just tore their houses down.¹

-Annie Dominic, Tla'amin Elder, 2003

For centuries, Northern Coast Salish peoples had visited the rushing waters at Tis'kwat to construct fish weirs across the opening of the river. Tla'amin families gathered at the site to fish, visit with family, and process and store smoked salmon for the coming long winter months. Some came and went after the fishing was over and kinship had been reaffirmed, but others stayed and spent the winter in the hills around the mouth of the river – protected from cold winds and bad weather, and from Laich-Kwil-Tach raids from the north. Tis'kwat also served as an entrance to the lake above – an important resource gathering and hunting grounds. The lake also offered access to trails that led deep into the mountainous interior. In many ways, Tis'kwat was a gateway.

In 1909, however, Tis'kwat became a gateway for thousands of non-Indigenous people. When construction began on the Powell River Pulp and Paper Company- a massive hydroelectric powered pulp and paper mill that was built at Tis'kwat - it was the culmination of a decades long process that saw Tla'amin jurisdiction over their territory wrested from their control through the survey of Indian Reserves. Few settlers arrived in the late nineteenth century, which

¹ Annie and Dave Dominic, Interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2003, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 3.

meant that Tla'amin could still access and use the resources present in their non-reserved lands (at places like Tis'kwat), but in the first decades of the twentieth century this all began to change. The construction of the mill brought thousands of settlers into Tla'amin territory seemingly overnight – creating competition between settlers and the Tla'amin who now vied for the same spaces and resources. The survey lines that carved reserves out of the Tla'amin's territory had become more than lines on a map- they became the paper promises for mass non-Indigenous settlement and the remaking of the Tla'amin's world in ways that brought new challenges, and opportunities, to the Tla'amin.

Chief Captain Tii'mo'tey's fears had been realized. The settler-colonial landscapes he saw while working on trade schooners up and down the Pacific Coast materialized in his homeland. The mill, which was built on Tis'kwat, created a whole host of new challenges and opportunities for the Tla'amin. Sure, the mill offered a local market for Tla'amin loggers, and certainly the settlement that grew around the industrial complex would provide opportunities for Tla'amin fishers to sell their catch. But the mill also meant competition for resources and space. The Tla'amin's territory was now open for unprecedented large scale industrial resource development and settlement. The Tla'amin had lost Tis'kwat after the Indian Reserve Commission failed to survey it as a Tla'amin reserve, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was a direct result of government officials in Victoria working in concert to wrest a large portion of Tla'amin land (Lot 450) from their control before the commissioners could even visit the region. Now a whole host of other Tla'amin villages and resource areas, such as čən (discussed in this chapter), and became the fee-simple legal property of settlers who flocked to the region to work in the mill and in the variety of offshoot industries that emerged in the growing community at Powell River. The Tla'amin living at Sliammon (and at other places in

their territory, some reserved, some not) were now locked into a new type of colonialism – settler colonialism - in ways that they had never been before, and they were forced to quickly adapt their ways of living to survive a time when they were facing pressures on a variety of fronts.

This chapter explores the Tla'amin responses to the industrialization and settlement of their lands in the early twentieth century. Using Indian Agent records, Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports, legal testimonies, and oral histories, it illuminates the variety of ways that the Tla'amin adapted to the quickly changing world around them. Introduced by the industrialization of Tis'kwat and its subsequent abandonment by the Tla'amin, this chapter analyzes a series of events that illuminate various Tla'amin responses to the aggressive settlement of their territory – the construction of the Powell River Mill, the Tla'amin battle for resource rights and protection of contested spaces during the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia (commonly referred to as the McKenna-McBride Commission), and the great fire of 1918 that burned Sliammon and a large swath of the Tla'amin traditional territory to the ground. Indeed, through these events the Tla'amin both resisted and accepted certain aspects of colonialism in ways that emphasize Tla'amin decision making and adaptability. As much as it was during the late nineteenth century, when international and national interests converged and made it nearly impossible for the Tla'amin to control their lands, the Tla'amin made pragmatic decisions about their lives and resource management that were never exclusively the result of colonialism. The Tla'amin continued to make decisions that were driven by in part by Indigenous knowledge and motivations, and in ways that demonstrate the continuity of Tla'amin culture and society during a time of increasing colonial control on their lands and lives.

Tla'amin elder Mary George, recollecting in 2003 knowledge learned from her grandparents decades earlier, described the village at Tis'kwat as on an elevated terrace above the mouth of the river, which had trails that went further up river to the lake and to the location of a shingle mill on the lower reaches of Powell Lake.² These trails served as access points for the lake and the variety of resources it offered. Several Tla'amin elders remember that there were families living at Tis'kwat in the early twentieth century, before they were forced out for the mill construction in 1909. These few remaining families then relocated to Sliammon, a few bays north of Tis'kwat. The process of removing the Tla'amin from Tis'kwat started in the 1870s with the survey of Lot 450 and the arrival of white loggers who built a small sawmill at Tis'kwat and used the area for their camp. Agnes McGee, a Tla'amin elder interviewed in 2006, remembered her father telling her, "They made a little mill there, cutting lumbers and shakes and it got bigger and bigger and then they started telling the people to move away from there, that's how the people moved back this way [to Sliammon]."³

Tis'kwat, by the 1900s had become the center of settler logging operations in the region and as a result became less significant in the Tla'amin world. Tla'amin families continued to use Tis'kwat during the late summer and early fall to harvest the salmon spawning up the river, and a few families had houses and lived at Tis'kwat, but it was no longer the central village that it had once been. Tla'amin loggers, operating out of Sliammon, sold their timber to the sawmill and worked alongside white loggers (after the resolution of tensions in the late 1870s), but by the time the industrial equipment began arriving to build the mill in 1909 it probably seemed like Tis'kwat was beyond Tla'amin control for good.

² Mary George, interviewed July 18, 2003 by Karen Galligos and Eugene Louie, transcribed and translated by Karen Galligos.

³ Agnes McGee and Katherine Blaney, interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2006, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 1.

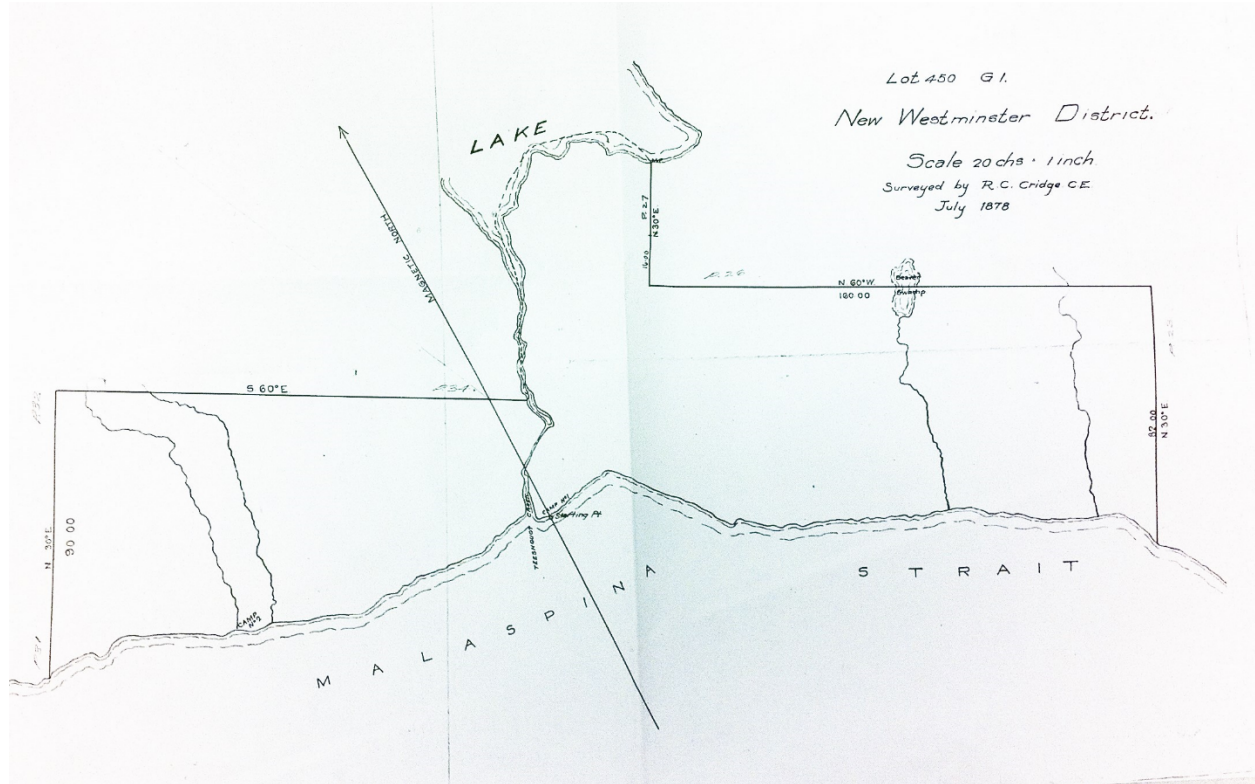


Figure 3.1: Lot 450 G.I., New Westminster District, Surveyed by R.C. Cridge, July 1878. Note the label "Teeshquot" that appears at the mouth of the river. The Boundary on the far left of the survey is the southern border to Sliammon I.R. 1. (Courtesy of Powell River Museum)

Tla'amin elders Bertha Treacle and Thomas August stated, in 1996, the Tla'amin were told that if they evacuated their village at Tis'kwat, they would be given preferential employment at the mill after its construction.⁴ Bertha Treacle noted that while a few Tla'amin men were given some work at the mill when it first opened, the full-time, dependable jobs never materialized in any meaningful way: "Granny used to say that too, that natives were priority to get a job at that mill. For a long time, they say, in those days, the natives never depended on the mill. According to Granny, if they come to get a job, they're supposed to give them a job. It was one of the

⁴ Thomas August, Bertha Treacle and Vince Timothy interviewed by Karen Galligos and Kerri Timothy, May 2 1996, Tla'amin Nation Archives, TLU 3.4.5.

agreements to block the dam.”⁵ Given that logging had been a staple part of the Tla’amin economy for several decades by this point, employment at the mill would have been an intriguing offer. Jobs at the mill, which would provide steady cash and local work for the Tla’amin, would serve to replace the resources that the construction of the mill would destroy.

Some of the most significant changes that came with the mill were environmental. Tis’kwat was an important salmon bearing river, and was a key place in the Tla’amin resource gathering system. Many Tla’amin, Klahoose, and Homalco people would congregate at Tis’kwat late in the summer to erect weirs to bring in the salmon trying to make their way to the spawning grounds in the lake above.⁶ These salmon were essential for surviving the winter, and once they were caught they were quickly processed, dried or smoked, and stored for the long winter season. Most of the fishers who came to Tis’kwat would pack up and leave after the fishing was complete, but places like Tis’kwat were essential to the Indigenous economic world. Gathering at Tis’kwat- or any of the many other fishing and resource sites on the coast – provided an opportunity to lock away important calories for when fresh food was scarce during winter, and for providing guests with food during the winter dance season. But it also brought several families together to reaffirm their kinship connections and demonstrate their claims to the fishing site. Tis’kwat was a central place in the Indigenous world because it fit within a complex system of resource procurement based on kinship obligation and permission.

The construction of the mill at Tis’kwat required the river to be straightened, dammed, and controlled to produce hydroelectricity for the mill and the town that would spring up around it. This raised the waters of the lake above (destroying many other important Tla’amin hunting,

⁵ Bertha Treakle, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Kerri Timothy, May 2 1996, Tla’amin Nation Archives, TUS.3.4.5.

⁶ Agnes McGee and Katherine Blaney, interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2006, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 1.

fishing, and village sites along the lake), and it also meant that salmon would no longer be able to access the lake to spawn. Salmon tried to spawn in 1910 and 1911, but the machinery and dam kept them from ascending the river.⁷ This was likely the proverbial ‘coffin nail’ for the Tla’amin, who now found themselves kicked out of a place that settlers had altered to the point that it no longer fit within the Tla’amin system. This period of removal, disruption, and environmental change fits within the broader changes that had come to the Tla’amin in the early twentieth century, and villages like Tis’kwat became grist for quickly expanding colonial mill.

The construction of the mill (and later the pollution it created), alongside the surveying of reserves and the settlement of Tla’amin territory by white settlers, destroyed many important resource gathering sites that brought people from all over the northern Coast Salish region together to harvest and reaffirm their kinship bonds. The destruction of these resources had massive cultural implications that reverberated throughout the northern Coast Salish populations. These rifts isolated Indigenous people from their broader territories and made them more insular in Indian Reserves. Places like Tis’kwat lost their cultural significance with the destruction of the resources that provided these sites with meaning in the Tla’amin world. As more colonial pressure was put on the Tla’amin, they were forced to battle for some places, while accepting that others had been removed from their control.

But by the 1910s, Tis’kwat was one of many contested sites, and with the industrial equipment arriving and the river being dammed it must have seemed like a lost cause. The historical record contains little evidence that the Tla’amin pushed back against the appropriation of this village at the time of the mill construction. Indeed, Tla’amin elder Annie Dominic (Captain Tii’mo’tey’s great-granddaughter) recalled that Captain Tii’mo’tey “gave up on the

⁷ Annie and Dave Dominic, Interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2003, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 3.

mill, he really wanted that land, he put up a big fight to get the mill site [in the 1880s].”⁸ Given the broader changes and challenges that came with colonial settlement in their lands, they saw Tis’kwat as a place that they were unlikely to get back. Also, the Tla’amin understood that the mill offered them economic opportunity, likely as labourers during the construction and in promised jobs at the mill once it opened, and as a market for their Tla’amin logs. Given that logging was increasingly the dominant focus of their economy, it is not unlikely that these new opportunities appealed many of the Tla’amin at that time. The settlement that came with the mill also provided a market for Tla’amin fish and manufactured goods, like baskets. The town that emerged around the mill would bring stores, a hospital, and other services, and even though the Tla’amin would be somewhat marginalized from these services by discriminatory laws and practices, they must have offered some consolation for the loss of Tis’kwat.

Of course, this is somewhat speculative. But it is not likely that the Tla’amin would have dedicated too much time and resources to fighting for a fishing village that was no longer useful for fishing. Indeed, when the next round of Indian Reserve Commissioners came to meet with Tla’amin Chiefs in the 1910s, Tis’kwat did not come up in the conversations. The loss of the Tla’amin village sparked the beginning of colonial settlement in earnest in Tla’amin territory. It was the spark that set off mass settlement and a huge increase in resource extraction. The mill made millions of dollars, and provided excellent lives for many new families that had come to Powell River to work at the mill. It made Powell River a town, and for the Tla’amin serves as a constant reminder of their dispossession and economic marginalization today. But we need to try and see the Tla’amin perspective in 1910, when they dammed the river and began to drive piles

⁸ Annie and Dave Dominic, Interviewed by Karen Galligos, April 14 2003, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Tiskwat Tape 3.

in the ground for the construction of the mill. Giving up on Tis'kwat was a difficult but realistic decision for those who faced a complex colonial world.

The records left from the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs (Commonly known as the McKenna-McBride Commission) provide insight into what was important to the Tla'amin in the mid 1910s – just five years after the construction of the mill and the settlement of Tla'amin territory by Euro-Canadian and American settlers. The Commission was designed to hear Indigenous complaints as a result of the failure of the last commission to answer the “Indian Land Question” before disbanding due to lack of funds in 1910.⁹ The Indian Reserve Commission, the same one that saw Sproat's unsuccessful efforts to survey Tla'amin land end in vain thirty years earlier, was disputed by Indigenous people across British Columbia because it failed to adequately survey Indigenous lands. Beginning in 1912, the McKenna-McBride Commission was designed to bring commissioners to each community, meet with band councils, and hear their complaints about their lands and resources, with the goal of putting an end to the Indian Land Question in British Columbia. The recommendations made by the Commissioners were meant to end the land disputes between settlers and Indigenous people in British Columbia by finalizing the boundaries of Indian Reserves. In many ways, the Commission was a direct response by the governments of Canada and British Columbia to the growing strength of Indigenous protest in Canada's Pacific province.¹⁰ The Commissioners were not mandated to discuss Indigenous title to land; they were only to adjust the size and location of the Indian Reserves established by the previous commissioners.¹¹ Unfortunately, the Commission's legacy is that it caused more problems than it created. Regardless, the field notes left from the

⁹ British Columbia Archives, “Office of the Indian Superintendent for British Columbia, 1886-1894 Finding Aid”, RG 10, Volume 11016, BCARS Microfilm Reels B 5633, 1-2.

¹⁰ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia*, 129.

¹¹ Ibid.

community meetings give us key insights into how the Tla'amin presented their land claims to the commission, and how they were received. Such information gives us an inner look at the Tla'amin responses to the aggressive industrial development and settlement of their lands in the previous decades.

Nonetheless, it is surprising that Tis'kwat did not come up in the conversations held during the McKenna-McBride Commission testimony hearings. Tis'kwat was a central place in the Tla'amin world, and an important part of the Tla'amin economic system. The absence of Tis'kwat from a discussion meant to air Indigenous grievances over the settlement of their land indicates that Tis'kwat had become significantly less central in the Tla'amin world long before the arrival of the mill. It is likely that after its survey as part of Lot 450 in the 1870s, increasing non-Indigenous logging operations centered at Tis'kwat made the fishing village less accessible and viable for Tla'amin fishers. By the time McKenna-McBride rolled through nearly half a century later, Tis'kwat had been industrialized and became the center of a newly emerging settler economy. It is significant, though, that Tla'amin elders today all remember learning about the village, and it remains an important part of Tla'amin oral history despite its lapse from the historical record. Many Tla'amin elders today believe that at the time the mill was built (and when the McKenna-McBride Commission visited), the Tla'amin understood that their reserve lands extended to the north side of Powell River (the mill was constructed on the south side of the river).¹² This explanation would explain why the Tla'amin did not complain about being kicked out of Tis'kwat in 1915, as they maintained access to the north side of the river. The evidence suggests that the Tla'amin who sat down with McKenna and McBride were convinced that the economic benefits of the mill justified the loss of Tis'kwat. 1915 was only a few shorts

¹² Personal communication with Drew Blaney (Tla'amin Culture and Heritage Manager), June 18 2020.

years after the mill had been completed and started producing paper in earnest, and perhaps the Tla'amin still believed that they would be given jobs at the mill and thus did not want to sacrifice an important economic relationship. This hypothesis, while speculative, also explains why Tis'kwat remains an important part of Tla'amin oral history today. As time passed, and the Tla'amin did not receive employment at the mill in the ways that they were promised, Tis'kwat transitioned from a place lost for economic benefit to a place wrestled from Tla'amin control as part of an aggressive settler occupation of Tla'amin territory. We may never know exactly why Tis'kwat does not appear in the transcripts from McKenna-McBride, but these insights give us several means to understand the complex decisions the Tla'amin faced as their lives and economies integrated with settler colonialism.

The Commissioners and their retinue arrived in Sliammon to hear the Tla'amin concerns in February of 1915. The Commissioners asked about disputes to the existing reserve boundaries and lands not reserved for Tla'amin use, but it was quite clear that the Tla'amin were more concerned with discussing their rights to regulate and control resources on their reserves. The Tla'amin recognized the booming market for timber in British Columbia (especially given that the new mill opened in their territory created a massive demand) and wanted clarity on their timber rights, and asked why they were not allowed to cut timber freely on their lands. Led by Toma, Chief Tom Timothy, the son of Captain Chief Tii'mo'tey, the Tla'amin opened the meeting by addressing the commission. In his address, Chief Tom spoke strongly of being able to cut their timber:

We want to clean up our land on the Sliam-mon [sic] reserve... There is lots of big timber on my place, and I want to find out if I can cut this big timber because I want to clean up my land. We sometimes try and cut this big timber. This place is not very good- it is all big timber and we want to cut this big timber sometimes and we report

it to the Indian Agent and also to the government at Ottawa, and it looks as if they don't want us to cut this timber.¹³

Chief Tom told the commission the Tla'amin wanted to 'clean up' their land, a curious phrasing that likely represents the Tla'amin's view towards asking for permission to log on their reserve land. For decades by this point, the Department of Indian Affairs had largely refused to allow Indigenous people to cut green timber (living trees) from their lands, unless it was for specific purposes like clearing (cleaning) land for agriculture or home construction.¹⁴ I believe Chief Tom understood this, and was asking for permission to log in ways that the Department would have a hard time refusing. A statement was also read from Willie Bob, Jim Timothy, Bob George, Felix, and Dominic, who were representing their families living both at Sliammon and at other Tla'amin reserves, that has similar phrasing: "We want to cut the timber...we ask our agent this winter to cut timber from our land, but he said 'no' – he did not like us to cut any timber from our land...We are willing to go farmer – we are willing to work on our land."¹⁵ But the commissioners, who were less interested in resource extraction activity and more focused on demarcation, refused to discuss logging, stating that "Indians all along the coast have spoken to us about cutting the timber...the commissioners have told them that when their final report goes in they will deal with this question."¹⁶ The Commissioners, as historical-geographer Cole Harris argued, found ways to avoid questions that they found difficult to answer: "Awkward questions were shelved, either by referring them to the Indian Agent or declaring them beyond the

¹³ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, "Meeting with the Sliam-mon Band or Tribe of Indians at their Sliam-mon Indian Reserve", February nineteenth 1915, in *Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs*, "Our Homes are Bleeding – Digital Collections", pg. 283.

¹⁴ Frank Devlin, Indian Agent, to A.V. Vowell, British Columbia Superintendent of Indian Affairs, March 19 1888, National Archives, RG10, reel C-14264, vol. 1451, file 614-616.

¹⁵ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, 291-2.

¹⁶ Ibid., 283.

Commission's terms of reference."¹⁷ By putting off any discussions of land use activities and commercial developments to the final report, the Commissioners avoided an issue that plagued many Indigenous communities in British Columbia. These communities, who had ample timber resources and the skills to harvest the bounty, were denied the permission to do so while white loggers descended upon Indigenous territories. Further, the lack of ability to log limited the amount of cleared agricultural land the Tla'amin could access, thus placing further limits on the Tla'amin economy. Even though the Tla'amin followed the proper government protocols when seeking to cut timber, McKenna-McBride never addressed the Tla'amin's concerns over their timber, leaving them to continue pushing the Provincial and Federal governments to recognize their resource rights.

The Tla'amin knew that if they were unable to maintain their traditional economy due to increased settlement and industrialization, they would have to incorporate certain other tactics alongside traditional elements in order to keep their families fed. Chief Tom told the commissioners that all of the families kept gardens and grew a variety of fruits and vegetables. Chief Tom boasted to the Commission,

All my people have little gardens all over the reserves and on the Islands...orchard trees such as plums, raspberries and gooseberries. Some of my people have cattle...chickens...sheep on the islands. All these gardens, no one helped us make them, and no one helped us put up the fences and no one helped us to put down the trees – we did it all with our own money. All these houses were put up with our own money and our own work...All my people want to work their land.¹⁸

¹⁷ Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), 131.

¹⁸ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, 284-285.

The Tla'amin had, on their own regard, responded to the settlement of their lands by adapting their traditional economy to include western agriculture, and Chief Tom was careful to show that this was something they did without government influence or aid.

The transcripts from the meeting make it quite clear that the Tla'amin were interested in pursuing more agriculture on their land, but they needed to get permission to log in order to do so. Chief Tom told the Commissioners that he wanted to purchase a steam powered engine (known as a 'steam donkey') to use in logging operations, but also to help pull the remaining stumps from the ground to make more arable land.¹⁹ Interestingly, five families living on the Toquana reserve also stated that they were "willing to go farmer" on their land, if they could get permission to log and clear land.²⁰ Chief Tom put it simply to the commissioners, "We live on fish and God put that fish in the water for us to eat, and we live on deer and game. We try and fix up our land to grow anything we want, and we want to make our living that way."²¹ What is fascinating about Chief Tom's pathway forward for the Tla'amin is that it embraces both continuity and change in the colonial period. In ways that are similar to how many Coast Salish people approached the McKenna-McBride Commission, using as Harris explained, a "complex mixture of compliance and resistance,"²² Chief Tom proposed a pathway forward that would both allow for newly introduced activities like farming to exist alongside the ways that the northern Coast Salish had always made their living. Chief Tom wanted his people to continue hunting and fishing, but he also understood that logging and farming were becoming increasingly important to Tla'amin lives. Certainly, as increasing settlement challenged the Tla'amin ability

¹⁹ Ibid., 290.

²⁰ Ibid., 292.

²¹ Ibid., 294.

²² Harris, *Resettlement of British Columbia*, 131.

to hunt and fish in their broader lands, growing more food at home was a key part of the Tla'amin future.

What the Tla'amin proposed was directed toward having the ability to secure agency, provide for the present, and protect their future. Willie Bob reported that he lived principally at Toquana (I.R. No. 4) alongside three other families, where they grew potatoes, and fruit of “every kind – apples, plums, cherries, pears, and gooseberries.”²³ The families living at Toquana collectively asserted that they “already got 200 fruit trees...we buy all our fruit trees with our own money, also our houses and cattle and pigs, also our own gas boats.”²⁴ Willie Bob, Jim Timothy, Bob George, Felix, and Dominic, the male members of families living at Toquana, blamed the Indian Agent and the government for their inability to increase their cropped land: “We want to report to you about our agent. We never got help from him yet. They never give us anything to clear with so we all got small land. If our agent treated us good, we will have big land this time but no.”²⁵ The Tla'amin had readily adopted some of these societal elements in ways that they saw as complimentary to their traditional systems, and the government continually failed to live up to the standards that they had created. This tension is clearly seen in the McKenna-McBride testimonies, where the Tla'amin pushed for the right to be able to manage their timber resources (and thus increase agricultural potential) against a colonial body that simultaneously assessed Indigenous land claims through evidence of land use while denying Indigenous people the right to use their land. Put simply, Indigenous people like the Tla'amin were being told that they needed to stop seasonal migration in exchange for wage labour and agriculture on their reserves, yet they were being denied the ability to actually do these activities

²³ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, 291.

²⁴ Ibid., 292.

²⁵ Ibid., 292.

in ways that ensured they were successful. These problematic dichotomies resulted in much misunderstanding between Indigenous and settler populations that continues to exist in many parts of Canada today.²⁶

There existed a certain hypocrisy in the words of the Commissioners. They understood that the Tla'amin were heavily engaged in the timber industry, and that they wanted to use the resources on their land in order to maintain their stake in the local business. Certainly, it made sense that the logs closest to their lands would be prime targets for Tla'amin loggers- they would get to return home at night and use the resources on their land to provide for the community and their families. It would also ensure that land was cleared of heavy timber in order to build new homes for the increasing on-reserve population, and to plant crops and grow food for Tla'amin tables. The Commissioners understood the Tla'amin "could not cultivate the ground when it is heavily covered with timber," and they promised that the final report would deal with these issues.²⁷ However, the final report never addressed resource rights in any meaningful way. The Tla'amin remained unable to independently harvest their timber, resulting in the creation of a system where the Tla'amin made most of their money from logging through wages or by surrendering their on-reserve timber to non-Indigenous logging companies in return for rental

²⁶ John Lutz does an excellent job of explaining how settler understandings of wage-labour economics often excluded Indigenous people who were an integral part of that economy in British Columbia in the mid-to-late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth centuries. His book *Makuk* focuses on wages and work as he sees them as central to discussions of what settlers have called "the Indian Problem" over time in Canada (Lutz, *Makuk*, 6). I fully agree with his assessment, and I also see how attempts to push Indigenous people into agriculture were mired in the same ideologies. Just like settlers could look at Indigenous people working and use problematic narrow lenses to dismiss Indigenous people as lazy, they could also see Indigenous attempts at farming through similar lenses that failed to assess the insufficient land (often both in size and fertility). This worked doubly to then allow the government to deny Indigenous claims to larger plots of land because they were not farming the land they had 'properly,' which they saw as representative of Indigenous farmers as being uncivilized or primitive, rather than as the result of a lack of arable land to pursue an agricultural economy.

²⁷ Ibid.

and stumpage fees, and guaranteed work at the leasee's logging camp.²⁸ It is ironic that the same government that touted agriculture as the key to the civilization of Indigenous people refused to allow Indigenous people to farm as much as possible. These tensions played out not only on surveyed Indian Reserves but also in places where the Commissioners failed to create reserves in places that had long been occupied by northern Coast Salish families.

Timber rights at Sliammon made up the bulk of the conversation during the meeting. However, as settlers descended upon Tla'amin lands they occupied places where generations of Tla'amin families lived and harvested resources. Dominic Tom, representing his family, attended the meeting with the Commissioners to state his claim to a piece of land long occupied by Coast Salish people on the Malaspina Inlet. Tom claimed that this land, named čən²⁹ had been given to him by his father, and he asserted to the Commission that he had "two letters from the government which promises to give it to [him]."³⁰ Tom claimed that a white man named Barnard Nelson had pre-empted the land, and was trying to push him out of land that his father and several other families had cleared, planted fruit trees, and built homes. Tom explained that there were several houses and ample fencing on the property, and they were all recently, and mysteriously, burned to the ground. Tom and Captain Tii'mo'tey gave testimony to the Commissioners that claimed all the houses on the disputed land were burned without any natural

²⁸ These surrenders are meant that Reserve lands were put up for public tenders through the Department of Indian Affairs. Logging companies placed bids for the contract, and the successful bidder was given a deal to harvest the timber within a certain amount of time. These surrenders often included caveats that the logging company had to employ Tla'amin loggers to work in the camps, with a portion of the log sales going directly to the community in cash, and the remainder going to the band's funds in Ottawa. These surrenders were complicated, and while they sometimes resulted in problems, they ensured a steady income into the Tla'amin community and provided many loggers with the ability to work close to home. These surrenders will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

²⁹ čən refers to a dog, which is a reference to one of the Tla'amin's origin stories (personal communication with Drew Blaney, April 8 2020).

³⁰ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, 297-298.

cause, except for the “white man’s house.”³¹ It is quite clear that the Tla’amin believed Nelson was responsible for the fire.

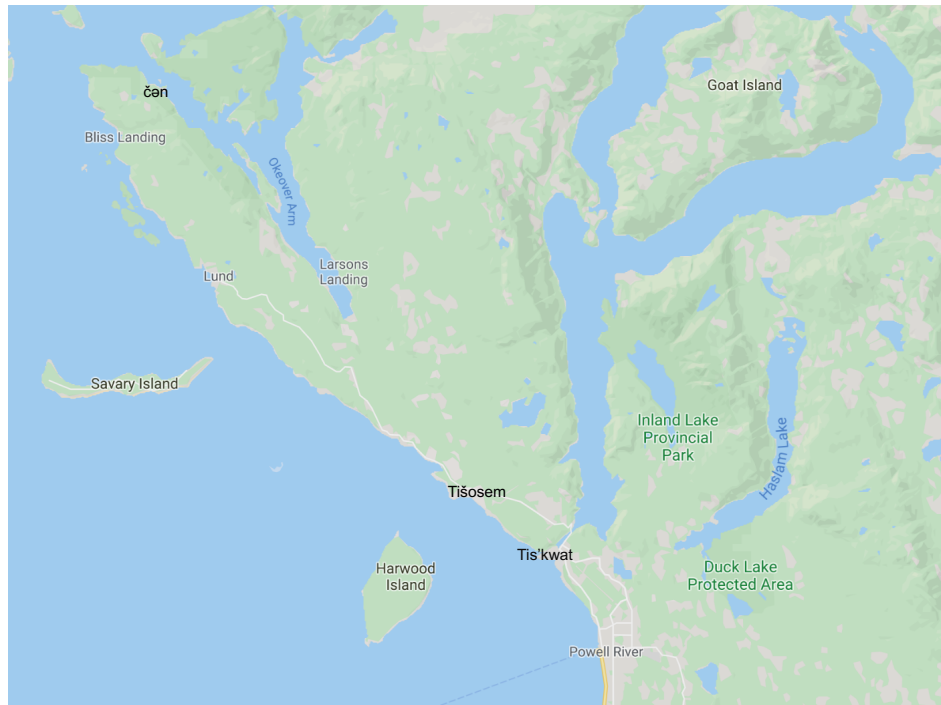


Figure 3.2: Map of Tla'amin lands showing location of Tis'kwat, čən, and Tišosem.

The disputed land had been an important site used by the northern Coast Salish to gather clams and shellfish for centuries. Indian Land Commissioners who visited the area in 1915 recorded “as to the former existence of a settlement on this point there was absolutely no doubt...the location has an added value from the fact that it contains a large supply of clams which were of considerable value to the interested Indians.”³² What the Commissioners may not have appreciated is that the clams were not just naturally abundant, but rather were associated with the presence of a large clam-garden – a long used Indigenous maricultural technique that used precisely placed boulders to create a sediment filled pool of water that created the perfect

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid., 298.

habitat for clams.³³ The land, despite the obvious Tla'amin presence, was pre-empted by Barnard Nelson on November 1st 1909, over twenty years since O'Reilly had surveyed Tla'amin reserves in the region. The settlement was across the inlet from Kahkaykay Indian Reserve No. 6, and there were numerous other village sites in the inlet. Commissioner Carmichael, who visited Tom's land in 1915, noted that there were orchards on the property that were at least "15 to 20 years old."³⁴ However, it should be clarified that he was guessing the age of the orchard based on the burnt remains, as all of the fruit trees and crops had been burnt along with the "Indian houses." Further, the Tla'amin interpreter at the Royal Commission meeting, Alex Paul, claimed that he was forty-six years old (in 1915), and Dominic Tom and the other families had lived there for "the whole time."³⁵ When surveyors arrived to survey the lot for Nelson in 1909, they would have clearly seen several houses, fences, established crops, cleared land, and fruit orchards. The Tla'amin's Indian Agent, Peter Byrne, recommended to the Commission "that the Indian get that portion of the land on which he has made improvements, approximately 14 acres."³⁶ Byrne also reported that part of Nelson's claim contained fields that were cleared and planted by the Tla'amin. After the survey, however, Nelson took over the land and planted his own crops in the Tla'amin clearings.

Nelson himself must have been immediately aware of the Tla'amin residents when he took up the land in 1909 (over at least a decade after the orchards had been planted). Given that the land was an important place for gathering clams and shellfish, it makes more sense that the crops and fruit trees were planted to add to the already high value of the site. Barnard Nelson entered

³³ For more on clam gardens and Indigenous mariculture and marine resource management, see: Judith Williams, *Clam Gardens: Aboriginal Mariculture on Canada's West Coast* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 2006).

³⁴ Chief Tom, Willie John, and Johnny Bob, to W.E. Ditchburn, Chief Inspector of Indian Agencies, December 26th 1931, RG10, T-16095, C-11-2, Vol. 11064, File RC pt. J.

³⁵ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, 297.

³⁶ McKenna-McBride Testimony Transcripts, "Meeting with Indian Agent Byrne", pg. 660.

an active Tla'amin village- one that had also been missed by surveyors in the 1880s, but had been occupied for generations by Tla'amin families. Tom claimed, backed by Captain Tii'mo'tey and Chief Tom, that he wanted his land rights recognized and that he be given title to fourteen acres of land.

The Commission, for reasons that are unclear, decided that Tom's claim was not acceptable.³⁷ Likely, as it often was when settler and Indigenous claims overlapped, the former's rights were protected due to the fact that they had pre-empted the land. Rather than except responsibility for their lack of ability to properly secure Tla'amin lands, the Government doubled down and protected settler land title over Indigenous claims. The final report for the Commission did nothing but confirm the Tla'amin's already existing reserves, and mentioned nothing about Tom's claims. In 1922, Chief Tom and members of the Sliammon Band Council visited Andrew Paull, a Squamish lawyer and activist who pushed for the recognition of Indigenous rights in British Columbia.³⁸ Paull wrote to W.E. Ditchburn, the Chief Inspector of Indian Agencies in British Columbia, to explain that the Tla'amin were unhappy that land they had cleared and occupied was not being recognized as a legitimate claim. Paull condemned the actions of the Commission, and brazenly declared that if the land was not given to the Tla'amin, "the Indians will always be under the impression that a miscarriage of justice has been dealt to them and they will never understand why, something which they owned was taken from them, and which was improved by their labors."³⁹ Regardless of a pre-existing claim, and ample evidence of occupation, the Commission never granted Tom his land rights.

³⁷ Andrew Paull, to W.E. Ditchburn, November 16 1922, RG10, T-16113, C-11-2, Vol. 11302.

³⁸ Paull was a well-known Aboriginal rights activist, and was trained in Law, although he never took the Bar (as it required him to enfranchise and give up his Aboriginal status). For More on Andrew Paull, please see: Brendan F.R. Edwards, "I Have Lots of Help behind Me, Lots of Books, to Convince You": Andrew Paull and the Value of Literacy in English," *BC Studies* 164 (2010): pp. 7-50.

³⁹ Paull, to Ditchburn, November 16 1922, November 16 1922, RG10, T-16113, C-11-2, Vol. 11302.

The irony in this process is palpable. The Tla'amin had altered an ancient village site that served as an important settlement and clam gathering location to be a cleared, fenced, and “improved” settlement with permanent European style housing and fencing. These “improvements” were in addition to the ways that the northern Coast Salish had already altered the landscape over centuries of occupation. Clam gardens were highly managed maricultural environments, and they took much labour and upkeep to ensure that clam populations (and thus harvests) stayed high.⁴⁰ The land around the clam gardens was also been cleared and terraced for a village site. Long before Barnard Nelson was even born, čən was an important part of the Indigenous world. The “improvements” that the commissioners spoke of were the fencing, housing, crops, and orchards that were put in place likely sometime in the 1880s, if we use Commissioner Carmichael’s assessment of the age of the orchards as a conservative estimate. Dominic Tom and his family had “improved” the already improved site decades before Mr. Nelson took out his pre-emption in 1909. The Tla'amin felt wronged beyond measure, and even after the Royal Commission’s report was released in 1916, they continued to seek Government recognition of not just their Indigenous right of occupation of the disputed space, but to recognize that they had marked their possession of the land using European standards long before it was given to a settler.

The Tla'amin loss of čən, like other parts of their territory, was not solely due to the government’s ignorance of Indigenous land rights in British Columbia, but also due to the lengths that the government was willing to go to in order to protect settler claims to Indigenous land. Places like Tis'kwat had been dramatically altered in ways that erased the Tla'amin

⁴⁰ For more on the construction and management of clam gardens, see: Christina M. Neudorf, Nicole Smith, Dana Lepofsky, Ginevra Toniello, and Olav B. Lian, “Between a rock and a soft place: Using optical ages to date ancient clam gardens on the Pacific Northwest”, *Public Library of Science* Vol. 12, no. 2 (2017), 1-21.

presence. But čən had been altered by the Tla'amin in both traditional and modern ways, highlighting both continuity and change in Tla'amin lifeways. The Commission would have had to understand that there existed ample evidence of Tla'amin occupation of čən previous to Nelson's claim, and that Dominic Tom's claim was active when the surveyors arrived to do their work. Despite ample evidence that Nelson had pre-empted occupied land, and likely intentionally destroyed Tom's home and property, the Commission protected Nelson's claim to čən.

McKenna-McBride, from a Tla'amin standpoint, was a resounding failure. Despite three years of extensive travel and meetings with Indigenous people, the Commission failed to adequately address Indigenous concerns over their land and title. The final report of McKenna-McBride recommended a series of new reserves, but also a series of reductions to existing reserves. In sum, while 87,291 acres of Indian Reserve lands were added in British Columbia and 47,058 acres deducted, the cut-off land "was almost entirely land regarded as highly desirable by white farmers, ranchers, developers, speculators, and municipal officials"⁴¹ and worth more than five-times per acre on average than the added land. As historical-geographer Robert Galois has shown, the Commission worked well to resolve the Provincial and Federal Government's concerns over Indigenous reserves, but its failure to assuage Indigenous concerns fueled the Indigenous rights movement in British Columbia.⁴²

With the Royal Commission ending without a satisfactory result, the Tla'amin built their economy around engagements in commercial logging and fishing, and they continued to push the Department of Indian Affairs for permission to log independently on their reserves. However,

⁴¹ Paul Tennant, *Aboriginal Peoples and Politics: The Indian Land Question in British Columbia, 1849-1989* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1990), 98.

⁴² Robert M. Galois, "The Indian Rights Association, Native Protest Activity and the 'Land Question' in British Columbia, 1903-1916", *Native Studies Review* Vol. 8, No. 2 (1992), 21-22.

devastating circumstances largely outside of the Tla'amin's control threw their recently and continually changing world into chaos once again. On March 31st, 1918, Easter Sunday, a massive forest fire burned through Tla'amin territory. The fire ignited somewhere near Sarah Point (north of Sliammon near the village of Lund), and was fueled by high winds. Intensive logging in the region in previous years had left the forest thinned and thus easily kindled. The Great Fire of 1918 levelled Tišosəm to the ground. Amazingly, not a single Tla'amin life was lost amongst the flames. Many Tla'amin escaped the horrific flames by gathering whatever goods they could carry and quickly launching canoes into the bay – others waded out into the water with wet blankets over their heads to protect themselves from the intense heat. In the wake of the fire, some Tla'amin families sought refuge with kin relations in Klahoose and Homalco villages. Others chose to relocate to their fishing, hunting, and shellfish gathering camps at Ahgykson (Harwood Island).⁴³

The fire destroyed Tišosəm. Photographs taken by Powell River Photographer Rod LeMay show the remnants of the Tla'amin homes and valuables.⁴⁴ One of the most iconic pictures of the tragedy is of the statue of Jesus Christ, standing seemingly untouched by the flames amongst the ashes of the Roman Catholic Church. The statue, the church's stark white cross remained the only objects standing amongst the smoldering ruins of the Tla'amin village. After only recently being remade as Sliammon I.R. 1, Tišosem was in ashes.

⁴³ Colin M. Osmond, "Easter Sunday Marks 100 years Since the Great Fire of 1918", *NehMotl*, April 2018, pg. 1; As part of the Tla'amin Ethnohistory Fieldschool in 2012, Elyse Bouey completed a compelling project about the Great Fire of 1918. Using research from the Tla'amin Nation archives alongside oral history, Bouey used maps labelled with the locations of people houses (collected as part of the Teeshoshum Commemorative Map project) to show how similar patterns were followed both in building temporary housing on Ahgykson but also in the rebuilding of the village a few years later.

⁴⁴ Rod Lemay, Powell River Museum and Archives, Dunstan's Studio of Photography Fonds, Rod Lemay sousfonds, 1907-1923.



Figure 3.3: Sliammon after the fire of 1918 (Rod Lemay - Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)



Figure 3.4: Statue of Jesus among the ashes (Rod Lemay - Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)

The Church that burned in 1918 was actually the second Roman Catholic Church at Tišosəm. The first was likely built sometime in the 1860s, when missionaries from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate encouraged converts among the Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco to live at Tišosəm permanently.⁴⁵ By the late 1890s, the original church had fallen into disrepair, and the Tla'amin petitioned the government for “permission to cut sufficient logs and exchange them for lumber etc. to enable us to construct a new church.”⁴⁶ They requested that the government front the money to purchase “axes, saws, spades, mattocks, etc. suitable for cutting logs,”⁴⁷ which were be paid for once the Tla'amin loggers had cut and sold enough timber. Logging was an integral part of the Tla'amin community, and it served to provide families and community coffers with incoming cash, but it also helped provide important community structures.

The Tla'amin were given permits to log enough trees to pay for the construction of a church in March of 1898, and the lumber and building materials arrived by steamship in the fall of 1900. The new church was officially opened in November of 1901. The church was not just an important religious and community building - it also provided the Tla'amin with a full complement of logging equipment that allowed them to continue hand logging and selling the timber to sawmills down the coast. Logging provided the funding and materials to build a church, but it also provided many Tla'amin families with the ability to put food on the table. I return to the Tla'amin efforts to build this church at the beginning of the next chapter.

⁴⁵ As early as the 1860s Tišosəm was becoming a regional hub where Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco people would gather to meet with travelling missionaries and priests. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) included “Tlahyamen Baie” as part of their rounds in the 1860s (R.P. Fouquet to T.R.P Superior General, Mission de Saint-Michel, December 20 1868, pp. 122-132, in *Missions De La Congregation Des Oblates De Marie Immaculee* No. 33, March 1870). Further, by the 1870s Indian Land Commissioner Gilbert Malcolm Sproat noted that during the summers the Northern Coast Salish people were “scattered... but they come together at their winter quarters where they have a village of good houses and a church, and there they are visited and receive religious instruction” (Gilbert Malcom Sproat, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, RG 10, Reel C-13900, Vol. 1274, files 44-49).

⁴⁶ Chief Charley, Tla'amin Chief, to Frank Devlin, Indian Agent, January 17 1898, National Archives, RG10, Reel C-12126, Vol. 7861, File 30167-24.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

In response to the burgeoning timber market in British Columbia, and to the loss of important economic sites like Tis'kwat, Tla'amin loggers quickly integrated logging into their economic rounds as early as the 1860s, and it remained a key industry for the Tla'amin well into the twentieth century. Many families organized their lives at least partially along logging work, with entire Tla'amin families or groups of fathers, uncles, and brothers uprooting to head off to take up jobs at distant logging camps up and down the coast.⁴⁸ Handloggers could work close to home, felling timber on the shoreline directly into the sea before booming them and sending a full "boom" to market.⁴⁹ Increasingly, however, as newer technology changed the industry, handlogging became less competitive in the world of early industrial logging.⁵⁰ Modern equipment like steam powered donkeys and logging railroads made it less economical for individuals to stake their claim in the industry, and wage labour in logging camps became much more central to the Tla'amin economy. The Tla'amin actively pursued their own logging permits, but the government rarely granted them. The government preferred to obtain land surrenders from Indian band councils that sold tracts of timber to non-Indigenous logging firms who brought their equipment onto the grant and remove the timber. Once the timber was removed, the land remained as part of the Indian Reserve. This system was problematic, as a

⁴⁸ I discussed this at length in my Master's Thesis, most specifically in Chapter Three. See: "Coast Salish Masculinity in the Rise and Fall of the Commercial Logging Industry", University of Saskatchewan, Unpublished Master's Thesis, 2016, pgs. 61-86.

