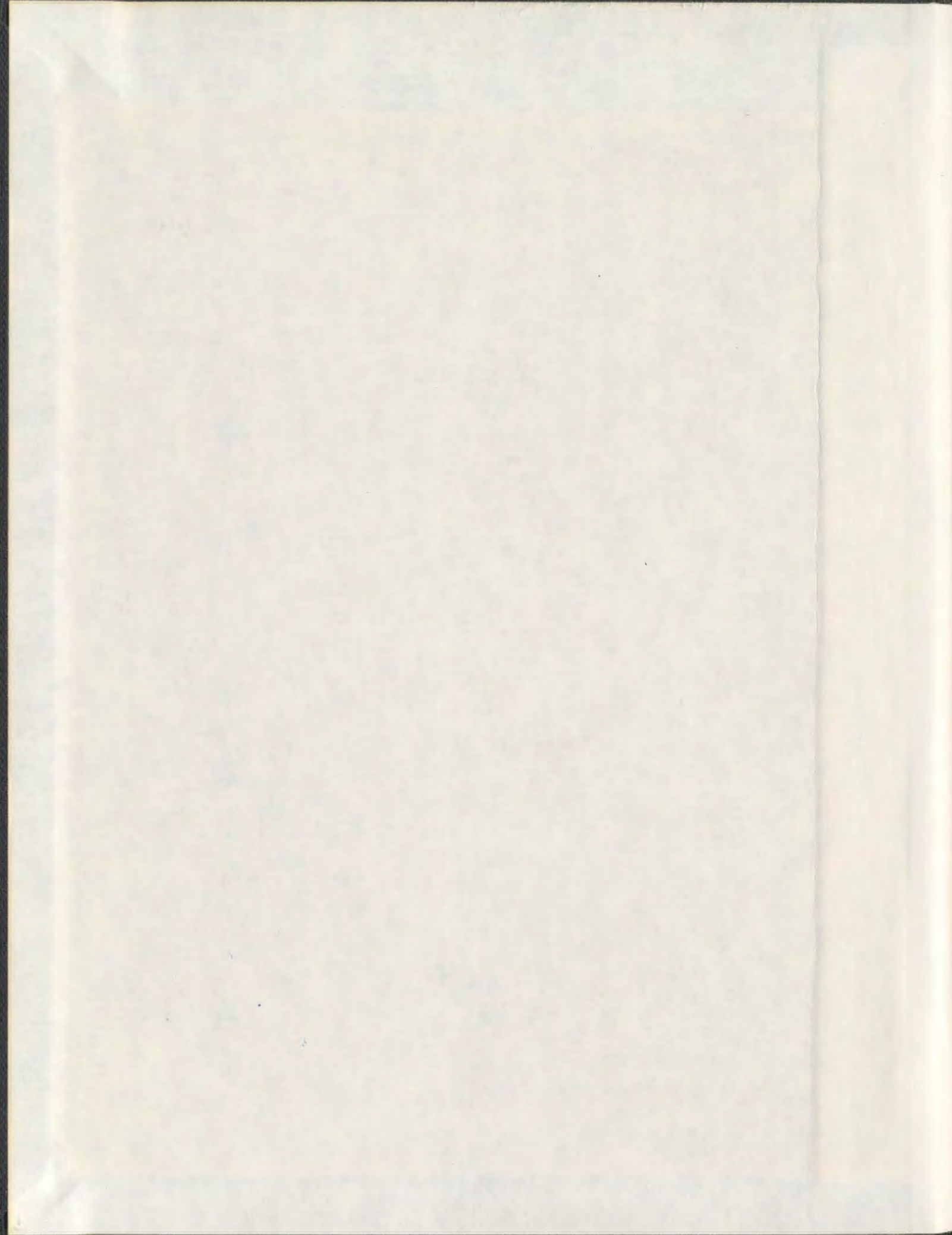


"OUR STRENGTH IS OURSELVES":  
IDENTITY, STATUS, AND CULTURAL  
REVITALIZATION AMONG THE MIKMAQ  
IN NEWFOUNDLAND

JANICE ESTHER TULK







001311





“OUR STRENGTH IS OURSELVES”: IDENTITY, STATUS, AND CULTURAL  
REVITALIZATION AMONG THE MI'KMAQ IN NEWFOUNDLAND

by

© Janice Esther Tulk

A thesis submitted to the  
School of Graduate Studies  
in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