⁴⁹ Tla'amin handloggers boomed their logs in bays and inlets along the coast, near where they had felled the trees. Sliammon Bay was used often for this purpose. Tla'amin Elder Leslie Adams told me that his father, and other Tla'amin loggers, then acquired the services of a local white logger to get their logs to market. This non-Indigenous logger attached the Tla'amin's log boom to his own, and when the tugboat arrived to take them to market all the logs were shipped together. Adams said that there was one man who did so as a gesture of goodwill, and that he did not accept payment for this service. It was also common for Tla'amin loggers to make specific deals with logging companies to purchase logs at Sliammon and then ship them to market.

⁵⁰ Building off scholarship from Gordon Hak and Richard Rajala, I discuss how the changes that came to the logging industry with new technology impacted Coast Salish handloggers in a recent article. See: Colin M. Osmond, "Logging, Laughing, and Staying Alive: The New Ethnohistory and Coast Salish Reflections on Dangerous Work in the Woods in the Mid-twentieth Century," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 109, No. 3 (Summer 2018), pgs. 120-134.

non-Indigenous company working on Indigenous lands received the lion's share of the profits. However, given that the government was reticent, if not completely unwilling, to give logging permits to Indigenous people, this was the next best offer.

Logging surrenders meant that a logging camp opened on the reserve. The Tla'amin always negotiated that any permit granted contained a condition that Tla'amin men be hired to work in the camp. Often, these agreements resulted in Tla'amin loggers removing the logs from the claim and delivering them to a dumping ground where the logging company picked them up and brought them to market. The logging company also supplied the equipment and built logging roads or rails. The result was that Tla'amin loggers received wages, while the Band obtained income for land rentals from the logging company. It also meant that Tla'amin loggers and their families did not have to pack up and move away for a portion of the year to find work at logging camps. This meant that men could return home at the end of the day and maintain their roles in the function of the community. While problematic, and often riddled with issues, logging surrenders provided Tla'amin people with the ability to provide family and community income from working the resources on their lands. I resume this discussion in the next chapter.

But the 1918 fire changed all this, at least temporarily. When the fire roared through the community, it destroyed homes, the church, the council house, stands of timber, and all the belongings within these buildings. Indeed, the smoking remnants of wood-fired cast iron stoves and furniture can be seen in the iconic photography of the wrecked village. The lives built at Sliammon in the relatively short existence of the reborn village had been ruptured. The Tla'amin, in ways that pay tribute to the cultural continuity of Tla'amin lifeways, responded by fleeing the flames and taking up residence in other parts of their territory. Many moved to Ahgykson (Harwood Island) and built temporary homes on the sites of ancient familial claims. Others

accessed kinship ties and moved into the inlets with their Homalco and Klahoose extended families. But amazingly, in just a few short years after the fire, the Tla'amin had mostly rebuilt their community at Tišosəm. A 1920 photograph shows a new church (built on the same site as the recently destroyed building) surrounded by houses – all standing in front of the ghostly remnants of a once spiritually and economically valuable Tla'amin forest.

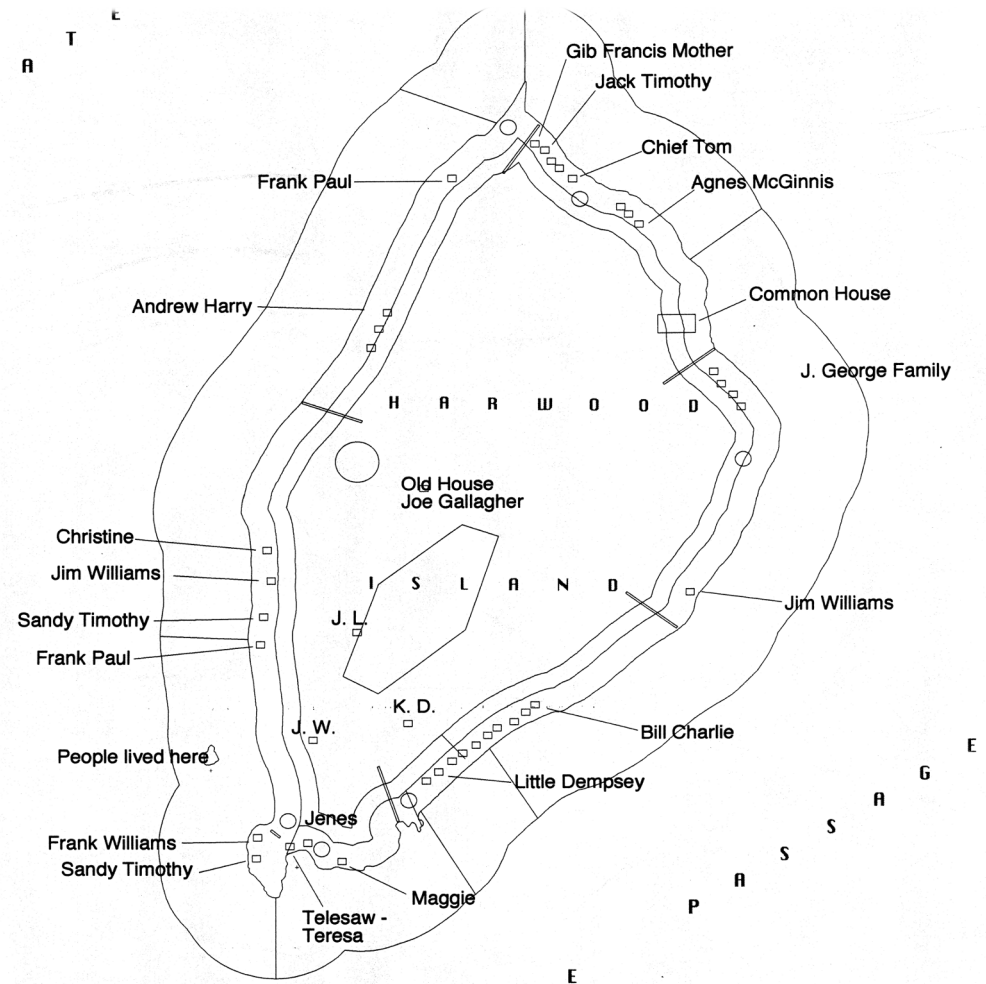


Figure 3.5: Resettlement at Ahgykson (Harwood Island) after the Great Fire in 1918 (Courtesy of Tla'amin Nation)



Figure 3.6 Sliammon before the fire, early 1900s. Note the boomed logs in the foreground of the picture- a clear indication of the role of logging in the Tla'amin economy in the early 1900s (Courtesy of Andrew Martin)



Figure 3.7: Sliammon reborn after the Great Fire, circa 1920 (Rod Lemay - Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)

Like the proverbial phoenix, Sliammon had risen from the ashes. The village, although being destroyed, was rebuilt and remained the center of the Tla'amin's new world. The quick reconstruction of the church shows how important Roman Catholicism had become in the community. Indeed, some Tla'amin elders claim that the survival of the statue of Jesus Christ and the Cross, alongside the fact that there were no deaths from the fire, solidified the Christian religion more firmly in the community. The Church stands today, and still is home to the same statue that survived the flames over a century ago.

Life returned somewhat quickly to the new modal "normal" at Sliammon. As early as January 1919, the Tla'amin were actively engaging the logging industry on their reserve lands, and within a few short years they again pushed the government to recognize their rights to harvest timber independently on their lands.⁵¹ Remarkably, the village at Sliammon took on similar shape as the one that had been destroyed. The church and cemeteries were rebuilt on the same spots, and many families rebuilt houses on the same plots of land they had lived on before the fire. Much like it had been when they escaped to Ahgykson during the fire, Tla'amin families responded to new events by using their traditional understandings of their lands and community structure. The system of land ownership that was in place before the fire (based on Traditional Tla'amin societal structures) was maintained after the fire.⁵² The Tla'amin, as they had done in so many situations before, continued to respond to transformative events through their existing societal structures.⁵³

⁵¹ The Tla'amin applied for permits to log on Ahgykson (Harwood Island) in January of 1919 (Petition by Sliammon Indians, to the Department of Indian Affairs, January 30th 1919, RG10, C11-2, Vol. 11077, File 167/20-7-6), and by 1922 they were actively logging in other parts of their reserve land. Obviously, the fire destroyed much of the merchantable timber at Sliammon, which meant timber reserves elsewhere on Tla'amin land became more valuable to their economy.

⁵² Teeshoshum Commemorative Map, Tla'amin Nation Archives.

⁵³ Keith Carlson's analysis of Sahlin's use of structure and event in *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of



Figure 3.8: Aerial Photograph showing Sliammon in 1930s. Many of the houses were rebuilt in the same plots of land that families occupied before the fire (Courtesy Tla'amin Nation).

The transformation of Tišosem to Sliammon, the destruction of the village, and the rebuilding highlight the resilience of the Tla'amin throughout a period of remarkable transformation. Since the 1860s, when colonial systems began to influence the northern Coast Salish region in several important ways (arrival of missionaries, beginning of commercial logging, formation of reserves), the Tla'amin had responded in ways that emphasized the Tla'amin ability to maintain their cultural identity while also adapting to changes wrought by the quickly expanding colonial world. As we have seen, the Tla'amin embraced both change and continuity as they remade their lives. The colonial forces gathered steam in the early twentieth century with the construction of the Powell River mill – an entity that put many new pressures on Tla'amin society. With larger areas of their territory being pre-empted for colonial settlement,

Toronto, 2010) provides a key theoretical framework for understanding cultural change and continuity in Indigenous identity. Carlson, building on Sahlins, states that ethnohistorians need to “invert our theoretical praxis to recognize that historical events can become ethnographically intelligible through the study of change rather than stasis” (27). What we see with the Tla'amin, in this example, is that even within the colonial changes that came to their society, such as European style property ownership, they still understood the layout of their village within Tla'amin traditional understandings of space. Even though Tišosem had changed into Sliammon, we still need to pay attention to the various elements of continuity that shaped the village.

and much more competition for resources, the Tla'amin responded by centering their economy around commercial logging, while also retaining much of their traditional systems as possible. Although many built homes at Sliammon, they still lived at various places in their traditional territory – as they always had. But places like Tis'kwat and the reformation of Tišosem to Sliammon provided a geographic anchor for the Sliammon Indians, but the Tla'amin worked this new societal element into the ways that they had always understood the world, even if this was becoming increasingly a challenge. The loss of Tis'kwat, and Dominic Tom's struggle for his land at čən, point to some of the tensions that arose as the Tla'amin and the settler colonial world overlapped, as does the general Tla'amin push to integrate certain elements of colonial society into their lifeways.

With Sliammon reconstructed, Tla'amin families rebuilt their homes and economies, and began to establish new networks and mercantile opportunities with the quickly growing settlement at Powell River that had sprung up beside the Mill. The next several decades witnessed more changes in Sliammon, though none of them as drastic as had been part of the previous half-century. Sliammon began to integrate more closely with their settler neighbours. Indeed, they worked alongside them in logging camps, and Tla'amin men and women found markets for fish and cultural goods, such as baskets, in town. The Tla'amin built their first water lines and sewers in the 1920s, and the construction of a provincial highway connecting the reserve to the town for the first time began in 1927. Sliammon became part of the electric power grid from the mill's massive hydroelectric plant in the mid twentieth century, and once again Tis'kwat provided an important element in the Tla'amin lives. The Tla'amin had built a day school as early as 1909, which helped keep their children from being taken away to the Residential School in Sechelt. Logging continued to play a key role in the Tla'amin economy, as

did commercial fishing. These occupations, however, had histories that were never smooth, regardless of their ability to continue provide food and cash for Tla'amin families.

The next chapter weaves these histories together to describe how the Tla'amin organized their community and family structures within these systems. Indeed, resource extraction work placed pressures on certain aspects of family and community life, and the Tla'amin managed their resources and work within the complicated, confusing, and conflicting provincial and federal laws that governed resources on Indian Reserves. Regardless, resource extraction, and the cash derived from it, became an integral part of the Tla'amin ability to resist some of the harsher edges of colonialism.

Chapter Four: Working and Living at Sliammon, 1888-1980

“They chopped the trees down there, up there...man and woman, you name it, they were pulling the logs out...that’s how they built that church...They helped each other, the men and women, kids and all.”¹

- Agnes McGee, Tla’amin Elder, 1995

“The Indians got out a boom which measured 193,671 feet [Board Measure] ... by fastening a long rope with a clevice to the end of the log and then 30 to 40 Indians getting hold of the rope and hauled the logs to the water, sometimes over ½ a mile.”²

- Frank Devlin, Indian Agent, 1898

At the turn of the twentieth century, when Tla’amin loggers worked to cut timber to build a new Roman Catholic Church at Sliammon, they were faced with numerous obstacles and challenges. Hand logging (felling timber using axes, saws, wedges, and muscle) was no easy task, but Tla’amin loggers had been part of this burgeoning coastal industry for decades by the late 1890s. The trees were large, and had to be cut, delimbed, transported to Sliammon Bay, boomed, and then towed to sawmill for processing. The Tla’amin were skilled loggers and understood the business, and thus arranged with a local logging company, Thulin Bros. located several kilometers up the coast at Lund, to rent their team of oxen to do the arduous labour of hauling these logs from the forest to the salt-chuck. However, Thulin consistently delayed the arrival of their oxen to do the hauling. For over two years, Tla’amin loggers fell giant cedars and prepared them for transport, only to find themselves waiting. Thus, with an abundance of fallen timber lying exposed on the wet grounds of the coastal forest, and an anxious community waiting for their new church, the Tla’amin mobilized their traditional forest practices to get the job done.

¹ Agnes McGee, interviewed by Maynard Harry, *Tla’amin Traditional Land Use Study*, MIS 1, Sliammon Treaty Archives, September 7 1995.

² Frank Devlin to A.V. Vowell, May 11 1899, LAC, RG10, Reel C-12126, Vol. 7861, File 30167-24.

Coast Salish loggers had been cutting down trees for a variety of purposes for centuries. Often, the tree would have to be moved to another spot to be processed. To do so, Coast Salish loggers tied strong cedar-root ropes around stout logs and used muscle power to pull them to their desired destination.³ This forest extraction activity took the efforts of entire villages – women, men, children, anyone able to provide leverage against the stubborn behemoth. When Thulin failed to show up as arranged, the Tla’amin mobilized as a community to get their logs to the sea. The Tla’amin pulled massive logs to Sliammon Bay from the heavily forested patches of their reserve – often at distances over a kilometer. In 1995, Tla’amin Elder Agnes McGee remembered her father, Jimmy Timothy, telling her that they “chopped the trees down there, up there...man and woman, you name it, they were pulling the logs out...that’s how they built that church.”⁴ By the end of 1898, the Tla’amin had pulled enough logs to fill one boom, nearly 200,000 feet (board measure) in timber. The Tla’amin’s Indian Agent reported that “Every able bodied Indian on the Reserve” went to work to get the logs cut and into the log boom at Sliammon Bay.⁵ It was an impressive task – a pertinent demonstration of Tla’amin work ethic and ingenuity. Even more impressive, they did it all again the following year.

This chapter uses this event as a means to complicate historical understandings of wage labour and family/community gender roles and dynamics in Indigenous communities in the twentieth century. The Tla’amin community made important decisions about community function and family systems by adapting their seasonal subsistence systems to include working

³ For more on the traditional harvesting of cedar by Coast Salish loggers, see Hilary Stewart’s *Cedar: Tree of Life to the Northwest Coast Indians* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1984). Also see the appendix of my Master’s Thesis, pgs. 109-111. available at: <https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/7413/OSMOND-THESIS-2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

⁴ Agnes McGee, interviewed by Maynard Harry, *Tla’amin Traditional Land Use Study*, MIS 1, Sliammon Treaty Archives, September 7 1995.

⁵ Frank Devlin to A.V. Vowell, June 11, 1898, Library Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG10, Reel C-14265, Vol. 1452, File 97.

for wages. This chapter analyzes the function of logging and the existence of the Sliammon Indian Day School from 1909 to the 1950s, and the workings of the commercial and food fisheries within the Tla'amin economy – to argue that family units, not individual wage earners, were the drivers of the Tla'amin economy throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Further, the incorporation of commercial logging and fishing into the Tla'amin economy provided benefits to the general function of the community at Sliammon, fostering the development of a new collective identity for the Tla'amin (and several Klahoose and Homalco families that chose to live at Sliammon) that was based on living and working at Sliammon. These provocative arguments complicate the role of resource extraction industries in indigenous communities in the twentieth century, which pushes us to evaluate how Indigenous families and communities functioned as a web of interconnected subsistence and labour strategies that depended on the contributions of each member of these systems. What follows is a story of entire families navigating in, and through, a complicated world.

Before the arrival of European settlers into the Pacific Northwest, Coast Salish people lived primarily in family units that were integrated into regional kinship, resource extraction, and mercantile networks.⁶ Anthropologist Homer Barnett, after extensive ethnographic work with multiple Coast Salish communities in the 1930s, found that the extended family was the “highest unit of common allegiance” in the Coast Salish world.⁷ As Keith Carlson has demonstrated, kinship was the base for a series of “exchange dynamics” that provided structure for Coast Salish mercantile relationships.⁸ Kinship networks, united through arranged marriages, gave people

⁶ Keith Thor Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics”, *Native Studies Review* Vol. 11, No. 1 (1996), 11-12.

⁷ Barnett, 241.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

permission to travel, trade, and extract resources in their kins' territories.⁹ While today we typically associate Indigenous people with specific reserve communities, historically, Coast Salish people migrated seasonally to a variety of village sites based on resource extraction and kinship cultural obligations.¹⁰ As anthropologist Wayne Suttles explained,

...at the time of white settlement the whole area formed a social continuum within which the village was only one of several equally important social groupings. On the basis of winter residence, we might distinguish four levels of discrete units: families, each occupying its own section of a cedar-plank house and maintaining its own domestic economy; house groups, each composed of several families (related through either males or females) occupying a plank house and co-operating as hosts of feasts and other ceremonies; villages, each composed of a group of such houses occupying a short stretch of beach or river bank and sharing a common name and identification with territory; tribes, generally composed of several villages occupying a longer stretch of shoreline or a drainage area and sharing a common name and, to some extent, forms of speech, subsistence methods, and ceremonial procedures.¹¹

Within this system, family units (small groups of closely related kin – mothers, fathers, grandparents, and siblings) accessed a variety of local and non-local resources across a broad geographic region based on their kinship ties.¹² As anthropologist Eleanor B. Leacock explained, connections within a village were less important than the family kinship connections that existed across large geographies and several villages.¹³ Suttles, however, took issue with Leacock's assumptions about Coast Salish community connections, arguing instead that the rigid Western concept of "community" obscured important community connections in the Coast Salish world.¹⁴

⁹ Kin networks and associated privileges are discussed at length in Wayne Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige Among the Coast Salish," *Coast Salish Essays*, pgs. 15-25.

¹⁰ Wayne Suttles, "The Persistence of Intervillage Ties Among the Coast Salish", *Ethnology* Vol. 2, no. 4 (1963), 512-514.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 513.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Eleanor B. Leacock, "The Seabird Community", in Marian W. Smith Ed., *Indians of the Urban Northwest*, Second Print (New York: AMS Press, 1969), pgs. 186-194.

¹⁴ Suttles, "The Persistence of Intervillage Ties Among the Coast Salish", 512. Leacock posited her assertions using Seabird Island (a Stó:lō Indian Reserve located in the Fraser Valley) as a case study, but she failed to evaluate the colonial processes that led to the creation of the Seabird Indian Reserve. Non-related or loosely connected Stó:lō individuals from several different upriver areas were sent to live at Seabird a mere seventy years before Leacock visited in the 1940s to conduct her ethnographic study, which contributed to the lack of community that Leacock

Coast Salish families operated within both local and distant spheres, some based on local community relationships (which shifted as families moved seasonally) and others based on kinship connections that facilitated travel through and resource extraction from other tribal territories.

When the Canadian government imposed its system of Indian Reserves and band memberships, it attempted to disrupt this system to create manageable social units based on geographically anchored village sites (reserves). They forced Coast Salish people who had previously identified in ways based on their kinship oriented economic system to create an identity that was based on sedentary living on a specific (and often singular) Indian Reserve. As Carlson explains, these new laws “prevented...Native people from being able to freely relocate to the settlements of relatives to take advantage of better economic opportunities...Extended family ties that had facilitated the movement of people to access geographically diverse, hereditarily owned properties were officially severed and replaced by ‘communal band lands.’”¹⁵ At places like Tišosem, the government pushed people into a rigid ‘community’ that transcended existing tribal or kinship identities. In so doing, the government imposed an identity that superseded several tribal affiliations (Tla’amin, Homalco, Klahoose) in favour of a newly created one – the Sliammon Indian Band. This new moniker came to represent a collective of families that had kinship access to a vast expanse of village sites and resource areas based on the existing kinship system. The Sliammon Indian Band, itself based on the traditional Tla’amin tribal identity, was a complex grouping of formally autonomous family units. What is important for this discussion is that all of the new societal elements that came to Sliammon in the nineteenth

discovered. For more on the colonial creation of Seabird Indian Reserve, see: Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 148-152.

¹⁵ Carlson, *Power of Place*, 177.

and twentieth centuries (the school, logging operations, commercial fishing, the church, etc.,) reinforced the new 'Sliammon' collective, while simultaneously enabling family units to continue to make independent economic and social choices (such as choosing to relocate to a logging camp or cannery, or deciding on religious or educational pathways) that were in themselves echoes of the older Coast Salish economic system. The modern Tla'amin community that formed at Sliammon was based on the traditional Tla'amin tribal identity, yet was highly innovative and demonstrative of the complex changes that northern Coast Salish people made as colonialism uprooted their traditional systems.

In this new system, itself a hybrid of the older Coast Salish and modern economy, Tla'amin family and community economies were based on moditional engagement with the wage labour economy.¹⁶ Since as early as the 1860s, the logging industry had provided the Tla'amin with the ability to meet ancient cultural obligations (such as potlatching) while additionally putting food on the table and providing Tla'amin families with purchasing power for western manufactured commodities. It worked within a complex system where the Tla'amin maintained their traditional economy but worked new elements like commercial logging and fishing into these seasonal rotations. In 1909, on the eve of the construction of the Powell River Pulp and Paper mill at Tis'kwat, the Tla'amin petitioned to cut and sell timber from their reserves. Chief Tom Timothy, and the signatories of the petition, explained,

Logging has been our only means of making a living for a good many years, and each of us owns a costly outfit of tools for the business, but most of the available timber has been cut or taken up under license, so that we are now facing a condition which means something like starvation for us, unless we are allowed to cut the timber on our reserve.¹⁷

¹⁶ John S. Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 23.

¹⁷ Sliammon Indians, to R.C. McDonald, Indian Agent, May 21 1909, LAC, RG 10, Volume 7861, File 30167-24.

Chief Tom estimated that there was enough timber on Sliammon I.R. No. 1 alone to provide Tla'amin families with income for the next ten or fifteen years. Over a hundred years later, several Tla'amin elders explained that logging was a central part of their grandparents and great-grandparents lives and economies. Peter August recalled that "All we could do up on the coast here is log and fish. That was our way of living."¹⁸ August reminds us that even though his ancestors attempted to farm on the Tla'amin reserves, the arable land they possessed was limited and only produced food for local consumption. Les Adams similarly noted that logging was the accepted occupation for the Tla'amin as "it was the only way that they made their living."¹⁹ The Tla'amin pushed to obtain legal permission to log on Tla'amin reserves in the early twentieth century, and they also found ample employment in the many commercial logging camps along the coast. But logging increasingly became a way to provide more than just wages for Tla'amin families. It became a means to provide important services and infrastructure to the families living at Sliammon. Proceeds from logging allowed them to build churches, housing, council halls, and other important community structures.

The Department of Indian Affairs was reticent, if not completely unwilling, to allow Indigenous people to independently harvest their timber resources for sale on the open market. They preferred to have Indian Bands surrender a portion of timber on reserve, which would be put up for tender on the public market. A white logging company would win the tender, and receive permission to log that stand of trees on the reserve. The land itself would remain part of the reserve, but the timber would become the property of the logging company under legal contract. The community gained a general economic benefit from this process. The contracted

¹⁸ Peter August interviewed by Colin Osmond. June 14 2013, Sliammon, BC.

¹⁹ Leslie Adams, interviewed by Colin Osmond, June 10 2013, Sliammon, BC.

logging company was required to pay land rental fees, stumpage, and royalties to the Tla'amin to operate on their lands.²⁰

These surrenders occurred many times in the twentieth century, beginning in 1916 with the surrender of a tract of timber on Sliammon I.R. No. 1. These deals were largely accepted by the Tla'amin, although many were reluctant to sign papers that would give white logging companies access to their lands.²¹ The Tla'amin negotiated to ensure that the logging camps that opened under these surrenders employed Tla'amin loggers. Often, the camp would consist entirely of Tla'amin loggers, and the logging company would be responsible for providing industrial machinery, such as steam engines (known as 'Steam Donkeys') and other equipment, and for shipping the resulting log booms to the mill. This system, however, took a large portion of the profits from the logs and placed it in the hands of the logging company, rather than in Tla'amin coffers. Regardless, given the Department of Indian Affairs' reluctance to grant timber rights to Indigenous bands, this was the best option – it provided the Tla'amin with the ability to work locally and earn wages, while infusing cash into the Tla'amin economy. This latter function provided the means to strengthen the Tla'amin government and provide important community

²⁰ I discussed the surrender of reserve land at length in my Master's Thesis, particularly in Chapter Two. See: "Chapter Two: The Sooner you learn to be truthful and manly, the sooner you will be fit to be a Chief": Coast Salish Assertions of Masculinity in the Web of Government Patriarchy, 1890-1935," in *Giant Trees, Iron Men: Masculinity and Colonialism in Coast Salish Loggers' Identity*, Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Saskatchewan (2016), pg. 25-60. <https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/7413/OSMOND-THESIS-2016.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

²¹ The 1916 deal raised concerns about the money being sent to the Sliammon Band's account with the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa, rather than being given directly to the band (Peter Byrne to Duncan Campbell Scott, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, October 30 1917, LAC, RG10, Reel C-12126, Vol. 7861, file 30167-24). Others were concerned that these deals would bring white loggers onto Tla'amin lands and take work away from Tla'amin loggers. In order to make these arrangements more palatable to the community, The Tla'amin band council pushed the government to make Tla'amin employment at any logging camp that opened on their lands part of the contract ("Correspondence and Statistics Regarding Timber on Sliammon Reserve," LAC, RG10, Reel C-12126, Vol. 7861, file 30167-24). They also pushed to have a stipend for every log cut be given directly to the Band council in cash, and to have 10% of the total contract value be given directly to the Tla'amin before any logs were cut from the reserve.

services, and to keep families together in the Sliammon community when they otherwise would have been separated to find employment elsewhere.

One of the most profound ways that logging shaped the Tla'amin community was through providing the funding and justification for the Sliammon Day school in 1909. This school, which operated until the 1950s, provided an alternative to sending young children to the infamous Residential School system in British Columbia. The school hosted children until Grade Seven, after which they were sent to Residential School to finish their education. However, most parents pulled their children out of the school at that age, keeping them out of Residential Schools entirely. The Sliammon Day School allowed children to stay at home and keep Tla'amin families together, and it provided the ability to learn English language and writing skills, something elders and parents at that time saw as integral to a child's ability to survive in this quickly changing world. But it also allowed the Tla'amin to provide a system that would give children the opportunity to receive a traditional Tla'amin education. Indeed, children who stayed on reserve could spend time learning from their grandparents and other elders, while also contributing to the general function of the community.

Most Tla'amin families took great measures to ensure their children would not have to attend residential schools. Once children had outgrown the day school on reserve they became candidates for residential schools, and many elders remember their Grandparents taking them away from Sliammon at certain times of the year to avoid the Indian Agent and the Priest who gathered up kids to ship them off to school. In 1998, Mary Jane Harry explained that her grandparents took her to Aghykson (Harwood Island) so she wouldn't be taken away to the Sechelt Residential School.²² Mary George explained that her father "told me we were going to

²² Mary Jane Harry, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, December 9 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS 65 and 66.

go food gathering and we will camp there until Christmas. We are not coming back, you are not going to school.”²³ George remembered that this was many children’s’ experience: “There were lots like that, that didn’t go to residential school...there was lots of children sent away [when the Priest came].”²⁴ Andy George, who grew up in Sliammon in the mid-twentieth century, recalled that his father refused to send him and his siblings to the schools.²⁵ Elsie Paul stated, “a lot of people tried to hide their children”²⁶ when they came to round them up and ship them to Sechelt. It was the Elders, Paul said, who fought to keep their grandchildren out of the system and as parts of Tla’amin families. Historian Omeasoo Wāhpāsiw, in her discussion of changes to Tla’amin architecture and its impact of Tla’amin education, argued that mid-twentieth century Tla’amin grandchild-grandparent connections served to replicate the types of teachings that Tla’amin children would have received when living in a traditional Longhouse setting.²⁷ Many Tla’amin children were sent away with their grandparents to keep them away from the prying hands of the Priests, and to give them ample time to absorb their teachings.

When the Tla’amin petitioned for permits to log on their reserves in 1909, their main reason for doing so was to obtain permissions to have continuing, reliable, and local logging work for the men on the reserve. The Tla’amin feared that if they had to uproot their families and leave the reserve to find work in distant logging camps, the school would close. Without the school, their children would either not get a school education or be forced to attend Residential

²³ Mary George, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, August 4 1998, Tla’amin Nation Archives, MIS 52.53.54.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Andy George, interviewed by Colin Osmond, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

²⁶ Elsie Paul, Paige Raibmon, and Harmony Johnson, *Written as I Remember It: Teachings (ʔəms taʔaw) from the Life of a Sliammon Elder* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 186.

²⁷ Omeasoo Wāhpāsiw, “Tla’amin Housing Architecture and Home Territories in the twentieth Century: Invisible Spaces Shaping Historical Indigenous Education,” Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan (2016), 102. <https://harvest.usask.ca/bitstream/handle/10388/7678/WAHPASIW-DISSERTATION-2017.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

School in Sechelt or beyond. They explained these concerns to their Indian Agent, R.C. McDonald, who forwarded them to A.V. Vowell, the Indian Superintendent for British Columbia. McDonald reported,

These Indians are taking a praiseworthy interest in the day school recently established on their reserve, and they fear that if they are compelled to leave the reserve to seek employment elsewhere, the school will suffer as they will have to take their families with them and one of their chief reasons for asking to be allowed to cut and sell timber from off the reserve is in order that they can stay in their village and make a success of the school.²⁸

Built from the proceeds of commercial logging, the Sliammon Day School provided an alternative for sending children away to Residential Schools. Keeping families together and children at home allowed the Tla'amin to maintain several important functions within Tla'amin society within the oppressive laws that impacted Indigenous people in early twentieth century Canada.



Figure 4.1: Sliammon Day School in an undated photograph (likely 1930s or 1940s). (Source: <http://publications.ravenspacepublishing.org/as-i-remember-it/sliammon-day-school>)

²⁸ R.C. McDonald, Indian Agent, to A.V. Vowell, Indian Superintendent for British Columbia, June 16 1909, RG 10, Volume 7861, File 30167-24.

Having the day school at Sliammon allowed Tla'amin children the ability to maintain important connections with community elders, therefore ensuring they would receive a Tla'amin education. By staying on reserve, children could visit with their grandparents and other elders after their school days were finished, and on weekends and holidays. These types of engagements provided Tla'amin children with the ability to receive traditional education alongside western schooling, something which would have been extremely challenged if they had to leave home either to travel with their families for work or for residential schooling. As Ernie Harry explained in 1996, he and other children would sit for hours learning traditional knowledge and skills from elders: "We used to sit with the Elders from right after school, three o'clock till three A.M. For 12 hours... We used to listen to Toma [Chief Tom Timothy], if he fell asleep, we waited for him to wake up."²⁹ It was central to Tla'amin education and teaching that children spend ample time sitting and listening with the elders in order to pass on the information to the next generations.

With the school located at Sliammon, elders had the ability to keep an eye on what was happening within the school itself. Elders were sometimes invited to come and speak to the children at the school, and given that the schoolteacher lived in a house on the reserve, they had the ability to directly monitor their children and grandchildren's education. Basil Nicholson, the schoolteacher at the Sliammon school in the 1920s, kept a diary which makes frequent mention of elders visiting the schoolhouse (or Nicholson's house in Sliammon). Captain Tii'mo'tey visited regularly, as did his son Chief Tom Timothy. Few notes were made about the nature of these visits, aside from one poignant reference to Chief Tom visiting to tell "yarns about the

²⁹ Ernie Harry, interviewed by Maynard Harry and Connie Wilson, April 29 1996, Tla'amin Nation Archives, TUS 1.2.

world before the white man,”³⁰ but it is reasonable to suspect that education and schooling were frequently discussed. Captain Tii’mo’tey visited the schoolhouse during school hours on several occasions, likely to provide a lesson to children, or to inspect what was happening within the schoolhouse. Perhaps both. Regardless, having the school on reserve allowed for elders and parents to constantly observe the education that their children were getting.

Not all children were kept from attending Residential School, however. Some, like Elsie Paul, attended for a few years.³¹ Impoverished families without extended kinship relations sometimes sent children to Residential Schools as a means to free up time for wage work or to ensure that children would be clothed, housed, and fed (at least in theory).³² Eugene Louie stated that his parents sent him to Sechelt was so that he would receive a good Roman Catholic education: “One of the reasons that I got sent away wasn’t really because of hardship on the family they just wanted us to get an education. They figured at that time the best way to get an education is to send us to residential school.”³³

After the Day School at Sliammon closed in the 1950s, Tla’amin parents had more options in their children’s education. Public schools in Powell River began to accept Tla’amin students in the 1950s, and private religious schools such as the Assumption Catholic School opened in 1964.³⁴ The Sliammon Day School operated for over half of the twentieth century – and during

³⁰ Basil Nicholson, Personal Diary, Monday November 21, Basil Nicholson Fonds, Powell River Historical Museum and Archives.

³¹ Paul, *Written as I Remember It*, 186.

³² Sending children to Residential School for this reason came up in several interviews. It also appears that some families suffering from alcohol addiction sent children to school, but this was only mentioned in one interview. Out of respect to the families and their living ancestors, I have chosen to not cite specific examples from my oral history work or the historical record.

³³ Eugene Louie, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 13 1998, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS 57, 58, and 59.

³⁴ Several Tla’amin elders related their experiences in public schools in Powell River, and many recalled their efforts to ensure their children were able to attend public schools in Powell River. See, Paul, *Written as I Remember It*, 258-260.

the peak operation of the Residential School system in Canada. The school was founded upon a community effort to both providing a local education for children and also to keep consistent logging work to keep Tla'amin families at home on the reserve rather than relying solely on work in distant logging camps. The school did far more than this, however. The school allowed for children to get a dual education that would provide them with the skills needed to survive in the settler-colonial world, but also provided them with a traditional Tla'amin education. By keeping children on reserve, they grew up within their families, and were thus able to connect with grandparents and community elders to learn Tla'amin teachings.

Recent scholarship on Tla'amin education in the twentieth century, however, has arrived at different conclusions about the function and utility of the Sliammon Day School. Wāhpāsiw argued that the Sliammon Day School undermined the Tla'amin education system and directly resulted in children rejecting the teachings of their elders and parents.³⁵ This, she argues, in addition to the impacts of Residential Schools and western-style housing, led to a breakdown in the traditional education of Tla'amin youth. While I do not disagree that the Day School was transformative, and in many ways disruptive, in Tla'amin life in the span of its existence, my research shows that the presence of the school actually helped many children maintain important connections with their immediate and extended families because it enabled most to avoid attending distant residential schools. Wāhpāsiw's contributions to our understanding of how changes to housing impacted Tla'amin education through a dislocation of extended families who once lived in communal longhouses are invaluable, however, her specific focus on the disruption caused by the day school has obscured aspects of Tla'amin agency and foresight. The Day School may have prevented parents and grandparents from being with their children for several

³⁵ Wāhpāsiw, 134.

hours a day during school days, but it enabled them to be with their children daily and meant children would not be sent away for months at a time. The Day School enabled many children to live at home in much closer contact with their families, elders, and physical territory than would have been possible if the majority of children were sent away to places like Sechelt. This was the vision that the Tla'amin had in 1909 when they petitioned to open the first iteration of the school. The operation of the school provided the ability to keep children at home in Sliammon, the new nucleus of the Tla'amin world, and gave an economic impetus to keep loggers working locally. Both of which had great impacts on work and family life at Sliammon in the twentieth century.

Logging was part of a larger economic strategy that served to keep families together, rather than children sent away to residential schools and parents who travelled long distances for employment. However, it did not mean that Tla'amin families permanently rooted at Sliammon for the entire year. Indeed, staying local was sometimes important, such as when working in a local logging camp, during visits from government and/or church agents, and for keeping children in the dayschool, but many Tla'amin families remained mobile and moved frequently throughout their territory and beyond based on the seasonal availability of resources and for different types of wage labour. Logging was the main industry that the Tla'amin pursued – but it was a seasonal job that fit into a system that relied on a variety of pursuits to form the Tla'amin economy. The Tla'amin, in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, created an economy that was both based on subsistence and working for wages. These pursuits were dynamic, and the Tla'amin adapted their traditional system of seasonal resource allocation to now include opportunities for work. Depending on the time of year, a Tla'amin person might be cutting down a tree, picking hops, fishing for sale or subsistence, picking berries, canning fish

either at home or at a cannery, trapping, hunting, or engaged in canoe making and cultural activities.

The Tla'amin organized their labour in a similar fashion to many other Coast Salish communities. John Lutz argued that Indigenous men and women in British Columbia and beyond typically lacked a single 'occupation' to maintain the ability to mobilize their labour in different ways at different points of the year. This, Lutz argues, was typical for most rural people in Canada, whether they were Indigenous or not. The difference, he notes, for Indigenous people was that they added this economy to a subsistence economy "that supplied them with food when other work did not."³⁶ Lutz also stated that this mixing of paid and subsistence work was based on the mobilization of entire family units to contribute to the functioning of the system.³⁷ Entire Tla'amin families would travel to places like hopyards, canneries, logging camps, or farms in places as far north as River's Inlet or as far south as Seattle. Men, women, and children all played specific roles in this economy and had responsibilities within it.

Indeed, the family unit is the most important lens for understanding the function of wage labour in Canadian life in the twentieth century.³⁸ Historian Joan Sangster argues that the focus on "workplace relations in a male-centered mold ...has obscured the vital role of social reproduction (such as the daily domestic recreation of the workforce) and the important connections of wage work to household, family, and interpersonal relationships, which were essential to an understanding of the whole working class."³⁹ Similarly, Historian Craig Heron

³⁶ Lutz, *Makuk*, 219.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 192.

³⁸ Bettina Bradbury established this as far back as 1979 in her article "The Family Economy and Work in an Industrializing City: Montreal in the 1870s", *Historical Papers* Vol. 14, no. 1 (1979), 71-96. Jane Humphries argued that the Marxist assumption that families and kinship were immaterial was in fact wrong – families were/are central to the material condition and stability of the working class ("Class Struggle and the Persistence of the Working-Class Family", *Cambridge Journal of Economics* Vol. 1 (1977), 241-258).

³⁹ Joan Sangster, "Introduction: Placing the Story of Women's work in Context", in *Earning Respect: The Lives of Working Women in Small-Town Ontario, 1920-1960*

demonstrated that wage labour is best understood in a complex familial and communal system where women and children are equal actors (not just a supporting cast for the assumed “breadwinner”).⁴⁰ This was increasingly true for Indigenous communities, who mobilized their labour in ways that required the contributions of the entire family to ensure the function of their economy. Lutz found that Indigenous labour efforts were often formed in family units and Indigenous people chose occupations that provided opportunity for the entire family and fit within seasonal subsistence patterns.⁴¹ Historian Mary Jane McCallum argues that studies of Indigenous labour are too often focused on Indigenous men, leaving the impression that Indigenous women either played no meaningful role in the wage labour economy or that their exclusion from waged work was natural and not an inherent part of the colonial scheme, despite the ample evidence that Indigenous women are an integral part of wage-labour economies.⁴² Further, as Sangster explains, Indigenous people in Canada persisted in organizing in multi-occupational and multi-earner families, despite colonial efforts aimed to organize Indigenous people into nuclear family groups around a male breadwinner.⁴³

Before handlogging was displaced by steam-powered (and later fossil-fuel powered) machinery and commercial camps, Tla’amin men and women both contributed directly to the logging economy at Sliammon. The anecdote used to introduce this chapter certainly describes the labour of men and women to get out logs to build the church, but women and men both contributed labour to logging in typical handlogging operations. In 1973 Rose Mitchell explained that men would go up into the bush to log the trees, and women would use horses to haul the logs

⁴⁰ Craig Heron, *Lunch Bucket Lives: Remaking the Workers’ City* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2015), 307.

⁴¹ Lutz, *Makuk*, 192.

⁴² Mary Jane Logan McCallum, *Indigenous Women, Work, and History: 1940-1980* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), 5-6.

⁴³ Joan Sangster, “Chapter 1: Aboriginal Women and Work Across the 49th Parallel: Historical Antecedents and New Challenges, in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism*, Carol Williams, Ed.(Chicago: University of Illinois, 2012), 28-29.

to the bay. Mitchell explained that the women would construct “skid roads” (a road built by laying smaller logs along the forest floor so that logs would ‘skid’ across them) and then use fish oil as lubrication to slide the logs to the booming grounds.

Historians Susan Roy and Ruth Taylor documented the roles of women and men in Coast Salish handlogging operations. Just down the coast in Sechelt (the Tla’amin’s southern neighbours and kinship relations), Shishalh women and men worked collectively to get their logs to market. In ways that were very similar to how the Tla’amin handlogged (they undoubtedly used the same systems as their neighbours), Shishalh men logged trees on bluffs and coastal embankments and then rolled them into the sea. Once the logs hit the water, Shishalh women took over and hauled the logs to a central booming ground. Shishalh elder Clarence Joe Sr. described these early twentieth century operations: “When the logs hit the water, the women were there with their canoes. They were the ones that towed it to the booming grounds – tie it up in the booming ground...The women played a big role in the hand logging days.”⁴⁴ It was the same for women in the Tla’amin handlogging economy, before the industry changed and industrialized and commercial logging camps became the main source of logging labour for many coastal Indigenous people.

In 1973 Rose Mitchell provided anthropologist Randy Bouchard with an overview of how the Tla’amin community worked in the early twentieth century.⁴⁵ She described how in the early morning, male loggers typically left first, heading up into the bush to start cutting down trees. The women then woke up the children and gave them their instructions for the day (tasking them

⁴⁴ Susan Roy and Ruth Taylor, “We Were Real Skookum Women: The Shishalh Economy and the Logging Industry on the Pacific Northwest Coast”, in *Indigenous Women and Work: From Labor to Activism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 113.

⁴⁵ Rose Mitchell and Elizabeth Harry, interviewed by Randy Bouchard, December 1973, Tla’amin Nation Archives, OTH 9.

with domestic chores and food gathering), before heading out with other men and women to fish. The fishers returned with their catch, and then several of the women headed into the woods to start hauling the timber to the bay. Those who did not head into the woods to haul the logs would break down and cook the freshly caught fish on the beach. Then, they baked bread on the open fire and prepared lunch for the loggers. Each task overlapped and complimented the other, providing the Tla'amin daily lives with cohesion built around several tasks- logging, fishing, cooking and preserving food, and ensuring domestic chores were completed.

Joe Mitchell, in 1996, recalled this system at work in Sliammon during his youth in the mid-twentieth century. In the early hours of the morning, he remembered, “you could hear people moving around: it would just breaking daylight and you could hear people already moving around to go fishing or hunting or looking for wood logs or things like that ... cutting wood, helping each other with the wood. It seemed to be a really busy place a while back.”⁴⁶ These oral histories demonstrate the dynamic nature of the Tla'amin economy. Based on a strong work ethic, and a desire to sustain a strong community, the Tla'amin worked as family and community units to ensure they had enough food and cash not only for that day but for the future. Joe Mitchell described this system using hunting as a perfect analogy:

In my generation it was all...for the use of the community...My job was to get it home. To go hunting. Get two deer, bring it home and hang it up. My mother would take the hide off and cut it up. From there my sisters would go invite the elders and people with big families...That was the last thing on my mind was to say, “hey I want two bucks for that.” If you're lucky and then when they're lucky then you got it back in return. So that's how I remember our communities. You never get such a good feeling as when you see somebody walking away and that's going to enjoy something you brought home. Boy it used to make me feel like a million dollars.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Hewkin Joe Mitchell, interviewed by Maynard Harry, April 1 1996, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Mary Jane Harry recalled similar stories when reminiscing about life in Sliammon as she grew up in the 1920s and 30s:

They would all go hunting. They get home and they would have about seven or eight deer; they would skin it all down on the beach, then the [church] bell would ring. They spread the meat and all the people would go down to the beach and help themselves. That is how it was long time ago. Everybody would help themselves to how ever much they wanted. Sometimes they would go fishing and they would bring lots of fish home and the bell would go again and everybody would go and get as much as you want, that is how it was long time ago.⁴⁸

These memories provide a means to understand the nature of the Tla'amin economy in the twentieth century. The subsistence economy that existed alongside the monetary one was not simply supplemental, it was complementary. These systems worked together to allow the Tla'amin to provide for their family and community in ways that would have been impossible if they had relied on one over the other. As Joe Mitchell stated, goods were shared when available on the understanding that the favour would be returned if the tables turned. This was also true for the moneys earned through commercial logging operations. They served both to sustain individual family economies through wages but also to the function and cohesion of the broader community. Further, this system required men and women to work in dynamic and responsive family units that shifted economic focus dependent on the season or opportunity. In these ways, men and women built their families and communities alongside newly introduced colonial economics and their traditional subsistence economies. These systems continued to work in balanced ways throughout the mid twentieth century.