School of Music

Memorial University of Newfoundland

July 2008

St. John's

Newfoundland

## Abstract

Mi'kmaq in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador are currently divided in terms of status under the *Indian Act*, a division which has had a significant and lasting impact on the sense of a Mi'kmaw community in the province. Through two case studies, this dissertation investigates differences in the practice of musical culture as a result of the status/non-status divide and questions what the localization strategies of each group can tell us about notions of identity, indigeneity, and community. It examines how Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland acknowledge, create, negotiate, embody, enact, and maintain a sense Mi'kmaw identity and community through the localization of "pan-Indian" powwow culture.

The first case study focusses on a community of status Mi'kmaq in the province, located in Miawpukek, and encompasses the localization of powwow as curriculum in the band-run Se't A'newey School, musical expression of the local drum group Sipu'ji'j Drummers, and annual community event. The second case study focusses on non-status Mi'kmaq in the province, specifically the drum group at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. Musically, these two contexts display several differences, particularly in terms of the repertoire each performs (one "traditional" Mi'kmaq, the other northern powwow) and the singing style that is used. Related extra-musical elements, such as cultural dress, also display distinct approaches to participation in powwow as a representation of identity. However, in both case studies, similarities emerge in the use of recording



technology as a didactic tool, the egalitarian structure of the drum, and the subversion (at times) of gender roles asserted as part of the powwow tradition.

Comparative analysis of the two case studies at the centre of this dissertation demonstrates different strategies for the localization of powwow. Three primary means of localization emerge: 1) incorporating pre-existing Mi'kmaw or local songs (such as l'ko) and dance genres (such as Ko'jua) into the structure of the powwow, sometimes transposing them for different instrumentation (powwow drum) or singing style (northern), and sometimes not; 2) inscribing borrowed powwow traditions with local or Nation-specific meaning through the embellishment of regalia, the use of local singing style or language, and discourse that emphasizes tradition or "the Mi'kmaw way"; and 3) explicitly referencing or implicitly performing local histories. At the same time that powwow may be localized to assert a Nation-specific identity, however, it may also be used to express a more personal identity, or even one broadly constructed as indigenous.

The diversity and contradiction present in the performance of identity, as well as the ethnic simultaneity experienced by mixed-blood, non-status individuals in this study, would seem to suggest that theoretical lenses that emphasize diversity and connectivity, such as music scenes, would allow one to move past homogeneous notions of community or singular constructions of ethnicity. However, it is shown that the way in which individuals speak about their experiences, indeed the reasons for their engagement in cultural pursuits, is specifically referring to community-building practices.

This study, grounded in binary structures of status and non-status, rural and

urban, focusses on two ways of knowing and two ways of being Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, a doubleness that finds expression in the Mi'kmaq double-curve motif. These ways of knowing and being are connected and overlap in many ways while coexisting. They nuance the commonly recounted histories of encounter, hidden heritages, and revitalization in the province, and insist that identity be understood as multiple, as simultaneities.



## **Acknowledgements**

First and foremost, I would like to thank my consultants, who graciously shared their knowledge and experiences with me, and gently suggested alternative interpretations when mine needed revising: Laverna Augustine, Pat Donnelly, Tony Drew, Jerry Evans, Steve George, Brenda Jeddore, Rod Jeddore, Denis LeBlanc, Greg Marr, Jason Morrisseau, Chrisine Pike, Paul Pike, Robin Purcell, Candace Russell, and Jerry Wetzel. Any remaining errors are solely my own. In particular, I am grateful to members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, who welcomed me into their drum and were a constant source of encouragement in the research process: you are true friends. Wela'lioq.

While these individuals are the heart of this study, it would not have been possible without the authorization of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, the local band councils, the administration of the St. John's Friendship Centre, and the administration of the Se't A'newey School. Thanks are extended to Lindsay Marshall and Vicki LeTerte at Cape Breton University, home of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch; Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe and council in Miawpukek, Ktaqmkuk, as well as his assistant Melissa Drake; Chief Susan Levi-Peters of Elsipogtog, New Brunswick, as well as research coordinator Denis LeBlanc; Chief Charlie Dennis and council in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia; Myrtle Banfield, former director of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, and Lori LeDrew, former youth coordinator; and Craig Benoit, high school principal of Se't A'newey School.

This research has been assisted by many individuals along the way. I am grateful to Franziska von Rosen for generously sharing with me her notes and recordings from field research during the 1980s. Janine Metallic and Mary Ann Metallic, though I have not yet met them in person, were key in locating Mi'kmaq-speakers who I contracted to translate research materials. The work of translators Helen Sylliboy and Janice Vicaire was essential to the analysis presented in this dissertation, while Bernie Francis' translation of a consent form enabled the research process. Research assistance was provided by Kathryn Curran, Mary Piercey, and Meghan Bowen; and Sharmane Allen kindly stepped in as field assistant during the Harris Centre Workshop. Kelly Best has been a thoughtful sounding board for ideas and drafts; Maureen Houston has provided encouragement and helpful organizational recommendations; and Spencer Crewe has provided technical assistance with field recordings in an enthusiastic and timely manner – "So let it be written, so let it be done." I am also thankful to Dr. Wayne Redmond (ENT) for his diligent care of my vocal folds as I learned to vocalize in a new way.

Thanks are also extended to Patricia Fulton and Pauline Cox of the Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive (MUNFLA); Patrick Johnson and Diane Chishom at the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre, Cape Breton University; Jodi McDavid of the Beaton Institute, Cape Breton University; the staff of the Centre for Newfoundland Studies, Memorial University of Newfoundland; and Bev Greene and Lisa Small of Ferriss Hodgett Library, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook. Your knowledge of resources and assistance in obtaining copies for consultation were essential



to this study.

This dissertation has greatly benefited from the careful reading and thoughtful comments of C. Kati Szego, Diane Goldstein, Carrie Dyck, Philip Hiscock, and Gordon Smith. I am especially thankful to my supervisor, Beverley Diamond, for her unfailing guidance, inspiration, and encouragement throughout this process. You always provided sage advice on conducting intercultural research, shared your experiences as well as your resources, and challenged me to pursue avenues of thought I had not previously explored.

Finally, I extend heartfelt thanks to friends and family who have supported me through this journey. You have all played a role in the completion of this dissertation, providing inspiration, sounding boards for ideas, comic relief, and sage advice on various occasions. In particular, I am grateful to fellow doctoral candidate Graham Blair and his family, who provided a home when mine was destroyed – your generosity will never be forgotten. To my own family on the west coast of the province, my father Ronald, my mother Florence, and my sister Christina: you believed in me from the beginning, encouraged me to pursue my dreams, and supported me in every way possible. Thank you.

Earlier versions of this research appeared as preliminary studies in *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* (2007), *Folk Music, Traditional Music, Ethnomusicology: Canadian Perspectives, Past and Present* (2007, ed. Hoefnagels and Smith), and *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* (2006). My thanks to Jeff Webb, Gordon Smith, and Anna Hoefnagels for permission to include segments of these essays in this greatly

revised and expanded study.

This research has been generously supported by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (Canada Graduate Scholarship), the J. R. Smallwood Foundation for Newfoundland and Labrador Studies (Memorial University), the Institute of Social and Economic Research (Memorial University), and the Mary A. Griffiths Memorial Bursary for Folklore Field Research (Folklore Department, Memorial University).