Many Tla'amin women found a key source of income in selling cultural goods in settler towns. Roy and Taylor described how basket making, alongside other work conducted by Coast

⁴⁸ Mary Jane Harry, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, December 9 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS 65 and 66.

Salish women, was “integral to family and community survival. They produced goods for extended family and community use and brought in hard cash, enabling both the survival and persistence of Indigenous economies.”⁴⁹ As historian Katya MacDonald outlines in her history of handmade Indigenous items, income derived from basket making served to supplement or replace male incomes earned by working for wages.⁵⁰ Tla’amin women created beautiful woven cedar baskets and packed them to places like Powell River or Savary Island to sell to white communities.

Tla’amin elder Katherine Blaney, who learned how to make baskets from her mother, explained that when families would travel to logging camps, men would head up into the bush to log and the women would gather cedar roots closer to their float homes. Sometimes, the men would collect cedar roots as they logged. At one particular place, Bliss Landing, Blaney explained that there were several Tla’amin families engaged in this mixed-economic endeavor:

We lived there [at Bliss Landing] for a long time...there was lots of people living there. We had a house there, my mother was making baskets then they would travel to Savary Island to sell, Christine, Tollissott, they would finish their baskets and go and sell in on Savary Island. It was a lot of fun when we were living there, trolling, we did everything... we used to go up the woods there, they were logging there. On’yess (Agnes McGinnis) and Dick McGinnis was there at the bay, Jimmy Harry used to go up to the woods and said there was cedar trees up there, he would get roots for Christine and Lou’wesa.⁵¹

Elsie Paul remembers travelling with her Grandparents so her grandfather could obtain work in logging or fishing. They lived in a float home, and while her grandfather was working Paul and her grandmother fished, dug for clams, or harvested cedar roots for basket weaving. Paul

⁴⁹ Roy and Taylor, “We Were Real Skookum Women,” 107.

⁵⁰ Katya MacDonald, “Making Histories and Narrating Things: Histories of Handmade Objects in Two Indigenous Communities”, unpublished doctoral dissertation (University of Saskatchewan, 2017), 62.

⁵¹ Katherine Blaney, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 15 1998, Tla’amin Nation Archives, MIS 59B.60.

remembers being at places like Brem River, where there were several Tla'amin families living in floats to access logging work and to harvest resources near the camp.⁵²

Annie Dominic explained that basket making was an important contributor to the Tla'amin family economy, especially at certain points of the year. In the summer, Tla'amin women travelled to Savary Island to tap into the lucrative tourism market. The Tla'amin took the opportunity to gather cockles (clams) while at Savary, and while doing so, the white residents would “wade out into the water” to purchase or trade for baskets with the women.⁵³ Dominic explained that their boats and canoes were loaded up with baskets, and the women either accepted cash or trade for goods. Dominic remembered a shelf in her Aunt's home which was filled with baskets in preparation for the Christmas season. Her Aunt was so busy that she collected orders for baskets in advance, and then enlisted the female members of her family to help with the production.⁵⁴

The Tla'amin community, and the families that lived within it, developed this economy in ways that allowed them to move throughout their territories and beyond, but also allowed them to maintain the function of Sliammon as a community hub. Indeed, Sliammon was the main village and contained the church, council house, school, and many family's main homes. The Tla'amin used their timber and salmon to provide a consistent inflow of cash through the surrender of timbered lands on reserve and commercial fishing, and individual families made their economies along both local logging work and procurement of resources, and also travel for paid labour in other parts of their territory and beyond. The result was a dynamic economy that was built on a mix of mobility and permanence. The Tla'amin had to remain in Sliammon

⁵² Paul, *Written as I Remember It*, 94-95.

⁵³ Annie and Dave Dominic, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS 62.63.64A.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

enough to keep it functioning as the hub of their entire economy – yet the Tla’amin also needed to leave for extended periods several times a year in order to ensure that they made enough cash to maintain both family and community coffers.

Elsie Paul, who grew up in Sliammon during the mid-twentieth century, described how the village had a “Home Guard” that kept the village functioning when many others were off working elsewhere. Paul recalled how older men and women – too old for work in logging camps or in other industries, but by no means infirm – remained in Sliammon alongside elders, families with babies or toddlers to provide important services that kept the village functioning. The Home Guard would hunt, fish, trap, gather firewood, and do other tasks that kept food on tables and home fires burning.⁵⁵ Paul remembered one of these Home Guards, Sandy Timothy (Chief Tom’s brother), who was widely known as an excellent fisher who would share his catch with everyone in the community. Indeed, Timothy travelled throughout Tla’amin territory fishing, and he would also stop at stores and towns to sell or exchange portions of his catch to procure other goods for the community. Timothy then returned to Sliammon with fish, supplies, and even treats for the smaller children. Paul and other elders remember Sandy Timothy pulling up on shore, where they gathered around the bow of his canoe seeking “Pink Popcorn,” one of Timothy’s frequent purchases. Robert and Elizabeth Blaney recollected fondly their childhood memories of the sugary pink treat, and they remember Sandy Timothy being an excellent fisher who sold or traded fish for a variety of goods at places like Blubber Bay (Texada Island), and upon his return he happily shared to spoils of his efforts with the community.⁵⁶ Timothy serves

⁵⁵ Paul, *Written as I remember it*, 242-243.

⁵⁶ Elizabeth and Robert Blaney, interviewed by Colin Osmond and Drew Blaney, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

as one example of the Home Guard, a built in component of the Tla'amin system that depended on mobility and seasonality, but also on the permanent function of the Sliammon community.

Ernie Harry also discussed the Sliammon Home Guard and its function in the community. Coast Salish communities relied on occupational leaders, defined as 'Task Masters' by scholars, who were especially adept in their trade and were responsible for planning and executing work projects.⁵⁷ Harry explained that the community 'Task Masters' held meetings to decide how best to allocate their labour before heading out to pursue fishing, logging, hunting, or gathering:

Yes, they had certain people looking after, they had other people stay behind, like if you leave your wife and you go clam digging in the winter time, and she stays home if she was pregnant, there was always 10-15 men left behind, but they still work but they always leave three or four men behind. They always seem to gather, hold a meeting and the Chief asks the people who wants to go out, who wants to go this way, and you put your hand up if you want to go this way, and they count that and they put your name down, where you going to be at, the people that stays, most of them went clam digging, about 10 - 15 boats.⁵⁸

The Tla'amin developed their mid-twentieth century economic system in ways that were designed to utilize the skills and labour of the entire family, but with the support of the entire community. It was dynamic, mobile, and adaptable, and relied on the actions, decisions, and labours of women and men. In fascinating ways, this system, although based on engagements with a modern wage economy, had many similarities with the ways that traditional Tla'amin economies functioned before the impacts of settler colonialism reshaped their lives and economies.

⁵⁷ Historian Keith Carlson and anthropologist Jay Miller both use the term 'Task Master' to define these "special interest groups" within Coast Salish societies. Task Masters were highly skilled and typically held hereditary title to specific resource sites. They were also often the receivers of spiritual guidance and help that gave them special privileges in their trade. Carlson provides an excellent discussion of Coast Salish Task Masters in: *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 48.

⁵⁸ Ernie Harry, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 23 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS 61.

The Tla'amin economic system built on a web of family and community relations that ensured people always had plenty of food to eat, and plenty preserved for winter or times of scarcity. Rose Mitchell explained this system, which she learned about from her father, to Anthropologists Randy Bouchard and Dorothy Kennedy in the 1970s:

The old people always shared with one another...When the hunter returned home, his wife skinned the deer and distributed it to the people. By the time she had finished giving it out, there was only a small piece left for herself. The next day someone else went hunting. It was always like that in the old days. And the people would also go out clam digging. They made sure that they got enough clams for everyone...Each family was given some clams...the women would sometimes go hunting with the men. They roasted the meat over a fire and then packed it home in large baskets. Then the children were called to collect their family's food.⁵⁹

Indeed, traditional Tla'amin systems of wealth and status were built around wealth redistribution and reciprocity.⁶⁰ Through potlatching, before it was outlawed by the Canadian state in 1885, Tla'amin families could show their generosity by giving out food and goods to non-family attendees. This system functioned to publicly recognize certain events, such as marriages and name giving, but also worked to redistribute goods throughout the community. Rose Mitchell's explanation of the daily work that the Tla'amin did replicated the function of the potlatch on a daily basis. Those with food or goods were expected to contribute to the general well-being of their neighbours. This system was well alive in the mid-twentieth century, and it comfortably existed alongside wage labour pursuits within the modern Tla'amin economy.

Seasonal labour provided much cash for the Tla'amin economy, and the subsistence economy operated alongside to provide fresh and preserved food throughout the year. Indeed, the

⁵⁹ Rose Mitchell, qtd. in Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1983), 25.

⁶⁰ For more ethnographic information on potlatching, see: Homer G. Barnett, *The Coast Salish*, pgs. 253-257; for more specific information on the Tla'amin, see: Dorothy Kennedy and Randy Bouchard, *Sliammon Life, Sliammon Lands* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1983), 60-61.

Tla'amin food fishery operated to provide many calories in addition to those purchased from stores. These economies operated in complimentary ways – at several times of the year, for example, when salmon were running, berries were ripening, or clams abundant, the Tla'amin switched their focus to their subsistence economy. Given that most wage-labour jobs were seasonal and based on contract, Tla'amin labourers accessed more freedom over when and where they worked, and when they moved on to pursue a different aspect of their economic system. Even while many families pursued wages, Elders and the “Home Guard” spent their days harvesting resources from the land and sea to contribute to the function of the village economy. Fishing was one of the most important endeavors in this economy, and it was pursued both on the sea in boats and from the banks of rivers. Like it had for centuries, the food fishery in the northern Salish Sea provided a consistent source of food for the Tla'amin while the commercial fishing industry provided wealth. However, as more settlers expanded into Tla'amin territory into the twentieth century, the food fishery became a point of contention.

On October 8th, 1925, a fisheries inspector named J.F. Tait travelled from Powell River to Sliammon to inspect a recently constructed fishing operation on Sliammon Creek. Tait came ashore near the church and quickly made his way to the creek to destroy the fishing weir that was used to corral fish towards waiting Tla'amin fishermen. This weir was constructed by Tla'amin fishers to help bring in food for the winter. Dismissing the Tla'amin's right to fish for food on the reserve, Tait “broke up the dam” and told Chief Tom Timothy to keep his fishermen in line.⁶¹ Sam August (a Tla'amin ‘Indian Constable’ at Sliammon) reported the incident to C.C. Perry, the Tla'amin's Indian Agent, and stated that Chief Tom had repeatedly asked for permits that

⁶¹ Sam August, Indian Constable, to C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, October 8th 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

would acknowledge the Tla'amin right to fish on their reserves.⁶² August told Perry that Inspector Tait “would not [grant permits] because the Indians might sell to the Japanese.”⁶³ August then reminded Perry that they do not sell these fish as this “is the time everybody dries and salts salmon for winter.”⁶⁴ Tait ripped down the structure, and threatened to put anyone who uses the fishing weir in jail and. He also refused to grant permits to the Tla'amin fishers so they could catch their winter food on Sliammon Creek.⁶⁵

Tait's threats were not idle. In 1924 government officials confiscated fishing gear from Tla'amin, Klahoose, and Homalco fishers who were fishing outside of reserve boundaries.⁶⁶ These Indigenous fishers claimed that they had not heard of the recently created boundaries, and that they had rights to fish at their traditional fishing sites. After appearing in court in Powell River, they were given their gear back on the condition that they pled guilty to the charges and agreed to stay in the boundaries in the future.⁶⁷ Elder Hewkin Joe Mitchell remembered his mother telling him of all the troubles that they had when catching fish in the 1920s, when the government imposed new limits and boundaries on the Indigenous food fishery: “We got into a lot of trouble, I guess, way back then. Because of the new rules. I know my mother got into a

⁶² Sam August was the Tla'amin's Indian Constable – a band appointed officer who reported events to the Indian Agent and to the Chief.

⁶³ August to Perry, October 8th 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ J.F. Tait was a controversial figure in the history of the Indigenous commercial and food fisheries in British Columbia. On Vancouver Island in the 1930s, as Supervisor of Fisheries of Vancouver Island, Tait battled Cowichan fishers who sought to use nets on the Cowichan River to both catch food fish and to sell on the local markets. He also refused to allow weirs of any sort of the river. Historical Geographer Douglas C. Harris described Tait as an unwavering in his belief that weirs were illegal under B.C.'s fisheries laws, and stated that Tait was a man who had no doubt that “Department of Fisheries had the authority to regulate the Cowichan fishery... [and] he assumed jurisdiction” (Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism*, 176-178). He inserted himself into Cowichan politics, manipulating an inner-band conflict to support his views that nets, not weirs, were the best fishing practice for Indigenous fishers. Tait also believed that Indigenous fishers who worked for wages should not have access to food fish permits.

⁶⁶ J.A. Motherwell (Chief Inspector of Fisheries), to C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, September 2 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

⁶⁷ J.A. Motherwell (Chief Inspector of Fisheries), to C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, October 17 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

fight with a fisheries officer, she wanted to hit him with an oar. He was trying to stop her from fishing. She told him in no uncertain terms where to go. That was a river and she was going to take fish from it.”⁶⁸ The Tla’amin had fished at the mouth of Sliammon Creek for centuries. Known as Ook’las, the site once housed a large tidal rock weir that corralled fish and caught them as the tide dropped. Mary George remembered her Grandfather “talking about it all the time...he would say ‘I’m going for a walk to Ook’las, I’m going to look for fish.’ He would bring home flounder, herrings, he said that pond was very important.”⁶⁹

Indian Agent Perry sent lists of all the Tla’amin, Klahoose, and Homalco fishers to the government in order to get permits for food fisheries. Perry asked the government to grant permits for 41 Tla’amin, 38 Homalco, and 18 Klahoose fishermen.⁷⁰ However, Fisheries Commissioner J.A. Motherwell refused to grant the permits, arguing that the lists contained the names of too many men who were ‘able bodied’ and thus able to earn wages and therefore did not rely on the food fishery. Tla’amin fishers found themselves in a difficult position. Those who worked for wages still relied on their food fishery to provide a stockpile of both fresh and dried fish to feed themselves, and many of these “able-bodied” people provided a share of their catch to elders and other people who were unable to fish for themselves.⁷¹ Seasonal labour functioned in the Tla’amin economy because it allowed the freedom to also catch fish at various points of the year, and the calories added by the food fishery allowed Indigenous people to feed

⁶⁸ Hewkin Joe Mitchell, interviewed by Maynard Harry, April 1 1996, Tla’amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS.11.

⁶⁹ Mary George, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, August 4 1998, Tla’amin Nation Archives, MIS 52.53.54.

⁷⁰ C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, to J.A. Motherwell (Chief Inspector of Fisheries), October 29 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

⁷¹ For an excellent discussion on Coast Salish systems of sharing resources, see: Liam Haggerty, “Power and Prestige: Stó:lō Systems of Sharing”, in “Shared Identities: A History Of Sharing And Native-Newcomer Relations In Western Canada, 1800-1970”, unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, University of Saskatchewan (2015), pgs. 41-81.

themselves when work was slow or seasonally unavailable. Without official permits, all Indigenous people who fished risked being fined or jailed for fishing.

In mid-October of 1925, Fisheries officers and Police Constables from Powell River arrested two Homalco fishermen- Tommy Paul and Alex Paul – for fishing “illegally” on their reserve on the Homathko River.⁷² Both men were placed in police custody, tried, and convicted in Powell River - their testimony thrown out of court as “they could not understand English,” and each were fined \$100. When the men refused to pay, they were sentenced to two months hard labour in Oakalla Prison in Burnaby, British Columbia. Alex Paul’s wife pleaded that he be let out of jail as there were only trying to provide fish for their family. Mrs. Paul left Church House after her husband was arrested, and she went to stay with family at Sliammon.⁷³

Several Coast Salish fishermen were fined and/or jailed in the fall of 1925. Many of them refused to pay the fines, which spurred people like Perry to seek aid from the Federal Government. Superintendent of Indian Affairs Duncan Campbell Scott condemned the actions of the Fisheries officers, stating that the Department of Fisheries has no right to prohibit Indians from spearing and gaffing food fish that run through rivers on Indian Reserves.⁷⁴ Tommy Paul and Alex Paul were eventually released from Oakalla, and the 1925 trial of Squamish fisherman Dominic Charlie (*Rex V. Charlie*) ruled that Indigenous people have protected Indigenous rights recognized in Section 33 of the Indian Act that ensure Indigenous fishing rights for sustenance. The Court ruled that Indigenous people in British Columbia have the exclusive right to fish at their own discretion on their reserved lands. However, an appeal ruled that the government did

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, to Alexander Burke, November twentieth 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

⁷⁴ Scott’s condemnation of the Fisheries officers’ is discussed in this letter: W.E. Ditchburn, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, to C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, November 4 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

have the right to regulate *how* Indigenous people fished.⁷⁵ They ruled that some forms of fishing could be declared “destructive,” such as the use of weirs and gaff hooks. Therefore, while an Indigenous fisher could fish for food at any time on reserve, they had to follow government guidelines on the type of equipment that could be used. This meant that the government could favour non-Indigenous methods, such as angling, over Indigenous fishing techniques.

The tensions that arose over the Tla’amin (and other Coast Salish communities) subsistence fishery provides us with a means to examine its function within the Tla’amin economy in the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Tla’amin’s Indian Agent C.C. Perry explained that Tla’amin fishers were “just trying to get a few poor dog [chum] salmons for their tables,”⁷⁶ but he failed to recognize the key function of the subsistence fishery to the Tla’amin’s economic system. Fisheries Commissioner Motherwell understood the subsistence fishery as something accessible only to those Indigenous people who could not work (due to age, health, or disability) and therefore needed to rely on fishing to feed themselves. He also viewed those Indians who worked as commercial fishers, and had the gear for pursuing that line of work, as ineligible for subsistence fishery licenses. In other words, working age adults and fishers who were adept in the trade and therefore well suited to provide the winter food for their communities were unable to do so because of Motherwell’s personal interpretation of the law. Viewing the food fishery as an act of charity from the government completely misunderstood the function of the Indigenous economy that relied on seasonal flexibility in wage labour in order to pursue seasonal subsistence activities.

⁷⁵ For more on *Rex v. Charlie*, see: Douglas C. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries: Indian Reserves and Fishing Rights in British Columbia, 1849-1925* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

⁷⁶ C.C. Perry, Indian Agent, to J.A. Motherwell (Chief Inspector of Fisheries), October 29 1925, RG 10, Vol. 10899, File 167/20-2.

Wage and subsistence economies were not disparate systems – they worked in tandem. Indeed, it was through adaptation of the subsistence economy, through the addition of the pay for work system on a seasonal basis that allowed the Tla’amin to provide for their families and communities. Seasonal work mostly in resource industries allowed Indigenous people in British Columbia to integrate waged work into their subsistence and prestige economies.⁷⁷ Therefore, Motherwell’s condemnation of those who worked for wages and also participated in the subsistence fishery completely missed the dynamic function of these systems.

The governments of Canada and British Columbia set Coast Salish fishers up for failure from the start of their management of Indian lands in Canada. As Douglas C. Harris has noted, the Indian Reserve system in British Columbia was designed on the presumption that Indigenous people would have direct access to their fisheries. Harris argued that the government justified their appointment of small reserves based on Indigenous access to their fishing sites.⁷⁸ These reserves were meant to serve as fishing sites that would allow Indigenous people to continue their traditional economies through the fisheries, and also as places from which they could pursue wage labour and engage in the emerging Canadian economy.⁷⁹ Indeed, all six of the Tla’amin reserves were surveyed by the Indian Reserve Commission as fishing sites, and were meant to protect the Tla’amin’s exclusive access to their fisheries at these locations.⁸⁰ Tla’amin families were meant to provide for themselves through access to their fisheries and thus reduce the amount of relief required from the Department of Indian Affairs, but by the twentieth century they were increasingly being marginalized from this aspect of their economy.

⁷⁷ Lutz, *Makuk*, 230.

⁷⁸ Douglas C. Harris, *Landing Native Fisheries*, 187.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 200-201.

When Tait arrived at Sliammon on that cool October day in 1925, his breath smelling of whiskey and intent on destroying a fishing weir that was well within the Tla'amin's rights to construct and use to catch their winter subsistence, he challenged a system that he did not fully understand. The weir was part of a seasonal system of resource allocation that allowed Tla'amin families to not only provide fresh fish but also to smoke and preserve fish for the winter season. As the Tla'amin increasingly engaged in a wage labour economy, this fish weir (and many others like it) became parts of an economy that was both reliant on wages and the traditional subsistence economy. The seasonality of logging and commercial fishing required the simultaneous existence of the subsistence economy that would complement and supplement when either wages stopped due to the seasonal end of work or when economies slowed. Tla'amin families found themselves mobilizing their labour in different ways at different times – but always within a system that required the efforts of entire families and communities to ensure that it functioned to both facilitate working for wages and pursuing traditional subsistence harvesting.

Commercial fishing played an important role in the Tla'amin family and community economy. Logging remained the main focus for many, but commercial fishing often worked in symmetry given the timing of the late summer/early fall salmon runs and the high demand for workers in coastal canneries. Logging camps typically (but not exclusively) operated in the late fall and winter months on the coast, as this was when the risk of forest fire was at its lowest. This was especially true as more and more machinery was introduced to the industry, as running steam, and later gas-powered, equipment in the bush increased the risk of fire. As Peter August, a Tla'amin man who worked as both a logger and a fisher, explained, “Pretty much most of the men did [went logging]. We were all seasonal. Years ago it used to get so hot in the summer that they would close the logging down for fire season... So in the summer months there wasn't too

much logging happening. That's when we went fishing right? Commercial Fishing.”⁸¹ Both could exist within the Tla'amin economy without interfering with the other, and without interfering with traditional activities.

Since the development of a settler society in their lands, the Tla'amin found markets for their fresh and dried fish. Many Tla'amin fishers brought their catch to Wildwood, Powell River, or Lund to sell to the settler community. Eugene Louie remembered helping his father fish for red snapper off the coast of Sliammon. After they hauled in their catch, they travelled from Lund “all the way to Westview to sell, we used to get ten cents a pound.”⁸² Andy George told of his grandmother selling fish in Powell River and the communities around it. By selling salmon, George argued, the Tla'amin accessed a broader range of foodstuffs and received cash: “My grandmother sold fish. Fresh fish. I remember them walking to Wildwood, Cranberry, along with our baskets too. They sold salmon. They could increase what they ate. They'd buy potatoes, rice, salt and sugar... There was a lot of fishing those days. People would go out and trawl, they'd catch a lot of bluebacks, catch 10-20 a day.”⁸³

Catching and selling fish relied on both women and men's labour, and fisher's typically organized in family units. Ernie Harry explained that he would go fishing with his parents, and he recalled that his mom paddled the skiff while his father set and hauled in the net.⁸⁴ Robert and Elizabeth Blaney fished together out of a large dugout canoe equipped with an outboard motor. “She was my captain,” Robert Blaney explained, “we would go out with a little 30-foot gillnet, I caught a lot of fish with that. I used to keep the smokehouse going. She used to cut ‘em up and

⁸¹ Peter August, interviewed by Colin Osmond. June 14 2013, Sliammon, BC.

⁸² Linda and Eugene Louie, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 13 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, MIS 57.58.59.

⁸³ Andy George, interviewed by Colin Osmond, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

⁸⁴ Ernie Harry, interviewed by Maynard Harry and Connie Wilson, April 29 1996, Tla'amin Nation Archives, TUS 1.2.

slice ‘em.’⁸⁵ The Blaney’s shared their smoked fish locally with family in Sliammon, but they also found markets in local Public Houses and establishments: “I used to have the pub full of people eating my smoked fish! I used to have them in baggies. \$5 a baggie...\$10 a slab. And pretty soon everyone in the pub was eating it.”⁸⁶

In addition to the local fishing markets, many Tla’amin families packed up seasonally and travelled to rivers with large salmon runs to both work as fishers and in the canneries. The typical division of labour for an Indigenous family travelling to a cannery was that men would rent boats or join crews from a cannery and earn a share of the boat’s catch. Women worked in the cannery itself, cleaning and cutting fish, portioning fish into cans and sealing them, and/or packing them into boxes for shipping. Children also found work scrubbing cans to remove fish oil, and also cleaning cutting room floors and other tasks. Most families rented housing from the cannery, usually located on the same land, offering easy access to work. Indigenous families worked long days for the entirety of the salmon run, before cashing out and returning home via a steamship or by canoe.

This line of work was very lucrative for Indigenous fishers. Given that entire families would take up labour at the cannery, they left with a hefty cheque at the end of the season. John Lutz argued that “an aboriginal family of four working in the canneries for three months might earn the same annual wage as the tradesperson before moving onto their other income-earning and subsistence activities.”⁸⁷ Further, the Tla’amin had included the Fraser River salmon runs for centuries. Eugene Louie explained that “families from Sliammon would go [to the Fraser] and visit their relatives up there. They were designated a fishing spot in Chilliwack...each family had

⁸⁵ Elizabeth and Robert Blaney, interviewed by Colin Osmond and Drew Blaney, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Lutz, *Makuk*, 186.

a designated fishing spot in the Fraser River, they said this was Sliammon's fishing spot."⁸⁸ The Tla'amin loaded their canoes with the bounty of their territory, the resources that were unavailable on the Fraser, and trade them with their Stó:lō kin, thus reaffirming distant kinship relations and allowing the Tla'amin to fish for salmon in Stó:lō territory. The Fraser River salmon run had been part of the Tla'amin economy for generations, and the Tla'amin adapted this part of their existing economy to shift to cannery fishing and labour.

The problem, however, was that Indigenous families needed to sacrifice part of the earnings in order to work in the fishing industry. Limited capital, and the inability to build equity in property, made it impossible for most Tla'amin fishers to purchase fishing boats, and government policy made it difficult for Indigenous people to get licensing for seine fishing (the typical method used by white fishers in the twentieth century). Unable to participate in the industry as independent fishers, Indigenous fishers were forced to work for canneries where part of their wages paid for their spot on the company boat and in company housing.⁸⁹

The Tla'amin were able to build a commercial fishing fleet in the 1940s, and began to work in the industry as independent fishers. Several Tla'amin families purchased commercial fishing boats in the 1940s and began to operate in the Malaspina Inlet selling their catches to canneries on Quadra Island and elsewhere.⁹⁰ This Tla'amin engagement in the industry, after decades of working as fishers on company boats, came at the expense of another marginalized group. Japanese fishers on the coast had their gear, homes, and possessions confiscated during World War Two, and were moved inland as the government feared that Japanese immigrants –

⁸⁸ Eugene Louie, interviewed by Karen Galligos and Connie Wilson, October 13 1998, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS 57, 58, and 59.

⁸⁹ Lutz discusses Indigenous employment in the canneries at length in *Makuk*, pp. 185-190 and 204-210.

⁹⁰ One of the canneries that the Tla'amin annually visited for work was at Quathiaski Cove on Quadra Island, located across the Malaspina Strait from Sliammon. Basil Nicholson's Diary noted that Chief Tom and others travelled there with their families annually.

even those that had been born in Canada – might potentially be sympathetic to their homeland, or worse, spies. Japanese-Canadian families lost their homes and livelihoods regardless of the fact that many of them had never even been to Japan. The Tla’amin purchased several of these boats from the government at fire-sale prices, and formed their own commercial fishing fleet.⁹¹

Problematically known as “Jap Boats” in the community, these vessels became an integral part of the Tla’amin economy in the mid-twentieth century. Andy George remembers that there were at least a dozen boats at the docks when he was young; his father owned two of them.⁹² George remembers travelling with his family on these boats to various canneries along the coast – north to places like Smith’s Inlet and as far south as the Fraser. Having these vessels meant that the Tla’amin could work on parity with other fishers, given they were able to obtain the licenses. It also meant that they could use the boats to pursue fishing well beyond the cannery seasons, as they then had access to boats year-round.

The new fishing boats provided Tla’amin families with a much more lucrative way to access the commercial fishery. However, Sliammon Bay had no docks to house the fleet. To protect their boats, Tla’amin fishers docked their boats in Powell River or Lund before travelling back to Sliammon, resulting in dock fees and inconvenience. In 1945, the Tla’amin negotiated a deal with the Powell River Company (the owners of the Powell River mill) that brought important new infrastructure to Sliammon. In return for allowing the Powell River Co. to use

⁹¹ Paul, *Written as I Remember it*, 134. I first heard the term ‘Jap Boats’ when discussing a historical photograph with Hegus Clint Williams. The photograph had several fishing boats lined up in front of the village, and Hegus Williams referred to them as ‘Jap Boats’ but stated that he was unsure why they were called that. Upon further research, I learned that the name was in reference to the purchase of these boats from the government of British Columbia during the expulsion of Japanese people from the western coast of Canada during the Second World War. I later presented this information at an update to the Tla’amin Nation Council, where several councilors expressed that this history was unknown in the community. For a detailed account of the displacement and internment of Japanese families from coastal British Columbia in the 1940s, see: Patricia Roy, J.L. Granatstein, Masako Lino, and Hiroko Takamura, *Mutual Hostages: Canadians and Japanese During the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990).

⁹² Andy George, interviewed by Colin Osmond, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

Kleh Kwa Num (Scuttle Bay – a small tidal bay located on Sliammon I.R. 1) as a booming ground for logs, the Company would finance and construct a large floating dock in Sliammon Bay and extend its hydroelectric transmission lines to the community. The Tla’amin would receive \$100 a month in payment until the electric lines were connected and operational. The deal provided a dock that allowed Tla’amin fishers to keep their fleet at home in Sliammon Bay. But it came at a cost- Kleh Kwa Num was an important part of the Tla’amin subsistence system. The bay hosted an annual herring spawn that was a key part of the Tla’amin diet, and it was also an excellent place to gather a variety of shellfish. Booming logs was a destructive process, and would definitely impact the success of both of these resources. The Tla’amin decided that the sacrifice was worth it, and they signed the deal in the fall of 1945 and construction of the float began in November.⁹³

It is important to remember that many Tla’amin families relied on employment in the Powell River Co.’s logging camps, and having a booming ground at Scuttle Bay would result in local logging work.⁹⁴ Regardless, The Powell River Co. built the dock in Sliammon Bay, and paid the \$100 rental fee until November of 1947 – putting roughly \$2400 into the Tla’amin economy – but changed its mind on using Scuttle Bay as a booming ground as “their scheme proved unworkable.”⁹⁵ In sum, the Tla’amin received a dock and cash for agreeing to let the Company use the foreshore, even though they never actually placed a log in the bay.

The dock provided the Tla’amin with an ability to put more resources into their commercial fishery, and it became a bigger part of their economy in the mid-twentieth century.

⁹³ F.C. Ball, Indian Agent, to Major D.M. McKay, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, November 13th 1945, RG10, T-16104, C-11-2, Vol. 11078, File 167/31-7-6-1.

⁹⁴ A 1936 Letter provided a list of all Tla’amin men working in Powell River Co. logging camps (RG10, C0-11-2, vol. 11077, File 167/20-6), and there are numerous logging scale reports of Tla’amin men selling timber directly to the mill ever since it opened in 1912.

⁹⁵ H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent, to Major D.M. McKay, Indian Commissioner for British Columbia, November 7th 1947, RG10, T-16104, C-11-2, Vol. 11078, File 167/31-7-6-1.

In 1948, using proceeds from logging surrenders on Tla'amin reserves, the Tla'amin petitioned the Department of Indian Affairs to construct a dredged boat harbour in Sliammon Bay to provide safer anchorage for their fishing fleet.⁹⁶ The new boat harbour would be constructed by dredging out the opening of Sliammon Creek and bulldozing part of the foreshore to create a sheltered harbour. The Tla'amin Indian Agent, H.E. Taylor, reported to his superiors that sixteen Tla'amin families owned boats that would benefit from the construction, and he informed the Department that "an increasing number of the Sliammon Indians are turning to fishing for a livelihood."⁹⁷ The new harbour was complete by 1950, and was constructed using logs cut by Tla'amin loggers.⁹⁸

Andy George's father owned one of the Tla'amin's fishing vessels. George explained that his father travelled to a cannery in his boat and the company paid him for the fish he hauled in during the season. This was straight pay – no boat rental or housing fees – which resulted in more money in Tla'amin pockets. But the boats did more than just provide increased wages during the fishing season. George remembers that Tla'amin fishers used their boats in the fall to bring in chum salmon for their winter food stocks. Fishers like George's father brought in several hundred fish, and the whole community would come together to participate in the harvest: "He'd get 2 or 3 hundred chum and all the families would work gutting it... My brothers would be cutting the cedar to keep the fish spread apart [for smoking]. We all worked together."⁹⁹

By the 1960s, however, the Canadian government made key changes to the fishing industry that disadvantaged Indigenous fishers – much like it did many smaller fishing operations. The

⁹⁶ Sliammon Indians, to the Department of Indian Affairs, May 5 1948, RG10, Reel c-14887, volume 8745, file 987/8-10-6-1 pt. 1.

⁹⁷ H.E. Taylor to D.J. Allen, June 21 1948, RG10, Reel c-14887, volume 8745, file 987/8-10-6-1 pt. 1.

⁹⁸ A.G. Leslie, Trusts and Annuities Division, to H.E. Taylor, Indian Agent, March 17 1950. RG10, Reel c-14887, volume 8745, file 987/8-10-6-1 pt. 1.

⁹⁹ Andy George, interviewed by Colin Osmond, April 11 2019, Sliammon, B.C.

Government actively pursued a license buy-back scheme that aimed to consolidate control of the coastal fisheries in the hands of large corporations.¹⁰⁰ Holders of smaller fishing licenses, like the Tla'amin, were denied renewals and forced to sell their quota back to the government, who then turned around and gave them to capital driven large corporations who owned majority shares in the fishery. By the late 1960s the Tla'amin fleet had been sold or hauled into dry dock. It lasted for a mere twenty-five years.



Figure 4.2: Figure 2 Tla'amin Commercial Fishing Fleet, 1958 (Courtesy of Powell River Museum and Archives)

¹⁰⁰ Lutz, *Makuk*, 209.



Figure 4.3: Commercial Fishing boat hauled up at Sliammon (Courtesy: <http://publications.ravenspacepublishing.org/as-i-remember-it/fishing-boat>)

Technological changes also contributed to the marginalization of the Tla'amin commercial fishery. New boats with refrigeration units travelled further and stayed out longer. Many of the canneries that dotted the coastline closed their doors as these new fishing vessels could now use a few large canneries as a home base and travel much further before returning to unload their catch.¹⁰¹ Andy George recalled that his father sold his license and his boats to a fishing company in Powell River when he retired. The company incorporated the license into their holdings and left George's boats to rot on the shore. Today, when walking along the shores of Sliammon Bay it is possible to see the piles that are the only reminders of the once bustling, but short lived

¹⁰¹ Lutz, *Makuk*, 205.

Tla'amin docks at the mouth of Sliammon Creek. Weather worn and caked in salt, these wooden piers once secured and protected the Tla'amin fleet from the winds and waves of the Malaspina Strait, and in turn, these boats provided Tla'amin families with a means to put money in their pockets and food on their tables.

With the decline in fishing, many Tla'amin families turned their focus back to logging. Logging had never diminished in importance in the Tla'amin economy, and it provided a safety net when the Tla'amin commercial fishery began to waiver. Tla'amin Elder Hewkin Joe Mitchell recalled that when he was a younger man with a family to support, in the late 1960s, “fishing started to slow down...they were starting to cut the days down to four days a week and then three days a week fishing. It was beginning to look more like a gamble than a sure thing, and by this time we'd been married a year, I already had a son, so I decided to go to the logging camp and stay there, at least I was assured of money coming in every two weeks to look after my family.”¹⁰² Mitchell's experience was not unique – many Tla'amin families relied on consistent work in logging in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s to provide the main source of their income from wage labour. Les Adams explained that “In them days, there were a lot of loggers, and the whole area was just full of logging. You could quit one job today and have another one by tomorrow...100% of our boys were loggers.”¹⁰³ Gary Mitchell, Joe Mitchell's son, remembered growing up learning the importance of logging to the Tla'amin economy before heading into the woods himself:

These elders, [logging] is all they know. That's their life. And back in the day they [logging companies] used to come seek us out around here. This is the stories that I've heard. They used to work in one camp, they'd quit or get laid off, they'd go to the next camp, and they got a job. That's when jobs were plentiful. They just worked

¹⁰² Hewkin Joe Mitchell, interviewed by Maynard Harry, April 1 1996, Tla'amin Nation Archives, Traditional Land Use Study, MIS.11.

¹⁰³ Leslie Adams, interviewed by Colin Osmond, June 10 2013, Sliammon, BC.

wherever. All over the coast. But that's the way it was back in the day. Logging was pretty big business.¹⁰⁴

Fishing still provided important calories for the Tla'amin diet, and some still plied the waters of the Salish Sea in the commercial industry. But the fishing industry had changed, and the Tla'amin, like many other Indigenous communities (and smaller operations run by white fishers) found themselves with dated equipment in an industry that required increased capital and cutting-edge technology to remain competitive.

This chapter has outlined some of the broader challenges and changes that the Tla'amin negotiated within their family and community economies in the twentieth century. Forced to adapt to a slew of constantly changing and inconsistent laws surrounding Indigenous resource rights, as described here using timber and fishing, Tla'amin families remained responsive and dynamic, accessing both wage and subsistence economies to feed their families and maintain (and grow) their community. The resulting community at Sliammon operated in ways that speak to this adaptability. The church, finished in 1901, represented the use of traditional Indigenous forestry practices to fuel a modern endeavor. The School opened in 1909 incorporated both commercial logging and western education to ensure that children could stay with their families and engage in various aspects of their community life and traditional Tla'amin education. Entire families travelled to logging camps and canneries, where men, women, and children engaged in economic tasks that worked in harmony with the Tla'amin subsistence economy. Tla'amin women adapted a traditional activity, basket making, to a commercial market that provided an important income to many Tla'amin families. The commercial fishing fleet, acquired in the 1940s, allowed Tla'amin fishers to engage the commercial market after their subsistence fishery had become the target of inconsistent governmental policies. These adaptations highlight the

¹⁰⁴ Gary Mitchell, interviewed by Colin Osmond. July 31 2015, Sliammon, BC.

persistence of the Tla'amin traditional economy in many ways – reliance on seasonal availability of resources (and wages), focus on family as the key mobilizing unit, and the nature of women and men's labour in a dynamic system.

Chapter Five: The (Re)settlement of Epekwitk aq Piktuk and the Remaking of the Mi'kmaw World, 1773-1864

In the fall of 1773, the Mi'kmaq living near A'Se'k looked out over the choppy waters of the Northumberland Strait, and saw the rough outline of the ship Hector's sails on the horizon. These were not the first tall ships that the Mi'kmaq had witnessed on the waters of Epekwitk aq Piktuk.¹ French traders had visited the harbour since the seventeenth century, and the Hector followed a meagre population of settlers from Philadelphia who arrived several years earlier. Of course, the British and French had built massive fortresses at Halifax and Louisburg respectfully, but they were too distant to have much direct impact on the Mi'kmaw in Piktuk. Carrying a ragtag group of Scottish Highlanders, the weather-beaten fluyt arrived on September 15th - too late in the season to plant crops, even if the ground was cleared to do so. The ship's stores were nearly depleted after storms had pounded the Hector's aging hull into an extended voyage, and those already living at the settlement had little to spare. Smallpox broke out during the voyage and greatly weakened the Hector's passengers, leaving them tired, desperate, hungry, and sick on their arrival.

The Mi'kmaq who were living at various places around the harbour provided these displaced Highlanders with food and taught them the skills needed to survive the cold and wet winters on the North Atlantic coast. Historian Rev. George Patterson gathered memories from those early settlers, one of whom was his grandfather, John Patterson. Patterson recalled that it was with "much kindness" from the Mi'kmaq that his ancestors survived those first winters.²

¹ Epekwitk aq Piktuk is the Mi'kmaq region that covers much of the shores of the Northumberland Strait between Cape Breton and the Peninsula, and also includes Prince Edward Island.

² Rev. George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877), 92.

They taught them how to make snowshoes, build shelters to withstand the cold and wet winds blowing down the Northumberland Strait, and to call and hunt for moose.³ Patterson, reflecting the stories he had heard, claimed “that from the time of the arrival of the Hector, they never gave the settlers any serious molestation, and generally showed them real kindness.”⁴ Patterson concluded on these early relationships, however, by highlighting that many of these settlers soon forgot these Mi’kmaq acts of kindness: “When the tables were turned, so that the whites had plenty and [the Mi’kmaq] were needy, it has not always been reciprocated.”⁵ Without Mi’kmaq assistance, many of these ill-prepared Highlanders would not have survived in the ‘new world.’

Of course, for the Mi’kmaq this was not the ‘new world’. It was their ancestral homeland. However, it was a homeland that their ancestors would have found increasingly unfamiliar due to the beginnings of settler colonialism, the process that the late Patrick Wolfe described as the displacement of Indigenous people from their territories and resources and the dissolution of their societies in order to establish a new colonial society on the appropriated land.⁶ The initial decades of colonization of Mi’kmaq land in what became Pictou County looked like anything but the type of structures that we associate with settler colonialism. As historian Joseph Weiss recently argued about the colonial settlement of Haida Gwaii on Canada’s West Coast, seeing settler colonialism as beginning when the first settler set foot on Indigenous land creates narratives of settler colonialism and its power to transform Indigenous space that require Indigenous people be “always on the verge of disappearing.”⁷ Recent scholarship has critiqued the utility of using settler colonial theory to understand the periods of exploration and early

³ Rev. George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877), 92.

⁴ Rev. George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877), 92.

⁵ Rev. George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877), 92.

⁶ Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native”, *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol. 8, No. 4 (2006), 388.

⁷ Joseph Weiss, *Shaping the Future on Haida Gwaii: Life Beyond Settler Colonialism* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018), 15.

settlement that occurred long before the emergence of settler colonialism proper.⁸ Much of what has been written about the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County's colonial settlement era situated the original inhabitants of the land as fledgling and fleeting shadows in the emerging settler colonial world – a phenomenon that occurred when the first Scottish Highlander placed his boot in Mi'kma'ki.⁹ It was not until the 1830s, however, that the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County began to experience settler colonialism in ways that significantly impacted their ability to access and harvest resources throughout their territory; and even then, they found ways to penetrate and side step colonial efforts at displacement.

The Mi'kmaq's persistence in their efforts to secure land between the mouth of Pictou Harbour and a tidal lagoon called A'Se'k (Boat Harbour) highlights how the area had always been an important area for the Mi'kmaq – and remained so during various attempts to settle the land. The Mi'kmaq had a thriving village on the site when settlers began to arrive in the 1760s and continued to use the land as their own holdings regardless of it being portioned out and deeded away to settlers in the late eighteenth century. However, despite the fact that it had been

⁸ For example, see: Keith Thor Carlson and Colin Murray Osmond, "Clash at Clayoquot: Manifestations of Colonial and Indigenous Power in Pre-Settler Colonial Canada: (The Overlooked 1792 Journals of David Lamb and Jacob Herrick)", *Western Historical Quarterly*, Volume 48, Issue 2 (2017), 159-188; Jeffrey Ostler and Nancy Shoemaker, "Forum - Settler Colonialism in Early American History: Introduction", *William and Mary Quarterly* Vol. 76, No. 3 (2019), 361-368; Alan Greer, "Settler Colonialism and Beyond", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2019), 61-86.

⁹ This narrative of Mi'kmaq dispossession and disappearance is clearly present in Rev. James Patterson's *A History of the County of Pictou, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877), where initial insights into the Mi'kmaq-settler relationship disappear in favour of using the Mi'kmaq only as interesting characters (speaking pidgin English) within the general story of settlers. The *The Illustrated Historical Atlas of Pictou County Nova Scotia* (Philadelphia: J.H. Meacham & Co., 1879) has limited discussion on the Mi'kmaq in its opening gambit, and the rest of the atlas serves to cartographically remove Mi'kmaq from the landscape (aside from the small reserve at the mouth of Pictou Harbour). More recently, James Patterson's locally popular (and oft-cited reference in local high school reading lists) *Pictou County's history* (New Glasgow: Pictou County Historical Society, 1972) uses its opening pages to attack the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County as being an economic drain over time. Unsurprisingly, they disappear from the remaining pages of his book. Judith Hoegg Ryan's 1995 *The Birthplace of New Scotland: An Illustrated History of Pictou County, Canada's Cradle of Industry* (Halifax: Formac Publishing, 1995) does a slightly better job at including Mi'kmaq content, but it is still limited to Chapter introductions and insets set aside from the narrative as a whole, creating a feeling that somehow the Mi'kmaq are not really part of the history of Pictou County.

promised to settlers on paper, few of these settlers arrived to occupy their land until the 1820s. I discuss the many attempts made by the Mi'kmaq, through residents of the town of Pictou, priests, and by their own petitions, to secure their land around A'Se'k, at the place that came to be known as Fisher's Grant, and today as Pictou Landing First Nation. The government failed to recognize and protect Mi'kmaw property rights at A'Se'k, regardless of ample contemporary evidence that they were living and improving the land at the site upon the arrival of settlers. As a result, as the settler population grew and concentrated by the 1830s, the Mi'kmaq became landless in their own territory, with few options other than to 'trespass' on settler land in order to maintain a living.

By the mid-Nineteenth century, the Mi'kmaq had been alienated from villages, fishing sites, and hunting grounds that were now surveyed and pre-empted to settlers. After the Hector, subsequent waves of settlement brought more Scottish Highlanders to Pictou County, as did the end of the end of the American Revolutionary Wars, which sent thousands of Loyalists onto Mi'kmaq lands. The Mi'kmaq had been turned from benevolent hosts to 'trespassers' in the eyes of many of the settlers. By the middle of the nineteenth century, without land and with increasing encroachment on their hunting and fishing grounds, the situation had become inverted with the Mi'kmaq at Pictou coming to increasingly rely on meagre settler government aid to survive the long winters. Even access to such fundamentals as firewood were largely denied to the Mi'kmaq, who were frequently chased away from settler land for cutting trees to warm their families, and to manufacture items both for Mi'kmaw use and for trade and sale in towns like Pictou. But marginalization did not mean complete alienation, and certainly it did not mean assimilation or extinction. Despite settler efforts, the Mi'kmaq did not stop accessing their broader territory.

This Chapter discusses the history of the Pictou County Mi'kmaq in the nineteenth century to reveal the processes that led to the creation of Fisher's Grant, the first Indian Reserve in Pictou County, in 1864 – a century after the arrival of the first settlers in Epekwitk aq Piktuk. Settlement on a reserve, where the Mi'kmaq could engage in subsistence agriculture and sedentary living (in order to reduce relief requests and free up land for settlement), was central to the colonial government's plan to assimilate the Mi'kmaq. But somewhat ironically, it was the Mi'kmaq, not colonial officials, who pressed the hardest to secure a Mi'kmaq reserve at the mouth of Pictou Harbour. The government, alongside their failure to survey and secure Mi'kmaq land, adopted an intentionally miserly system of relief for the Mi'kmaq, which, compounded by the denial of reserve lands, stressed and distressed the Mi'kmaq living in Pictou County. However, despite the increasing pressure on Mi'kmaw land and resources that came with the rising settler population after 1830, the Mi'kmaq never gave up or abandoned their desire to regain control over the land between the mouth of Pictou Harbour and A'Se'k. This, the evidence makes clear, was due to the long history of Mi'kmaw use of the land, and to their desire to access markets for Mi'kmaw labour and manufactured goods at places like the town of Pictou. Mi'kmaw women and men provided essential as well as prestigious manufactured goods, such as baskets, quill boxes, axe and pick handles, and butter churns and firkins, and also fresh and salted fish for both local and market settler consumption throughout the nineteenth century. Typically, Mi'kmaw families often harvested resources together, but often divided production into gendered spheres. Women more commonly made baskets, quill boxes, dried flowers, and clothing, while men typically made axe and pick handles, firkins, and other wooden products.

These gendered divisions were less rigid in practice, however, and at certain times of the year women and men engaged in all aspects of the production of these goods.¹⁰

Despite the pressures from the colonial government at Halifax to remove the Mi'kmaq from their land near Pictou, many settlers maintained respectful relationships with the Mi'kmaq who worked and sold their goods in and around the budding settlement at Pictou. Many settlers, such as James Dawson and Hugh Denoon (discussed below) recognized the plight of the Mi'kmaq and pushed the government to secure land for them. Some settlers complained that the Mi'kmaq stole resources from land that they (in their understanding of land ownership) understood as belonging to them, were less sympathetic to the Mi'kmaq claims for land at A'Se'k and at the mouth of Pictou Harbour. The result was a confusing situation where the Mi'kmaq found themselves negotiating local intricacies and attitudes while simultaneously moving through a world that was increasingly dominated by settler colonial law.

These tensions were exacerbated as the settler population grew. The early settlement that followed the Hector was relatively slow. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the whole of Pictou County had a sparse population estimated at “1,300 souls.”¹¹ By 1817, the County had 6,737 settlers. However, by 1827 that number had doubled (13,949), and by 1838, 21,449 settlers lived throughout the county.¹² By the 1870s, Pictou County had ballooned to 32,114 people, a sizable County in the newly created Province of Nova Scotia in the Canadian Dominion.¹³ As

¹⁰ See discussion on pgs. 247-250, for example. Ruth Sawtell Wallis and Wilson Wallis discussed various elements of how gender divisions functioned in the daily life of the Mi'kmaq in Chapter III “Economic Life” (25-56) and Chapter XIV “Family, Kin, and Marriage” (226-247) in *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955).

¹¹ Patterson, *A History of Pictou County*, 164.

¹² The *Illustrated Historical Atlas of Pictou County Nova Scotia* (Philadelphia: J.H. Meacham & Co., 1879), provides an excellent overview of early Scottish and Loyalist migration to Pictou County. It does not, however, provide much detail on subsequent settlement. Rev. James Patterson provides an overview of the various Census data for Pictou County in *A History of Pictou County*, 442.

¹³ Library and Archives Canada, “Pictou County”, in *Census of Canada, 1871* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1871), Reels C-10559-10561.

settlement grew, the Mi'kmaq not only faced competition for their village sites, but also for access to resources such as hardwood, wild game, and fish. The development of an industrial economy in the County increased the competition, and thus further marginalized the Mi'kmaq from their lands and resources. The history of population growth in Pictou County fits within the general pattern of colonial growth in rural Nova Scotia. Indeed, as historian John Reid argues, colonial Nova Scotia witnessed a "period of intensive settlement that lasted from 1782 until approximately 1860."¹⁴ Much of the settlement between 1782 (the end of fighting during the American Revolutionary War) and the early nineteenth century, however, was focused around the colonial node of urban, economic, and political power at Halifax, and in a network of associated coastal towns on the southern and western shores of the province in what historian J. Brian Bird has called the "Atlantic-Shore pattern of settlement"¹⁵

While the settlement in rural Pictou County remained sparse in the early nineteenth century, places like Pictou began to host budding colonial populations. As various industries developed in Pictou County, Mi'kmaq labourers found a market for their labour, in jobs such as logging, stevedoring, fishing, and in the local coal and iron industries.¹⁶ The Mi'kmaq also engaged a variety of industries through the sale of wooden tools and raw timber (used in ship

¹⁴ John Reid, "Immigration to Atlantic Canada: Historical Reflections," *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society* Vol. 19 (2016), 45.

¹⁵ J. Brian Bird, "Settlement Patterns in Maritime Canada: 1687-1786," *Geographical Review* Vol. 45, No. 3 (1955), 402.

¹⁶ Historian Daniel Samson argues that several industries had developed in rural Nova Scotia by the 1830s, along with a budding working class. See: Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 8-9. Coal was first recorded by Europeans in Pictou County in 1798, with a settler named John McKay being given the first licence to mine for coal in the County in 1807. The General Mining Association (GMA) opened a coal mine at Albion (known as Stellarton, Pictou County, today) in the 1820s, sparking a spike in growth of the Pictou County coal industry. See "Men in the Mines: A History of Mining Activity in Nova Scotia, 1720-1992", *Nova Scotia Archives*, <https://novascotia.ca/archives/meninmines/timeline.asp?Language=English> Accessed October 2 2019. The ship building industry developed early in Pictou, with records of ships being repaired and timber being squared for that purpose in 1774. The first ship that was recorded as built in Pictou was the *Harriet*, which was launched in 1798. See: James M. Cameron, *The Ships, Shipbuilders and Seamen of Pictou County* (Antigonish, Nova Scotia: Pictou County Historical Society, 1990).

building and for mineshaft construction). In this context, my research reveals how government action (or lack thereof) created a confusing morass of laws and policies pertaining to Mi'kmaw land rights and use. Direct action and inaction by the colonial government made it increasingly difficult for the Mi'kmaq to build a stable economy, regardless of new and increasing wage labour and mercantile opportunities. The lack of a land base (caused by the Government's failure to properly survey Mi'kmaw land before assigning settler land grants) and the alienation from resources facilitated a reliance on government aid, which ran directly opposed to the colonial government's plans for the Mi'kmaq.¹⁷ As historian L.F.S. Upton has shown, "the touchstone of Indian policy remained settlement,"¹⁸ but without land, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County were forced into a feedback loop within the colonial gaze – they could not become 'civilized' in the government's eyes without land, and thus relied on periodic relief, which the government saw as evidence that the Mi'kmaq were lazy, primitive, and disconnected from settler society. Of course, these Eurocentric idealizations ignored Mi'kmaw perspectives and ways of understanding work and labour. The historical evidence mobilized in this chapter and those following make it clear that work ethic allowed the Mi'kmaq to survive even the most challenging times. This chapter examines these government created problems, which resulted in nearly a century of Mi'kmaq attempts to gain a land base in their own territory. And although the

¹⁷ Previous studies have linked Indigenous people's dependence on state aid and relief as results of the collapse of the fur trade economy, which had fostered Indigenous dependence on European goods and products (see Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930). More recent scholars have added much nuance to the role that relief played in the Indigenous economy. For example, see: Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as trappers, hunters, and middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1974); John S. Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Amongst the Choctaws, Pawnees, and the Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983).

¹⁸ L.F.S. Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia 1783-1871", 21.
<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/viewFile/11392/12142>

Mi'kmaq had shifted from a self-governed people to a colonized people that struggled to secure a footing in the settlers' New World, this is a story of Mi'kmaw agency, hard work, and resistance against staggering colonial odds.

The symptoms of colonial settlement on Mi'kmaw family and community life were many. The Mi'kmaq, whose population had been reduced and weakened by several disease epidemics spread from incoming Europeans, had to face a colonial system that favoured settler land claims over Indigenous ones. Their traditional economies challenged by settlement and competition for resources, they were thrust into a rapidly changing Euro-Canadian economy based on export markets and, later in the nineteenth century, industrial production. As their land base disappeared with the preemption of Mi'kmaw land to settlers, the Mi'kmaq were forced into a situation where they were landless in their own territory, which manifested in an ardent Mi'kmaw effort to reclaim their land at the mouth of Pictou Harbour. These efforts, however, were often more passive than they were direct: Mi'kmaw families simply refused to recognize settler claims to land and made decisions to live and harvest resources regardless of the settler presence. As Mi'kmaw historian and archaeologist Roger Lewis explains, in the early nineteenth century the Mi'kmaq's traditional economy imploded, resulting in changes to Mi'kmaq social structures and traditional ways of living.¹⁹ This process, Lewis argues, highlights Mi'kmaq adaptability and agency at a time of increasing pressure on their lives and resources. In this context, the Mi'kmaq remade their economy to adapt to settler colonialism.

Facing an influx of Loyalist farmers following the American Revolution, and recognizing that despite significant Indigenous population decline, the Mi'kmaq were there to stay, the colonial government of Nova Scotia sought to remake the Mi'kmaq into rural subsistence

¹⁹ Roger Lewis, qtd. in "A Relocation Experiment," *APTN Investigates*, Aboriginal People's Television Network (April 17, 2020).

farmers that organized as nuclear families.²⁰ In this way, the Mi'kmaq would not interfere with commercial economic resource extraction and development in the forests and mines, nor would they become financial burdens on the emerging settler communities. The most the government was willing to invest in the Mi'kmaq was the setting aside of marginal reserve lands, a few seeds and basic farming tools, and training in agricultural techniques. Through making the Mi'kmaq sedentary farmers, as historian Courtney Mrazek argues, "the British believed that agriculture would allow the Mi'kmaq to bear the costs of their own civilization."²¹ Indeed, as early as the 1790s, British officials saw the solution to their "Indian Problem" in "equipping the Indians to become self-supporting farmers."²²

Starting with the survey of Mi'kmaq land in Pictou County for disbanded Loyalist soldiers from the American Revolution in 1783, and with more aggressive colonial settlement in the first half of the nineteenth century, the colonial government appropriated lands through a process that Mi'kmaq Historian Daniel Paul describes as "delivering the ultimate blow to Mi'kmaq dignity."²³ Many Mi'kmaq, like those in Pictou County by the 1830s, found themselves landless and forced to camp near settler towns to find work and sell their various manufactures.²⁴ The Colony of Nova Scotia, under the British Colonial Office, struck a committee in 1800 to solve the issue, which was mainly focused around the Mi'kmaq in Halifax County. Their plan was to provide increasingly limited relief, agricultural training, and education for the children, to

²⁰ Courtney Mrazek, "After Planting their Few Potatoes They Wander About the Island': The Mi'kmaq and British Agricultural Policies in Nineteenth-Century Nova Scotia", *Journal of the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society*, Vol. 20 (2017), 18-19.

²¹ Mrazek, 19.

²² Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia", 8.

²³ Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savage: A Micmac Perspective on the Collision of European and Aboriginal Civilization* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1993), 173.

²⁴ L.F.S. Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia 1783-1871", 9.
<https://journals.lib.unb.ca/index.php/Acadiensis/article/viewFile/11392/12142>

ultimately “make them over into farmers, ‘useful members of society.’”²⁵ These plans resulted in the surveying of 9560 acres of mostly swamp, rocky, non-fertile land on mainland Nova Scotia as Indian Reserves in 1801, but none of them were in Pictou County.²⁶ The Government made a lackluster effort to understand the Mi’kmaq situation by attempting a census, before cutting relief funding in 1801 and 1803.²⁷ The Committee angrily debated relief costs, viewing Mi’kmaq seasonal mobility as idleness and laziness, and relief as wasted money merely sustaining such attitudes and behavior. The Mi’kmaq, however, understood relief and periodic government grants as part of their treaty benefits from agreements signed between the Mi’kmaq and the Crown in the mid-eighteenth century.²⁸ These payments were akin to interest in the Mi’kmaq mind, who were awaiting “fulfillment of the treaty...compensation for fisheries and lands long lost.”²⁹

In the fall of 1807, the Mi’kmaq of Nova Scotia were divided into twelve Indian Districts, partly as a means to understand and comprehend the size of the various Mi’kmaq populations in the Province. The colonial government was also attempting to solidify their relationship with the different Mi’kmaq communities in the years leading up to the War of 1812. The British sought to ensure that Mi’kmaq would support Britain in the case of an American invasion of Nova Scotia. The relationship was still tenuous, as the British had only recently solidified their colonial claim over Mi’kma’ki. The British wanted to ensure that if they could not rely on the Mi’kmaq as allies they would at least remain neutral. A war on two fronts, in a loosely controlled colony, was a war that the British feared they would lose. There can be little debate over whether it was in the

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savage: A Micmac Perspective on the Collision of European and Aboriginal Civilization* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1993), 180-181.

²⁷ Upton, “Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia 1783-1871”, 10.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

colonial government's best interest to deal respectfully with Mi'kmaq land claims, and yet in the end the British colony failed to adequately do so in Pictou County.

In 1808, the Mi'kmaq travelled across the harbour from A'Se'k to Pictou to meet with a government agent representing G.H. Monk, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Nova Scotia. The agent left the meeting with a troubling message. The Mi'kmaq refused to accept any gifts from him and told him that they would remain neutral in the prospective war until "they could form an opinion on the strength of the enemy."³⁰ The Mi'kmaq expected that the colony would be invaded and that the invaders would conquer the British. If this came to pass, one Mi'kmaw man warned, "in the case of war, he, and a few others, could scalp all of the inhabitants [of the village of Pictou] in two nights."³¹ The relationship between the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County and the Colonial Government was precarious at best – and the Mi'kmaq negotiated from a position of power. Pictou, in the early years of the nineteenth century, was a small colonial settlement – the entire County only had about 1500 settlers. It was a long way, nearly 200 kilometers of horse paths, from the center of colonial power in Nova Scotia at Halifax. The small settler population at Pictou initially had little impact on the Mi'kmaq, and the Mi'kmaq clearly believed that they held the balance of power despite the increasing settler presence.

The British did not control Nova Scotia in ways that allowed them to disregard these threats. Indeed, Monk conservatively (and likely incorrectly) estimated that the fighting force of all Mi'kmaw men on mainland Nova Scotia able to bear arms to be about 350-400 in 1808. While the force was small in comparison to the English garrisoned at Halifax, the British did not

³⁰ George Henry Monk to Sir George Provost, April 23 1808, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 430, Doc 145.

³¹ Letter from George Henry Monk to Sir George Provost, April 23 1808, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 430, Doc 145.

exert much control over Mi'kma'ki, especially in the Mi'kmaw lands in between the scattered outposts of colonial power on the coastline of Nova Scotia. Monk warned that if steps were not taken to control the Mi'kmaq in the event of war, the Mi'kmaq would be able to “harass and destroy the scattered inhabitants of the new settlements.”³² Pictou was one of these “new settlements,” and the Mi'kmaq warning struck fear in the heart of the British government. Considering the consistent raids that the Mi'kmaq had conducted at Halifax and the surrounding area, Colonial officials like Monk were worried that their precarious foothold might not withstand a unified Mi'kmaq attack that was supported by the United States.³³

In interesting ways, the Mi'kmaq grappled with geopolitical pressures and dynamics that threatened to isolate them from their territory and resources. They negotiated these pressures by not simply aligning with whoever offered them more gifts or promised sympathetic treatment, but by rather assessing who was the strongest and most likely to win if a war erupted. Even though British documents like the Royal Proclamation of 1763 aimed to reduce settler violence towards Indigenous people, which was markedly different than American approaches to settling Indian Country in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth Centuries, the Mi'kmaq weighed their options and considered the strength of each side and their survival through another international conflict in Mi'kma'ki. As Colin Calloway explains, the Royal Proclamation of 1763 had little influence on American settlers who felt justified moving east into Indian Country. Rather, Calloway explains that the Proclamation “aggravated tensions, alienating back country settlers and ensuring that many of them would throw in their lot with the rebels once the Revolution

³² Letter from George Henry Monk to Sir George Provost, April 23 1808, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 430, Doc 145.

³³ For more on the Mi'kmaq raids on the settlement at Halifax and at other colonial outposts in Nova Scotia, see: Jon Tattrie, *Cornwallis: The Violent Birth of Halifax* (Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield, 2013).

began.”³⁴ Regardless of American policy towards Indigenous people, which largely situated Indians as obstacles to American expansion and settlement, the Mi’kmaq assessed their situation, and made pragmatic decisions about their role in any conflict that might erupt around them.³⁵ This realistic approach demonstrates that the Mi’kmaq were well attuned to dealing with conflicting colonial powers – they had been doing so for over a century. And even if they were a small force in a potentially large conflict, they knew they would play a key role at the local level in any colonial conflagration.

Interestingly, although the Colonial Office granted limited funding to provide relief and supplies for the Mi’kmaq during the War of 1812, Monk’s answer to this issue was not to attempt to garner Mi’kmaq favour through increasing the number of gifts offered and through heightened efforts to make alliances, as one might suspect.³⁶ His plan was to use the Catholic Church, an important player in many Mi’kmaq communities, to root out sympathetic Mi’kmaq who would help organize pro-British Mi’kmaq militias in case of attack. These allies would be provided with clothing, arms, supplies, and significantly, land, seeds, and implements to plant crops. Monk estimated that these Mi’kmaq would inspire others to ally with the British. Monk foresaw that geographically anchored Mi’kmaq communities would become self-sustaining and no longer rely on semi-seasonal migration and government aid to sustain their populations, and thus would not interfere with settler and corporate interests who wanted direct access to resources to sustain industries such as ship building. Indeed, anchoring Mi’kmaq people would allow the government to count and control the Mi’kmaq in ways that the colonizers saw

³⁴ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 22.

³⁵ For more on American dispossession of Indian land, see: Lindsay G. Robertson, *Conquest by Law: How the Discovery of America Dispossessed Indigenous Peoples of their Land* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

impossible if they maintained their migratory systems.³⁷ Monk foresaw the increasing European settlement that would “occupy the rivers and forests” and take the country away from the Mi’kmaq.³⁸ In the eyes of the colonizers, sedentism and assimilation were the keys to turning the Mi’kmaq from enemy to ally, from foe to friend.

In the end, there were no violent encounters between Pictou settlers and Mi’kmaq during the War of 1812. Ultimately, the British and American’s had no major engagements in Nova Scotia and the Mi’kmaq were never forced to choose sides. Once the threat of American invasion had passed, the Mi’kmaq were left without consistent and reliable relief from the colonial government.³⁹ During the entire ordeal, the Mi’kmaq of the area had been clearing land and planting crops on the site of an important Mi’kmaq village between Moodie Cove (the entrance of Pictou Harbour, also called Indian Cove, today Pictou Landing) and Boat Harbour. Since the arrival of Scottish settlers in the region, the Mi’kmaq had increasingly cleared and planted their village across from the small settlement at Pictou.⁴⁰ Long before the British began to implement their control and plans for assimilation, the Mi’kmaq at Pictou had, on their own accord, altered a seasonal fishing village and important resource site to plant corn, wheat, and potatoes. Historian Jason Hall has argued that maize agriculture had reached the St. John River Valley (and the broader region) by 1680, and likely much earlier.⁴¹ Mi’kmaq Chief James Lulan and

³⁷ Keith Smith argues that monitoring, quantifying and surveilling Indigenous Nations was a central part of gaining control over Indigenous populations and resources. Smith argues that these systems of counting and control solidified the power of the Canadian State and made expansion over Indigenous land possible. See, Keith Smith, *Liberalism, Surveillance, and Resistance: Indigenous Communities in Western Canada, 1877-1927* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2009).

³⁸ George Henry Monk to Sir George Provost, April 23 1808, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG 1, vol. 430, Doc 145.

³⁹ Upton, “Colonial Policy in Nova Scotia”, 8.

⁴⁰ James Lulan, Chief of Pictou, to Sir Peregrine, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, March 2 1829, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol 430 (Indian Commissioner Series), File 168.

⁴¹ Jason Hall, “Maliseet Cultivation and Climatic Resilience on the Wəlastəkw/St. John River During the Little Ice Age,” *Acadiensis* XLIV, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2015): 3.

others had planted crops at the mouth of Pictou Harbour as early as 1780 (likely sooner). As had a Mi'kmaw man named Joseph Purnall, who was reported to be growing "potatoes, Indian corn, beans. &c...in several parts of the district [of Pictou County]" in 1800, suggesting that by the turn of the nineteenth century the Mi'kmaq were pursuing agriculture without direct government action to induce them to do so.⁴² Regardless of the fact that the Mi'kmaq had a significant land holding at Moodie Cove, occupied for centuries by their ancestors, the British government had leased the land to a Doctor from the 82nd Regiment of Foot, a disbanded regiment from the American Revolutionary War given a massive grant of land in Pictou County.⁴³ The Mi'kmaq were compromised from the start, and this sparked a half-century battle to obtain a portion of their land at the mouth of Pictou Harbour.

While it took the better part of the nineteenth century for the Government to recognize the Mi'kmaw claim to the land at the mouth of Pictou Harbour, the Mi'kmaq actively pursued them throughout the century to recognize their land rights. In 1829, Chief James Lulan, a "sober, honest, and industrious...Chief of the Indians at Pictou" petitioned the government to give his people their land at Moodie Cove, where they had been planting for "upwards of fifty years."⁴⁴ Lulan complained that the settler who had pre-empted the land, Thomas Moodie, had prevented them from planting corn and wheat in the considerable clearing they had made over the past fifty years. Without the ability to plant crops, in addition to decreasing access to hunting grounds and

⁴² Edward Mortimer, Merchant, to Judge Monk, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, 1800, cited in Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts From Mi'kmaq History, 1500-1950* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1991), 184.

⁴³ For an excellent recount of the settlement of British soldiers following the American Revolutionary War, see: James Cameron, *Pictonians in Arms: A Military History of Pictou County* (Fredericton: University of New Brunswick, 1969); George Patterson, *A History of Pictou County, Nova Scotia* (Montreal: Dawson Brothers, 1877).

⁴⁴ James Lulan, Chief of Pictou, to Sir Peregrine, Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, March 2 1829, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol 430 (Indian Commissioner Series), File 168.

fisheries due to increasing settlement, Lulan feared that his community would be destitute without a land base. Additionally, without ample hardwood they would not be able to warm their lodgings or be able to manufacture goods that were in high-demand by settlers at Pictou. These markets were still forming, but the Mi'kmaq recognized an important market for their goods and sought to protect their land at Moodie Cove to maintain both their cropland and their base for trade in Pictou.

Lulan's petition raises interesting questions about the Nova Scotia colonial Government's goals pertaining to the Mi'kmaq. It is clear that the government wanted to instill sedentary living through agricultural development for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. The British believed this would work doubly to keep the Mi'kmaq stationary (where they could be counted and controlled), and ensure the Mi'kmaq would be self-sufficient and rely less on government aid. Chief Lulan and the Mi'kmaq community called for their land to be surveyed in the onslaught of settlement in the mid-nineteenth century, but the government had already surveyed the land to settlers, causing friction between the government's settlement plans, and the Mi'kmaq's desire to settle on land they had occupied for centuries.

The Mi'kmaq had maintained their right to occupy the land at Moodie Cove, despite attempts to remove them from the vicinity. In 1831 Hugh Denoon, a Pictou Merchant, wrote to Sir Rupert George, the Lieutenant Governor of Nova Scotia, to request one hundred acres of land "adjoining Boat Harbour, about three miles to the entrance of the Town of Pictou and on the southern side of the entrance to the Harbour."⁴⁵ Denoon, who had developed a friendly trade relationship with the Mi'kmaq, reported that the land could be purchased for one hundred pounds, and that the failure to purchase it would result in tensions between the Mi'kmaq and the

⁴⁵ Hugh Denoon and M. Dickason, to Sir Rupert George, March 8 1831, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430, File 186A.

settlers on the land. Denoon stated that anything less than one hundred acres would be insufficient to provide a land base for the Mi'kmaq, and he hoped that the government would grant land to help relieve the pressure on "these unfortunate Indians."⁴⁶

Four months later, George Smith, a settler living in Pictou, repeated Denoon's calls for the government to recognize the Mi'kmaq claim to the land at Moodie Cove. Smith reported that he found the "Indians so attached to their personal possession at the entrance of the Harbour that no other [place] would satisfy them" and that Moodie had agreed to sell the land to the Mi'kmaq.⁴⁷ Smith stated that the land was "very convenient and desirable for these poor people" and that if the land was not granted to them it would be difficult to find any other suitable land in the region that would meet their needs in terms of agriculture, fishing and trading.⁴⁸ The Government, however, refused to secure the land for the Mi'kmaq, resulting in constant complaints by settlers and Mi'kmaq action to protect the rights to their village site for the next thirty-five years.

The lack of a land base from which to grow crops, fish, and provide a base for labour and trade pursuits in nearby markets, in addition to facing increasing pressure on their larger territorial hunting and fishing grounds, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County were forced to be "squatters" on their own lands – lands that had been permanently occupied, cleared, and cropped by the Mi'kmaq for the entirety of the European settlement period in Pictou. This resulted in a series of Mi'kmaq requests for food and provisions throughout the mid nineteenth century, as well as complaints from settlers that Mi'kmaq families were cutting wood, camping, and

⁴⁶ Hugh Denoon and M. Dickason, to Sir Rupert George, March 8 1831, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430, File 186A.

⁴⁷ George Smith, to Sir R. George, June 10 1831, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430 (Indian Commissioner Series), File 186B.

⁴⁸ George Smith, to Sir R. George, June 10 1831, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430 (Indian Commissioner Series), File 186B.



Figure 5.1: "Entrance to Pictou Harbour", Alexander Cavalie Mercer, July 10 1839 (Courtesy of Library Archives Canada) - note the presence of a Mi'kmaq village and agricultural land at the mouth of the harbour.

trespassing on their land. Chief Maltiel Sapier, representing a group of Mi'kmaq families living near Pictou pursued the Government for "benevolence...in the most liberal manner" in the form of blankets, clothing, and muskets for hunting in 1836 and again in 1837.⁴⁹ Without land, the Mi'kmaq were forced to live in a sort of hybrid world – one where they were unable to fully engage with the newly emerging colonial society, and one where they were unable to maintain their means of subsistence due to increasing settlement and thus pressure on fish and game stocks from settlers.⁵⁰ The Government's answer was to dole out meager amounts of relief

⁴⁹ Maltiel Sapier and other Indians, to Lieutenant General Sir Colin Campbell, January 18 1836, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, R.G. 1, Vol. 431, File 23.

⁵⁰ Drawing on Homi Bhabha's argument, that the colonial system relied on colonized people to remain in a subaltern position, the Mi'kmaq of Pictou were unable to engage fully in colonial society without land, and due to a higher settler demand on resources that the Mi'kmaq once exclusively controlled, were unable to live in the ways they had before the arrival of Europeans. This manifests in a tension between the settler and the Indigenous people, who now compete for the same spaces and resources. The Mi'kmaq must traverse this hybrid world from a disadvantaged place. The meagre amounts of relief given to the Mi'kmaq to seemingly offset this disadvantage furthered to depth of that hybrid world by creating a system where the Mi'kmaq came to see relief as a resource that could be provided by the colonial state, but the state would only provide limited resources as a means to keep the Mi'kmaq subdued. See Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 166-174.

funding, which barely provided a small portion of the community with any sort of meaningful relief.⁵¹ Many Mi'kmaw families received next to nothing from the government.

What is ironic about this conundrum is that the Mi'kmaq had, for several decades, attempted to incorporate aspects of settler life into their systems. These were often ones that also had value in Mi'kmaw traditions and ways of living, such as catching and trading fish, and manufacturing baskets and other goods. They had cleared land and planted crops at Moodie Cove, but the Government, due to its own failure to survey reserves prior to settlement, had not protected their land rights. Many Mi'kmaw labourers found work in the various industries around Pictou, and many provided important items for consumption by settlers in Pictou (fish, game, baskets, wildflowers, axe and pick handles, etc.).⁵² But without a land base, the Mi'kmaq were forced to either risk being evicted from a settler's land, or to move further north to Maligomish – an island in the Northumberland Strait that had been an important gathering place for Mi'kmaq from all over Mi'kma'ki for centuries.⁵³ Maligomish was too far from settler markets, and the Mi'kmaq required a land base close to Pictou to be able to use the town as a market for their goods and labour. The island, sometimes referred to as Indian Island (not to be confused with the large Mi'kmaw settlement in Cape Breton), was also too small for intensive agriculture and offered little protection during the winter months. Moodie Cove became an unflinching point of contention for the Mi'kmaq, were they dug in their heels and pushed to have their land rights recognized.

⁵¹ Letter to Thomas W. James, Esq. (Author's name illegible), January 18 1837, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 35.

⁵² Joseph Howe, Indian Commissioner, to James Dawson, Merchant, May 6 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 57.

⁵³ Lelievre, *Unsettling Mobility*, 7.

The Colonial Government began more concerted efforts to survey and reserve Mi'kmaw lands in Nova Scotia in the 1840s. Led by Sir Joseph Howe, the Indian Commissioner for the Province of Nova Scotia and later Premier of the Colony, the Commission was tasked with visiting the various Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia and ascertaining their land and property rights in the wake of recent increased settlement. For some, the Commission secured already surveyed land and made them part of the Colonial gridwork. For others, like the Mi'kmaq of Pictou County, the Commission was to listen to Mi'kmaw land issues and find suitable holdings that would provide them with ample space to build houses and develop agriculture. Indeed, the goal of the commission was the same as the goal before 1812 – make the Mi'kmaq stay in one spot so they could quantify and control them.

Howe was unable to travel to Pictou due to other commitments in Halifax. In his stead, he appointed James Dawson, a merchant in the town of Pictou, to act as a government agent. His task was to “represent [Howe], and do with the Pictou Indians whatever your own judgement dictates concerning your attention within the scope of the Act, and having in mind that a permanent settlement and education of these people, not one based on relief, are the primary objects.”⁵⁴ Howe asked Dawson to gain a better understanding of the land situation at Moodie Cove, and to decipher who owned the current title to the land. Interestingly, given that Howe must have understood that the Mi'kmaq had no land holdings in the area, instructed Dawson to give any Mi'kmaq person “disposed to make clearings” farming equipment and seeds.⁵⁵ Ironically, the Mi'kmaq had met this requirement at least three-quarters of a century earlier, if not a century earlier.

⁵⁴ Howe to Dawson, May 6 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, File 57.

⁵⁵ Howe to Dawson, May 6 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, File 57.

The Mi'kmaq had been dealing with Dawson for nearly twenty years, by Dawson's own estimation, driven mostly by his self-confessed interest in the "civilization of the Indians."⁵⁶ But Dawson was also a merchant who acted as a middle man between the Mi'kmaq and merchant ships seeking to load up on goods for their return voyages. He claimed he was sympathetic to the Mi'kmaq, and reported that even though he had developed a relationship with the community, he had "long and deeply regretted that he could do little for them."⁵⁷ Dawson believed that civilization required education and religion, but he also believed that settlers and Mi'kmaq alike needed to live closely, as Mi'kmaq goods were "necessary for the settlers."⁵⁸ Dawson understood that all of these factors were of a little utility if the Mi'kmaq were not provided with a sufficient land base that they could use to harvest timber, produce goods, obtain consistent wage labour, and educational and religious instruction. Dawson told Howe that religion, labour, and education efforts would remain "but preliminary to their settling in a piece of land and ultimately adopting regular civilized habits."⁵⁹

Dawson knew that the land at Moodie Cove would be the most desirable for encouraging the Mi'kmaq to engage with these societal structures. But we must be careful to not put too much strength and advocacy in the hands of the Government. The Mi'kmaq themselves had many reasons for wanting to secure their land holdings at Moodie Cove. As noted, they and their ancestors had used the land in this area as a village for centuries. They had also cleared a significant portion of land for European style agriculture, despite the government giving the title

⁵⁶ James Dawson, to Joseph Howe, January 26 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 127-129.

⁵⁷ James Dawson, to Joseph Howe, January 26 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 127-129.

⁵⁸ James Dawson, to Joseph Howe, January 26 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 127-129.

⁵⁹ James Dawson, to Joseph Howe, January 26 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 127-129.

to settlers. Dawson maintained that even without Government title and surveys, the Mi'kmaq had always maintained "*adverse possession*"⁶⁰ of the area, and would not vacate their lands. In a report on the history of the title to the tract of land at Moodie Cove, Dawson stated to Howe that, despite the title having changed hands several times since the original grant, the grant to disbanded soldiers from the 82nd Regiment of Foot, in 1783,

...no one claiming it has ever had anything like possession of it until a few years ago [1830s], when it began to be sold in small lots...and the parties in doing so have had to drive the Indians from their clearings where they grow potatoes etc. The Indians are so passionately fond of this lot, as it affords them great facilities for the fishery.⁶¹

Increasing settlement resulted in a situation where the Mi'kmaq were "driven from one place to another till they have not a foothold left they can call their own. Their very burying grounds have in some instances been desecrated by the plough."⁶² As more settlers came to Mi'kma'ki in the mid-nineteenth century, the land holdings that the Mi'kmaq had maintained through the early settlement period became contested and increasingly tenuous.

Settlement at Moodie Cove made it difficult for the Mi'kmaq to maintain their village, and while the Mi'kmaq harvested resources in the area, many families moved to Maligomish. This island had been part of a land grant, known as the Wentworth Grant, but given the Mi'kmaq presence on the Island the title was transferred to them by a settler.⁶³ However, the title transfer had never been completed by the government, even though several settlers testified and verified

⁶⁰ Dawson to Howe, May 19 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 129-135. Emphasis Added.

⁶¹ Dawson to Howe, May 19 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 129-135.

⁶² Dawson to Howe, May 19 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 129-135.

⁶³ James Dawson, Merchant, to Sir Joseph Howe, January 26th 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 129-135.

that they had witnessed the transfer of the title between the settler and Mi'kmaw Chief John Lapier.⁶⁴ From Maligomish, the Mi'kmaq pursued their right to occupy the land at Moodie Cove.

On June 25th, 1842, Dawson travelled to Maligomish to meet with the Mi'kmaq. However, many of the Mi'kmaq had left the village that morning to pursue the herring and cod fisheries. Dawson, accompanied by a local settler named John MacDonald, who was "much in the confidence of the Indians" met with Lapier, an elderly Mi'kmaw Chief who was tending to his potato crops when they arrived.⁶⁵ Dawson and MacDonald asked if they could speak with Lapier to explain the government's plans the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. Lapier agreed to listen, but he insisted that he first assemble several women present on the island to be part of the discussion. The Mi'kmaq gathered and listened to the men, and at their conclusion they expressed agreement "of these benevolent intentions." However, Lapier and the group of Mi'kmaq women collectively conveyed disapproval "of any of their children being educated in the white man's school because, when so educated, it would break off all natural ties of affection and association between them and their tribe."⁶⁶ The Mi'kmaq gathered did approve of getting more Mi'kmaq to plant crops on their lands, especially at Fisher's Grant, and Lapier personally agreed to do his best to encourage others to plant potatoes and other crops. Indeed, Lapier had already been helping others to get a potato crop into the ground by giving them shares of his seed potatoes and lending out his tools, an initiative that impressed Dawson. But attempts at agriculture by the Mi'kmaq would always be minimal and limited. Maligomish was much too small to provide the entire population with ample land for planting crops. Dawson reported to Howe that more land

⁶⁴ Maligomish, or Indian Island, was officially surveyed in 1865 as Merigomish Harbour Indian Reserve 31. Before this, the island was locally recognized as Mi'kmaw land.

⁶⁵ Dawson to Howe, June 25 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 136-141.

⁶⁶ Dawson to Howe, June 25 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 136-141.

would be needed, and the Mi'kmaq at Maligomish told Dawson that their land at Moodie Cove was the best location.

Moodie Cove was an important base for the Mi'kmaq fishery, and the various fish they harvested were not only for subsistence. The Mi'kmaq provided an important source of fresh fish to the Town of Pictou, and for salting and shipping to foreign markets.⁶⁷ Without a land base near Pictou, the Mi'kmaq would be unable to maintain this supply. Dawson reported to Howe that this market has provided an important income for the Mi'kmaq and has reduced the need for government aid in recent years. Dawson's view was that if Maligomish could be used as a place to teach the Mi'kmaq how to farm, they could apply those skills on larger reserves elsewhere. Moodie Cove would be a perfect land base from which to farm, fish, labour, and also to allow access for teachers and missionaries. But the government was unwilling to purchase the land, and regardless of Dawson's efforts, the Mi'kmaq continued to be considered squatters on their own land.

The lack of a land base required the Mi'kmaq to migrate to different parts of Pictou County, and to other regions in Nova Scotia, in order to survive. Indeed, as Michelle Lelievre reminds us, European settlement and colonialism did not put an end to Mi'kmaq mobility, rather, it just shifted the ways that Mi'kmaq people migrated.⁶⁸ Writing in 1843, Joseph Howe reported that as places like Pictou County became more settled by Europeans, the Mi'kmaq were being forced out of their lands by "the forest disappearing before the axe, and mills either damming, or in course of erection upon, every stream, are very likely to be deserted for others."⁶⁹ As more of

⁶⁷ Dawson to Howe, June 25 1842, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Indian Commissioner Series, Vol. 432, file 136-141.

⁶⁸ Lelievre, *Unsettling Mobility*, pg. 7-8.

⁶⁹ Joseph Howe, Indian Commissioner, "Report on Indian Affairs," Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 191.

Mi'kma'ki was occupied by settlers, and especially the most productive lands at river mouths and fisheries, the Mi'kmaq of Pictou County found their ability to survive in the changing world rooted in their mobility.

The government's motives for rejecting Mi'kmaw efforts to acquire title to Moodie Cove, despite the fact that their broader goals for the Mi'kmaq required settlement on a reserve, were influenced by the fact that there were settlers who wanted the lands for themselves. Despite the efforts made by Dawson and others in Pictou, the government favoured non-Indigenous claims to the land between Moodie Cove and A'Se'k.⁷⁰ This resulted in a petition from residents of Pictou in 1846, who requested the Legislative Assembly of Nova Scotia to survey and purchase land for Mi'kmaq.⁷¹ As Mi'kmaq sources of food and material became challenged with the rise of competition from the settler population in the County, industrial labour and "supplying the markets with fresh fish" had become more central to the Mi'kmaq economy.⁷² Further, many Mi'kmaq manufactures, such as baskets, butter churns, wooden hoops for lobster traps, and axe and pick handles, were in high demand in places like Pictou. Without a permanent land base, settlers could only expect to have access to these goods on an inconsistent or seasonal basis, and residents of the town of Pictou (and other nearby towns) recognized Mi'kmaw contributions to their economy and wanted to keep their Mi'kmaw neighbours close at hand.

Regardless of these consistent pleas for the Mi'kmaw land rights in Pictou to be recognized, the Government failed to secure any holdings at Moodie Cove. It is unclear from the

⁷⁰ L.F.S. Upton argued that government officials frequently, perhaps always, recognized a white person's claim to a disputed property, stating "it was very easy for a white official to see the virtuous hard work of a squatter with a large family to support, less easy to remember that those who had been dispossessed had some claims on colonial justice" ("Colonial Policy in Nova Scotia", 14). He further stated that "there was no legal obstacle to whites gaining legal title and forcing [the Mi'kmaq] to move on" (14).

⁷¹ "The following claims for remediation for services to Indians are or have been sent before the house." Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 40.

⁷² Patterson, *A History of Pictou County*, 192.

existing records why the government failed to do so, but the lack of responses by Howe to these several requests suggests that the Commission was understaffed and unable to handle the amount of correspondence and requests. Alternatively, they may have suffered from a lack of funds and were consequently unable to purchase any land. Perhaps it was both. Either way, the Government failed to make its intentions clear. The government seemed willing to give limited relief to the Mi'kmaq in the form of goods, such as blankets or great-coats, and also in medical care. In 1846 Howe signed off on a paltry sum of £253 of relief for the Indians in Pictou County, allotted for reimbursing Doctors and druggists for their expenditures to Mi'kmaq patients.⁷³

The late 1840s and 1850s was a grim period for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. The Mi'kmaq lived at various places in Pictou County, such as Maligomish, Pine Tree Gut, or as 'squatters' on Mi'kmaw lands occupied by settlers. These places, however, were small camps on settler land with limited resources and no agricultural opportunity. Chief Peter Toney travelled to Halifax to hand-deliver a petition to the House of Assembly, asking for relief for his community at a time of "want of sufficient food and clothing."⁷⁴ Toney went to Halifax on behalf of his "famishing brethren," and he sought to remind the

Honourable House that his people have been driven from their hunting grounds and natural places of subsistence and that they can very scarcely find an abode in the Province, furnishing even fuel necessary for their comfort of life. That in consequence they are driven to appeal to those who have now in possession the lands once the sole property of the Indian and your memorialist hopes that this appeal, which he now makes to your honorable House, for immediate relief, will not be made in vain.⁷⁵

⁷³ Joseph Howe, Indian Commissioner, "Statement of the Expenditure of the sum of £800 granted for the encouragement and relief of Indians", Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 40.

⁷⁴ Nova Scotia House of Assembly — Assembly petitions series Nova Scotia Archives RG 5 Series P, Vol. 45, No. 144

⁷⁵ Nova Scotia House of Assembly — Assembly petitions series Nova Scotia Archives RG 5 Series P, Vol. 45, No. 144

Toney's petition demonstrates how the government's failure to protect Mi'kmaw land rights in Pictou County positioned the Mi'kmaq in a place where they were unable to maintain a stable economy in the colonial world, and thus relied on the government to provide relief. The Mi'kmaw land holdings at Maligomish were only 35 acres, which was not sufficient to sustain a population of at least 150 people.⁷⁶ In response, it seems as if the government was only willing to provide the most meagre of provisions to help the Mi'kmaq withstand issues that were directly related to the lack of a sufficient land base (something the government had failed to allot to this population).

The issues with land were also compounded by sickness and diseases amongst the Mi'kmaq. Due to their lack of land base to provide consistent subsistence, and due to the issues with accessing their hunting grounds and fisheries, the Mi'kmaq were increasingly susceptible to the spread of introduced infectious diseases.⁷⁷ Mi'kmaw historian Daniel Paul argues that the "European ravishing of the Aboriginals' traditional food supplies... lowered Aboriginal resistance to all sicknesses...and created the right climate for disease to run rampant among [the Mi'kmaq]."⁷⁸ Smallpox appeared in Pictou County in 1800-1801, spread to the Mi'kmaq from

⁷⁶ Due to Mi'kmaw mobility and seasonal travel, it is difficult to ascertain the total amount of Mi'kmaq in Pictou County in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1843, Joseph Howe suggested that the population of Mi'kmaq in Pictou County was one hundred people. He estimated that the population was likely around 800 half a century earlier (Joseph Howe, Indian Commissioner, "Report on Indian Affairs," Public Archives of Nova Scotia, Vol. 430, Indian Commissioner Series, file 191). In 1846, Dr. William Anderson of Pictou sought payment for services rendered to a Mi'kmaq camp near Pictou, and he counted at least "thirty wigwams" in the one settlement. This suggests a population of roughly one-hundred and twenty in this camp alone (Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431, Indian Commissioner Series, file 111). An 1849 petition suggests that there may have been 142 Mi'kmaq living near Pictou, but that number may be the total number of non-Mi'kmaq signatories on the petition (Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431, Indian Commissioner Series, file 40). In 1855, a man named Wilkins reported that there were "about 21 families of Indians" in a camp near Pictou that were in "extreme want of food." This would conservatively suggest that eighty to one-hundred people were living in this single encampment (Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431, Indian Commissioner Series, file 88). I have estimated what I consider to be a conservative estimate of population at least 150 people, with the caveat that at some points of the year the population would have been higher or lower.

⁷⁷ Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia," 22.

⁷⁸ Daniel Paul, *We Were Not the Savage: A Micmac Perspective on the Collision of European and Aboriginal Civilization* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1993), 163.

newly arriving Scottish settlers who had recently landed in Pictou Harbour.⁷⁹ In 1846, an epidemic (likely tuberculosis) spread amongst the Mi'kmaq living at Maligomish, which caused many of the survivors to flee to an encampment somewhere near the town of Pictou, likely near A'Se'k. The Board of Health from Pictou sent several doctors and magistrates to the camp to assess the situation, and they found the "sick Indians were in want of everything."⁸⁰ The Board of Health immediately voted to "procure a batch of oatmeal and molasses to supply their immediate wants", while also reporting the situation to the Provincial Secretary, Sir Rupert George, for further instructions. James Anderson, the secretary of the Pictou Board of Health, reported to His Majesty that "the sick Indians were in a state of destitution, and that those in health had a difficulty in procuring necessaries on account of the increasing unwillingness of the white inhabitants to hold communications with them",⁸¹ likely for fear that the fever would spread to the white population. It is not known exactly how many perished from the outbreak, but the Health Officers recorded only one death after they intervened with food and supplies.

The plight of the Mi'kmaq in the mid-nineteenth century needs to be considered in the context of broader environmental and colonial factors. Much like other rural populations that combined subsistence agriculture with hunting, fishing, and wage labour, one of the main staple crops for the Mi'kmaq at this time were potatoes. Potato Blight wrought havoc on crop yields in Nova Scotia during the 1840s and 50s, taking away a resource that provided many calories to the Mi'kmaw diet. Historian Rusty Bittermann argues that incoming Scottish Highlanders to Nova Scotia, dispossessed of their land and personal resources via the capitalistic remaking of their

⁷⁹ Virginia P. Miller, "The Decline of the Nova Scotia Micmac Population, 1600-1850," *Culture* vol. 2. No. 3 (1982): 11 (107-120).