## Table of Contents

List of Tables	xiii
List of Figures	xiv
Chapter One: Introduction – Newfoundland’s Union with Canada and its Lasting Impact on Ktaqmkuk Mi’kmaq	1
1.1 Mi’kmaq Life Prior to Confederation with Canada	2
1.2 Confederation with Canada	6
1.3 Terms of Union and Treaty Rights	10
1.4 Status in Newfoundland: Approaches to Redress the Situation	18
Chapter Two: Mi’kmaq Music in Newfoundland: Issues of History and Contemporary Practice	26
2.1 Mi’kmaq Music, Historically Speaking	33
2.2 Literature on Newfoundland Mi’kmaq Culture	41
2.3 Contemporary Expressive Practices and Localization	44
2.4 Identity, Music Scenes, and Performance	47
2.5 The Inescapable Question of Authenticity	59
2.6 Representation and Methodology	62
2.7 Analysis and Interpretation	72
Chapter Three: (Re-)Introducing Mi’kmaq Music: Learning, Sharing, and Expressing Culture On the Rez	78
3.1 Granddaddies of Mi’kmaq Powwow: How Powwow Came To Mi’kma’ki	83
3.2 The Cultural Days Program Becomes Community Based	101
3.3 Powwow and Mi’kmaq Music as Curriculum	110
3.4 Presenting Mi’kmaq Culture	119
3.5 The Spirits Drive	135
3.6 Localization Strategies in Se’t A’newey School	137

Chapter Four: Making Powwow Local: Miawpukek's Community Drum and Powwow	151
4.1 The Sipu'ji'j Drummers	153
4.2 Types of Powwow	165
4.3 The Traditional Powwow in Miawpukek	169
4.4 Elsipogtog Celebrates 20 Years: A Mi'kmaw Contest Powwow	188
4.5 Mi'kmaw Powwows	203
4.6 The Traditional Way	208
4.7 Localization Strategies in Mi'kmaw Powwows	211
 Chapter Five: Mi'kmaw Powwows: Music, Dance, and Regalia Styles In Miawpukek	 220
5.1 "Swing and Sway the Mi'kmaw Way": Mi'kmaw Song and Dance Styles	222
5.2 Eastern Woodlands, Northern, or Regional: Songs and Singing Styles at a Mi'kmaw Powwow	232
5.3 Mi'kmaw Regalia: Dance Styles, Aesthetics, and Personal Expressions	245
5.4 Localization Strategies in Mi'kmaw Dance, Singing, and Regalia Styles	264
 Chapter Six: Creating an Urban Community: Learning, Sharing and Expressing Culture Off the Rez	 270
6.1 The St. John's Native Friendship Centre	273
6.2 The Friendship Centre Drum Group	277
6.3 What's in a Name?	301
6.4 Representation and Performance Venues	305
6.5 "Our strength is ourselves": Continuing Struggles and the Strength of Diversity	312
6.6 Localization Strategies of an Urban-Based Drum Group	318



Chapter Seven: Making Powwow Local: Sounding Diversity Through A Friendship Centre Drum Group	325
7.1 Learning to Sing, Learning to Sound: The Weekly Practice Sessions	329
7.2 “There shouldn’t be a leader. We should share this thing.”: Restructuring the Drum Group	338
7.3 Autumn in St. John’s: A Time of Renewal and the Return of The Lead Drummer	348
7.4 Dealing with Sonic Diversity: “Just don’t mess with our beat.”	354
7.5 Craigmillar First Nation: Repertoire, Recording Technology and ‘Compact Disc Culture’	358
7.6 Leadership and Singing Style	369
7.7 The Girl in the Boys’ Club: Reflections on my Role in and Experiences with the Drum Group	376
7.8 Localization Strategies in Powwow Repertoire and Singing Style	382
Chapter Eight: Conclusion – Localizing the ‘Pan-Indian’ Powwow On and Off the Rez	390
8.1 Repertoire and Singing Style	390
8.2 Structure of the Drum Group	395
8.3 Oral Modes of Transmission and Technology	396
8.4 Cultural Dress or Regalia	397
8.5 Language	400
8.6 Discursive Practices	402
8.7 Gender	405
8.8 Two Ways of Knowing, Two Ways of Being: Status, Community, and Identity	408
8.9 The Ethnography of Emergent Cultures: Choosing a Past, Choosing a Present	420
List of References	425
Discography	452