⁸⁰ William James Anderson, to Sir Rupert George, Provincial Secretary, June 24 1846, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 41.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Scottish homelands, suffered during the potato famines in Nova Scotia “like the rural poor elsewhere in the western world during these decades from the combined misery inflicted by agricultural failures coupled with more general economic down turns.”⁸² Rural folk in colonial Nova Scotia often lived a precarious life, subject to drought, famine, and economic downturn.

The Mi’kmaq faced a similar situation, but with the additional burdens of settler colonialism which kept them from fully accessing the same sorts of safety nets that Euro-Canadian rural settlers could rely on. For example, poor settlers (such as the settler potato farmers mentioned above) in Nova Scotia could, if they found themselves destitute, access relief through work houses and poor asylums, founded in Halifax as early as 1758.⁸³ The Colonial government looked to townships to care for their local poor, and the colony’s “Poor Laws” were only available to those who lived in settler towns or poor districts and could demonstrate they had done so for at least a full year – in some cases up to five years of residency had to be proven before relief would be given.⁸⁴ The first poor houses were established in Pictou County in the 1880s, and before that poor people were often sent to be boarded with better off families, or shipped to the poor houses in Halifax County.⁸⁵ Given the residency requirements (remember for most of the nineteenth century the Mi’kmaq were seen as ‘landless vagrants’), and the fact that the colonial government had separate accounts that provided for Mi’kmaw relief, the Mi’kmaq were unable to access these institutions. Indeed, in the Mi’kmaq living in Queens County petitioned the colonial government to extend the colonial Poor Laws to them in 1859, stating that

⁸² Rusty Bittermann, “The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a nineteenth Century Cape Breton Community”, *Acadianses* Vol. 18, No. 1 (1988), 44.

⁸³ Cheryl Desroches, “For Them but Never Really Theirs: Finding a Place for the Aged Within State-Funded Institutions in Nineteenth Century Nova Scotia,” *The Canadian Historical Association* Vol. 20, No.1 (2009), 61.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 62. L.T. Hancock discussed residency requirements in Nova Scotia’s Poor Laws in his article, “The Function and Status of Poor Boards in Nova Scotia,” *Canadian Journal of Public Health* Vol. 45, No. 11 (1954), 476-481. His article, while dated, provides an excellent overview of the roots of Nova Scotia’s Poor Laws and the changes that came to them over time.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 59.

it was unfair that the government provided relief for people of African descent but did not extend to the original inhabitants of the country.⁸⁶ The historical record contains multiple letters from the mid-eighteenth century from both Pictou County Mi'kmaq and officials from settler towns asking for relief to be delivered to the Mi'kmaq. The government sometimes sent supplies (blankets, greatcoats, and preserved food) to towns like Pictou where it could be distributed amongst the Mi'kmaq living near the town. For example, in 1837 the colonial government sent a meagre £7 (roughly \$112 Canadian Dollars today) to purchase blankets and preserved foods for



Figure 5.2: Poor House in Town of Pictou, 1895-1920 (Courtesy of The Pictou County Historical Photograph Society)

that “a few Indians are very thankful, there are yet a good many more in need.”⁸⁷ Further, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County did not even have British recognition of their land rights, which made any of their planted crops, even in the most productive years, tenuous and contested by settlers.

all of the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. George Smith, the local man in charge of handing out the blankets, commented he “sparingly dealt to the Indians” the few blankets he could purchase. He grimly stated, however,

⁸⁶ Mi'kmaq of Queens County, to the House of Assembly, February 14 1859, “Petition from Mi'kmaq of Queens County regarding amendments to the poor laws”, Nova Scotia House of Assembly — Assembly petitions series Nova Scotia Archives RG 5 Series P, Vol. 49, No. 26.

⁸⁷ George Smith, to the Deputy Secretary of Indian Affairs for Nova Scotia, January 18 1837, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 35.

The lack of land from which to supply food and provisions had grave effects on the Mi'kmaw population. At a minimum it pushed some Mi'kmaq to remove to other parts of the Province or to be risk being fined for 'trespassing' on settler land while remaining near Pictou. On the other end of the scale, however, the lack of land meant that disease epidemics like the one discussed above were potentially much deadlier than they might have been if the Mi'kmaq had a permanent, and ample, land base. Indeed, diseases spread much more quickly through malnourished populations, and it is clear that the many calls for relief from the Mi'kmaq in the 1840s were from a community unable to provide some of the basics of survival due to the government's failure to protect Mi'kmaq land.⁸⁸

Without permanent settlements, the Mi'kmaq were less likely to have regular visits from medical professionals, and doctors had little incentive for travelling to distant and isolated Mi'kmaq camps. One doctor, requesting reimbursement for aid in 1861, highlighted the difficulty he had in treating Mi'kmaq patients. George Murray, a Medical Doctor from Pictou, described travelling over rough terrain in order to visit Francis Fraser, a Mi'kmaw man who maintained a camp "in the woods between the East and Middle Rivers about 1 ½ or 2 miles from New Glasgow."⁸⁹ Murray reported that he had to travel through the woods in "snow 3 or 4 feet deep" to attend to Fraser's injury, a lacerated artery in his leg. Murray also gave medical attention and food and clothing to the wife of Michael Phillips, a Mi'kmaw woman living at a camp called "Wash Brook." To cure her illness, Murray provided clothing and food, in addition

⁸⁸ For more on the spread of smallpox and other diseases to Indigenous Nations, and why these diseases impacted Indigenous people in Canada in such deadly ways, see: Elizabeth Anne Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001); Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998); Adam R. Hodge, "'In Want of Nourishment for to Keep Them Alive': Climate Fluctuations, Bison Scarcity, and the Smallpox Epidemic of 1780-82 on the Northern Great Plains," *Environmental History* 17, no.2 (2012): 365-403.

⁸⁹ George Murray, M.D., to Capt. George Mackenzie, February 22 1861, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 125.

to medicine, for which he was never repaid from the Government. Murray then travelled to Matthew Paul's camp at "a point below the narrows on the East River" to treat Paul and his wife for Typhoid Fever. Regardless of his services, which entailed many miles of travel and were not necessary to maintaining his medical practice in Pictou (Murray was not paid directly from the government to treat the Mi'kmaq), Murray's invoice was disputed by the House of Assembly. They refused to grant Murray his full amount, which the House saw as excessive. Murray defended his submission by resubmitting the claim the following year, complete with justification on what similar services would cost if provided by a doctor in a town. The Colonial government refused to provide basic medical services for the Mi'kmaq, even though they were considered to be wards of the state, under the care of their colonial oppressors. The Mi'kmaq of Pictou County had no permanent base, which meant that doctors who agreed to care for them had to travel to isolated and inconvenient places. This was a direct result of the failure of the colonizers to secure land for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou, yet they refused to pay the bills that resulted from this unfortunate situation. The travel of medical professionals to these various camps represents the Mi'kmaq attempt to remain in their territory in spite of the challenges brought by increased settlement on their lands.

Relief efforts highlight the limited lengths the Colonial Government of Nova Scotia was willing to go to provide the basic necessities for the Mi'kmaq who had limited ability to provide for themselves without reserves. Alexander McLean, a Pictou resident who had agreed to distribute relief to the Mi'kmaq, reported in 1862 that he "received some time ago a supply of blankets for the poor Indians of this county which I distributed amongst them as far as they went. I am sorry to say that the supply was this year so very small that I could not even give one

blanket to each family, and what is one blanket for a family of seven or eight?”⁹⁰ Several families did not even receive one blanket. McLean called on the government to provide relief to these families as they were “really in a state of suffering.”⁹¹ The lack of blankets as government aid, from a Mi’kmaq perspective, was a failure of the Crown’s treaty obligation to care for the Mi’kmaq. The Mi’kmaq understood that the loss of their lands, and the destruction of their hunting livelihoods that provided meat for food and furs for warmth, had resulted in a government responsibility to care for the Mi’kmaq. Indeed, as one Mi’kmaq man told Linguist and Baptist Missionary Silas Rand in the earlier nineteenth century, “Our lands have been taken away; the forests have been cut down and the moose and the bear nearly exterminated. We have no skins now with which to wrap ourselves up in winter. Government, it is true, gives us a bit of a blanket, and we spread it over the children. One awakes crying with the cold, and gives it a pull; and then another awakes crying, and he gives it a pull; and (suited the action to the word), by-and-bye they pull ‘em all to pieces.”⁹²

By 1863, the government finally made an effort to secure land at Fisher’s Grant for the Mi’kmaq. The House of Assembly struck a special committee to purchase land out of proceeds from the sale of Indian lands elsewhere in Nova Scotia, with J.B.B Fraser as head commissioner in charge of securing land at Pictou. Samuel P. Fairbanks, the Indian Commissioner in 1863, proposed to the House, in his annual report, that

a proposition has been submitted for purchasing a tract of land, situate about one mile from the town of Pictou, for the purpose of settling a number of Indians in that County,

⁹⁰ Rev. Alexander Maclean to the Provincial Secretary, January 11 1862, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 133

⁹¹ Rev. Alexander Maclean to the Provincial Secretary, January 11 1862, Public Archives of Nova Scotia, RG1, Vol. 431 (Indian Commissioner Series), file 133

⁹² Silas T. Rand, *A Short Statement of Facts relating to the history, manners, customs, language, and literature of the Micmac Tribe of Indians, in Nova Scotia and P.E. Island: Being the substance of two lectures delivered in Halifax, in November 1819, at public meetings held for the purpose of instituting a mission to that tribe* (Halifax: J. Bowes, 1850), 7.

where there are no Indian Reserves. I most earnestly recommend this proposal for the consideration of the Legislature; and that the land should be paid for out of the Indian Fund. At a proper time I shall be prepared, with such evidence of the importance of such a purchase, as I think cannot fail to satisfy the government and the Legislature, that it would be a wise and judicious measure, giving the Indians of the County of Pictou a home, from which they are now wholly destitute.⁹³

The Committee on Indian Affairs for the colony had been confounded by the fact that “although Pictou contains the largest Indian population of any county in the Province, there were no Indian Reserves in the County.”⁹⁴ Through a series of decisions, some direct and some consequential, the Colonial Government of Nova Scotia had failed to protect the Mi’kmaq land in Pictou County, and let tens of thousands of settlers occupy Mi’kma’ki.

The Mi’kmaq were forced to negotiate a difficult, confusing, and nearly impossible situation where they were alienated from the vast majority of their ancestral lands and resources, blamed for the situation the colonists had created, and given few of the required tools to survive in this new world. Interestingly, the Mi’kmaq strategy for survival was similar to the way that they had always used their territory – migration based on resource availability, now including the newly introduced elements of settler markets and wage labour opportunity. Colonialism brought new realities on Mi’kmaq ways of living – resources and land were challenged by increasing competition and settlement, in addition to seasonality. Regardless, the Mi’kmaq’s knowledge of their land and their ability to remain mobile and highly adaptable allowed them to not only survive in this difficult world, but also to remain active agents of their land who demanded that the government recognize their rights. After nearly a century of struggles in the face of

⁹³ Samuel P. Fairbanks, Indian Commissioner, to Hon. Joseph Howe, Provincial Secretary, February 9 1863, *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: W. Compton & Co., 1863), Appendix No. 15, Pg. 2.

⁹⁴ William Ross, John McKinnon, J. Bourinot, William Burgess, and Silvanus Morton, “Report of Committee on Indian Affairs,” *Journal and proceedings of the House of Assembly of the province of Nova Scotia, Session 1863* (Halifax: W. Compton, 1863), Appendix No. 37, 1-2.

conflicting and contradictory messaging from individual settlers and colonial authorities, the Mi'kmaq were finally able to secure a small portion of their ancestral lands at the mouth of Pictou Harbour. The total acreage of the reserve was small and was totally insufficient for the sizable Mi'kmaq population that came to live for at least part of the year at the Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve. By this point in time, however, the Government motivation for granting land seems to have been less about accommodating Indigenous rights than it was about quieting settler complaints that the Mi'kmaq used the land and resources in the region regardless of settler title. These latter points will be explored in the next chapter.

The purchase of land for the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant was carried out by February of 1864, and the Mi'kmaq were then in formal possession of the land. Fairbanks noted that having a home has provided the Mi'kmaq "afforded much satisfaction."⁹⁵ The purchase was controversial, at that time, as the money used to buy the land at Fisher's Grant was taken from the general Indian fund, specifically from funds that were gained by selling Mi'kmaq land in Cape Breton.⁹⁶ However, the Committee justified the expense given the fact that Pictou County's Mi'kmaq population was larger than any other county on mainland Nova Scotia. The purchase of 50 acres at Fisher's Grant cost \$401.25.⁹⁷

It had been nearly a century since the Mi'kmaq watched the arrival of the Hector, and the start of settlement in earnest on their lands in Pictou County. Finally, the Mi'kmaq had a base from which they could start to restore their village at A'Se'k. Much had changed for the

⁹⁵ Samuel P. Fairbanks, Indian Commissioner, to Hon. Joseph Howe, Provincial Secretary, February 1 1864, *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: W. Compton & Co., 1864), Appendix No. 15, 1-2.

⁹⁶ John McKinnon, William Ross, Peter Smyth, C.J. Campbell, and C.R. Bill, "Report of Committee on Indian Affairs", *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: W. Compton & Co., 1864), Appendix No. 37, 5-6.

⁹⁷ Samuel P. Fairbanks, Indian Commissioner, "Cash Paid for Indian Reserves, and Interest Thereon, to 31st December, 1864," *Journal and Proceedings of the House of Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia* (Halifax: W. Compton & Co., 1865), Appendix No. 19, Pg. 4.

Mi'kmaq in the long nineteenth century, and a new chapter was about to begin. Mobility, while not disappearing, became seriously challenged as more and more settlers came to appropriate Mi'kmaw land in Pictou County. Regardless, the Mi'kmaq continued to travel seasonally off of their reserve lands to access resources that they used for both traditional purposes and to accentuate their participation in the settler economy well into the twentieth century. Increasingly, as Upton has shown, the Mi'kmaq had in many ways "incorporated the whites into their seasonal cycles of life."⁹⁸

But if the Mi'kmaq had found a way to preserve continuity in their culture, they were also facing changes that they determined required them to adapt. In the next chapters, I discuss how the settlement of the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant changed Mi'kmaw life and labour over the next half-century. With this land base, Mi'kmaw dependence on relief majorly reduced, and wage labour and manufacturing goods for the settler market played an increasingly larger role in the Mi'kmaw economy. I continue to discuss contestations between Mi'kmaq and settlers over land by showing the various changes to the boundaries of the Fisher's Grant Reserve between 1864 and 1930. What becomes clear, however, is that the government's plan for agriculture at Fisher's Grant was doomed to fail, given the small acreage of the original reserve (and additions to it), and the reality that many Mi'kmaq preferred to obtain wage labour, manufacture goods, and catch fish to sell to settler markets. My examination of the tensions that emerged between government plans for 'civilization through the plow' and realities on the ground at A'Se'k reveal the adaptability of Indigenous culture and economies in the face of both concerted government efforts at assimilation and languishing government neglect.

⁹⁸ Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia", 31.

Chapter Six: A'Se'k and the Creation of Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve, 1863-1927

In 1864, after nearly a century of European settlement in Epekwitk aq Piktuk, and over two centuries of contact with Europeans, the Mi'kmaq living at the mouth of Pictou Harbour succeeded in having the colonial government designate the small fifty-acre plot at the mouth of Pictou Harbour as an Indian Reserve. Mired in colonial boundaries and laws, the reserve was tiny in comparison to what settlers were allocated for even individual nuclear families. But for long-fighting Indigenous people, this was all that the Nova Scotia government was able (or willing) to purchase back from settlers for Mi'kmaq use. The creation of the reserve, though regarded as a gesture of generosity and benevolent paternalism by the Nova Scotia government, sparked a series of tensions over land and resources that characterized Mi'kmaq – settler relations in the period stretching from the mid-nineteenth century through to 1927.

The Mi'kmaq made consistent and concerted efforts in the nineteenth century to secure a degree of control over the land at Fisher's Grant at the mouth of Pictou Harbour. The creation of Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve No. 24 in 1864 formed a nucleus for several important expansions of reserve boundaries over the next sixty-years. Even though Indian Reserve boundaries shaped Mi'kmaw lives and livelihoods in many ways, the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant used their broader territory regardless of the survey and preemption of their land by settlers. Despite ongoing changes to the reserve over the next half-century the Mi'kmaq refused to be bounded by government lines on their territory. Indeed, the push to increase reserves largely stemmed from settler complaints that the Mi'kmaq ignored the boundaries and continued to use the broader region for their own purposes. The settler population called them 'trespassers' and 'vagrants,' and asked the government to remove them from their land. By refusing to be bound by reserve

limits, the Mi'kmaq pushed the government to recognize their land and resource rights to their larger territory.

While they remained interested in all of their traditional territory, new opportunities and colonial realities caused the Mi'kmaq to focus their attention on the region that became known as Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve 24 (today Pictou Landing First Nation). This chapter traces the story of the Mi'kmaw struggle to regain parts of their territory in Pictou County in the form of government surveyed Indian Reserves. Increasing opportunities for trade and the sale of Mi'kmaw commodities, in the form of fresh fish and shellfish, and in manufactured items such as baskets and axe/pick handles, played an important, and as of yet underappreciated role in the creation, location, and expansion of Indian Reserves in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Nova Scotia. While Indian Agents regularly expressed frustration that many Mi'kmaw families lived in various places such as Pine Tree Gut, Maligomish, and Barney's River, wage labour opportunities at Fisher's Grant drew the Mi'kmaq increasingly into the vicinity of the growing settler community. As such, government agents, teachers and religious leaders used Fisher's Grant to access the larger Mi'kmaw community in Epekwitk aq Piktuk.

Focusing too closely on the colonial agenda for the creation of Indian Reserves threatens to obscure or mute important Mi'kmaw efforts to secure surveyed and protected land that had long been meaningful for the Mi'kmaq, and continued to be so as new opportunities for Mi'kmaw labour and manufactured goods emerged in Pictou County. Building from James C. Scott's theories on how the states worked "to make a society legible," this chapter engages with Mi'kmaw negotiations with the increasing focus on Indigenous lives that came as part of the new Dominion of Canada's attempt to better understand (and thus control and manage) the Mi'kmaq. As Scott argues, the function of the state remade local "complex, illegible, and local social

practices, such as land tenure customs or naming customs and created a standard grid whereby it could be centrally located and monitored.”¹ The Dominion of Canada inherited much of this gridwork from the British colonial government, but upon the creation of Canada there was a new focus placed on controlling and ultimately assimilating Indigenous people. Mi’kmaw efforts were central to establishing the reserve at the mouth of the harbour, yet despite the best efforts of colonial agents, Mi’kmaw mobility made it difficult for the state’s eyes to count and monitor, and Indian Agents frequently complained that their work was hampered by the failure of the state’s grid to contain the Mi’kmaq. Indeed, as historian Martha Walls argued in her discussion of Mi’kmaw resistance to colonial governance systems, the Canadian government failed in totally asserting their agenda over the Mi’kmaq who “variously accepted, rejected, ignored, and/or amended” colonial policy and plans to suit their own agenda.²

The regions known today as Pictou Landing and Boat Harbour, or previously as Moodie Cove, and Indian Cove, were important to Mi’kmaw seasonal movements and migration. The area at the mouth of the harbour and around A’Se’k was a bountiful and abundant place; it had ample shellfish and other marine vertebrates, large stands of a variety of trees, and it offered access to important hunting and gathering grounds in Epekwitk aq Piktuk. French explorer Nicolas Denys reported in the 1630s:

...there is so great an abundance of all kinds of game...the trees there are very fine and large. There are oaks, cedars, pines, firs, and every kind of wood...A league and a half up the river [Pictou Harbour] where you may find large quantities of excellent oysters; some, in one place, are nearly all round, and deeper in the harbour they are monstrous. Among them are some larger than a shoe and nearly the same shape, and they are all fat and of good taste.³

¹ James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

² Martha Walls, *No Need of a Chief for This Band: The Maritime Mi’kmaq and Federal Electoral Legislation, 1899-1951* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 1-2.

³ Nicolas Denys, cited in Patterson, *A History of Pictou County*, 25-26. This translated text is uncited in Patterson’s book, but it originally appears in Denys’ 1672 *Description Géographique et Historique des Costes de l’Amérique Septentrionale: avec l’Histoire Naturelle du Païs* (Paris: Chez Claude Barbin, 1672).

The Mi'kmaq harvested these resources throughout the settlement period, even if settlement and colonial policy challenged some aspects of these patterns. That is to say, settlement limited the Mi'kmaq ability to fish, hunt, and settle in some parts of the land, but they still fished, gathered resources, and used the region as a central hub for travel. Conversely, emerging settler markets for Mi'kmaq goods and manufactures required the Mi'kmaq to access resources throughout Pictou County at various times of the year, which blended traditional seasonal migrations with new economic opportunity. This latter point will be discussed in this chapter, but also in more detail in Chapter Seven. Fisher's Grant also became an important base for wage labour and mercantile opportunity in places like the settler town of Pictou.

What is clear from the archival record is that settlers complained that the Mi'kmaq ignored reserve boundaries when harvesting resources, such as hardwood, or when planting crops. The fifty-acre plot of land was not suitable for growing enough crops or having enough hardwood to satisfy the needs of the Mi'kmaq who by then not only depended on these resources for subsistence but also to sustain their engagement in the capitalist economy. Settlers, frustrated that their land was being 'molested' by the 'trespassing' Mi'kmaq, in their words, wrote letters to the government asking them to buy their land and give it to the Mi'kmaq as the Mi'kmaq used it as their own anyway. Efforts to remove the Mi'kmaq were meaningless. Just like they had during the hundred years of settlement before the creation of the first Indian Reserve in Pictou County, they repeatedly returned and harvested resources as active agents within their larger territory.

Through a careful examination of Indian Agent reports, letters and petitions from settlers, I posit that spatial changes to the Fisher's Grant Reserve boundaries reveal a tension between Mi'kmaq and settler land claims in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Through these records I am also able to demonstrate, in a tertiary way, how new opportunities such as

wage labour and the sale of commodities to settler towns played an important role in Mi'kmaw management of their hardwood and marine resources. As a hub for these new opportunities, Fisher's Grant became the Mi'kmaw base for these operations, and it resulted in increased need for hardwood to heat homes and for manufacturing. As the Mi'kmaq came to live and work more permanently at Fisher's Grant, which was part of the government's agenda, the reserve boundaries had to expand to support the community. To illustrate this point, this chapter pays special attention to Mi'kmaw motivations and agencies in this process as a means to complicate the colonial and Canadian government's narrative that their plans for assimilation were effectively working at Fisher's Grant.

The colonial Government initially believed that their plans to make the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County more sedentary at Fisher's Grant were effective. Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, Fisher's Grant had a Roman Catholic Church, a day school, and an Indian Agent to oversee the assimilation process. The Mi'kmaq were putting more effort into clearing and cropping their meagre land, and most families integrated wage labour and the production of manufactured items into their economies. Indian Agents reported that changes were occurring in Mi'kmaw life, and implied that assimilation plans were working. However, too often what the government reported was what they wanted and expected to see. As Martha Walls has shown, we need to recognize the "divide between the theoretical intent and the day-to-day operation of Canada's twentieth century Indian Policy."⁴ Much like L.F.S Upton had argued about the Mi'kmaw incorporation of a settler market for Mi'kmaw goods in the early settlement period, the Mi'kmaq again incorporated new colonial opportunities into their existing subsistence systems.⁵

⁴ Martha Elizabeth Walls, *No Need of a Chief for This Band: The Maritime Mi'kmaq and Federal Electoral Legislation, 1899-1951* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 5.

⁵ Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia", 31.



Figure 6.1: "The Chapel, Pictou Landing First Nation, 1908" (Courtesy of Nova Scotia Museum)

These new additions became increasingly important given the pressures that settlement put on Mi'kmaw hunting grounds and ability to control the larger and more distant parts of their territory. Indeed, Walls has drawn important connections between the Mi'kmaq in the late nineteenth century and Richard White's theoretical framework of the "middle ground," where Mi'kmaq and settler lives and systems overlapped and blended with each other in relationships that challenge the simple colonizer/colonized binary.⁶ These cross-cultural opportunities were less new than the government officials suggested in their records; French traders had been visiting Pictou since the seventeenth century and the fur trade played an important economic role

⁶ Walls, *No Need of A Chief*, 10.

in Mi'kmaw life for centuries by the time the Canadian government sent Indian Agents to Fisher's Grant.

Within the new colonial realities brought by settlement and industrial expansion in Pictou County in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, Fisher's Grant became the nucleus of Mi'kmaw engagements with settler society. This process was based as much on Mi'kmaw determination to protect this village as it was on colonial coercion. This is evidenced by the fact that the Mi'kmaq refused to vacate Fisher's Grant and sought to have a reserve created there, in spite of the land already being surveyed and occupied by settlers. The new function of Fisher's Grant did not preclude the Mi'kmaq from using their broader territory. Indian Agents explained that the Mi'kmaq resisted completely settling at Fisher's Grant and relying on intensive agriculture for their subsistence. Rev. Ronald MacDonald, the Indian Agent working in Pictou County in the 1870s, complained that it was difficult to obtain consistent census data due to the "migrating dispositions" of the Mi'kmaq.⁷ The Mi'kmaq refused to live within the boundaries of the reserve and continually left Fisher's Grant to attend to other parts of their territory to harvest resources. This resulted in several key changes to reserve boundaries as the Government tried to accommodate Mi'kmaw mobility and entice the Mi'kmaq to live on the reserve.

It is important to note that the colonial record contains scant information directly from the Mi'kmaq living at Fisher's Grant. However, it is clear that the letters written by Indian Agents, settlers, and others were drafted after lengthy conversations with Mi'kmaw people. Indian Agents spent ample time listening and speaking with Mi'kmaw community members at Fisher's Grant and other villages in Pictou County. Settlers were neighbours who shared boundaries, and

⁷ Rev. Ronald MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Superintendent General Indian Affairs, June 30th 1874, in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending [date] 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1875), 45.

often spoke across them. Many settlers became clients of the Mi'kmaq; they hired them to work on their land, bought their fish, their wares, and their manufactures. Relying on settler correspondences and records, especially when they are primarily concerned about land, risks obscuring the Mi'kmaq perspective. However, the Mi'kmaq remained active agents in these processes, and Mi'kmaq perspectives can be gleaned from colonial sources with careful thought and consideration. Historian William Wicken proved through his use of early twentieth century court records that generations of Mi'kmaq voices can be gleaned through colonial sources.⁸ These records contain sinews that allow historians the opportunity to glean community perspectives through sources that are often heavily steeped in colonialism.

With Fisher's Grant Reserve No. 24 appointed in 1863 and surveyed in 1864, the Mi'kmaq now had a land holding at the Mouth of Pictou Harbour, something they had demanded since the beginnings of colonial settlement, going back nearly seventy-five years. But fifty acres was too small for the type of living that the government supposed the Mi'kmaq would adopt, and it was too small to continually supply hardwood for firewood and for manufacturing. Fisher's Grant served as a nucleus that allowed the Mi'kmaq to increase their foothold in the manufacturing of goods for sale in Pictou. With a permanent land base close to Pictou, the Mi'kmaq could consistently tap into local markets to sell things like fresh fish, baskets, dried flowers, axe and pick handles, butter churns, and other goods in demand by the increasing settler population. Indeed, in his 1874 report Indian Agent MacDonald reported, "the quantity of fish taken by the Indians is considerable, but as they invariably sell their fish fresh, every morning as it is taken, I have no means of arriving at a correct estimate of the quantity caught, or of the amount

⁸ William Wicken, *The Colonization of Mi'kmaq Memory and History, 1794-1928: The King v. Gabriel Sylliboy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 9.

realized.”⁹ He reported that several men from the reserve worked in local Public Works operations, and also that all men and women in the community engaged in coopering- making butter firkins and hoops for sailboats and lobster traps.¹⁰ Lobster traps, at that time, were made of wooden frames wrapped in mesh. Wooden ‘hoops’ would be used to create an opening for the lobsters to enter the trap. Sailboats used similar wooden hoops to attach canvas sails to masts.¹¹ Several Elders remember seeing the tools and equipment at their grandparents’ houses. Many also remember playing on what they called ‘horses’ – wooden benches that were used to make these hoops – in their grandparents’ yards.¹² Mi’kmaq women engaged in the above industries, and they also found meaningful employment in domestic labour in settler homes, drying and selling wildflowers, and in making baskets for sale in settler towns. Indeed, MacDonald took special mention of the division of labour in the Mi’kmaq community: “The women are most industrious. The Micmac woman is indeed seldom idle: she is either discharging the duties of housekeeping, or making baskets; and if she has nothing else to do she goes a-begging.”¹³

But what MacDonald saw as ‘begging’ was actually a part of the Mi’kmaq-settler economic relationship that had been built over the nineteenth century. The reports of Mi’kmaq begging appeared somewhat frequently in settler and Indian Agent letters. However, during my research and work with the elders at Pictou Landing, another explanation for ‘begging’ emerged.

⁹ Rev. Ronald MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Superintendent General Indian Affairs, June 30th 1874, in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending [date] 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1875), 45.

¹⁰ Rev. Ronald MacDonald, “Report No. 19, Indian District No. 4, NS.,” 23rd November 1875, in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending [date] 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1876), 21.

¹¹ Community Roundtables held at Pictou Landing First Nation, May 6-10 2018, Pictou Landing Training Centre, Pictou Landing, N.S. These sessions were comprised of presentations on my research followed by roundtable discussions with elders and community members on a variety of historical topics. It will be cited throughout this chapter generally as “Community Roundtables.”

¹² Community Roundtables.

¹³ Rev. Ronald MacDonald, “Report No. 19, Indian District No. 4, NS.,” 23rd November 1875, in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended June 30th, 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1875), 21.

Many elders remember travelling to Pictou with their grandmothers and great-grandmothers to sell baskets, dried mayflowers, and other commodities. Their customers came to be close friends, and visits to town often resulted in invitations to stay for tea or dinner, or at least to take some food with them for the canoe or ferry ride back to Fisher's Grant. The Mi'kmaq understood this not as charity, but as affirmations of friendship, reciprocity, and a good mercantile relationship. Charity surely did exist, and inevitably some Mi'kmaq did attend settler towns seeking it, but this explanation hints at the varied types of relationships that existed between settlers and the Mi'kmaq at that time.¹⁴

My ancestors participated in this economy. My maternal grandmother, Helen MacPherson (nee MacMillan), remembered working with her mother, Margaret "Maggie" MacMillan (nee Logan), to prepare baskets of food that were placed by the backdoor of their Cottage St. home on days the Mi'kmaq would visit. The Mi'kmaq would come to the backdoor, collect their cash, and replace the basket of food with a basket of wildflowers, fresh fish, and crafts. My grandmother told me that this type of exchange was common in many Pictou homes. These types of engagements were facilitated by the settler desire for Mi'kmaw goods, and with the creation of the Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve, the Mi'kmaq now had a dependable base from which to engage in this economy.

Sustaining business in Pictou and elsewhere by living and harvesting at the small grant placed a heavy demand on local hardwood resources. By 1874, the Mi'kmaq required more forested land. The Indian Agent reported that since "the land reserved for the Indians near the harbor of Pictou is devoid of timber, and the Indians were suffering from the want of fuel, measures were initiated for the purchase of a lot containing 89 acres of wood land at Fisher's

¹⁴ Community Roundtables.

Grant.”¹⁵ This land was not connected to the original reserve, but was located several kilometres south east. Titled Fisher’s Grant Indian Reserve 24A, this grant provided more timber land for manufacturing and for firewood, something high in demand for the Mi’kmaq. However, this new land caused new tensions with surrounding settlers, namely Thomas Sproull.¹⁶

The Sproull family held several plots of land around Fisher’s Grant. When the government purchased more land for the Mi’kmaq in 1874, they put one parcel of Sproull’s land directly in between the two Mi’kmaq land holdings. There was no direct access to the new reserve via roads. Thus, to access their land, the Mi’kmaq travelled directly over Sproull’s land. J.M. Carmichael, the Member of Parliament for Pictou County, penned a letter to David Laird, the Minister of the Interior for the Dominion, proposing that Sproull and the Mi’kmaq exchange equal valued parcels of land to make one contiguous reserve for the Mi’kmaq.¹⁷ Carmichael reported that this would stem the issue, appeasing Sproull by giving him land in lieu of land that the Mi’kmaq used at their discretion. Carmichael told Laird that “you will readily understand the difficulty that exists in enforcing the law against trespass against Indians.”¹⁸ Carmichael understood the scenario- the Mi’kmaq would continue to use Sproull’s land to travel directly between their two land holdings, harvesting resources as they travelled, so it made sense to be pragmatic and trade lands in order to mitigate Sproull’s concerns. Indian Agent Rev. Ronald MacDonald agreed. He told the Department of Indian Affairs that as long as the land deal served

¹⁵ Lawrence Vankoughnet, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, “Annual Report,” in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended June 30th, 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1875), 7-8.

¹⁶ The correspondence regarding this land exchange gives the names of James and Thomas Sproull. My thoughts are that James Sproull was the owner of the title to the specific land, but that his son, Thomas, was occupying the land at that time or was set to inherit it.

¹⁷ J.M Carmichael, Member of Parliament, and F.O. Dawson, Member of Parliament, to the Hon. David Laird, Minister of the Interior, March 20 1875. LAC, RG10, Reel C-11121, Vol 1957, file 4671.

¹⁸ Ibid.

to benefit the Mi'kmaq, and was for equally valued lands of similar acreage, he saw no issue with the transfer.¹⁹

Legally, because no roads existed, the Mi'kmaq could only access their new woodlot by crossing Sproull's land. The new Mi'kmaq woodlot was bounded on one side by Boat Harbour, and on all others by Sproull's property. Lawrence Vankoughnet, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, reminded Carmichael that as "there is no other way provided for the public to get from the one point (the wood land) to the other (the Indian Reserve) that Mr. Sproull is obliged in law to allow such right of way."²⁰

The land dispute was less about providing access to the new Mi'kmaq woodlot than it was about Mi'kmaw land use in the area. The Mi'kmaq used the area around A'Se'k for their own purposes regardless of the settler presence. Indeed, Carmichael wrote to Sproull to sympathize with him, calling him a "working farmer" who was "subjected to serious and continual annoyance" from the Mi'kmaq using his land.²¹ If all of these issues could have been solved by a simple path or roadway connecting the two reserves, it is unlikely that Sproull would give up land that he had partially cleared and used for crops.²² Sproull understood that the position of his land, between two Indian Reserves, in an area where the Mi'kmaq used land regardless of title, was precarious. Sproull opted for the safer bet and proposed a deal that would remove his holdings from the area, and thus mitigate the reality of the Mi'kmaq using his land.

¹⁹ Rev. Macdonald, Indian Agent, to E.A. Meredith, Secretary Indian Affairs, September 9 1875, LAC, RG10, Reel C-11121, Vol 1957, file 4671.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ J.M. Carmichael to David Laird, September 12 1875, LAC RG10, Reel C-11121, Vol 1957, file 4671.

²² There is some evidence that a roadway was proposed. The proposed road would have travelled across two different parcels of Sproull land and connected Fisher's Grant 24A with the main highway near Pictou Landing. The main highway cut across Fisher's Grant 24, but it would mean that to access the woodlot, the Mi'kmaq would have to travel a significant distance in the opposite direction to gain access to the new road. It is unlikely that it would have been more appealing to use the road than it was to simply cut across Sproull's land, so the road was never constructed.

The relationship between the Mi'kmaq and their settler neighbours was tenuous, at times, given the way that the Mi'kmaq used the region for their own purposes. John Dawson, the son of Pictou Merchant and temporary Indian Commissioner James Dawson discussed in the previous chapter, described the Mi'kmaq as “troublesome neighbours who cannot be stopped from constantly cutting wood on adjoining properties, tearing down fences and burning them in the winter season when wood is hard to be got.”²³ Dawson also reported that even before the exchange was made between Sproull and the Mi'kmaq, the latter had already “taken up possession of the property and built some small houses upon it and are otherwise using it.”²⁴ These poor relations were reflections of Mi'kmaq attitudes towards settler land, which they understood as part of their traditional territory, and on which they had protected treaty rights to access and harvest resources as they required them.

The exchange of the two parcels of land took place in the late 1870s, after some dispute over unequal acreages and quality of land. Sproull's portion of land was five acres larger, but the land he wanted to exchange was of higher value. In the end, it is unclear whether the government asked Sproull to pay for the extra land, or if it was all considered a wash. Maps from 1887 indicate that the Mi'kmaq were given more land than was allotted in the original rough sketch of the proposed exchange, but it is not clear whether this was simply an issue with the scale and accuracy of the sketch, or with later changes to the boundary that are not present in the correspondence. Regardless, the exchange of land hints at the tension between Mi'kmaq land use and settler lands, something that was a theme over the next several decades.

Not even a decade later the Mi'kmaq had again reached the natural limits of their land, and required more for their domestic and commercial use. In 1883, the Chiefs and Keptins (Captains)

²³ John A. Dawson to David Laird, November 21 1876, LAC, RG10, Reel C-11121, Vol 1957, file 4671.

²⁴ Ibid.

of the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant asked their Indian Agent, Rev. Roderick McDonald, to petition the government for funds to purchase land from Mrs. Eliza Copeland.²⁵ Copeland's land was adjacent to Fisher's Grant 24A, and would provide thirty acres of hardwood laden land. However, the government failed to immediately secure the sale, and it wasn't until 1886 that the negotiations began in earnest. Again, this sale of land was sold to meet two objectives. One, to secure more hardwood for firewood and for materials for manufacturing for the Mi'kmaq, and two, to protect settlers from Mi'kmaw encroachment on settler land. Roderick McDonald wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs to explain the issue: "In my opinion, the purchase of this land would be most desirable both for fuel and fence posts, and would save considerable annoyances and loss to the white settlers in the neighbourhood, by the encroachment of these Indians on their properties."²⁶ McDonald knew that if the Indian Reserves were not sufficient in resources, the Mi'kmaq would simply venture off reserve to harvest them. For the Mi'kmaq, the land was only in possession of the settlers, their actions show they still recognized the resources present on those lands as their own. The fix, for people like McDonald, was not to impose the law and try and stop the Mi'kmaq. Rather, it was to survey more land in hopes that more resources in Mi'kmaw hands would stem the issue. This fix was more about fixing the colonial and Dominion government's failures to properly secure Mi'kmaw land in Pictou County than it was providing resources for the Mi'kmaq, who would take them as needed in spite of imposed settler boundaries.

Eliza Copeland wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs on March 14, 1888, to ask the government to pay for the land that the "Indians have taken possession of and have cut the wood

²⁵ The record contains considerable discussion of Mrs. Eliza Copeland's title. Apparently, Mrs. Copeland was a widow, and her land was held 'In Trust' by a man named R.P. Fraser, her brother.

²⁶ Rev. Roderick McDonald, Indian Agent, to Hon. Sir John A. MacDonald, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, March 30 1886, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

and otherwise destroyed the property.”²⁷ Frustrated that the Government had failed to act since the original request in 1883, Copeland asked for fair compensation for her losses on her land at Fisher’s Grant. Again, the Mi’kmaq showed disregard for settler property and resources by actively possessing and harvesting on land that was not surveyed and purchased for their use until December of 1888. Copeland’s frustration hints at both the failure of the government to deal with Indigenous land issues in a timely manner, but also at the fact that the Mi’kmaq acted as if the lines did not matter to their resource needs.

Copeland’s thirty acres were acquired as an addition to the reserve in 1889, several years after the issue had first been raised. Edward Dewdney, the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, justified the land purchase in his 1889 Annual Report by stating that the land was purchased because the Fisher’s Grant Reserves had insufficient hardwood groves and agricultural space, and that “the Indians, consequently, often trespassed on their neighbours’ properties” to secure these resources.²⁸ The problem with this addition, however, is that by the time the government bought it, under the guise that they were providing more resource land for the Mi’kmaq, the Mi’kmaq had already used up the wood on the property. The Government was behind the times, so to speak, which meant the Mi’kmaq still needed more woodlands for their use. This further exacerbated the tensions between the Mi’kmaq and settler land, where government officials could not understand why the Mi’kmaq in this region were continually running out of resources and asking for more land.

The issues that developed between settlers and the Mi’kmaq occurred in other parts of Pictou County, not just at Fisher’s Grant. In the 1890s, a series of correspondence occurred

²⁷ Eliza Copeland, Landowner, to Charles Tupper, Member of Parliament, March 14 1888, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

²⁸ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1888 (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1889), xxvii.

between John Roy, a settler living at Pine Tree Gut, wrote to the government to state that the Mi'kmaq had occupied his land for many years. Pine Tree Gut was a Mi'kmaw village located near the mouth of Sutherland's River, about twenty-five kilometers from Fisher's Grant. Pine Tree Gut is also at the entrance to Merigomish Harbour and near Maligomish (Indian Island, the other Mi'kmaq Reserve in Pictou County). Roy wished to sell the land to the government, similar to the occurrence at Fisher's Grant, and reported that the land was attended by several Mi'kmaw families. Pine Tree was an excellent fishing location, especially for eels, and was located close to the settler market at New Glasgow. Roy knew the Mi'kmaq would not stop using his land, so much like Sproull, he called for the government to buy it.

Indian Agent Roderick McDonald was frustrated by the persistence of Mi'kmaq seasonal migrations, and he thought that if the government provided one large reserve, the Mi'kmaq might all take up land there and stop there "migratory ways."²⁹ He wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs, saying "I think it is more to their advantage to have their lands in one large block than to have it in small reserves in different parts of the country."³⁰ This letter confused the Department, as they were only aware of two Indian Reserves in Pictou County- Fisher's Grant No. 24 and Indian Island. What McDonald was referring to, however, was not more officially surveyed and government sanctioned reserves, but to the many places that the Mi'kmaq used regardless of settler claims. McDonald's plan was to secure more land at Fisher's Grant to make the reserve larger, while also keeping Indian Island as a place of religious significance for the Mi'kmaq. In April of 1899 he wrote to the Department of Indian Affairs asking for them to purchase another parcel of land adjacent to the original Fisher's Grant No. 24 parcel. The land was being sold by a

²⁹ Roderick McDonald to J.D. Mclean, Secretary of Indian Affairs, April 29 1899, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

³⁰ Ibid.

settler named William Scott, who had purchased the land from the original settler, Hector McKinnon.³¹ McDonald described the eighty-acre plot as being a mixture of arable land and dense softwood, something that would provide acreage for agriculture and wood for heat during the winter – two things that were of scarce quantity on the Fisher’s Grant reserve land.

It is clear that even with the reserve at Fisher’s Grant the Mi’kmaq lived at different places throughout the year. The Indian Department attempted to understand this by treating the two reserves, Indian Island and Fisher’s Grant, as separate reserves with distinct populations. This, I assume, has more to do with Indian Agent bias than it did with Mi’kmaq realities. Even while trying to present the reserves separately, under different headings in his annual reports, McDonald himself knew that many Mi’kmaq moved between places frequently throughout the year. In his 1900 report, he claimed that forty persons lived at Indian Island during the summer, before removing to Pine Tree Gut for the winter (mostly due to ice flows in the Northumberland being dangerous at that time of the year). But he also revealed that many families from Fisher’s Grant also lived at Indian Island for most of the summer. At Pine Tree, he reported, the Mi’kmaq occupants were “allowed” to build “shanties” at the generosity of the owner.³² McDonald was attempting to fit boxes around the Mi’kmaq population, but they ultimately did not fit. The Mi’kmaq accessed these spaces as part of seasonal migrations, now including wage labour and the production of goods for settler towns as part of these mixed economic systems.

Roderick McDonald called for the government to purchase the Scott parcel into the twentieth century. McDonald reported that the Mi’kmaq in Pictou Landing were taking a greater interest in farming their land, but at present there was only “an acre or two” for every family. He

³¹ Ibid.

³² Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1900 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson Printer to the Queen’s Most Excellent Majesty, 1901), 72.

argued that “it would be a pity” to miss an opportunity to get more arable land for the Mi’kmaq, and he warned that if the opportunity was squandered it “would not be an easy matter later on to enlarge the Reserve.”³³ In fact, McDonald’s conservative estimates were quite far off their mark. The reserve, in 1900, was 164 acres in total. There were 160 Mi’kmaq reportedly living at Fisher’s Grant, and twenty-six living at Pine Tree in 1898.³⁴ Given that the entire Mi’kmaq population could access arable land at Fisher’s Grant, the total population of an estimated 186 Mi’kmaq living in Pictou County would need to be considered in estimates for arable land for Mi’kmaq agriculture. This means that there was actually less than one total acre of land per person. Of this acreage, McDonald estimated that “no more than about thirty acres can be plowed.”³⁵ This means that there was 0.88 acres per person of total land, and only 0.16 acres of arable land per person. Even with the addition of the eighty-acre Scott parcel, of which only forty acres were arable, the total land per person would only be increased to 1.31 acres, with 0.38 acres of arable land per person. The land was completely insufficient to provide enough calories to make the Mi’kmaq alter their sustenance systems. More land meant more crops, but it did not mean that the Mi’kmaq would become static farmers at Fisher’s Grant. Indeed, J.D. McLean, an Indian Agent for Fisher’s Grant in the early twentieth century, later reported that Fisher’s Grant would scarcely provide enough arable land for one white family, let alone nearly 200 Mi’kmaq.³⁶

Regardless of the Department of Indian Affairs agreeing that it was important to encourage the Mi’kmaq to farm, and that sufficient land should be provided, they claimed that

³³ Roderick McDonald to J.W. Carmichael, March 13 1900, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

³⁴ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1898 (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1899), 411.