Filmography	454
-------------	-----

Interviews Cited	455
------------------	-----

## List of Tables

Table 3.1	Powwow Order of Events	100
Table 3.2	Comparison of forms and musical features of songs presented in the workshop prior to the mini-powwow on May 19, 2006.	108
Table 3.3	Instrumentation for "Song of the Earth" as performed by Se't A'newey Choir.	127
Table 3.4	Comparison of forms and musical features of songs presented at the Harris Centre Regional Workshop on October 3, 2006.	135
Table 4.1.	Community Song by Sipu'ji'j Drummers.	161
Table 5.1	Comparison of two Ko'jua songs.	230
Table 5.2	Comparison of I'ko sung at the cultural workshop in Se't A'newey School and at the Eskasoni annual powwow.	237
Table 5.3	Comparison of Two Men's Traditional Songs.	239
Table 5.4	Two intertribals heard at the Miawpukek powwow.	243
Table 7.1	Practice CD #1 (Untitled).	362
Table 7.2	Practice CD #2 <i>Craigmillar First Nations</i>	364
Table 7.3	Comparison of five songs in the repertoire of the Friendship Centre Drum Group.	375



## List of Figures

Figure 2.1	Map of Newfoundland.	27
Figure 2.2	The double-curve motif.	29
Figure 3.1	Powwow schedule at Se't A'newey School, October 1987	98
Figure 3.2	Culture Day schedule at Se't A'newey School, May 19, 2006	103
Figure 3.3	The music room in Se't A'newey School, Miawpukek, NL	114
Figure 3.4	The Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers at the Harris Centre Regional Workshop, October 3, 2006	120
Figure 4.1	The Sipu'ji'j Drummers at the 10 <sup>th</sup> Annual Powwow in Miawpukek (2005)	157
Figure 4.2	Layout of powwow grounds in Miawpukek, NL	171
Figure 4.3	Layout of powwow grounds in Elsipogtog, NB	192
Figure 5.1	Paul Pike in his Newfoundland regalia at the 2005 Miawpukek powwow.	255
Figure 5.2	Mi'kmaw eight-point star	257
Figure 6.1	Friendship Centre Drum Group at the Multicultural Fair Celebration of Diversity	309

**Chapter One: Introduction**  
Newfoundland's Union with Canada and its  
Lasting Impact on Ktaqmkuk<sup>1</sup> Mi'kmaq

The present study of Mi'kmaw<sup>2</sup> and intertribal music-making in Newfoundland, an island province of Canada located off the east coast, seeks to illuminate the cultural renaissance under way in Mi'kmaw communities throughout the province. However, the situation of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq, a product of colonial government and confederation with Canada, is a complicated one. The Newfoundland Mi'kmaw community is bifurcated into those with status<sup>3</sup> and those without, and the only reserve in the province is in Miawpukek (Conne River), located on the south coast. While status community members living in Miawpukek have access to government programming and funding, and are making progress towards self-government, for those Mi'kmaq who are non-status<sup>4</sup> and living off reserve, access is limited or non-existent. Thus, there are many ways of understanding what it means to be Mi'kmaw in twenty-first century Newfoundland and, as a result, the cultural renaissance among Mi'kmaw communities is actualized in

---

<sup>1</sup> Ktaqmkuk is the Mi'kmaw name for Newfoundland.

<sup>2</sup> Following the Smith-Francis orthography, Mi'kmaq is the plural noun and Mi'kmaw is both the singular noun and adjectival form. Mi'kmaq also refers to the language spoken by the Mi'kmaq. The now outmoded spelling Micmac, as well as other spellings of Mi'kmaq, is retained in quotations from sources that use other orthographies. Finally, where a particular spelling is used in the name of an organization, I have retained that spelling.