³⁵ McDonald to Carmichael, March 13 1900, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

³⁶ Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30, 1901 (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1902), 68.

they did not have the funding necessary to purchase the land.³⁷ Without more land, the Mi'kmaq expanded outward onto settler land, using resources as they saw fit. In 1901, Member of Parliament for Pictou County A.C. Bell penned a letter to the Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, to alert the department that "the Indian families living at Pine Tree Gut and Indian Cove-Fisher's Grant...are impoverished of lands on which they can cut firewood. In consequence, they are trespassing...Firewood is a necessity of life for the Indian and provision should be made. If not he supplies himself with wood belonging to his neighbours."³⁸ The Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of the Interior forwarded Bell's warning, further stating that "the Indians are likely to get into trouble from the fact that they take wood off of lands other than those belonging to them."³⁹ The Government refused to grant funds to buy more lands, stating that a few years earlier (during the discussions for the Scott purchase) it was reported that the land was mostly timbered. However, the government seems to have been unable to appreciate the types of demand a population of nearly 200 places on woodlots. Conservative estimates show that a family of four requires at least three acres of firewood to sustain the cold, wet coastal winters in Nova Scotia.⁴⁰ Thus, if we roughly divide the population of 200 into families of four, we would have fifty families, requiring roughly 150 acres of firewood annually. If the reserve at this time was 164 acres, with roughly thirty acres of arable land, there was not even enough firewood to survive one full winter. This also does not account for wood that was used in the manufacture of various wooden implements and goods by the Mi'kmaq, nor for land that was

³⁷ James A. Smart, Deputy Minister of the Interior, to J.W. Carmichael, April 27 1900, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

³⁸ A.C. Bell, Member of Parliament, to James Smart, May 2 1901, LAC RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

³⁹ James Smart to J.D. McLean, Secretary of Indian Affairs, May 3 1901, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁴⁰ Joshua MacFadyen, "Hewers of Wood: A History of Wood Energy in Canada," in *Powering Up Canada: A History of Power, Fuel, and Energy from 1600*, edited by R.W. Sandwell (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2016), 129-161.

occupied by homes or was neither arable nor wooded (swamps, beaches, roads, etc.). Again, we encounter the tensions between reserve boundaries and resource demand. The government wanted the Mi'kmaq to live sedentary lives at Fisher's Grant, but refused to provide sufficient land to actually ensure that system could function.

Despite these tensions, no land was added in 1900 or 1901. Not surprisingly, the issue did not resolve itself. One of J.D. McLeod's, Fisher's Grant's new Indian Agent, first tasks as agent was asking the government to purchase a sixty-acre section of land from James Sproull, the same settler who had previously sold land to the government for the Mi'kmaq's use. McLeod reported that the reserve land was nearly devoid of timber, and that Sproull was offering up sixty acres of wooded land for sale. However, the government again refused to purchase the land, stating, again, that they had no funding for such purposes.

Again in 1902, McLeod put pen to paper to ask for more land for the Mi'kmaq. He listed several properties that adjoined the reserve and would be "most conveniently situated for the Indians."⁴¹ This time, the government provided \$400 to purchase thirty-six acres from William Scott- the same land that was applied for in 1899. However, they somehow forgot to tell McLeod. In April of 1904, nearly six months after the government had secured the title to Scott's land, McLeod wrote an angry letter asking, "What about the land that was to be bought for the Indians?...If the land is to be of any use to the Indians this year, they must be given permission at once."⁴² McLeod's letter was received by J.D. McLean, the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, who stated that McLeod had been informed in the October last. Even with the

⁴¹ Letter from J.D. McLeod, Indian Agent, to an undisclosed recipient, March 17 1903, LAC RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁴² J.D. McLeod to J.D. McLean, April 20 1904, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

thirty-six acres added to the reserve, the Mi'kmaq were still in great need of firewood to keep their homes warm during the cold Nova Scotia winters.

The Mi'kmaq again asked Mcleod to pursue the government for more woodlots for their winter fuel within a few short years of the Scott addition. Mcleod did so in December of 1904, reminding the government that “the Indians of Fisher’s Grant Reserve have had no firewood since some time. They have been encroaching on other people’s property to keep themselves warm.”⁴³ Mcleod then gave a recommendation to purchase a ten-acre woodlot from John Fraser. The government replied with what was becoming their typical reply- they claimed that they had just purchased land for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou, and that they did not understand why more land was needed. The Government consistently failed to provide ample land and sufficient resources, placing the Mi'kmaq were in a feedback loop that kept them asking for more land.

Mcleod responded by explaining that while some of the reserve was timbered, it was timbered with softwoods, mostly spruce, which was not terribly useful as firewood, nor was it of any use for manufacturing. He again reminded the government of the Mi'kmaq tendency to use their land as needed by assuring the government that “to keep themselves warm during the winter the Indians have to *steal* the firewood, which they have been doing much to the chagrin of the proprietors.”⁴⁴ He again repeated his call to purchase the Fraser lot, which was heavily wooded with hardwood that he estimated would provide for “the comfort and material welfare of the wards of the Nation” for some years.⁴⁵

⁴³ J.D. McLeod to J.D. McLean, December 17 1904, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁴⁴ J.D. McLeod to J.D. McLean, January 4 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058. Emphasis added.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

But the Department of Indian Affairs did not see it this way. Duncan Campbell Scott, then an accountant, but later Superintendent of Indian Affairs, vehemently opposed granting any more land to the Mi'kmaq. He stated that they

...should be able to make a living for themselves. They should be looked upon as ordinary citizens and if they commit trespass they should be prosecuted...By making that point the conspicuous and important one I think we are looking through the wrong end of the glass. Our policy is to provide relief to only those who are in needy circumstances, and it would be better for us to buy a little wood for old widows and dependent orphans than to buy wooded land that may be plundered by able-bodied Indians who should earn enough to supply them with wood.⁴⁶

Scott wanted to create a class of Mi'kmaq workers within the capitalist economy – not a community that collectively managed and shared resources – and saw the granting of resource rights for entire communities as undermining that goal.⁴⁷ The Mi'kmaq found themselves enthralled in Canada's efforts to assert its liberal ideologies within their settler colonial rule – Scott's call for Indigenous people to be understood under the same frameworks as “ordinary citizens,” in his words, required them to shed their collective Mi'kmaq identity and act as individuals who found their own path in the colonial world. The hypocrisy is abhorrent, and McLeod had no issue in calling Scott out: “The Indians have been taking wood for fuel from their neighbours – if they could keep themselves from freezing otherwise they would not be stealing it, but God has given man the paramount right to live. The neighbours who suffer are repelling them from taking the wood, so violently that an Indian told me today that he was afraid they

⁴⁶ Duncan Campbell Scott, Accountant of Indian Affairs, to Frank Pedley, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, January 31 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁴⁷ Historian Glenn Icton explored similar government intervention in Indigenous land use in the history of Indigenous fur-trapping and trapline registration in northern British Columbia and the Yukon. See: Glenn Icton, “Many Families of Unseen Indians: Trapline Registration and Understandings of Aboriginal Title in the BC-Yukon Borderlands”, *BC Studies* Vol. 201 (2019), 67-91. Historian Daniel Rueck argued that the Department of Indian Affairs attempted to undue Mohawk customary laws that protected communal resource harvesting in order to undermine Mohawk land claims and ultimately disperse them from their lands. See: Daniel Rueck, “Commons, Enclosure, and Resistance in Kahnawa:ke Territory, 1850-1900,” *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 95, No. 3 (2014), 352-381.

would be murdered.”⁴⁸ The Mi’kmaq were between the proverbial rock and hard place- not able to live the type of sedentary life the government required of them due to the limited availability of resources, while also being chastised and penalized for using their broader territory to provide the necessities of life.

These tensions, between the Mi’kmaq way of life and the expansion of liberal ideology over it, were exacerbated by the government’s failure to protect ample land for the Mi’kmaq during the settlement period, and continued because they refused to do so in the twentieth century. The irony was that the Government pushed the Mi’kmaq to live at Fisher’s Grant to enforce assimilation efforts that would destroy Indian Bands and remake the Mi’kmaq as individual property owners without Indian Status, but they undermined their own efforts by failing to provide ample space to allow the Mi’kmaq to live in the ways that they wanted them to. Even if the Mi’kmaq were totally on board with the Government’s plans (which they were not), this type of life was impossible with the land and resource shortage at Fisher’s Grant.

Historians have seen the application of liberal ideology – that is, the political ideology that supports individualism, limited government intervention, free markets, and equal opportunity access to resources – as a fundamental part of the project of building Canada. Historian Ian McKay posited several years ago that the ‘new liberal order’ provides a framework to understand the history of Canada.⁴⁹ McKay’s framework promised unity for those who saw the writing of Canadian history as a fragmented discourse that was ultimately too presentist, diverse, and unable to effectively capture the history of Canada as a Nation.⁵⁰ Others, however, critiqued liberalism as ill-equipped to properly tell the histories of women and racial minorities in

⁴⁸ J.D. McLeod to J.D. McLean, February 11 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁴⁹ Ian McKay, “The Liberal Order Framework: A prospectus for a reconnaissance of Canadian history,” *The Canadian Historical Review* Vol. 81, No. 4 (2000), 617-645.

⁵⁰ Jack Granatstein, *Who Killed Canadian History?* (Toronto: Harper-Collins, 1998).

Canada's past. Indeed, historian Adelle Perry took issue with McKay's treatment of Indigenous people as 'exceptions' to Canadian liberalism that required concessions to the liberal order to encompass – thereby making it an ineffectual lens to understand Canadian history.⁵¹ Historian Jarvis Brownlee argued that using liberalism as a means to explore Indigenous history in Canada is fraught with issue, given that the project of applying liberal ideology to "Canadian Indian policy...was and remains remarkably incomplete."⁵² A focus on liberalism certainly provides a key window into the function of Canadian settler colonialism and the spread of capitalism over Indigenous lands. However, in so doing we risk creating the façade of a pan-Indigenous experience with liberalism that threatens to mute or obscure important differences between unique communities across the broad geographical and cultural expanse that is Canada.

The Mi'kmaq at Pictou Landing, who sought firewood to heat their homes and provide economic opportunity found their lives dominated by liberal ideology that on paper promised to remake Mi'kmaq lives, but in application resulted in a system where the Mi'kmaq not only lacked access to resources on reserve land but also were denied the ability to harvest them in their broader territory. The need to provide settlers with the benefits of liberalism (land, resources) required the same benefits be denied to the Mi'kmaq. What's worse, people like Scott failed to see this situation as a failure of the Canadian state and its policies and blamed the Mi'kmaq for their own plight.

It appears that there was quite a bit of ignorance and misunderstanding of the Mi'kmaq situation within the Department of Indian Affairs. To provide some clarity on the issue, George

⁵¹ Adelle Perry, "Women, Racialized People, and the Making of the Liberal Order in North America," in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 274-297.

⁵² Robin Jarvis Brownlee, "A Persistent Antagonism: First Nations and the Liberal Order," in *Liberalism and Hegemony: Debating the Canadian Liberal Revolution*, Jean-Francois Constant and Michel Ducharme (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000), 299-300.

Chitty, the Dominion Timber Inspector, wrote to the Deputy Superintendent of Indians Affairs Frank Pedley to shed light on the situation. Chitty, after visiting Fisher's Grant and reviewing the case, explained that the Mi'kmaq had been suffering for want of arable land and firewood for quite some time. The former issue, he reminded, had been partially dealt with by the purchase of thirty-six acres of arable land from William Scott in 1903. The Department had understood this land to be a woodlot, when in actuality it was mostly arable land with some stands of softwood. He explained that the ten-acre purchase from John Fraser was not a land purchase, but a purchase of the wood on the land – a kind of informal timber lease. Chitty advocated for the purchase of the wood by pleading for the government to recognize their role in providing relief for the Mi'kmaq: "it is evident that the Indians there are badly in need of hardwood for fuel and as the agent states, the 10 acres of wood would supply their wants from some years."⁵³

The Department of Indian Affairs was much more willing to purchase the timber, and not the land, even though they initially balked at the idea of spending \$40 on the Mi'kmaq, regardless for its purpose. It is strange, this logic, considering that ten acres of land would have been a steal at \$40. In this light, it seems like the Department of Indian Affairs was willing to find the money, but not willing to increase the Mi'kmaw land holdings in Pictou County. In the end, there was an issue with the title to land, and the sale nor lease was never completed.

In 1905, James Sproull, through his Member of Parliament Edward MacDonald, again offered a portion of his land for sale to the Mi'kmaq. MacDonald forwarded Sproull's letter to the Department of Indian Affairs, reporting "that there is a quite a colony of Micmacs [sic] who are very enthusiastic people and who have given up their old ways absolutely."⁵⁴ MacDonald

⁵³ George Chitty, Dominion Timber Inspector, to Frank Pedley, February 21 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁵⁴ E.A. MacDonald, Member of Parliament, to Frank Pedley, April 1 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

agreed that the Government should purchase Sproull's land. While the Mi'kmaq were only mentioned passively in these letters, it is reasonable to assume that they had been conversing about expanding their land with their neighbor and their local politicians. Sproull and the Mi'kmaq had lived next door to each other for several decades and they had done similar land deals in the past. MacDonald, for his part, seemed in favour of assisting in settling local land issues in ways that were favourable to both the Mi'kmaq and settlers like Sproull. Not surprisingly, the Department of Indian Affairs disagreed. They claimed that they could not dispose of any more funds to buy land for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. They closed the issue without entertaining it at all.

Without ample firewood, the Mi'kmaq would have much difficulty living comfortably. This was especially true for Nova Scotia's often cold, damp winters. Thus, without firewood, the Mi'kmaq were forced to leave the reserve boundaries in order to heat their homes. From the perspective of the government, this was trespassing, or stealing, but for the Mi'kmaq, it was their land and they had never given up their right to access the resources on them. Another local settler, Captain Joseph Foster offered eighty acres of land for sale, forty acres of which was under "excellent firewood", and the remaining acres were cleared for crops. Indian Agent McLeod pleaded for the Department to purchase the land, which was being offered for \$700, as it would provide firewood that would "last a long period of years and the land could be used by the Indians for agriculture."⁵⁵ The situation, McLeod declared, was becoming increasingly desperate, and he called for the government to act "before the snow of another winter covers the ground."⁵⁶ The Department of Indian Affairs again claimed that they had no funds that could be used for purchasing land, and that they instead would supply firewood to individuals on a case-

⁵⁵ J.D. McLeod to Frank Pedley, June 14 1905, LAC, RG10, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

by-case basis.⁵⁷ Inevitably, the Mi'kmaq were forced to acquire their firewood in other ways. Indeed, later in 1905 a settler named Andrew Fraser, who occupied land bordering the Fisher's Grant Reserve, complained to the Government that the Mi'kmaq had cut the wood on his land.⁵⁸ McLeod wrote to the government, stating that Fraser sought payment of \$100 for the wood taken from his land. The Department told McLeod that they would not reimburse Fraser, and they reminded him that they had agreed to purchase firewood for the Mi'kmaq, which they hoped would stem the issue of theft off of adjacent settler lands.⁵⁹

At this point, after nearly a decade of pursuing the Department to purchase more lands for the Mi'kmaq living at Fisher's Grant, Indian Agent McLeod was becoming angered, and impatient. He wrote again to the Department of Indian Affairs in April of 1906, reporting that the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County had been able to survive the winter due to the mild weather. McLeod warned George Chitty, the Dominion Timber Inspector, that if something was not done, the Mi'kmaq would not be so lucky in the future:

I have been writing from time to time about procuring firewood for the Indians of the Fisher's Grant Reserve...During a severe winter the Indians might perish from the cold, and their sad plight would be brought home in an unpleasant way to all concerned. What are you going to do about it?⁶⁰

Calling out the Department directly, it seemed, might be a way to make them act. However, they again claimed that they were destitute of funds and reasserted that they would purchase firewood for those in need. Ultimately, the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County, and more broadly in Nova Scotia, were not a priority for a federal government that was clearly focused on developing the Canadian

⁵⁷ J.D. McLean to J.D. McLeod, July 21 1905, LAC, C-12050, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁵⁸ J.D. McLeod to J.D. McLean, August 31 1905, LAC, C-12050, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁵⁹ J.D. McLean to J.D. McLeod, September 6 1905, LAC, C-12050, C-12050, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁶⁰ J.D. McLeod to George Chitty, April 2 1906, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

west.⁶¹ The government promised individual payments on a case by case basis. Promises, however, did not heat Mi'kmaq homes, nor put food on Mi'kmaq tables.

However, when it came time to pay for the wood, the Department refused to do so. A New Glasgow Law Firm contacted the Department in the summer of 1906 representing a client who wished to be reimbursed for the wood cut from his land by the Mi'kmaq.⁶² The lawyer reported that the Mi'kmaq had cut wood on his client's land at Chance Harbour (roughly ten kilometers and a few bays East of Fisher's Grant), and he seemed sure that the Department would purchase the wood after the fact. He claimed that "his client had suffered sufficiently at the hands of the Indians," and he asked whether or not the Department pays for wood used by the Mi'kmaq. This letter is curious, as it suggests that the Lawyer expected that the Department would pay for the wood. It is likely that upon being accused of cutting the wood illegally, the Mi'kmaq loggers told the settler that the Government had agreed to pay for the firewood they needed. The lawyer was possibly simply following up on these claims on behalf of his settler client. The Department denied the claim, stating that they had agreed to only purchase firewood for those in need on a case-by-case basis.⁶³ The Mi'kmaq were again caught between what the Government said they would do, and what they are actually willing to do.

The Annual Report in 1906 painted a grim picture for the prospect of the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County. McLeod reported that in addition to the lack of firewood, wood for manufacturing, a key element in Mi'kmaq economics in the early twentieth century, was also suffering from lack of resources.⁶⁴ McLeod made a good case for more land. He basically told

⁶¹ Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, 173-175.

⁶² Jennison and Graham, Barristers, to Frank Oliver, Minister of the Interior, July 30 1906, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁶³ J.D. McLean to Jennison and Graham, August 3 1906, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁶⁴ Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31 1907 (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1907), 65.

the government that the plan for assimilation would fail unless the Mi'kmaq were given the means to provide for themselves. This system ensured that the Mi'kmaq would have to trespass, but also highlights how reserve boundaries were quite porous and ineffectual. Indeed, a settler named A.J. Reynolds offered to sell his land at Moody Point to the Department, stating "the Indians have been using the property for years."⁶⁵ Reynolds land, like all others bordering the reserve, served as unofficial extensions of the reserve for the Mi'kmaq, regardless of boundaries.

Finally, in 1907, the Government agreed to appropriate funds in order to purchase more land for the Mi'kmaq. The land approved was the land that Captain Foster had offered up for sale several years previous.⁶⁶ This eighty acre plot was well wooded, and while not connected to the reserve it was located directly across Boat Harbour, so it was accessible by boat from Fisher's Grant. However, even with the new land, the Mi'kmaq still made use of other non-reserve land neighbouring the reserve. Indeed, the Foster land seemed to extend the boundaries of the reserve across the non-reserve land in between the Foster land and the main reserve. C.K. Sproull, a relative of earlier mentioned James Sproull, complained less than a year after the Foster Purchase that the Mi'kmaq were now using his land, which lay between the new woodlot and the old reserve. Sproull stated that the government had created an unfair situation when surveying Mi'kmaq land, as his land was then "hemmed in" on all side by Indian Reserves.⁶⁷ The Mi'kmaq had been cutting wood on Sproull's property for over five years, and now with the Foster purchase, they would have to travel over his land to reach the shore of Boat Harbour. Sproull reminded the government of the distance between the two reserves, and posited that it was highly

⁶⁵ A.J. Reynolds, settler, to Frank Pedley, August 12 1907, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁶⁶ Deputy Minister of Justice to J.D. Mclean, September 9 1907, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058; Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30, 1903 (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1904), 1-14.

⁶⁷ C.K. Sproull to E.M. Macdonald, Member of Parliament, November 6 1908, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

improbable that the Mi'kmaq would travel so far for firewood when they could easily take it from his land by the reserve. Sproull, however, did not seem angry or annoyed at the Mi'kmaq. His letter reads rather critical of the government for failing to assess the situation. Knowing that the Mi'kmaq would use the land, Sproull instead proposed to exchange the land so that the Mi'kmaq would have direct access to Boat Harbour and firewood. He claimed that if the land was not traded, it was inevitable that he would have to sell and move from his land, as having "Indians on both sides of it" would eventually render it valueless. If exchanged, Sproull reasoned that it would save him, the government, and the Mi'kmaq from "lots of trouble that now exists."⁶⁸

This land deal was remarkably similar to the one that C.K. Sproull's relatives had made back in 1875. These deals suggest that the Sproull's and the Mi'kmaq were somewhat complicated neighbours, who likely communicated across the boundaries. The Sproull's surely could have tried and have the Mi'kmaq arrested or fined, yet there is no evidence that they sought to do so. Perhaps, they understood the situation to be more complicated than simply two neighbours sharing a boundary. This is likely, given that the Sproull's in both situations sought to appease the Mi'kmaq by offering land deals that would be valuable to them. It is interesting, too, that the Sproull's did not try to outright sell the land to the Mi'kmaq in these situations. Perhaps they, through lengthy discussions with their Mi'kmaq neighbours, understood that the government was unlikely to purchase land outright, and instead devised a plan that would be more likely to appeal to the Indian Agent and the Department of Indian Affairs. This is highly speculative, of course, but the fact that these deals appeared nearly half a century apart suggests that there was more going on than appears in these limited letters. Certainly, there must have

⁶⁸ Ibid.

been at least some communication between settlers like the Sproull's and the Mi'kmaq, and although it does not exist in the historical record (conversations over the fence rarely do), we can speculate on these relationships by assessing the ways that Mi'kmaw and settler lands shifted over time.

To assist in the exchange of land between Sproull and the Mi'kmaq, the Department of Indian Affairs asked Indian Agent McLeod, and A.J. Boyd, the local Indian Superintendent, to investigate the matter and report back. Boyd reported back that the Foster land was nearly useless for the Mi'kmaq, as it contained "no suitable material for fencing or tub-making, axe handles, baskets and such articles as are usually manufactured by Micmac [sic] Indians."⁶⁹ Boyd stated that there was enough firewood to last a few years, but nothing of the sort that would allow the Mi'kmaq to engage local markets with their commodities. The Department of Indian Affairs failed to realize that the Mi'kmaq wanted more than just firewood, they also wanted the timber to be able to maintain their ability to manufacture and sell their products. For his part, Dominion Timber Inspector George Chitty claimed the wood on the Sproull lot would provide for the Mi'kmaq for "all time."⁷⁰ The Department of Indian Affairs, through their secretary J.D. McLean, stated that they would not be able to complete the transfer between Sproull and the Mi'kmaq, as they had no funds to pay for the \$600 difference in the value. McLean complained that the Mi'kmaq always seemed to denude or misuse their timber land, resulting in a reoccurring debate over resources every few years. But McLean, like others at the Department, were focused on firewood, and forgot the whole other segment of the equation; the Mi'kmaq needed woodlands for their livelihood, not just to warm their homes.

⁶⁹ George Chitty to the Assistant Deputy Minister of Indian Affairs, July 20 1909, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁷⁰ Ibid.



Figure 6.2: "A shingled hut and birch bark tepee – Pictou Landing Reservation, 1908 (Courtesy of Nova Scotia Museum)"

This gets at the fundamental tensions surrounding the formation of Indian Reserves in Pictou County. From a small parcel of fifty acres that became the hub of Indian Affairs influence in the county, the reserve had quadrupled in size over the next several decades. But, as more and more Mi'kmaq came to call Fisher's Grant home, the population grew, as too did Mi'kmaq engagement with the settler economy. And as more and more settlement occurred in the region, the Mi'kmaq became less able to access their broader territory without causing issues with people who had settled on their land. Thus, the increase in reserve land was asymmetrically balanced by a much larger reduction in Mi'kmaq ability to access land and resources off of their reserve. The government also forgot its role in causing this resource crises; the Mi'kmaq were praised for their initiative in building their mercantile webs and selling their products and labour to a variety of industries, yet the Department did not want to facilitate and maintain these industries by providing adequate access to resources, regardless of whether they be for wood to keep warm or to make into a saleable product. McLean ignorantly claimed that "as long as the

Indians are impressed with the belief that the Department will supply their wants in respect of timber lands they will neither make an effort to conserve what they have, nor take steps to provide for their future wants.”⁷¹ McLean viewed access to timber in a vacuum. The Department of Indian Affairs had remade Mi’kmaq life based on several ideas: 1) keep the Mi’kmaq sedentary as much as possible 2) encourage them to adopt agriculture 3) encourage them to engage in wage work and other industries that keep them more permanently on reserve 4) create education and logistical support (Indian Agent access, services, church, etc.) and make Fisher’s Grant a central hub. But the tensions I have discussed in this chapter show the issues between the government’s idealized plans and their ability to provide the land required to do so. The Mi’kmaq had less land – far less land – per capita than any of their white neighbours and had very limited options to increase this land holding to make it feasible for their growing population. Their agricultural land was minimal, so focusing on cropping was nearly a waste of time for many years as the soil quickly became depleted.⁷² Manufacturing items for sale was economically viable, but the limited timber resources required the Mi’kmaq to trespass or to find distant isolated places to harvest hardwood (and these were becoming scarce with settlement). Forced to assimilate, but shorthanded on the required tools at every corner. The result was that despite the Mi’kmaq using their broader territories and resources to provide for themselves and their families, they were finding such activities compromised by the expansion of settler population and private and corporate claims to Mi’kmaq (aka Crown) lands.

In 1911, land was formally exchanged between the Mi’kmaq, the Department of Indian Affairs, and Sproull, making Fisher’s Grant Indian Reserve one contiguous parcel of land

⁷¹ J.D. McLean to E.M. Macdonald, July 27 1909, LAC, RG10, Vol. 7761, File 27058.

⁷² Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December, 1883 (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1884), 24-25. Indian Agent McDonald cited a lack of fertilizer as a key issue in agriculture as far back as 1883, something that continued to be an issue at Fisher’s Grant for decades.

between Boat Harbour and Pictou Harbour. Further additions were made to the reserve in 1928, and again in the 1960s, which make the reserve within its present boundaries. From fifty acres in 1863, to over 200 acres in 1928, the Fisher's Grant Reserve had seen much change to its boundaries over its short half century as an Indian Reserve. This growth was part of a painstaking process of making a portion of Mi'kma'ki into what became known as Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve, today Pictou Landing First Nation. The growing pains associated with making this transition were totally of colonial origin and scope. The Mi'kmaq, through increased settlement and the subsequent diluted access to resources throughout their territory, lived for increased periods at Fisher's Grant, a place where the government plans for assimilation could take fruition. Ironically, the government's actions created a situation where the Mi'kmaq were required to access resources by remaining mobile in their larger territory. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were a time when the Mi'kmaq incorporated the new reserve at Fisher's Grant into their larger social and economic systems.

The Mi'kmaq, as was argued in the last chapter and forwarded in this one, fought hard to have land at the mouth of Pictou Harbour, and they demanded that this land holding be increased to make the reserve useful to their requirements. But when the reserve became too small, or resources became too scarce, they used their larger territory to provide for themselves. This was clearly seen by the ample evidence that settlers consistently had problems with the Mi'kmaq using settler land with little abandon for who owned the title, and by the persistence of the Mi'kmaq living at places outside of reserve boundaries, Pine Tree Gut, Chance Harbour, and Barney's River, to name a few.

These first two chapters on the Mi'kmaq have set the stage for the third, and final, chapter of this section of this dissertation. With a clear narrative of how, and why, the Mi'kmaq

came to live at Fisher's Grant, we can now move to discussions of how these new boundaries impacted Mi'kmaw community and family structures. As it became increasingly difficult to maintain a semi-seasonal migratory lifestyle in Pictou County, many families and the Mi'kmaw community as a whole adapted to suit new opportunities. But this does not mean that they simply forgot about their Mi'kmaw identity and ways of knowing. Indeed, the next chapter closely examines these changes, and these continuities, with an eye to how social, political, cultural, environmental, industrial, communal, and familial structures changed (or did not change) within the context of settler colonialism in Nova Scotia. It highlights Mi'kmaw agency and decision making in these processes to provide a history of not only how the colonial agenda and structures challenged Mi'kmaw society and identity at a crucial point (through education, religion, settlement, assimilation, etc.), but also to show how the Mi'kmaq made specific decisions and embraced or rejected certain elements of settler society based on their identities as colonized people in a quickly changing world.

Chapter Seven: Working and Living at Fisher's Grant, 1870-1960

The tribe were thus essentially a wandering, homeless race, dependant on the chances of game and venison, and on the spear and the rifle, for means to eke out a very precarious livelihood...Thus lived our Indians a few years ago, a harmless, but useless life. To-day, however, a change forces itself on the notice of the least observant.¹

-Reverend Ronald MacDonald, Indian Agent, Pictou County, 1880.

Throughout the late-nineteenth century, settler observers like Indian Agent Rev. Ronald MacDonald perceived great change within Mi'kmaw society. They framed these changes as transitions from savagery to civilization, and as a process that was guided and facilitated by outside agents. People like himself, who acted on behalf of the settler colonial state. And while there can be no doubt that changes were occurring, these changes were adaptations to Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and living – honed over a century of contact with settlers. More to the point, they were driven by local Indigenous agency as people made often difficult decisions on how best to adapt community and family function to the challenges, or take advantage of the opportunities, of living as a colonized people. The Mi'kmaq in Pictou County, using their reserved land as a foothold in their broader territories, negotiated these changes by developing an adaptive and responsive economy that was rooted both in the traditional Mi'kmaw economy but also in the emerging colonial economy. This economy was gendered, built on flexibility, and allowed for incomes to remain consistent even when individual industries faltered or slowed, or demand for Mi'kmaw manufactured goods declined. The development and sustenance of this system, which emerged over the nineteenth century but came into its own in the twentieth,

¹ Rev. R. MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Sir. John A. MacDonald, the Superintendent of Indian Affairs, October 1st 1880, in *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December, 1880* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1881), 44-46.

challenges notions that male-earned wages were the most important economic driver in Mi'kmaw life. Rather, the Mi'kmaq built an economy that required contributions from a variety of economic strains – some male centered, like wage-labour in industrial settings, other female centered, such as the manufacture and sale of baskets and dried flowers in settler towns – to provide for Mi'kmaw community and family function in the twentieth century.

Having a permanent base from which to work and harvest resources provided the Pictou County Mi'kmaq with new economic opportunities that had significant impacts on the ways that the Mi'kmaw community, and the families that lived there, operated at Fisher's Grant. As the previous chapter demonstrated, the Mi'kmaq struggled to establish physical, political, and economic spaces within their invaded territory from which to increase their engagements with wage-labour and the settler-market for Mi'kmaw goods. Waged work became increasingly important to the Mi'kmaw economy as resources, such as fish, game, and hardwood, became harder to access in the face of settlement and industrialization. They embraced opportunities for wage work for the past century in a complicated web of non-Indigenous settlement, but with a surveyed and secured space protected under the Indian Act the Mi'kmaq could now incorporate these economic opportunities into their family and community systems in more integral ways. Indeed, wage labour and market opportunities simultaneously reinforced and challenged aspects of traditional Mi'kmaw ways of living and knowing. Wage labour, alongside other economic activities such as the production of manufactured goods for sale in settler markets, caused the Mi'kmaq to adapt and innovate in terms of gendered work and labour, mobility, and community function.

This Mi'kmaw mixed economy was dynamic and adaptable – built on mobility and seasonality. It was based on wage labour and trade with settlers, but it was also an adaptation of a

much older Mi'kmaw economy. Fisher's Grant became the central hub from which the Mi'kmaq increased their opportunities for wage labour and the market sale of Mi'kmaw goods to settlers.² Mobility for food and resource procurement, familial visits, religious purposes, and wage labour opportunities continued throughout this era, but Fisher's Grant became a stable base for the operation of this modern Mi'kmaw economy. Evidence from Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports highlight the increasing role of wages in this economy, while also pointing to examples of Mi'kmaw adaptability when opportunities for local work became scarce. The Mi'kmaq both worked in a formal fashion for wages (at places like the public works, coal docks, fish plants, coal mines, domestic work, etc.) but also maintained the ability to supplement this income with other work, such as the manufacture of baskets, pick axe handles and Mi'kmaw material goods and products for markets in settler towns. In ways that mirror what historian Andrew Parnaby has described in the context of the Mi'kmaq in Cape Breton, the Mi'kmaw of Pictou County embraced an economy that was "Flexible and mobile, Mi'kmaw families were engaged in a mixed economy, in which men and women deployed some of their labour, some of the time, in new ways – working for wages, selling 'handy work' – while maintaining older practices of seasonal family migration and ties to an economically and culturally significant locale."³ The flexible and dynamic nature of the Mi'kmaw economy has also been used by historian Courtney Mrazek to explain how Mi'kmaq men and women mixed agricultural and wage labour pursuits with "traditional practices of seasonal migration."⁴ This adaptability, as noted in a different context by historian John S. Lutz, allowed for Indigenous communities like

² I do not suggest that Mi'kmaw mobility ended, as is evidenced by scholarship by Michelle Lelievre. Indeed, Mi'kmaw seasonal labour in a variety of locations, namely across the 49th Parallel in the North-Eastern United States, remained an important part of Mi'kmaw society.

³ Parnaby, 73.

⁴ Courtney Mrazek, "'Our Nation is like a withering leaf on a summer's day': The Mi'kmaq and British Agricultural Policies in Colonial Nova Scotia," Unpublished Master's Thesis, Saint Mary's University (2016), 4.

the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant to be adaptable to market conditions while still maintaining important aspects of the Indigenous economy. The Mi'kmaq engaged in what Lutz has coined as a *moditional economy*, a dynamic blending of Indigenous and settler economies that worked to satisfy traditional Indigenous societal needs and cultural priorities by engaging selectively with western ("modern") economic opportunities.⁵

Wage labour, combined with Mi'kmaw mobility, allowed the Mi'kmaq to use their ancestral residence within the newly created reserve as a central hub for regional economic engagements. One notable result of this economy was that Mi'kmaw women greatly increased their social and economic power in the community. While men undertook new opportunities in industrial wage labour, women found employment opportunities in domestic work in settler homes, and more frequently in the manufacture of material goods that utilized local resources and were sold in local settler towns. Mi'kmaw women thus generated cash that provided them and their families with purchasable resources, giving women increased social power in community systems and enhancing their already important role within the family and broader community collectives.

Fisher's Grant became a very convenient base from which to produce and sell various products to local towns, such as Pictou and New Glasgow. This occurred throughout the colonial period, even without a secured land-base for the Mi'kmaq. But by 1874, a decade after Fisher's Grant had been surveyed as an Indian Reserve, the Mi'kmaq had notably expanded their engagements with the surrounding settler economy. In 1874, Indian Agent Ronald MacDonald

⁵ John S. Lutz, *Makuk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 23-24.

reported that the Mi'kmaq caught and sold "considerable" amounts of a variety of fish for sale in local towns.⁶ In 1875 MacDonald reflected,

Within the last few years I perceive a very appreciable improvement in their industrial habits. Several of the able-bodied young men of the tribe are employed in the Public Works at remunerative wages. Others engage in fishing at the proper season, and sometimes with good results.⁷

Many at Fisher's Grant were skilled coopers, and objects like butter churns, firkins, barrels, wooden hoops for lobster traps and for sail stays, and axe and pick handles fetched them good value in the local settler markets. Mi'kmaw men and women often worked collectively to make these goods – they gathered hardwood resources in family units, and worked side by side to craft various goods. Indeed, MacDonald took special note of the "industrious" women at the Fisher's Grant Reserve, stating that they were "seldom idle."⁸ By the 1870s, only a decade since the establishment of the reserve, the Mi'kmaq at Pictou Landing had found ways to retain and exercise their ancestral Indigenous rights while simultaneously finding new ways to integrate into the settler economy that had imposed itself into their territory and lives.

By the late nineteenth century, Pictou had grown into a sizable port in Nova Scotia. By 1900 Pictou County's shipbuilding industry, which had shifted from building wooden vessels to repairing and producing steam equipment for steel-hulled ships, coupled with the Town of Pictou's growing importance as a port for exports of coal and iron ore, had transformed Pictou County into an industrial center in the Nova Scotia economy.⁹

⁶ Rev. R. MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 30th June 1874, in *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June 1874* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1875), 45.

⁷ R. MacDonald to Vankoughnet, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June, 1875* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1876), 21.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ For more on Maritime industrialization, see: Daniel Samson, *The Spirit of Industry and Improvement: Liberal Government and Rural-Industrial Society, Nova Scotia, 1790-1862* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008). Pictou Landing's Industrial history is detailed by local historian Fergie McKay in

The Mi'kmaq simultaneously benefitted and were challenged by this increase, just as they had during the nineteenth century when thousands of settlers invaded Mi'kma'ki. But this increase in industry also provided new markets for Mi'kmaw manufactured goods and labour. Amongst these changes, the newly formed Canadian state brought a new level of focus and attention the Mi'kmaq through its bureaucratic arm meant to deal with Indigenous people – the Department of Indian Affairs. As part of this process, the Dominion of Canada assigned Indian Agents that would periodically visit Fisher's Grant to enforce Canadian Indian Law (the Indian Act of 1876), and monitor and report upon the activities of the Chief and council. The Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant first Indian Agent, appointed in the 1870s, was Ronald MacDonald, the Reverend at the Roman Catholic Church in Pictou. Unlike Indian Agents elsewhere, Rev. MacDonald was employed on a part time basis to visit infrequently, conduct censuses and collect data for the Department of Indian Affairs. But he also served as a conduit for the Mi'kmaq to air grievances and other issues to the Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Ottawa. Through Indian Agent reports, we learn what the Mi'kmaq living at Fisher's Grant did for work, what types of crops they planted, the merchandise they purchased, and about the ways they adopted or resisted newly emerging elements of settler society. These Indian Agents' written remarks provide us today with important and valuable information which, when properly contextualized, provides important insights into Mi'kmaw life in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

By the late nineteenth century, as the Fisher's Grant Reserve expanded to incorporate more land, and more resources, the Mi'kmaw economy became more intertwined in local settler

A History of Pictou Landing (Montmagny: Marquis Printing, 2014). Pictou had a shipbuilding industry as early as 1788 when the first wooden ships were built in Pictou Harbour. By the turn of the twentieth century, Pictou had become a producer of machinery and steam boilers for steam ships, and although the port stopped building ships after the decline of the demand for wooden vessels, the port became an important hub for repairs and refits. During the Second World War, Pictou became a producer of steel-hulled ships for the war effort. For more, see: James Cameron, *The Ships, Shipbuilders and Seamen of Pictou County* (Antigonish, Nova Scotia: Pictou County Historical Society, 1990) and Roland H. Sherwood's *Pictou Parade* (Sackville, New Brunswick: The Tribune Press, 1945).

systems and spheres. By the mid 1870s the Mi'kmaq had notably expanded their engagements with the surrounding settler economy, and the Mi'kmaq worked in a variety of local industries, sold various manufactured items, and caught and sold “considerable” amounts of a variety of fish for sale in local towns.¹⁰ Mi'kmaw men found ample work in the local coal wharves in Pictou Landing, at the terminus of the Intercontinental Railway.¹¹ Railways became an important part of Mi'kmaq travel for work and resource extraction. The “Steel River,” as described by Mi'kmaq historian and archaeologist Roger Lewis, provided the Mi'kmaq with the ability to access work and markets for their manufactures and baskets.¹² Mi'kmaq also worked in local tanneries, at the various steel works in Trenton, and they continued to find markets for their fish and marine products in local towns.¹³ Fisher's Grant's Indian Agent in 1882, Rev. Roderick MacDonald (Ronald MacDonald's predecessor in both the church and as Indian Agent), earliest reports remarked that most worked as fishers in the summer months, before turning to the manufacture of axe and pick handles for the coal mines during the fall and winter months. These were interspersed with hunting, fishing, and resource extraction excursions, which provided both food and goods for local consumption and for sale in settler towns.

As hardwood resources dwindled in Pictou County, especially those on and near the Reserve, it became harder for the Mi'kmaq to obtain the proper supplies to be able to manufacture goods for the settler market. Roderick MacDonald noted that this industry had been the staple way of making a living at Fisher's Grant for decades, but as stands of ash and birch

¹⁰ Rev. R. MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, 30th June 1874, in *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June 1874* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1875), 45; R. MacDonald to Vankoughnet, *Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for the Year Ended 30th June, 1875* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co., 1876), 21.

¹¹ Hon. Sir John A. MacDonald, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1883* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1884), xxxiii.

¹² Roger Lewis, qtd. in “A Relocation Experiment,” APTN Investigates, Aboriginal People's Television Network (April 17, 2020).

¹³ Ibid.

became scarce, more and more Mi'kmaq focused their efforts on procuring wage labour to make their living. They did not give up on woodworking; they adapted their economy to place more emphasis on wages.¹⁴ MacDonald emphasized these changes to Mi'kmaq life in his annual report for 1884:

A very few years ago, the Micmac tribe was entirely engaged in basket making and cooping. A desultory essay by way of fishing with hook and line in the deep sea, was the only variation in their monotonous life. Hunting, of course, they followed, as they still to some extent do, at special seasons; but their staple avocation was as described. Wood was plenty and within available distance of the towns, in which they found their principal market. With the disappearance of the forest, the Micmac found his ancient occupation gone, and necessity constrained him to exert his energies in a new direction. He began to appear in other fields of labor, so that to-day, there is no employment in which he does not compete, occasionally at least with his white brethren. He enters the mine, he works on a farm, he is a wharf builder, he makes boats, he is a self-taught, but skilful house and ship carpenter.¹⁵

What MacDonald failed to consider was that these processes of adaptation were nothing new to the Mi'kmaq. The Mi'kmaq had always maintained flexibility in their economy, and the presence of settlers and their markets offered another stream of potential income that could be used in conjunction with their other means of making a living. This had been the consistent story for the Mi'kmaq in Pictou, who continually adapted during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as settlers began to fill their homeland and compete for the same resources. The Mi'kmaq adapted to changing circumstance by placing more emphasis on wage labour, a trend that continued for the next half decade at Fisher's Grant.

As the Mi'kmaq increasingly turned to wage labour to feed their families, partly as a response to dwindling resources on the reserve, they maintained their manufacturing economy by

¹⁴ See Figures 25-27, and: Roderick MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Hon. Sir John A. MacDonald, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1884* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1885), 43-44.

¹⁵ Roderick MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Hon. Sir John A. MacDonald, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1884* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1885), 43-44.

pursuing resources further afield in their territories. Much like they had for centuries, the Mi'kmaq used their broader territory and the resources in it regardless of the presence of settlers. Indian Agent MacDonald noted that the Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant spent considerable time gathering wood for manufacturing alongside working for wages: "The majority of the men are industrious, and look for work, as other labourers do, and command the same wages...The principal occupation of the Indians in this locality is in making butter tubs and pick handles for the coal mines, to provide material for which they seem to lay undisputed claims to the forest far and wide."¹⁶ Forest resources, for the Mi'kmaq, were not limited to those on reserve, and they sought out stands of hardwood regardless of the presence of settler title. Mobility and economic adaptability, and the assertion of Mi'kmaq territorial rights, were central components in the Mi'kmaq economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth Centuries.

Indian Agents were aware of this mixed Mi'kmaw economy, but they did not really understand it. They saw Mi'kmaw mobility and continual changes to economic focus as a lack of Mi'kmaw foresight, planning, and economic ability, rather than part of a dynamic and adaptable economy that used a variety of means to ensure Mi'kmaw survival. This critique, however, is perhaps a bit unfair, as middle-class people like MacDonald (and Indian Agents in general) generally had little knowledge of working class or poor lives and economics.¹⁷ MacDonald's work as a Priest might have provided him with some insight into the lives and economics of working class conditions, but he appears to have been completely ignorant of the traditional and

¹⁶ Roderick McDonald, Indian Agent, to Edward Dewdney, Superintendent of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1891* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1892), 41-42.

¹⁷ Environmental Historian Jim Clifford, in his book about environmental and social impacts of the industrialization of West Ham in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, argues that middle and upper class people living in Greater London had little knowledge or awareness of the lives of West Ham's industrial working class and therefore allowed the landscape (and its residents) to be sacrificed to industrial and urban pollution. See: Jim Clifford, *London's Industrial Marshlands: The Rapid Transformation of West Ham and the River Lea* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press) 2017.

cultural aspects of the Mi'kmaq's economy. Thus, when MacDonald described the mixed Mi'kmaq economy in 1893, he was unable to fully appreciate its value in Mi'kmaw life and community: "The avocations of the Indians are various: some take up as a trade, coopering, basket-making, carpenter work, making axe and pick handles for the mines; others are at the Iron Works of Ferrona. They are fairly industrious, but change often from one work to another."¹⁸ Colonial agents saw this as something that limited the Mi'kmaw engagement with settler economics, but they failed to see how this incorporation of wage work fit into a Mi'kmaw world view that was built on adaptation and accommodation.

The Mi'kmaq had a reputation as good workers, and they received the same wages as white workers when working at places like the coal wharves or the iron works. MacDonald reported, in 1896, that they were "considered excellent workmen" and "faithful workers," and many found employment at the local docks loading iron ore and coal off of rail cars and onto waiting ships.¹⁹ MacDonald argued that these were examples of the Mi'kmaq realizing "the independence of white people, and are making an effort to imitate them,"²⁰ but he again failed to see how these engagements with wage labour, which had been happening for at least a century by this point, fit with Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and living. Alongside working, MacDonald noted that many still engaged in the manufacture of wooden commodities, such as baskets, and axe and pick handles, for sale in settler markets. To engage this economy, the Mi'kmaq would uproot from Pictou Landing, and "locate themselves where wood is most plentiful, and claim the

¹⁸ Roderick McDonald, Indian Agent, to T. Mayne Daly, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31st December 1893* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1894), 240.

¹⁹ Roderick McDonald, Indian Agent, to Clifford Sifton, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, *Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1896* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1897), 63-64.

²⁰ McDonald to Sifton, *Dominion of Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1897* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1898), 64.

right of taking whatever they require.”²¹ This is consistent with how the Mi’kmaq had run their economy for centuries; it was adapted to incorporate new opportunities, but still championed mobility and adaptability to current realities and opportunities.

As Figure 7.1 shows, wages and income earned from a variety of industrial pursuits became increasingly important to the Mi’kmaq economy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1898, 68% of the reported income from the Mi’kmaq in Pictou County came from wages and “other Industries,” a category that tabulates income from the sale of Mi’kmaq manufactures in local markets. Wages played an increasing role in the economy, especially towards the late 1910s, when Mi’kmaq labour found important markets in wartime production and the general economic boom of the decade. Indeed, income from Mi’kmaq wages alone provided 70% of the total income in 1918, with another 17% coming from the “Other Industries” category. This theme continued in the 1920s, and even into the 1930s when economic depression devastated the world economy, the Mi’kmaqs’ included. This forty-year trend demonstrates that wages and other industrial pursuits became intermixed, and often surpassed, income from more traditional Mi’kmaq societal elements, such as hunting and fishing.

Some other interesting trends emerge from these economic statistics that deserve closer attention. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 provide a year by year representation of reported incomes, which highlights different sources of income as part of the broader Mi’kmaq economy from 1838-1939.²² Interestingly, when income from wages were high, the income from Mi’kmaq manufactured goods typically fell, and vice-versa. See, for example, 1901-1902, 1910-1913,

²¹ McDonald to Sifton, *Dominion of Canada*, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended 30th June 1897 (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 1898), 64.

²² These charts were separated into two eras as 1914 was the first year that Canada calculated consumer price indexes (CPI) through the Board of Labour and Statistics. In part, this was a measure to evaluate the Canadian dollar when the Gold Standard was removed as part of the war effort.

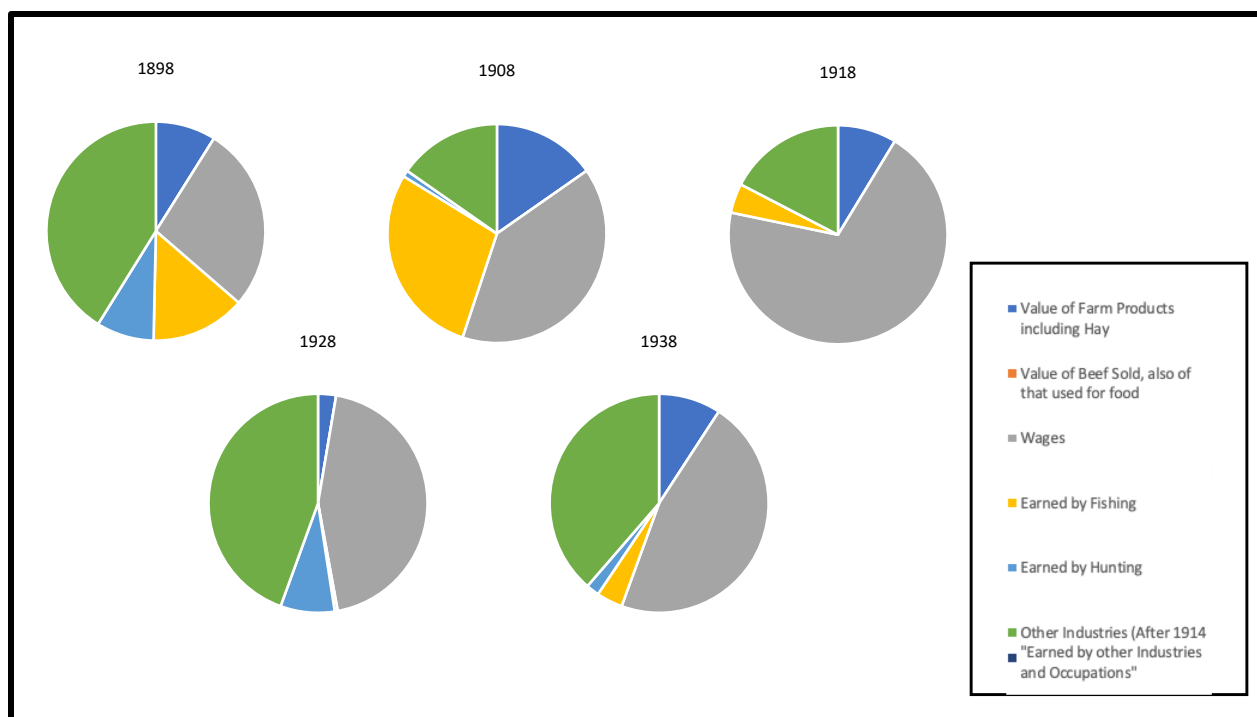


Figure 7.1: Income Reported in Pictou County Indian District, 1898-1938. The data for the tables in Figures 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 is from the Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports special appendix titled “Sources and Value of Income”, which had consistent data for the period 1898-1938. I synthesized the data from 40 years of tables and reports to produce these charts. The information was collected by the Indian Agent and reported back to the Department annually. Figure 7.1 shows ten-year snapshots to show general change over time, while Figures 7.2 and 7.3 provide a year-to-year account for the various types of incomes earned by the Pictou Landing First Nation. The tables can be found in every annual edition of the Department’s report for this period, typically in the Appendices. After 1939, as a cost saving measure, the Department of Indian Affairs changed the format of the Annual Report, and all data for Nova Scotia Mi’kmaq were synthesized into one report, making it impossible to discern income for individual communities.

1915-1916, 1919-1920, and 1932-1936. These timeframes all show an interchange between formal wages earned and other industrial pursuits, which demonstrates Mi’kmaq adaptability and responsiveness to current market conditions. They were able to respond to labour shortages, or low prices for manufactured goods, by allocating more time and resources to different pursuits. Of course, this also implies that the Mi’kmaq occupied an important, but precarious place in the local economy. The Mi’kmaq, while always working, were often doing so in the lowest paid positions (even if they were paid on par as white labourers doing similar work). When work was available, such as during the First World War, the Mi’kmaq economy was heavily focused on wages and working in other industries. When the war ended in 1918, the

Mi'kmaq lost their lucrative access to wage work with the return of soldiers and the general decline the post-war economy. But as wage work opportunity slowed, they found adaptable ways to manipulate their economy so that they were still able to pay the bills and put food on the table.

This dynamic economy is demonstrated by examining the income from fishing and hunting. At several points, namely 1915-1916 and 1920-1923, we see income from fishing and hunting rise as wages decline. It is difficult, however, to properly tabulate income from fishing, as there exists evidence that Mi'kmaq fishers would go directly from the fishing grounds to local towns to sell their catch, and would not often report total catches to the Indian Agents.²³ Regardless, these graphs show that the Mi'kmaq created a mixed economy that was increasingly focused on earning wages and manufacturing. And while fishing and hunting seem to have played a minor role in the economy, accepting that these incomes were difficult to assess, it is clear that they continued to play an important role as a backup when other incomes failed, and also continued provide food and other resources for the Mi'kmaq. In 1915, when Pictou County and Nova Scotia suffered an industrial depression that limited Mi'kmaw opportunities for wage labour and also gutted their market for the sale of manufactured items, the Mi'kmaq turned to the sea to provide food for their families and also to sell to local towns.²⁴ Figures 7.1 – 7.3 collectively show that the Mi'kmaq, for the first half of the twentieth century, subscribed to a

²³ Rev. Ronald MacDonald, Indian Agent, to Lawrence Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent General Indian Affairs, June 30th 1874, in *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ending [date] 1874* (Ottawa: publisher, 1875), 45.

²⁴ J.D. MacLeod, "Report of Rev. J.D. Macleod, Indian Agent for Pictou County, Nova Scotia", *Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31 1914* (Ottawa: J. De L. Tache, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1914), 36-37.

variety of incomes that could be intertwined with traditional Mi'kmaw societal elements as was required by Mi'kmaw life.

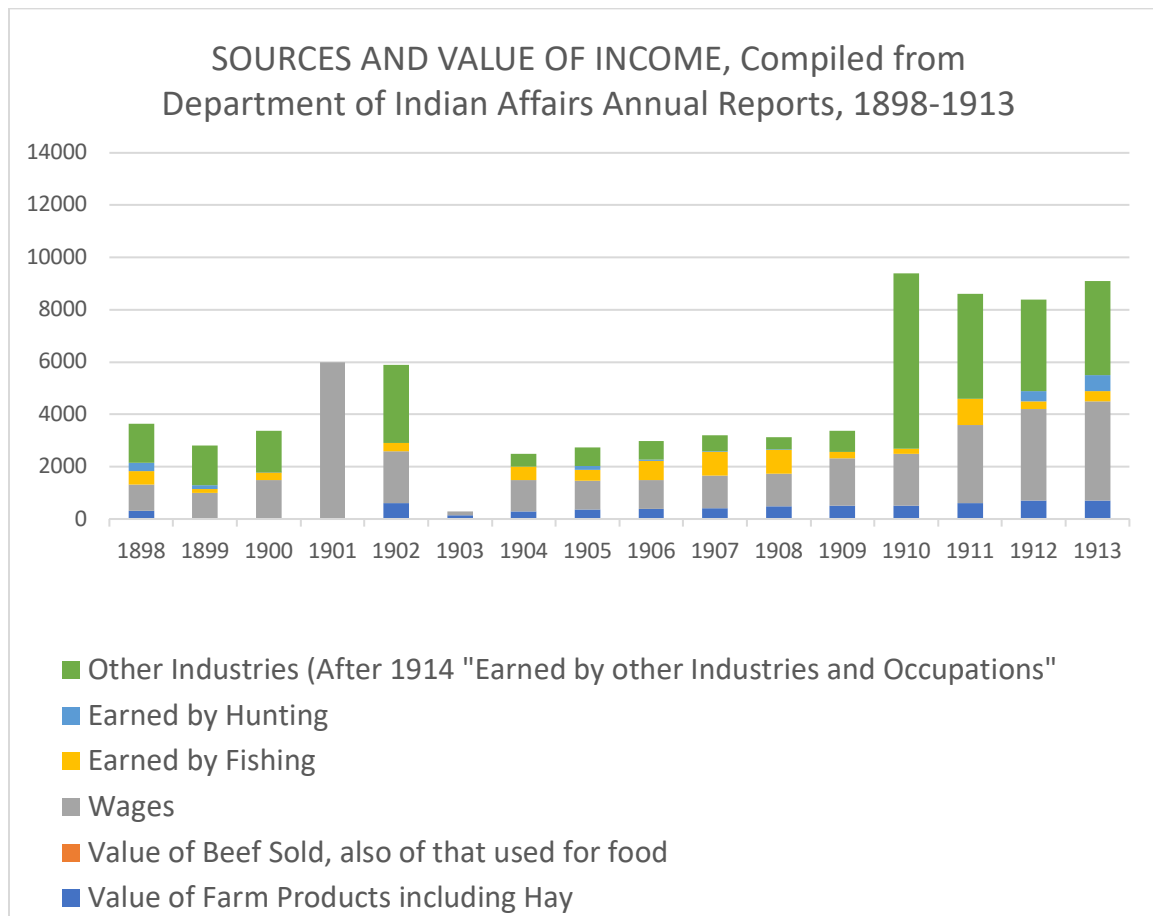


Figure 7.2: Sources and Value of Income, Pictou County Indians, 1898-1913. Chart Created by Author from data quantified from Indian Agent reports. For this chart, the Canadian Dollar's value was determined by the value of gold (Gold Standard), and is not adjusted for inflation because the Canadian Government did not collect Consumer Price Index values before 1914. Note: The Annual Report for 1903 is missing several categories that skewed the data, making it seem like a major decline in the economy when really it is more reflective of the lack of data in the report. Similarly, in 1909-1910, we see an increased effort to document Mi'kmaw income, which shows a significant increase in the economy. What is more likely is that the Mi'kmaw economy consistently (but modestly) rose during the first decade of the twentieth century before booming with the outbreak of World War One.

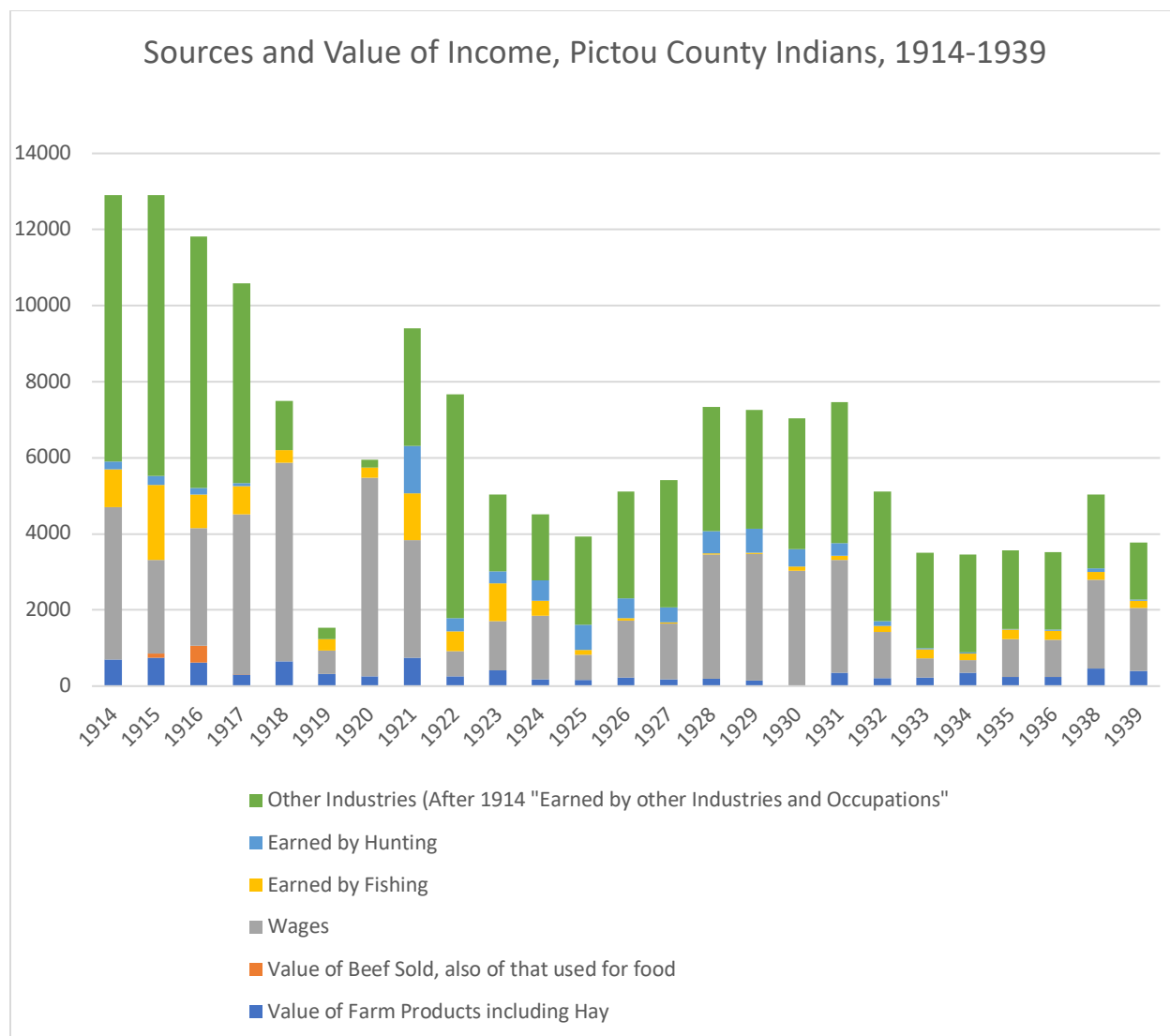


Figure 7.3: Annually Reported Incomes in the Pictou County Indian District, 1898-1938. Chart Created by Author from data quantified from Indian Agent reports. Adjusted for Inflation to 1914 Canadian Dollars (Consumer Price Index sourced from The Bank of Canada).

This mixed Mi'kmaw economy was subject to the ebbs and flows of industry and settler markets, World Wars, economic depression, vulnerable to racist overtures, and sensitive to fluctuation in the availability of resources. The mixed economy functioned well when one industry failed to offer lucrative employment or income, however, when several avenues turned into dead ends in resulted in lean living for many families. Figures 7.2 and 7.3 suggest that these periods were less common than they were sporadic. Indian Agent McLeod had a bleak outlook

for the Fisher's Grant Mi'kmaq in 1907, regardless of the fact that they had demonstrated their ability to work in a variety of occupations that lessened their dependence on government aid and relief. McLeod, much like those before him, saw mobility and adaptability as signs that the Mi'kmaq were not 'civilized' by European standards, and that they failed to completely transform their local environment to reap the maximum benefits that it could provide:

Most of these Indians are industrious; only a few make a comfortable living. They cannot obtain steady employment near the reserve. The land is not productive, the fishing is precarious, they lack the knowledge and equipment to till the soil or reap the harvest of the deep. The wood to be made into tubs, baskets and pick-handles is getting scarce and more remote. What outlook is there for the ambitious Indian? Their circumstances are not improving.²⁵

McLeod's words are inconsistent with his earlier reports, where he stated that the land at Fisher's Grant would scarcely provide for a single white family, let alone a population of 170 Mi'kmaq.²⁶ Extracting hardwood resources had been an issue at Fisher's Grant for decades, and it is obvious that the Mi'kmaq continued to travel to areas that still had stands of hardwood to harvest the materials for manufacturing. And, as Figures 7.2 and 7.3 show, the Mi'kmaq economy was improving in terms of total income. From 1907 to 1910, the Mi'kmaq total reported income nearly doubled, and by the mid-1910s (with the rise in opportunity associated with the war effort) had almost tripled from 1909 levels. Although the Mi'kmaq economy went into decline after the Great War ended in 1918, it began to rise in the mid-1920s before falling again in the general economic depression of the 1930s limited economic opportunity, especially in industrial

²⁵ J.D. Macleod, "Micmacs of Pictou County", April 30th 1907, in *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31 1907* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1907), 65.

²⁶ J.D. Macleod, "Micmacs of Pictou County", July 11 1902, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30, 1901* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1902), 68.

labour in Nova Scotia.²⁷ Regardless, McLeod was generally wrong in his assumptions, and seemingly guided by ethnocentric notions about the unstable future for Indigenous people in Canada. Historian Daniel Francis provides us with a framework for understanding how non-Indigenous Canadians and Americans have understood Indigenous people through a lens that required them to be a declining remnant of a fallen society, in part to justify Euro-Canadian/American domination and marginalization of Indigenous peoples.²⁸ It seems that McLeod was blinded by these assumptions, and he failed to comprehend the dynamic nature of the Mi'kmaw economy.



Figure 7.4: “Summer Basket Making Camp near Pictou Lighthouse, 1908 (Courtesy of Nova Scotia Museum)

²⁷ There was a downturn in Industrial production, and a general recession, in Nova Scotia in the late 1920s (see: Daniel Samson *Spirit of Industry*). The Mi'kmaq also suffered economically during the 1930s, when the world economy was in its worst economic condition in recorded history. L.F.S. Upton argued that the decline in industrial production started in Nova Scotia well before the 1930s, making Nova Scotia one of the poorest economies in Canada when the Depression came in the 1930s (see: L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, 171-172).

²⁸ Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture*, 2nd Edition. (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 2012), 30-31. Francis describes Euro-Canadian understandings of Indigenous people in the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries as if Indigenous people were “pretty much a forgotten people. When they gave Native People any thought at all, White Canadians believed they were quickly disappearing in the face of disease, alcohol abuse, and economic hardship” (30).

While tradition and culture played a major role in determining how the Mi'kmaq in Pictou County organized and maintained their economy, it is illustrative to consider that they faced many of the same challenges associated with capitalism and liberalism that rural Canadian settlers faced. Many rural populations in Canada, as is shown by Kenneth Sylvester's history of engagement with capitalism in farms on the Canadian Prairies, and in rural Quebec by Gérard Bouchard, created mixed agrarian and wage economies within Canada's capitalist economy.²⁹ Ironically, many of the settlers that came to Mi'kma'ki in the nineteenth century were forced out of their homes in the Scottish Highlands by the spread of capitalism and the reorganization of the Highland economy away from family crofting to sheep grazing.³⁰ When arriving in Nova Scotia, as Rusty Bitterman has shown, settlers had unequal access to land, resources, and capital, resulting in the creation of local economies that had varying reliance on subsistence farming, selling crops at market, and working for wages.³¹

The Mi'kmaq faced many of the same challenges while simultaneously living under settler colonial rule. Unlike settlers, the Mi'kmaq could not use their land and resources as they saw fit. Instead, they had to do so within the regulations set forth by the *Indian Act* and at the behest of the Department of Indian Affairs – neither of which, as we have seen, allowed for Indigenous people to manage and mobilize their resources independently. Nor could the Mi'kmaq freely sell their land or purchase additional reserve lands. The Mi'kmaq at Fisher's Grant owned far less land *per capita* than many rural settlers in the region could claim, thus restricting their ability to

²⁹ Kenneth Michael Sylvester, *The Limits of Rural Capitalism: Family, Culture, and Markets in Montcalm, Manitoba, 1870-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2001); Gérard Bouchard, *Quelques arpents d'Amerique: Population, économie, famille au Saguenay, 1838-1971* (Montréal: Boréal, 1996).

³⁰ John Reid, "Scots, Settler Colonization, and Indigenous Displacement: Mi'kma'ki, 1770-1820, in Comparative Context", *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* Vol. 38, No. 1 (2018), 178-196.

³¹ Rusty Bitterman, "The Hierarchy of the Soil: Land and Labour in a nineteenth Century Cape Breton Community", *Acadianses* Vol. 18, No. 1 (1988), 34.

engage in subsistence or market farming.³² Further, as Ian McKay has shown, settler industrial workers like coal miners typically held collective power to resist when capitalism pushed them too far.³³ But the Mi'kmaq rarely worked as fully employed labourers in one job – rather, they worked in industries like coal mining by supplying material (axe and pick handles and lumber for mine-shaft construction) and therefore were recipients of all of the uncertainty associated with capital-based resource extraction industries while deriving little of the power needed to push back when their livelihoods were impacted by things like work shortages or decreased wages. Thus, while all rural labourers faced similar capitalistic pressures, marginalized labourers, the Mi'kmaq included, faced additional pressures that impacted their engagement in local economies.

The Mi'kmaq living at Fisher's Grant responded in ways that were both traditional to Mi'kmaw society, but also adaptive to the pressures brought by capitalism and settler colonialism. The mixed Mi'kmaw economy replicated the ways that the Mi'kmaq had lived in Mi'kma'ki for centuries. Mi'kmaq had always used a strategy that emphasized different resources in different regions at various points throughout the year. Mobility and widely construed resource areas, as anthropologist Michelle LeLievre has noted, was key to Mi'kmaq life in the Maritimes.³⁴ And as L.F.S. Upton has reminded us, the Mi'kmaq incorporated white settlers, their markets and demand for goods, into Mi'kmaw seasonal rounds and economies.³⁵ These Mi'kmaw adaptations to traditional life allowed them to both continue to use wider parts

³² The original land grants at Fisher's Grant were typically 150-180 acres. By the 1870s, most settlers had individual lands that ranged from 45 acres to 150 acres – many of the original lots had been divided amongst family members over time (*The Illustrated Historical Atlas of Pictou County Nova Scotia* [Philadelphia: J.H. Meacham & Co., 1879], 27). In contrast, Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve was only fifty acres in 1863, and even though it had grown to over 200 acres in the 1920s, it was the main reserve for the entire Mi'kmaw population in Pictou County.

³³ Ian McKay, "The Realm of Uncertainty: The Experience of Work in the Cumberland Coal Mines, 1873-1927", *Acadiensis* Vol. 16, No. 1 (1986), 3-57.

³⁴ LeLievre, *Unsettling Mobility*, 9.

³⁵ L.F.S. Upton, "Indian Policy in Colonial Nova Scotia 1793 -1871", *Acadiensis* Vol. 5, No. 1 (1975), 31.

of their territories while also placing new emphasis on specific places and industries, such as Indian Reserves (on the site of ancient Mi'kmaw villages) and settler markets that arose near them. This was certainly the case at Pictou, where the Mi'kmaq used Fisher's Grant as a central hub from which to access wage labour and settler markets, but they also continued accessing resources throughout their larger territory in Pictou County.

A central feature of the Mi'kmaw people's moditional engagement with the settler economy was that it allowed female and male labour to work in coordinated ways. In the summer months, Mi'kmaw men sought out wage labour opportunities in local public works operations, at the wharves in Pictou Landing, or at the various mines and steel works in the county.³⁶ Mi'kmaw women worked at home on the reserve manufacturing various products, such as baskets, needlework, dried mayflowers, and footwear, which they would then pack into local towns to sell "at good prices."³⁷ It seems that these gendered spheres took on different functions during the winter months, when the Mi'kmaq engaged in harvesting resources and manufacturing wooden products for the local mines (such as pick and axe handles, supports for mine shafts) and markets (baskets, butter churns and firkins, hockey sticks, etc.), often in family units. When wage labour markets were slow, men worked under the direction of women making baskets and other goods. Mi'kmaw families also engaged in the eel fishery in Pictou Harbour, finding lucrative markets for these products in Pictou, where they were shipped to international markets.³⁸ Regardless, these gendered aspects of Mi'kmaw work – when sometimes women and men would work independently and at other times together – highlight how the Mi'kmaw economy functioned along dynamic and gendered lines. The Mi'kmaq continued to work in this

³⁶ Macleod to Sifton, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended June 30, 1903* (Ottawa: Dominion of Canada, 1904), 75-76.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

mixed economy, incorporating elements that were introduced and sustained by settlers, but they maintained a clear understanding of this work through Mi'kmaw ways of understanding work and living.

Anthropologists Wallis and Wallis, who did ethnographic research at Fisher's Grant in the early twentieth century, noted that Mi'kmaw local political and economic function was held together "by the recognition of the common need, reinforced by common courtesy...The hungry are always fed, if a hunter had been successful and others were short of supply, he shared his bag equally with the group."³⁹ Work and community life was always balanced on specific expectations and roles, and these were often determined by age and gender. An excellent example of these functions is clearly seen in the divisions of labour surrounding breaking and making camp during travel. Chretien LeClercq, a Catholic Missionary who spent over a decade living near (and often with) the Mi'kmaq in the mid-to-late seventeenth century, recorded the process of striking camp and relocating. Mi'kmaw male heads of family were responsible for determining where the new camp would be established, and would depart the night before to locate and prepare the new site. The man (or men) pushed out in the specified direction and prepared the path by removing obstacles, such as fallen trees or branches, to make for easier passage for those who would haul the group's possessions on sleds or toboggans. The men removed trees and undergrowth to create a clearing at the specified location, which they ensured had ample resources and a source of water. The men then marked out the shape of the wigwam, removed any snow and frozen ground (creating a hollow), cut poles and built the rough structure of the wigwam, before heading off to hunt. Women were responsible for striking the camp –

³⁹ Wilson D. Wallis, and Ruth Sawtell Wallis, *The Micmac of Eastern Canada* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1955), 176.

removing the coverings from the wigwam, packing the sleds and supplies, and moving the body of the camp to the next location. Upon arrival at the new site, the women would finish building the wigwam with the transported materials before setting out to collect firewood and freshwater. The women were responsible for building fires, boiling water in large kettles, and then preparing food for the inhabitants and the later returning hunters.⁴⁰ This pattern, recorded sometime in the late seventeenth century, is similar to Mi'kmaq author Isabelle Knockwood's recollection of travel with her family in the early twentieth century, where she recalled that her family divided tasks in similar gendered ways.⁴¹ These examples show that a gendered organization of work was an engrained element in Mi'kmaw society that informed their world view. These gendered notions of Mi'kmaw work continued with the inclusion of a settler market for Mi'kmaw labour and goods, and provided the Mi'kmaq with an increased ability to remain adaptive and responsive to changing economic markets and demand for Mi'kmaq manufactured commodities.

The Mi'kmaw economy continued to be adaptive along gendered lines well into the 1910s and beyond. Indian Agent McLeod reported, in 1915, that Mi'kmaw women provided a key source of income to the Fisher's Grant community by making and selling traditional hand-crafted items, such as baskets and moccasins, complimented by wages earned by men at various local industries.⁴² These gendered aspects of Mi'kmaw work provided another benefit in the Mi'kmaw mixed economy. While fisheries, the extraction of hardwood, and the manufacture of goods had always been occupations that were conducted by men and women (typically in family units),

⁴⁰ Chretien LeClercq, *New Relation of Gaspesia* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1910), 100-102, cited in Wallis and Wallis, *The Micmac of Eastern Canada*, 229-230.

⁴¹ Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*, Forth Ed. (Halifax: Fernwood, 2015), 77-79.

⁴² J.D. Macleod, to William James Roche, Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended March 31 1914* (Ottawa: J. De L. Tache, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty, 1914), 36-37.

wages in industrial settings were primarily accessed by men. The manufacture of baskets and other goods by women provided a stable income into Mi'kmaq families that offered another stream in the mixed economy. During times of economic slowdown or depression, Mi'kmaw women provided financial security through their work. In some settings, Mi'kmaw men and women worked together in efforts to earn some cash or manufacture goods for sale. This suggests that gendered divisions were sometimes situational, and based somewhat on the details of the work, such as wage labour in a factory. As Andrew Parnaby states, rebuking Ellice Gonzalez's earlier argument that women's economic role had become marginal and subordinated by the work of Mi'kmaw men in the colonial era, gendered roles in work depended largely on "the economic task being performed."⁴³ This suggests that while many contemporary observers saw the Mi'kmaw economy increasingly built on the efforts and wages of men, women performed much of the labour that made up the Mi'kmaw economy in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their contributions were downplayed, or perhaps even unseen, by assessors like Indian Agents who saw women as working in supportive roles to their husbands or male family members – another failure to recognize the dynamic nature of the Mi'kmaw mixed economy.⁴⁴

⁴³ Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival", 93.

⁴⁴ This phenomenon, while important to consider in the Mi'kmaq context, is not unique to Indigenous people in nineteenth and twentieth century Canada. Ruth Sandwell recently argued that rural labour statistics "generally do not include the work of millions of rural women whom according to the custom of the time, were not to be considered 'working'" in the same ways as did male labourers (*Canada's Rural Majority: Household, Environment, and Economies, 1870-1940* [Toronto: University of Toronto, 2016], 3-4). Joy Parr's *The Gender of Breadwinners: Women, Men, and Change in Two Industrial Towns, 1880-1950* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1990) argued that women were staples in Ontario's industrial economy – often in ways that superseded their husband's labour. Joan Sangster posited that in this history of Canada "The dominant scholarly definition of work, as many feminists have argued, have been saturated with masculinist biases, putting market related labour at the top of a hierarchy of importance, and women's unpaid labour at the bottom" (*Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Postwar Canada* [Toronto: University of Toronto, 2000], 8).

While Indian Agents and others commented on Mi'kmaw women's work as a supportive aspect of the male contributions to the broader Mi'kmaw economy, the Mi'kmaq have a different understanding of how this functioned at Pictou Landing. Elder Sadie Francis remembered that "women did everything."⁴⁵ Elder Mary Hatfield recalled that before the construction of a massive industrial pulp mill in the 1960s (which polluted the waters and resources at Boat Harbour, a key place for Mi'kmaq resource gathering), women were an intricate and key part of the Mi'kmaq economy:

This time of the year [Spring], we'd be getting mayflowers to sell in Pictou. Most of us, at my age, we all had that experience [in the 1940s and 1950s]. Getting on the ferry to go sell Mayflowers. Women had money, so having money, you know, you fed your family and there were a lot of other things women did. This time of year, they started their gardens, my mom did anyway. And I've seen gardens in other places. Then there were blueberries, besides making baskets and quills and stuff, reeds.⁴⁶

The income earned by women was integral to the family income, and settler markets for Mi'kmaw goods gave Mi'kmaw women the ability to adapt traditional activities, such as weaving and gathering foodstuffs, to mercantile opportunity in settler towns. Indeed, the Mi'kmaq had been weaving baskets for centuries, and had found new markets for their labour within the settler economy.⁴⁷ Many Mi'kmaw Elders remember going with their grandmothers to Pictou to sell a variety of goods. Don Francis remembers helping his grandmother and other women from the reserve load all of their baskets onto the train to Pictou. He recalled being amazed at the quantities of baskets and other goods that these women would load onto the trains to sell in Pictou. Another female elder recalled that the Mi'kmaq manufactured goods and dried

⁴⁵ Community Roundtables.

⁴⁶ Community Roundtables.

⁴⁷ Bunny McBride's work on Mi'kmaq basketry includes an excellent discussion of the history of basket-making and the ways that baskets have changed over time to reflect either use as prestige item for sale or as rugged, but less visually appealing, tools for agricultural production (*Our Lives in Our Hands*. Halifax: Nimbus, 1990).

wildflowers were popular with many residents in town, and the women made good money selling their wares. The sale of traditional Mi'kmaw goods marks an important distinction between rural settler and Mi'kmaq labour – the Mi'kmaq were not selling eggs and crops, they were selling traditional Mi'kmaq handiwork and commodities. Thus, their engagements with the settler economy this way show marked continuity in Mi'kmaw culture and economics in ways that speak to the broader function of the Mi'kmaq mixed economy in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Mi'kmaw women typically went door-to-door in Pictou. They had consistent and regular customers whose houses they would frequent. Often, many Mi'kmaw women would pool their goods and send one or two women to town to sell them. The proceeds would then be split amongst the group, regardless of who had made each individual item that was sold. One elder recalled that this provided a way for women who were not particularly skilled at basket making or weaving to contribute to this economy. One Mi'kmaw women, named Sally, would procure all of the items from a group of women before heading to Pictou. Her granddaughter, Sarah Francis, humorously recalled, “My Grandmother, all her Grandchildren would make baskets or whatever crafts they were doing at the particular moment. So everyone would dump all their stuff on her, and she'd go off to sell it. [They'd say] ‘Did you make that Sally?’ [and she'd say] ‘Oh yes I did!’ I don't think she even knew how to make a basket!”⁴⁸

These excursions into Pictou resulted in business relationships that provided an important income for many Mi'kmaw families. It also resulted in many personal friendships and connections between the Mi'kmaq and the settler community in Pictou. The settler customers were referred to as “Special Friends” by the Mi'kmaw women, and these trips to town often

⁴⁸ Community Roundtables.

resulted in offers of food and invitations to come in for a cup of tea and refreshments. Mi'kmaw women highly valued repeat customers, who treated them fairly and paid in either cash or in kind with sundries like flour, sugar, and tea.⁴⁹ One elder remembers that she used to dread going to town with her Grandmother as she would return with an upset stomach from eating too much food! She said that the Mi'kmaq did not want to upset their customers by refusing food, so they would always accept the offer regardless of whether they were hungry or not. Food played an important role in Mi'kmaq society. When hosting visitors it was considered inexcusably rude if you did not offer them to partake in a meal, likewise if a visitor refused to eat.⁵⁰

The Mi'kmaw mixed economy continued well into the mid-twentieth century, a time when anthropologists Wallis and Wallis noted that Mi'kmaw women had a prominent voice in Mi'kmaq communities. Wallis and Wallis recognized women's voices were seen as equivalent to men's when discussing Mi'kmaq history and community affairs.⁵¹ Wilson Wallis conducted several trips to the community in 1911-1912 (as a Graduate Student at the University of Pennsylvania) and in 1953, when he returned with his colleague and wife Anthropologist Ruth Sawtell-Wallis. Wallis noted that in 1911 he spoke mostly with men, and women were not commonly invited to discuss Mi'kmaq history, economics, and politics. However, in the 1950s fieldwork, women sat at the table and were equal partners in recollecting history and commenting on current community function.⁵² This was a result of the prominent role that women played in the Mi'kmaw economy, which at this time heavily relied on women's labour to provide for many families in the region.

⁴⁹ Parnaby, "The Cultural Economy of Survival", 84.

⁵⁰ Silas T. Rand, *A Short Statement of Facts relating to the history, manners, customs, language, and literature of the Micmac Tribe of Indians, in Nova Scotia and P.E. Island: Being the substance of two lectures delivered in Halifax, in November 1819, at public meetings held for the purpose of instituting a mission to that tribe* (Halifax: J. Bowes, 1850), 16.

⁵¹ Wallis and Wallis, 8.

⁵² Wallis and Wallis, 8-9.

The mid-century Mi'kmaw economy was built on basket making, the manufacture of axe and pick handles, and making commodities like moccasins and Christmas wreaths alongside formal wage labour.⁵³ Wage work came at the local iron and steel work at places like Trenton and New Glasgow, as well as at the coal docks at Pictou Landing. Many worked as commercial fishers, either independently or on non-Mi'kmaw boats. Others found seasonal employment in logging camps, fish packing plants, or as farmhands. Many Mi'kmaq travelled annually to the fertile lands of the Annapolis Valley (south-western Nova Scotia, along the bay of Fundy) to work as farm hands, and to the northeastern United States to work in the potato fields, a trend that continued to the 1960s, when the arrival of mechanized harvesters replaced picking by hand.⁵⁴ Interestingly, the potato fields of Maine and New Hampshire provided several avenues for Mi'kmaw labour. Entire families would uproot and head south for the late summer and fall. Men, women, and children would all work in the fields.⁵⁵ Mi'kmaw women also made sturdy and durable baskets that were the staple of potato pickers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.⁵⁶ These baskets were an industry standard, and potato pickers (both Indigenous and settler) all carried one in the fields. Many Mi'kmaw families would travel with their complement of baskets, which they would sell to the farmer upon arrival. This made for an additional source of income alongside the wages earned as pickers.

⁵³ E. Chiasson, "Agent's Report for Quarter December 1936", LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

⁵⁴ Bunny McBride, *Our Lives in Our Hands* (Halifax: Nimbus, 1990), 21. Many elders in my community Roundtable sessions also noted that their grandparents travelled to various places to work as farmhands and pickers. The Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Mines and Resources (who oversaw Indian Affairs) Annual Report for 1940 also stated that Mi'kmaq from all over Nova Scotia attended the Annapolis Valley to obtain farm labour, mostly harvesting fruit. See: Canada, Department of Mines and Resources, Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1940 (Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources, pages 182 to 210) (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier Printer to the King, 1941), 195.

⁵⁵ Wallis and Wallis, 281.

⁵⁶ McBride, *Our Lives*, 18-20.

Some women also found domestic work during these potato picking excursions. Women would be hired to work in the farmhouses around the fields, or they would be hired by the farm owner to cook meals and clean the housing used by the potato pickers.⁵⁷ Often, these trips extended beyond the potato picking season, and Mi'kmaw families would take up a variety of occupations and lines of work before returning home to reserves in Nova Scotia for the winter season. These excursions provided a valuable stream of income in the mixed economy, and they also replicated the traditional Mi'kmaw economies that utilized mobility and seasonal resources to provide for Mi'kmaw families and communities.

By the mid-Twentieth century, Mi'kmaw baskets remained a popular trade item and continued to provide a stable source of income for Mi'kmaw families. The work was mostly done by women, but when labour and other work was unavailable (especially during the winter), men often worked at basket making to help supplement the family income. In 1939, the Mi'kmaq found an interesting new market for their goods. Through the Department of Indian Affairs' Welfare and Training Service (WTS), the Mi'kmaq at Pictou Landing began to ship their baskets to Ottawa where they were sold in various national and international markets alongside 'Indian Crafts' from all over Canada. The Department of Indian Affairs had found a sizable market for these products and they acted as middlemen between Mi'kmaw manufacturers and buyers. This came at a crucial time for the Mi'kmaq at Pictou, as labour work was scarce in the late 1930s. Indian Agent E. Chiasson reported that the only work available for the Mi'kmaq was the manufacture of baskets (sold mostly in the markets at Halifax) and axe and pick handles (sold to mines and to merchants in New Glasgow).⁵⁸ He corresponded with Kathleen Moodie of the WTS

⁵⁷ Wallis and Wallis, 281.

⁵⁸ E. Chiasson, Indian Agent, to Kathleen Moodie, March 11 1939, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

to find more markets for these goods, which, he stated, would “greatly relieve the condition of our Indians.”⁵⁹ The Mi’kmaq sent a few samples to the WTS, and they agreed to stock the Mi’kmaw baskets for sale in these markets.⁶⁰

The WTS found buyers for the Mi’kmaw baskets from Pictou, and they ordered several dozen more to be sent to Ottawa. This new stream for Mi’kmaw baskets fit within a mixed economy, where labour was complimented by other opportunities, such as fishing or working for wages. Indeed, the Mi’kmaq still dictated the flow of goods when other jobs needed to be done. For example, in June of 1939, the Mi’kmaq were unable to send the required number of baskets because they prioritized waged work at the local coal docks and ploughing their fields in preparation of the summer growing season.⁶¹ This angered the WTS Supervisor, R.A. Hoey, who stated that the Mi’kmaq needed to “organize the basket workers in such a fashion that we can depend on prompt delivery.”⁶² He explained that the WTS carried over one hundred lines of Indigenous baskets, and they would not be able to guarantee buyers if deliveries could not be made on time. Much like others in the Department of Indian Affairs over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hoey and the WTS failed to understand the mixed Mi’kmaw economy and the ways that it functioned to provide for the Mi’kmaq’s economic needs. It was not worth it for the Mi’kmaq to exert all of their efforts in one tenuous and untested opportunity. It was the flexible and adaptable aspects of the Mi’kmaw mixed economy that had provided for the Mi’kmaq for centuries, especially so during the tumultuous nineteenth and twentieth centuries when settlers competed with Indigenous people for space and resources. The Mi’kmaq had

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Moodie to Chiasson, April 18 1939, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

⁶¹ E. Chiasson, to Secretary of Indian Affairs, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2; E. Chiasson, to R.A. Hoey, Superintendent of Welfare Services, July 15 1939, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

⁶² R.A. Hoey to E. Chiasson, June 14 1939, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

always valued their ability to adapt their efforts quickly and effectively. Indeed, as far back as the early nineteenth century Silas Rand witnessed a group of Mi'kmaq packing their baskets to sell in town when a shoal of porpoises appeared in the bay: "all other business is suspended. The women and children line the beach [waiting to land the catch and begin the harvest]. The men gird on their belts, overhaul their guns, get ready their ammunition, launch their canoes, and away."⁶³ The Mi'kmaq were happy to make baskets as part of a larger system, but as always, basket making fit within a complicated economy that valued or devalued certain avenues for work depending on current markets and opportunity. Surely, the promise of selling several dozen baskets to distant buyers was alluring, but it was not enough to destabilize a Mi'kmaq economy that had existed for centuries. Basket making continued to operate as it had for the last several decades, only now with the WTS securing more distant buyers and thus increasing Mi'kmaq basket makers income. This new avenue provided another element into the mixed economy.

By the mid-twentieth century, the Mi'kmaq economy was built on several off-reserve industries and occupations. The Mi'kmaq worked as loggers, stevedores, log-drivers, farmhands (and as farmers on reserves), hunting guides, and at industrial facilities like coal mines and steel factories.⁶⁴ They continued to make baskets, axe and pick handles, hockey sticks, butter churns, barrels, hoops for lobster traps, and other wooden manufactures.⁶⁵ There was a general resurgence of the popularity of "Indian handicrafts" mid-century, and many Mi'kmaq sold their

⁶³ Silas T. Rand, *A Short Statement of Facts relating to the history, manners, customs, language, and literature of the Micmac Tribe of Indians, in Nova Scotia and P.E. Island: Being the substance of two lectures delivered in Halifax, in November 1819, at public meetings held for the purpose of instituting a mission to that tribe* (Halifax: J. Bowes, 1850), 17. I think this could be used elsewhere more effectively.

⁶⁴ "Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1940," Department of Mines and Resources, (Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources, pages 182 to 210) (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier Printer to the King, 1941), 195.

⁶⁵ "Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1940," Department of Mines and Resources, (Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources, pages 182 to 210) (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier Printer to the King, 1941), 195.

wares in both local and distant markets through wholesalers and offices like the WTS.⁶⁶ In 1941, Tom Francis, a Mi'kmaw man from Pictou Landing, secured a lucrative contract to supply the local Acadia Coal Company with 650 handles over a one year period. Francis had "no difficulty completing the contract."⁶⁷ The handles were made from maple, which Francis and his workers procured from a variety of places in Pictou County, reportedly hauling the wood for upwards of ten miles back to Pictou Landing for manufacturing.⁶⁸ The Mi'kmaq still treated Pictou County as their territory, harvesting resources freely from the broader region.

Baskets were increasingly made from maple, as ash trees were locally unavailable. It is likely that the makers of axe and pick handles and basket makers worked together to harvest maple trees, as neither product required the use of an entire tree.⁶⁹ The Mi'kmaq worked these markets while also securing wage labour in the same places as they had for decades, which demonstrates that the Mi'kmaw mixed economy survived well into the mid-twentieth century.

The Pictou Landing First Nation community understands that this mixed economy operated until the construction of a massive pulp mill a few coves over from their reserve. When Scott Paper Products built their mill at Abercrombie Point in the early 1960s, they secured A'Se'k, called Boat Harbour by settlers, as the location of a treatment facility for the mill's toxic effluent. A'Se'k, as described in earlier chapters, was a tidal lagoon on the back side of the reserve at Fisher's Grant, and had been used for centuries for resource gathering and recreation for the

⁶⁶ "Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1940," Department of Mines and Resources, (Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources, pages 182 to 210) (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier Printer to the King, 1941), 195.

⁶⁷ W.S. Arneil, Inspector of Indian Reserves, to Dr. McGill, Department of Indian Affairs, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

⁶⁸ W.S. Arneil, Inspector of Indian Reserves, to Dr. McGill, Department of Indian Affairs, LAC, RG10, Reel C-9547, Vol. 7918, File 41058-2.

⁶⁹ Bunny McBride's book (*Our Lives in Our Hands*) has several discussions that explain how each tree was used, and which parts were suited for specific purposes.