<sup>3</sup> Status refers to a "Status Indian"; a person who has been registered with the federal government, is recognized under the *Indian Act*, and is, therefore, entitled to the rights and benefits assured to Indians (First Nations peoples) registered under the *Act*.

<sup>4</sup> A "Non-Status Indian" is a person who identifies himself/herself as an Indian, but is not recognized under the *Indian Act* and is not entitled to the rights and benefits the *Act* ensures.

different ways through different modes.

The body of this dissertation will focus on aspects of music-making among both status and non-status Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland through the use of two case studies; the first, in Miawpukek, centres on the powwow tradition in the community, a community drum group, and the music curriculum taught in the school, while the second study based in St. John's focusses on the music-making of the Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group hosted at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. Music as an entry point into Mi'kmaw culture affords an opportunity to consider the ways in which two different bodies of Mi'kmaq in the province (those with status and those without status) pursue cultural revitalization – the forces that drive the renaissance, the support provided to accomplish such cultural goals, and the practical impacts on Mi'kmaq living in Newfoundland of the political and legislated division between status and non-status individuals and communities. Music as it is practised by both status and non-status Mi'kmaq on the island has much to tell us about being and becoming Mi'kmaw in twenty-first century Newfoundland. Before proceeding to discuss these two case studies, however, it is necessary to explain how political events, particularly the union of the province with Canada, have shaped present-day Aboriginal life in Newfoundland.

### *1.1 Mi'kmaw Life Prior to Confederation with Canada*

Newfoundland Mi'kmaq originally shared the island and its resources with the



Beothuk, often intermarrying with them (Dickason 2002: 77).<sup>5</sup> Up until the turn of the twentieth century, Mi'kmaq largely maintained a traditional subsistence life. The impacts of colonization which were felt much earlier among Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia and First Nations peoples throughout North America, came later in Newfoundland. Pastore notes that nineteenth-century descriptions of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq indicated that their health and traditional lifeways were largely intact, unlike their kin in the Maritimes:

As William Chearnley, the Nova Scotia Indian Commissioner, put it in 1861, "The condition of the Indians of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton may be described as destitute and miserable . . . they seem destined to live a roving life almost wholly based on charity." No nineteenth century observer used terms such as these to describe the Newfoundland Micmacs. (Pastore 1978a, 171)

While Pastore points to the "ingenuity and adaptability" of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq as a possible reason that their culture persisted into the early twentieth century, he notes that it was "ultimately doomed" once the interior of the island was opened to the general population (1978a, 171-72). This is not to suggest that there was a coherent and unchanging culture prior to this opening of the interior. Rather, increased contact and competition for resources may have accelerated the rate of change.

---

<sup>5</sup> Some Mi'kmaq believe the word Beothuk is a corruption of the Mi'kmaw word *Pi'tawagk* meaning "the people above here" or "the people up stream" which in English would sound like "Bee-da-wach"; however, the Mi'kmaw name for Beothuk is "O-say-yana" (Jerry Wetzel in Coish 2000, 55). In my discussions with Jerry Evans and Steve George, they always refer to the Beothuk as *Pi'tawagk*. In Marshall's *A History and Ethnography of the Beothuk*, she notes that "Osa yan a," a word referring to "a Beothuk tribe," was the term known by the Mi'kmaq for the Beothuk; however, she asserts that "Beothuk" is a term emerging from conversations with the last known Beothuk people - Demasduit and Shanadithit (1996, 434-35). The story of Demasduit and Shanadithit, the final days of the Beothuk in Newfoundland, and the various factors leading to their disappearance is the focus of a recent docu-drama titled *Stealing Mary: Last of the Red Indians* (2006, dir. Tim Wolochatiuk). While many sources state unequivocally that the last known Beothuk died in 1829, there are families in Newfoundland who claim Beothuk ancestry through intermarriage with other Aboriginal groups (Dickason 2002, 77, 206).