Mi'kmaq. It had also served as a base for the Mi'kmaq's fleet of fishing boats, as it was a protected harbour with access to the fishing grounds in the Northumberland. The Mi'kmaq were told that the effluent would not impact A'Se'k – they would still be able to use the lagoon to fish, swim, dock their fleet, and harvest the many varieties of goods that existed in the region. However, within a few weeks of the toxic sludge seeping into the brackish water, the lagoon became toxic – fish died and floated on the surface in the hundreds, and the stench from the effluent soon made the place uninhabitable for humans or wildlife. As one Elder from the community remembered, “Well, almost a week after they got that mill going, the change started to come right away...the fish were trying to get out of the water, all their little heads were, well it was packed, packed, packed with...fish trying to get oxygen...And in just a few short days the shores were just covered with dead fish.”⁷⁰

Beyond the loss of A'Se'k for industrial production that disproportionately benefitted the settler community, the construction of the treatment facility at Boat Harbour drastically impacted the Mi'kmaw mixed economy, and destabilized gender roles within the Mi'kmaw community. A'Se'k was a place where women gathered many resources, such as wildflowers and materials for baskets and other goods that they could sell in town and make an independent source of income. Many women also found opportunities in operating restaurants and canteens at the beach on the harbourside of their reserve, often called “Lighthouse Point” or “The Spit” by locals. The beach was a popular spot amongst locals from Pictou and New Glasgow, and many flocked there on warm summer days to enjoy the salt-laden breezes and the refreshing waters of the Northumberland Strait. The Mi'kmaq noted that people from the reserve capitalized on these visitors by charging for parking and setting up beachside canteens and stores. Elder Mary Irene

⁷⁰ Joan Baxter interviewed an Elder from Pictou Landing who did not want to be publicly named in Baxter's book, *The Mill: Fifty Years of Pulp and Protest* (Lawrencetown Beach. Pottersfield Press, 2017), 46-47.

Nicholas reflected that these opportunities fit within the spectrum of opportunities that the Mi'kmaq embraced to make their livings in the 1950s and 1960s:

The beach was starting to be a place of opportunity. We had these small opportunities for making money, and I think most people on our reserve were good at making a few dollars here and there. Because there really weren't many full time jobs. The beach was a source of income. Sadie, you had a canteen there, right? So that's what we were doing in the 60s, life was really picking up and it was fun. And then Boat Harbour. Once Boat Harbour came women lost their place. They weren't selling, or harvesting, or picking or nothing anymore. Everybody lost their place. We are still trying to come back.⁷¹

The changes that came to the region with the construction of the pulp mill and the flow of effluent into Boat Harbour directly impacted Mi'kmaq women's economic power. Without the resources offered by A'Se'k, Mi'kmaq women found their role in the mixed economy challenged, while simultaneously Mi'kmaq men found more work in logging to supply pulp for the mill. The introduction of pollution to A'Se'k impacted the entire Mi'kmaq community at Pictou Landing, however, Mi'kmaq women suffered a direct blow to their ability to maintain their role in the Mi'kmaq economy.

The construction of the mill signaled the demise of a centuries old economy that was built on the ability to harvest local resources and engage in a variety of economic opportunity. Elders from the community remember seeing their grandparents working at several of these industries, but they were the last generation to be able to fully access the mixed economy. This was partly due to the creation of the mill, but also to the general change in Canada that embraced foreign mass-produced products which gutted the market for locally made products like axe and pick handles.

In the first one hundred years of the history of the Pictou Landing First Nation (from the creation of the reserve in 1864 to the construction of the pulp mill in 1963), the Mi'kmaq had

⁷¹ Community Roundtables.

built an adaptive and flexible economy that both incorporated new opportunities for wage labour and the sale of goods on settler markets, but also contained several elements that had existed in the Mi'kmaw economy for centuries. Mobility and seasonality were still important aspects of the Mi'kmaw economy, and new markets worked well in this system. The Mi'kmaq found a variety of opportunities for work, much like they always had, and in lieu of consistent, predictable, and stable wage labour, they built an economy of interwoven fragments that allowed them the flexibility to continue certain traditional aspects of Mi'kmaw life in changing world.

The construction of the mill marked a turning point in the history of the Pictou Landing First Nation. The mill, along so many lines, created challenges for the community. Toxic air from the mill stacks caused many long-lasting health issues for the community, and the effluent flowing into Boat Harbour was laden with furans and dioxides, resulting in the destruction of A'Se'k and the beaches around the reserve. The community was burdened with over a half-century battle to reclaim their harbour. The treatment facility at Boat Harbour closed on January 31, 2020, potentially marking the end of the mill's toxic regime, and the prospect of the return of A'Se'k after decades of pollution. The Governments of Nova Scotia and Canada are currently working on a plan to remediate the site, beginning with a slew of environmental tests beginning in the summer of 2020.

This chapter (and indeed this entire section of this dissertation) has shown that the Mi'kmaq of Pictou County have never retreated or relinquished claim to their territory and to their right to harvest resources in it. Nor have they failed to engage in new markets when they arose in Mi'kma'ki. The Mi'kmaq built a dynamic and adaptable economy that allowed them to continually put food on the table and provide for Mi'kmaw families in the region. It was not always easy, and many factors were against them. However, this is a history of hard work,

adaptability, and community strength. The return of A'Se'k marks a new chapter in this story, one that will unfold over the next several decades. And while it is unclear what will become of A'Se'k, history tells us that the Mi'kmaq will develop its potential both along traditional Mi'kmaw ways of understanding the world, and to embrace new markets and opportunities. They have been doing this for centuries.

Chapter Eight: Conclusion

On a cool spring night, April 5th 2016, members of the Tla'amin Nation gathered in front of their newly constructed Government House to celebrate the effective date of the *Tla'amin Final Agreement* (TFA) – the modern treaty between the Tla'amin and the governments of Canada and British Columbia. Under the TFA, the Tla'amin Nation are no longer an Indian Act band, and no longer bound by the assimilationist philosophy that underlay the rules of that

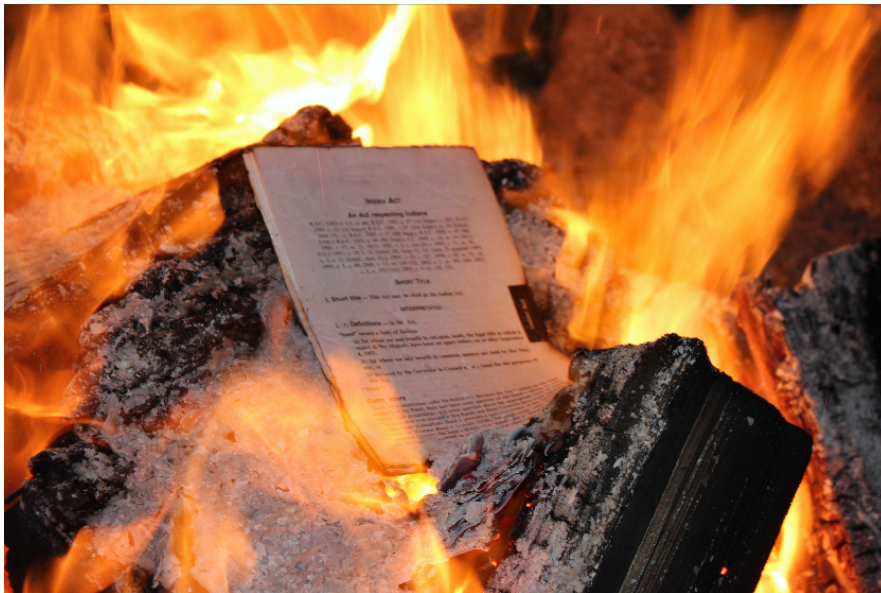


Figure 8.1: The Indian Act burning at Tla'amin Governance House (Courtesy of Salish Sea Sentinel)

infamous document. As Roy Francis, one of the Tla'amin's Chief Negotiators, explained, "living under the Indian Act is like living under somebody else's rules and somebody else's decision making...It was a very paternalistic type

relationship...we've managed to work our way out of that relationship."¹ To celebrate their freedom, the Tla'amin community burned the Indian Act, page by page, on an open fire. After one hundred and forty years of being the Sliammon Indian Band, the Tla'amin Nation was born.

The Tla'amin now manage their own forestry and fishing operations on Treaty Settlement Lands in accordance with newly negotiated regulations that bypassed the Indian Act and

¹ Roy Francis, qtd. in "Tla'amin Nation Implement Treaty with B.C., Canada", *CBC News*, April 5 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/tlaamin-nation-treaty-finalized-1.3521493>

connected them with the Federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the Provincial Ministry of Forests. This means that a century after Chief Tom Timothy and others battled to independently open logging operations on Tla'amin lands, the Tla'amin can now do so in a non-contested manner where the federal and provincial governments recognize Tla'amin rights and jurisdiction – no petitions, no Indian Agent approvals, no surrenders. Tla'amin families can now catch fish for food for more than ceremonial purposes, and they can now freely trade them with other Indigenous people. The TFA does not, however, have provisions for a Tla'amin commercial fishery. If they choose to enter the commercial fishery, the Tla'amin will need to follow the same guidelines as any Canadian citizen who chooses to do so. However, the TFA earmarked \$1.4 million in funding to build additional capacity (the Tla'amin have an active halibut and prawn commercial license) in the commercial fishery, meaning that in the near future the Tla'amin will re-establish itself in the commercial fishing industry.

The TFA provides Tla'amin authority and control over their lands and resources. Further, it secures the Tla'amin self-government, and the ability to independently manage their municipal, social, and political affairs. Many of the social programs managed formerly by the Department of Indian Affairs (now called Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada or AANDC), such as housing, education, health care, social services, and income assistance, are now under Tla'amin Nation control. Tla'amin families now look to the Tla'amin Nation, not the Department of Indian Affairs, for leadership and action. As outlined in the *Constitution of the Tla'amin Nation*, “Our vision of self-government and of a healthy, self-sufficient Tla'amin Nation began long ago with our ancestors and our leadership of the past...they put in place the foundation that

we have built on today. Those respected ones have cleared that path so that we, the Tla'amin Nation, could achieve our vision.”²

In December of 2019, Mi'kmaq and non-Indigenous people alike gathered around their TVs and radios to listen to a press conference where Premier Stephen McNeil was set to announce the Province of Nova Scotia's decision on a requested extension to the *Boat Harbour Act*. Five years earlier, in 2014, McNeil's government promised to clean up Boat Harbour – A'Se'k, the once bountiful resource gathering area for the Mi'kmaq – from decades of effluent from the paper mill located at Abercrombie Point. Boat Harbour was the home of a water treatment facility that handled millions of liters of polluted water daily from the mill. The catalyst for this promise, the latest one of many from the Nova Scotia government, came after residents from the Pictou Landing First Nation erected a blockade after a leak in the pipe that delivered heavy toxins and dioxides from Abercrombie Point to Boat Harbour spilled millions of liters of effluent at Indian Cross Point – an ancient Mi'kmaw burial ground. The blockade kept crews from repairing the pipe (which had been shut off after the leak was discovered) – rendering the mill inoperable for several days. The Pictou Landing First Nation, led by Chief Andrea Paul, were tired after decades of living next to a toxic waste dump, and demanded that the facility be shut down and A'Se'k be restored to its pre-industrial state. The next year, in 2015, the Nova Scotia Government passed the *Boat Harbour Act*, which declared that the Boat Harbour Treatment Facility must cease operations by January 31 2020. Without the facility, the mill could not operate, meaning Northern Pulp had five years to redesign its effluent treatment system and pass a full environmental assessment.

² “Preamble”, *Constitution of the Tla'amin Nation*, Tla'amin Nation, April 5 2016.

By December 20th 2019, when McNeil took to the podium to address the January 31st 2020 closure date, Northern Pulp had failed to provide an adequate plan to replace its outdated effluent treatment facility. Northern Pulp claimed they needed more time, and many believed that the McNeil government would allow it. However, McNeil stood by his commitment, and upheld the conditions of the *Act*:

This is one of the hardest decisions that we as a government has had to make. The commitment I made to clean up Boat Harbour was a serious one, and not something our government did lightly. Many governments before us said they would clean it up, but did not. We will not repeat that pattern. The Boat Harbour Act will be enforced as of January 31st, 2020. Northern Pulp will be ordered to stop pumping effluent into Boat Harbour. And let me be clear – there will be no extension.³

This meant that after over half a century of dumping effluent onto the Fisher's Grant Indian Reserve, Boat Harbour would begin its long transition back to A'Se'k.



Figure 8.2: Pictou Landing First Nation Protest to Protect A'Se'k, 2019 (Courtesy of Michelle Francis-Denny)

³ Premier Stephen McNeil, Press Conference, Halifax, N.S, December 20th 2019.

The Mill's construction in the 1960s had disrupted Mi'kmaw life in many ways, but now that disruption could begin to heal. With the closure of the Boat Harbour Treatment Facility, the Mi'kmaq regained meaningful control over and access to a key part of their territory, and their history. The construction of the mill, alongside changes in production that saw their markets for hand-made wooden tools disappear to cheaper mass-produced imported products, resulted in the end of the Mi'kmaw mixed economy- they could no longer rely on the resources from Boat Harbour to fuel their economy and put food on their tables. Pictou Landing First Nation can start the process of reclaiming A'Se'k – a place that provided many resources for the Mi'kmaq, and later served as an important fishing and resource gathering area for engagements with the settler economy. For centuries, the Mi'kmaq worked to protect A'Se'k from settler encroachment and to preserve it for future generations of Mi'kmaw families. With the closure of the effluent facility, the Mi'kmaq have an opportunity to start rebuilding what was lost.

These two events – the creation of the Tla'amin Nation and the restoration of A'Se'k, provide an excellent opportunity to reflect on what we can learn about the function of settler colonialism in Canada by studying its functions and legacies in two different regional contexts. Through the colonial settlement of their lands, the Tla'amin and the Mi'kmaq lost control over large tracts of their broader territories, were relegated to government-controlled Indian Reserves, and had their economic opportunities restricted to particular spheres of the wage labour economy and the selling of goods in settler towns. Their ability to use and manage resources was, and in many ways still is, at the discretion of the government, and thus their livelihoods were/are also determined by racist and unfair practices maintained by a settler colonial apparatus in Ottawa. But against these odds, Mi'kmaq and Tla'amin people pushed back against oppressive laws that limited Indigenous families' abilities to provide for themselves and engage their resources and to

participate in a moditional (modern and traditional) economy.⁴ They resisted government interference by using their resources despite the existence of laws that said they could not. And perhaps more to the point, they consistently insisted that the government honour its paper promises made in centuries old treaties (for the Mi'kmaq) and by various Indian Reserve Commissions (for the Tla'amin). They held the Canadian government at their word – and occasionally suffered the consequences when they did so.

Yet despite all of the achievements made by Indigenous people in Canada, they still suffer from settler colonialism in tangible ways. Recently, in October of 2020, the Mi'kmaq have been asserting their treaty rights to fish for “a moderate livelihood” from an onslaught of settler protests, demonstrations, and roadblocks. The Mi'kmaw right to fish for lobster and earn a moderate income are entrenched in the Peace and Friendship Treaties of 1760 and 1761, and upheld in *R v. Marshall* - a landmark Supreme Court of Canada decision that affirmed the Mi'kmaq's treaty rights to their traditional hunting and fishing economy.⁵ Mi'kmaq fishers reported that as they exercised their rights to engage the lobster fishery, several of their traps were cut, and white fishers uttered threats and fired flares at the Mi'kmaq fishing vessels. In the *Marshall* decision the Supreme Court affirmed the Mi'kmaw right to be able to use the resources of their traditional territories to feed their families, engage in cultural ceremony, and sustain a moderate economy. Just like it was for Chief Matthew Francis in the 1920s, whose experience opened this dissertation, the Mi'kmaq are still subject to the colonial bounds on their lands, lives, and economies. Despite the centuries' old treaties, the Mi'kmaq still face the threat of violence if they attempt to provide for their families, and sustain an economy, using their treaty rights.

⁴ Lutz, *Makuk*, 23.

⁵ Government of Canada, “Factsheet: The 1999 Supreme Court of Canada Marshall Decision”, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, November 20 2019, <https://www.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/publications/fisheries-peches/marshall-1999-eng.html>

While the Tla'amin on the other side of Canada have gained significant control over their resources through their modern treaty, they also face threats to traditional resource stocks in similar (albeit different) ways that their ancestors did over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This situation is most clearly demonstrated through the Tla'amin's protest over the return of the commercial herring fishery in their territory in 2016. Herring were a major source of food wealth for the Tla'amin before they were overfished by the non-Indigenous commercial industry in the middle of the twentieth century. Archaeological excavations from Tla'amin territory reveal middens full of herring bones, indicative of the importance of the fish to Tla'amin society.⁶ By the 1980s, herring had all but been fished into extinction in Tla'amin territory. Places like Tišosem, which means "milky waters from herring spawn" in the Tla'amin tongue, lost their once abundant herring fishery to the hungry nets of the commercial fishery. By the 1980s, the herring spawn ceased to occur in Tla'amin territory, and did not return until the 2010s.

When the commercial herring fishery re-opened in March 2016, the Tla'amin Band Council (which through treaty was replaced by the Tla'amin Nation less than a month later) passed a resolution banning the commercial herring fishery in Area 15 – the federally designated fishing zone encompassing Tla'amin territory and the town of Powell River. Hegus Williams opposed the return of the commercial fishery, stating, "We haven't been able to exercise or practice our traditions of herring roe gathering and drying because the herring haven't been around for thirty years."⁷ The federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) did not allow commercial boats to fish in Area 15 after testing determined the number of herring to be too low, but they did allow the herring fishery to operate in several other areas of the Salish Sea. Herring,

⁶ For more on the Coast Salish herring fishery over time, see: Alisha M. Gauvreau, Dana Lepofsky, Murray Rutherford, Mike Reid, "Everything revolves around the herring: the Heiltsuk-herring Relationship Through Time", *Ecology and Society* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2017), 10.

⁷ Chris Bolster, "Tla'amin Nation Voices Opposition to Herring Fishery", *Powell River Peak*, March 9 2016.

of course, do not restrict their activities to DFO boundaries, and many Coast Salish people called, unsuccessfully, for the fishery to be fully banned in order to allow herring stocks to continue to rebound.

In 2019, the DFO again opened the commercial herring fishery, and again the Tla'amin protested against the opening in Area 15. Again, the DFO claimed that testing did not support the opening of the commercial fishery in Area 15, but Hegus Williams was not hopeful this ban would last until the herring could sufficiently recover.⁸ In several areas of the Salish Sea seiners hauled up herring, thus threatening the precarious future of the herring population in the entire region. While the DFO claims that herring stocks are at record numbers since the 1980s collapse, Chief Williams is not sold on the return of the commercial fishery: "I'm still not a 100% believer in their science. Their science said they could fish on the inside here [Area 15] and it has just devastated the fishery here."⁹ What Hegus Williams is saying is that, despite ample evidence that the fishery has not yet fully recovered, the DFO has bent to the political lobby of corporate interests and is willing to ignore science in order to protect the commercial herring fishery. So far, the Tla'amin have been able to keep the commercial boats from taking herring from their waters – which have recently seen the return of the milk-coloured spawn that once blanketed the coastline of Tišosem. Perhaps, the declaration of the Tla'amin Treaty has provided the Tla'amin Nation with more political pull and the ability to begin fighting back against unfair colonial laws. Hegus Williams, however, is not optimistic: "It's just a matter of time before it gets up this way. We're really tired of having the same conversation."¹⁰ This conversation, as I have outlined throughout several chapters of this dissertation, began over a century ago as Chief Captain

⁸ David Brindle, "Roe Herring Fishery Opens Under Watchful Eye of Tla'amin," *Powell River Peak*, March 12 2019.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Timothy and his son, Chief Tom Timothy, pushed back against government control over Tla'amin resources.

The cases of the Mi'kmaq lobster fishery and of the Tla'amin battle to protect herring stocks from the commercial industry highlight the continued functions of settler colonialism in Canada in very clear ways. Indeed, settler fishers who are part of industries that have overfished species like lobster and herring for decades require the 'eliminary' aspects of settler colonialism to remove Indigenous fishers and their economies from the industry – even if Indigenous people catch a mere fragment of the total landed catch.¹¹ Indigenous people in Canada have fought for generations to ensure that they have access to the resources in their traditional territories for economic gain and for subsistence. But they have not always done so in ways that were meant to completely reverse settler colonialism. Rather, in many of the cases highlighted over the previous pages, Indigenous people often worked to engage the settler economy in ways that allowed them to be more than labourers. They pushed to be equitable stakeholders in local industries – with the ability to use their ecological knowledge to regulate and maintain resources in their traditional territories.

Settler Colonialism is a useful framework for beginning to evaluate these issues, but it is only when we start parsing settler colonialism down into its specific temporal, cultural, and geographic/ecological context does it provide us with the means to understand the local expressions of power and resistance. It is from these local contexts, in turn, that we can learn more about the global expression of settler colonialism and its impacts on Indigenous people. The Mi'kmaq for example, had for centuries dealt with Europeans trading and living in isolated

¹¹ Patrick Wolfe argued that incoming settler society required the "elimination" of Indigenous people in order to effectively implant settler society on Indigenous lands ("Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research* Vol. 8, No. 4 (2006), 387-409).

posts in Mi'kma'ki before an oppressive form of settler colonial displacement developed there. Similarly, the Tla'amin also pushed the colonial and then provincial government of British Columbia for space and resources decades before any settlers came to live on their lands. Focusing on only the broad expressions of settler colonialism sheds light on part of this story, and thus obscures the distinct geographic, temporal, and cultural context in which colonialism functioned – and continues to function - in Canada that made it nearly impossible for Mi'kmaq or Coast Salish people to succeed in the new colonial world.

The oppressive and dispossessive structures that work to alienate Indigenous people from their lands and resources are amorphous by design. Canadian colonial domination took different tactics and emphasized different systems depending on a variety of circumstances. Rather than being a rigid and strict overarching structure that could influence and inculcate by operating from a central node of colonial power (London or Ottawa, or perhaps Halifax or Victoria in the case of my focus communities), the structural design of settler colonialism allowed it to adapt and shift over space and time. That is to say, Indigenous people were constantly forced to adapt to the colonial system, while the system itself was constantly changing to ensure that Indigenous people could never quite escape its vicious cycles. My findings for this dissertation coincide with Keith Thor Carlson's analogy of a "Cauldron of Colonialism" where despite their best efforts to thwart the aggressive colonial system when it conflicted with the function of their communities, Indigenous people were bombarded with a slurry of inconsistent, overlapping, and contradicting colonial laws and ideologies, which made it impossible for them to counterattack the system as a whole.¹² Similarly, Historian Alexandra Harmon argued that Indigenous societies were "shredded by disease and thrown into a bubbling stew of European traders and colonists,"

¹² Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 2010), 8-10.

resulting in a morass of newly emerging and quickly changing colonial laws that increasingly shaped Indigenous lives.¹³

This complicated and complex situation is one of the main reasons that it was so difficult for Indigenous people to oppose with success. In some situations the methods used to enforce Canadian colonialism were overtly military and violent (such as in Red River in the late 1860s, and during the Riel Resistance in 1885). In others they were administrative and cartographical (the survey of Indian Reserves and subsequent alterations to their size and resources). Some were corporate and coercive (such as in the construction of massive industrial pulp mills near reserves in Pictou and Powell River). But even where we see great similarities in settler colonial objectives and actions, the day to day lived experiences of settler colonialism was different for Indigenous people in different parts of Canada. It matters whether the victims of settler colonialism were Coast Salish or Mi'kmaw. Specific Indigenous culture certainly shaped the ways in which communities responded to settler colonial rule. Moreover, the gendered and racialized ways in which economic opportunities were or were not created for Indigenous people as part of the settler colonial experiment also shaped the expression settler colonialism took, and the way it was experienced and internalized by different Indigenous populations.

On both coasts of Canada, and in many places in between, Indigenous people availed themselves of opportunities to engage in the colonial economy. Whether it was through logging, fishing, farming, working for wages, or selling products in settler towns (or as I have shown in the previous pages, an integration of all of these jobs), Indigenous people embraced a variety of opportunities in the new colonial world, and as we have seen, not always in ways that were solely based on adaptation to colonialism. Indigenous people had their own reasons for going to

¹³ Alexandra Sasha Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California, 1998), 3-5.

work, ones that were deeply engrained in Indigenous economics, and family and community function. Yet, despite their efforts, Indigenous work was inevitably shaped by, and too often controlled by, colonialism. In many ways, it did not matter how hard an Indigenous person worked – they could never outwork colonialism. The biases within the structures that orientated economic development towards exploiting Indigenous lands (and to a lesser extent Indigenous labour) were too engrained.

We can learn much about Canada's colonial past and legacies by analyzing its function in different parts of this broad landscape. And while we see Canadian settler colonialism being well established by the 1870s and 1880s, its application and function had varied effects in different places across the broad landscape that is Canada. By the time Canada began to enforce its assimilative laws on the Mi'kmaq in 1867, Mi'kmaq lands and resources had already fallen into the hands of non-Indigenous economic interests. By 1876 the Tla'amin were impacted by the Indian Act and related Canadian settler rules and laws, but until they had a sizable settler population living in their territory (the 1910s), the displacing components of settler colonialism had played a far less disruptive role in their day to day lives.

Thus, Canada's settler colonial past needs to be understood as something that expressed itself, and was experienced by people, differently at different times and at different places. The process of creating Canadian settler colonialism advanced unevenly in fits and starts over long periods of time, but by the early twentieth century Canada's settler colonial domination of Indigenous people had created a system where even with consistent and continued efforts to engage the settler economy, Indigenous people were seldom able to do so in stable ways, and almost never on their own terms. Regardless of whether it was the relatively new urban and industrial settler colonialism that emerged in Powell River in the 1910s, or the near-century old

system that existed in Pictou, by 1920, the Tla'amin and Pictou County Mi'kmaq lived on government monitored reserves and had to battle tooth and nail for access to their traditional resources. The remarkably different paces and expressions of colonization provided little difference in the newly emerged Canadian settler colonial society of the twentieth century. Indeed, the Mi'kmaq have a much longer history of interaction with newcomers – beginning as far back as the sixteenth century – while the Tla'amin did not see a white explorer until the late eighteenth century, and no settlers until the end of the nineteenth. Regardless, by the early twentieth century, both were fighting the same battles against an oppressive centralized settler colonial state.

The first white people to come to what is now called Pictou Harbour came to trade, not settle. Indigenous labour and cooperation were key to their success. For the sixteenth, seventeenth, and the better part of the eighteenth centuries, the Mi'kmaq living at and around Piktuk traded with visiting French ships and entertained the occasional missionary, but were mostly able to live in their territory as they had for centuries. The first significant inroads made by a colonial power into the region came in 1758, when, after the French loss of Louisburg, Father Pierre Maillard relocated his missionary headquarters to Maligomish – the site of a long standing Mi'kmaw settlement.¹⁴ Father Maillard used Maligomish as his base for travels throughout the region until 1760, when he relocated to Halifax until his death in 1762. None of these encounters fit the necessary components of settler colonialism, and are rather more in line with Greer's "Imperial Penetration."¹⁵

Even when settlers came to Pictou, it was decades before we see any real evidence of manipulative or coercive colonialism. The first settlers to Pictou came from Philadelphia on the

¹⁴ John Ashton, "Mi'kmaq Presence in Pictou County," *The New Glasgow News*, Oct. 3 2019.

¹⁵ Greer, 64.

Betsey in 1767 – but there were only a handful of people on board, and of them only a few families stayed in the area. The *Hector*, as discussed earlier, was the beginning of ample settlement in the region, but even then, the settler population remained relatively small until about the 1830s. Therefore while settlement began in the late eighteenth century, we really do not see the beginnings of the impact of settlement on Mi'kmaw lives until much later. The Mi'kmaq maintained the possession of many of their village sites until the 1820s – even those like the one at the mouth of Pictou Harbour that had been signed away to settlers decades earlier – but never occupied. It was not until 1829 that the first Mi'kmaw petitions asked for their land at the mouth of Pictou Harbour to be surveyed. By the middle of the century, the Mi'kmaq found themselves fully encircled by settlers, and definitely suffering from the 'elimination' tactics that define the settler colonial process.

The Tla'amin story is different. The Tla'amin fell victim to European germs at least a decade before they actually saw a white explorer. Cole Harris explains how in 1782, a smallpox epidemic, following Indigenous trade routes, swept north through from Mexico up into the Great Plains of what is now Canada, before crossing the Rocky Mountains (likely via the Columbia River) and spreading up the Pacific Coast.¹⁶ The epidemic was devastating. In Harris's estimation, "the great majority of the people died."¹⁷

The Hudson's Bay Company began visiting Tla'amin territory in the 1830s, but did not establish a formal trading post in the region. Several Tla'amin villages appear on a Hudson's Bay

¹⁶ Cole Harris, "Voices of Disaster: Smallpox around the Strait of Georgia in 1782", *Ethnohistory* Vol. 41, No. 4 (1994), 604.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 609.

Company census conducted in the late 1830s, but for some unknown reason, the pages listing the Tla'amin communities contain very little data – suggesting the traders spent little time there.¹⁸

The first sustained colonial incursions into the Tla'amin world came in the 1860s, when missionaries from the Oblates of Mary Immaculate visited the Tla'amin at “Tlahyamen Baie” - Tišosem.¹⁹ Shortly after, the Tla'amin built a church and congregated at the village when the priest would visit. The foundation of the church marks a significant event in the early relationship between the Tla'amin and settler society, but the expression of colonial control that the priests sought, and ultimately exercised, was more about social behaviours than it was control of lands and resources.

The commercial logging industry had reached the region by the 1860s, with a series of small logging operations opening near present day Powell River in the 1870s. The Tla'amin took part in this industry from its earliest beginnings, but they also protested it when white loggers began to take timber they deemed to be too close to their Tla'amin villages. The Tla'amin protested a massive timber lease survey in their territory in 1878 – one that saw the village of Tis'kwat removed from their control. The 1870s also witnessed the beginnings of colonial surveys in Tla'amin territory. Sproat visited several times in the late 1870s to hear Tla'amin land concerns, and the reserves were officially surveyed in the 1880s. The arrival of a gridwork of colonial surveys in Tla'amin territory definitely had major consequences for the Tla'amin. However, as few settlers came to live in the region in the 1880s and 1890s, the Tla'amin were

¹⁸ James Douglas, “Private Papers: Census of Indian Population in Vancouver Island and British Columbia”, Second Series, BCARS, B/20/1853 MS MFM 737A, 5-30.

¹⁹ R.P. Fouquet to T.R.P Superior General, Mission de Saint-Michel, December 20 1868, pp. 122-132, in *Missions De La Congregation Des Oblates De Marie Immaculee* No. 33, March 1870. <https://www.omiworld.org/wp-content/uploads/missions9.pdf>

still able to live and work as they had for decades. Not quite the ‘elimination’ that we need to qualify settler colonialism.

The arrival of genuine settler colonialism designed to alienate Tla’amin resources came in 1910, when the Powell River Company constructed their massive industrial pulp and paper mill on the site of Tis’kwat and flooded the lands adjacent to Powell River. As discussed in Chapter Three, this mill brought thousands of settlers into Tla’amin territory seemingly overnight. Powell River transformed from a series of isolated settler homesteads and a small commercial logging presence to a major industrial and urban center in the region. Within a few years, Powell River was a sizable town complete with a mill, roads, hospitals, schools, governance, police, and of course, settlers. With the mill, the Tla’amin now found themselves fully in the throes of instantaneous settler colonialism. Colonial settlement came to limit Tla’amin access to resources and space, and the Tla’amin economy was now completely embroiled with the settler economy.

So what can we make of these histories? If both the Mi’kmaq and the Tla’amin have decidedly different experiences with settler colonialism, what can that tell us of settler colonialism in Canada? What my research had made clear is that both the Mi’kmaq and the Tla’amin encountered settler colonialism at different times, and with different (though not dissimilar) consequences. Ultimately, however, by the 1830s for the Mi’kmaq, and the 1910s for the Tla’amin, settler colonialism had replaced earlier forms of colonial control. By 1920, both the Tla’amin and the Mi’kmaq were locked into Canadian settler colonialism in ways that made both their distinct cultural traditions and their diverse experiences with settlers matter little to their ability to maintain control over their lands and resources.

Despite the different tactics used by the Mi’kmaq and the Tla’amin, and their different social and cultural beliefs, by the early twentieth century both Nations were surrounded by

Canadian settler colonialism in ways that dominated their social, cultural, and economic worlds. The Mi'kmaq resisted the expansion of settlers over their lands by continuing to live and harvest resources across their territory – even when they conflicted with settler colonial boundaries and settlers. Even without reserved lands, the Mi'kmaq maintained their presence in specific places that had always been important to their economic world, but that also had new importance in the settler colonial world. The land at Fisher's Grant was one of these spaces – and even after it was surveyed and seemingly placed beyond Mi'kmaq control, the Mi'kmaq resisted and refused to leave the area, which resulted in its survey as an Indian Reserve in 1864.

On the other side of Canada, the Tla'amin reserves were surveyed when there was a limited settler presence in their lands. Other than the massive tract of Tla'amin land that had been signed away in the Lot 450 Timber Lease in the 1870s, and the subsequent loss of the village of Tis'kwat, the Tla'amin had their lands allocated without having to negotiate purchasing back settler lands. With several of their key village sites protected, and few settlers keeping them off of other lands, the Tla'amin continued to harvest resources throughout their broader territory, and also continued to engage in the handlogging industry that had been part of their economic world since the 1860s.

The Mi'kmaq managed to increase the size of their land holdings at the mouth of the harbour exponentially from the 1870s to the 1920s, but regardless of these additions, they still struggled to maintain a permanent and stable economic presence in the region, and their holdings were still too small to effectively provide for their population. As discussed in Chapter Six, the growing Mi'kmaw population on the reserve meant more demand for on-reserve resources, and the additions of resource lands to the reserve barely managed to provide a basic income for many of the Mi'kmaq living there. The Tla'amin, too, found their economy increasingly limited after

1910, when the Powell River Mill brought thousands of people into their territory. With much more competition for space and resources, the Tla'amin found themselves struggling to maintain economic opportunities. Their initial success in the commercial handlogging business was eclipsed as the industry mechanized and they lost the ability to independently harvest the timber throughout their lands.

While eighty years separate the beginnings of settler colonialism in these two communities, we can clearly see that the 1860s and 1870s mark a significant increase in settler colonial penetration into the Pictou County Mi'kmaq and Tla'amin worlds. In the 1860s we see the first survey of a Mi'kmaq reserve at Fisher's Grant, and we also see the beginning of a church presence in the Tla'amin community at Sliammon. Reserve surveys began in Tla'amin territory a decade later, and were solidified in the 1880s. Both communities became part of the Dominion of Canada (without consult, of course), in 1867 (for the Mi'kmaq) and 1871 (for the Tla'amin), and this link provides us with a means to begin stitching together these histories into an analysis of how Canadian-style settler colonialism began to impose itself on Indigenous life from coast to coast.

My research makes clear that it was the period after Confederation when we really start to see a centralized and sustained focus on controlling and managing Indigenous lives in the union of colonies that formed the Canadian state. After Confederation, Canada developed its own particular blend of Colonialism and formed into a genuine "settler-colonial machine" in the late nineteenth century.²⁰ Canada mobilized itself to solve what they saw as "The Indian Problem"- and they did so in a relentless fashion – reserves, Residential Schools, Indian Act, a focus on agriculture, and an ever-growing settler colonial society. And for all of the differences in the

²⁰ Greer, 73.

stages of colonialism that we see in the diverging histories of the Mi'kmaq and the Coast Salish, both were then under the same colonial authority and under the gaze of a centralized bureaucratic arm designed to deal with Canada's Indigenous people – The Department of Indian Affairs. Although the Mi'kmaq had endured a sizable settler presence for almost a century more than the Tla'amin, they had not, due to the inherent bias and limitations in colonial society, managed to build an economy that could persist in the onslaught of settlers. For both the Tla'amin and the Mi'kmaq, regardless of whether it was 1830 or 1910, when settlers started coming in earnest, there was no going back. Regardless of the varied colonial histories, and the unique responses to colonialism in each case study, by the early twentieth century both communities found themselves locked into a specific Canadian style colonialism that came to dominate their lives and lands.

But if the oppressive system was the same on both sides of the continent, the culture of local Indigenous populations nonetheless continued to shape resistance to settler colonialism and the way it was experienced and interpreted. This dissertation has explored how each community responded to Canadian settler colonialism in ways that were both in tune with their traditional economics and social structures and also adaptive to nearly emerging opportunities within the colonial world. And regardless of the fact that each community agreed to settle on reserves (at least for a portion of the time), adopt elements of Christianity, build schools, and engage in the settler economy, both communities struggled to create stable and lasting economies that were equitable with other populations within settler Canada. This is where we see the true power, and inherent hypocrisy, of settler colonialism come to terms. The Mi'kmaq and the Tla'amin both fared well economically in the extractive colonial system. Mi'kmaq fur traders and fishers found ready markets for their goods – until their economy was undercut by an influx of settlers from

other parts of the world.²¹ On the Pacific Coast, Tla'amin loggers fared well in the handlogging industry. But as soon as settler colonialism took hold and the logging industry developed into an industrial mechanized industry that required ample capital to engage, Tla'amin loggers found themselves only able to secure seasonal work as contract loggers – not as independent stake holders in the industry.

Through my study of two geographically, culturally, and environmentally unique places, we see the power of Canadian settler colonialism in sacrificing people who tried to integrate the settler world into their traditional understandings of place, work, and family, at the altar of colonialism. Settler colonialism, for both these communities, was the final and lasting stage of the colonial project. It is one that saw the mass urban development and commercial/industrial resource alienation of Indigenous territories by non-Indigenous people, the building of entities like pulp mills. In the settler colonial world, the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq fought against colonial oppression both by actively resisting it in some ways, but also by adapting their economies and working hard in the newly emerged settler economy. For decades, Indigenous people in Canada rebuilt their lives and economies in the settler world, but found themselves largely unable to succeed in the ways that settlers – even poor working class ones – could. Indigenous people worked hard and kept their economies nimble and adaptive to the ebbs and flows of the settler economy. But despite their best efforts, they were unable to transcend the racist limits placed on them by the constantly shifting demands of Canadian settler colonialism. They were, in the words of Homi Bhabha, “almost the same, but not quite”²² – always working but rarely fully employed; essential to many aspects of the local economy but always the first to be let go during

²¹ Julian Gwyn, “The Mi'kmaq, Poor Settlers, and the Nova Scotia Fur Trade, 1783-1853”, *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* Vol. 14, No. 1 (2003), 65-91.

²² Homi K. Bhabha, *Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 85.

slow economic times. Ultimately, for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it did not matter how hard Mi'kmaq or Coast Salish people worked, or how skilled they were, they were not able to break down the stalwart barriers of settler colonialism.

The recent events outlined at the start of this conclusion, however, give us some hope that this might be beginning to change. After decades of being politically and economically marginalized, both the Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq have gained significant political victories in recent years. The Tla'amin are now a Nation within Canada, and have considerable control over their social, political, and economic realms. The Mi'kmaq, after decades of protest, successfully battled an industrial juggernaut and ended the dumping of toxic waste on their land at A'Se'k. And while neither event signifies an end to settler colonialism or even indicates that the settler colonial system is in decline, these events do signify an enhancement of Indigenous agency and control over land their ancestors protected and managed over centuries.

Just like Chief Tom and Chief Francis (the Indigenous leaders used to introduce this dissertation) did a century earlier, the current Indigenous leaders of Pictou Landing and Tla'amin referenced the importance of providing for families, and for the future. Pictou Landing Chief Andrea Paul, reflecting on the closure of the treatment facility, is hopeful for the future: "You know, I'm just really happy for the whole community and especially for the young people that [the effluent treatment facility] won't be a part of their legacy anymore. They'll have a new legacy and they'll have A'Se'k back."²³ On the other side of Canada, Hegus Clint Williams reflected on the passing of the TFA by expressing its impact on future generations of the Tla'amin: "Our treaty will benefit all of our citizens, and especially our children – our future

²³ Chief Andrea Paul, qtd. in Tom Ayers, "A New Legacy: Pictou Landing's Chief Pleased with Boat Harbour Efforts", *CBC News*, April 28 2020, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/northern-pulp-boat-harbour-wastewater-andrea-paul-1.5547654>

leaders who will grow up in a world of possibility and opportunity. Our lands and our rights are secure, our partnerships with our neighbours are strong, and our community is on a journey of healing and hope. Our future is bright.”²⁴

Much as previous generations of Mi’kmaq and Tla’amin people have resisted oppression to help preserve Indigenous space, resources, and lifeways for future generations, both leaders spoke of future generations of Indigenous people benefitting from these modern battles. After a century and a half as colonized people in Canada, the Tla’amin and Mi’kmaq have begun journeys that were the visions of many of the Tla’amin and Mi’kmaq leaders and elders a century earlier. Chief Tii’mo’tey pushed to build a strong and resilient Tla’amin community when he confronted surveyors and demanded more land for Tla’amin families. His son, Chief Tom continued that fight, as did so many others after. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth Centuries, many Mi’kmaq fought to protect land for their families and future generations of Mi’kmaq people in Pictou County- James Lulan, Matthew Sapier, Peter Toney, Chief Peter Wilmot, Chief Matthew Francis, and many countless others.

These names, however, are but a few of the many who carried out the fight to protect Indigenous rights in Canada. Most who fought never signed petitions nor protested at places like a legislature. Indeed, the fight to protect Mi’kmaq and Tla’amin rights to their land and resources was mostly fought by families who continued to use their territories to provide for themselves, despite the presence of settlers who claimed Indigenous land as their own. Whether it was through gathering resources, hunting, or fishing to provide food, or through working for wages in a variety of industries, the persistence of generations of Indigenous families has led to these recent successes in reestablishing Indigenous resource rights in Canada.

²⁴ Hesus Clint Williams, qtd. in “Tla’amin Nation Implement Treaty with B.C., Canada”, *CBC News*, April 5 2016, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/british-columbia/tlaamin-nation-treaty-finalized-1.3521493>

It is this resistance to settler colonialism that makes up the main sinews that connect my dissertation's histories from opposite sides of Canada. Despite laws forbidding them from using the resources on their lands, whether it be in British Columbia or Nova Scotia, Indigenous people continued to use their lands as acts of resistance and demonstrations of Indigenous agency. I have outlined these assertions over centuries, showing how Mi'kmaq and Tla'amin people have pushed to maintain their resource rights even against the most oppressive of colonial laws. When the Mi'kmaq travelled in Pictou County gathering hardwood on settler land to make axe handles to sell in local markets, they asserted their right to those lands. When Tla'amin fishers caught salmon to feed their families (either by eating fish or selling it), they asserted their rights to their resources. These are acts of resistance that echo from the past and provide the foundations for modern discussions of nationhood, Indigenous self-governance and control over Indigenous space. The Tla'amin and Mi'kmaq who today push for the restoration of Indigenous rights over space and resources do so as acts of continuation.

When British Colonials and later the Canadian government used coercive tactics to push Indigenous people off their broader lands and onto small reserves, they created the roots of modern Indigenous reserve communities. These reserve communities were created from a diverging set of understandings of land ownership and occupancy, and the resulting reserves placed populations of Indigenous people, who had vastly different understandings of territory and living within them, together into "Indian Bands." The reserve system supplanted the Indigenous systems and created Bands out of people who identified in a variety of ways based on Indigenous culture and knowledge. The government's intention in creating reserves was to provide them with the boundaries necessary to undertake their assimilation plans and thus ensure

they would successfully ‘eliminate’ Indigenous people. However, their plans worked in almost the complete opposite way.

Indian Reserves - perhaps the most visible marker of settler colonialism - became the new nucleus for Indigenous life in the twentieth century. Their creation disrupted (but did not end) the kinship systems that the Mi’kmaq and Tla’amin had followed for centuries, and in place created geographically anchored islands of Indigenous people in a sea of settlers. The institution of Indian Reserves and band registry lists challenged regional kinship networks, and the Mi’kmaq and Tla’amin alike responded by strengthening kinship relationships both within and beyond their local community. The result was the forging of new communities, on the sites that had for centuries hosted Indigenous villages and where Indigenous people had deep historical connections. These communities, rather than serving as sites for the disappearance of Indigenous people and culture, became strongholds to protect and preserve Indigenous culture, and they became the base from which to push for the return of Indigenous land and resource rights. They also were the places where Indigenous people built new economies that were based both on their traditional ways of living and the new opportunities (and challenges) that came with settler-colonialism. They were the staging ground for wage labour and for selling commodities in settler towns. They became the seat of band councils and for community services, and although all of this was mired in colonialism, they served as Indigenous sites of resistance against a settler society that aimed to assimilate and dissolve Indigenous society within Canada.

Throughout this dissertation I have argued that Community-Engaged research can provide a more nuanced understanding of how Indigenous people negotiated various types of colonial incursion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By working closely with the Pictou Landing First Nation and the Tla’amin Nation, I have attempted to tell a more complicated story

of how colonialism has impacted Indigenous people in Canada. I have worked to bring community perspectives in conversation with the histories that I found in various archives, which ultimately provides a more complicated story of living and working as Indigenous people in settler colonial Canada in the twentieth century. Indigenous people have been largely left out of the stories we tell about work in Canada, and this in no small way is due to the way that settler colonialism has provided settlers with a narrative that whitewashes Canadian history. Scholars have begun to change this narrative, and this dissertation draws inspiration from, and I trust contributes to, those who have made important contributions to the ways we understand Indigenous engagements with wage labour in Canada. However, we still have work to do. Much of the general public knows something about what they perceive as the Indigenous challenges to economic development, and precious little about the ways that Indigenous people in Canada have contributed to local and national economies through their labour – despite the limits that settler colonialism placed on their ability to do so. Local museums and interpretive displays that praise settler labour and industry fail to commemorate the ways that Indigenous people remade their economies to incorporate working for wages. And while historians and scholars from other disciplines may not find it surprising to learn that Indigenous people in Canada were an important part of the workforce, many Canadians would. We need to tell better stories about work in Canada – stories that pay homage to the Indigenous people who worked to earn wages and feed their families – that account for resistance and renewal, and that recognize agency in the face of multiple forms of colonial incursion.

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