As the end of the nineteenth century approached, the Newfoundland government imposed regulations which would impact the Mi'kmaq's subsistence lifestyle. In 1863, methods of fishing for salmon were restricted such that salmon could neither be speared, nor caught in weirs, the two traditional means by which Mi'kmaq caught them.<sup>6</sup> Perhaps more damaging to their lifestyle was an 1889 bill that was meant to conserve the deer population in Newfoundland. This bill "limited the number of caribou which anyone, Indian or white, could take" (Pastore 1978a 173).<sup>7</sup> This bill was difficult to enforce in the interior and Anger notes that while it caused little immediate change in the hunting activities of the Mi'kmaq, it meant that prosecution for infraction was now possible (1983, 65-66; see also Pastore 1978b, 27-9). By the turn of the century, the railway across the island which was completed in 1898 and constructed such that it crossed the caribou herd's primary migration route, had opened the interior to white hunters and provided easy transport of game to communities throughout the island. The influx of hunters placed significant strain on the herd and by 1930 it had been hunted almost to extinction.<sup>8</sup> Pastore notes that this "signalled the beginning of the end of the Micmacs' traditional way of life" in Newfoundland (Pastore 1978b, 29; see also Pastore 1978a, 173; Jackson 1993, 161).

---

<sup>6</sup> A weir is a fence or dam that is built across a stream to catch or retain fish.

<sup>7</sup> This limit was set at 10 caribou, which could be hunted between October 1<sup>st</sup> and February 15<sup>th</sup> (Pastore 1978b, 27).

<sup>8</sup> The herd which numbered between 200,000 and 300,000 in 1900 was reduced to only 1900 caribou in 1930 (Pastore 1978b, 29; Dugmore 1930, 127-128).

In the first half of the twentieth century, the traditional subsistence life of hunting was in decline, as was trapping when the value of fur plunged in the 1930s, and logging soon became the primary economic resource. Increasingly men left the communities in search of work. Some found a trade that utilized their knowledge of the land and became employed as guides for exploration purposes, which in addition to mapping the province also often aided the development of industry (Anger 1983, 67-79). Throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, many intermarried with settlers of European descent, most often with Mi'kmaw men marrying European women. Because the men left the communities for extended periods of time in search of work, some children were raised in an English language environment (Pastore 1978b, 30).

Accelerating the loss of Mi'kmaw language was the fact that in the early twentieth century, traditional languages were forbidden by church officials, primarily by order of the Catholic priest Father Stanley St. Croix who was based in St. Alban's and was administrator for the school. St. Croix "told teachers to strictly enforce the use of English in the classroom. Children were to be strapped if they reverted to Micmac, and he banned the use of Micmac in church" (Jackson 1993, 163).<sup>9</sup> The traditional governing structure was also disposed of when Chief Noel Jeddore was deposed in 1924 through the efforts of St. Croix (Hanrahan 2003, 222; Jackson 1993, 163-4). Coupled with further

---

<sup>9</sup> Research by Mi'kmaw Rod Jeddore indicates the impact of intermarriage, economic climate, and Fr. St. Croix's ban on language as the primary reasons for the decline of Mi'kmaw language in the area (2000, 84-5) and by the 1980s the language had largely disappeared. Jeddore's work suggests strategies to remedy this situation for the future.



impositions by the government (discussed below), the Mi'kmaw language largely vanished from use in Miawpukek.

## *1.2 Confederation with Canada*

The restrictions imposed on hunting and fishing on the island in the 1860s through the 1880s came during a time when Newfoundland was wrestling internally with its future as a nation. While Newfoundlanders initially voted in favour of independence, a series of events from the 1890s through the depression had significant economic impact on Newfoundland. Confederation with Canada, a move that was to stave the economic hardship faced by the population, was ultimately achieved. Some consideration of the events leading to this union with Canada is warranted.

Newfoundland was the first overseas colony of Britain and had representative government beginning in 1832. In 1839, Lord Durham's Report suggested that, due to the small size of Newfoundland and Prince Edward Island, it would be best if they united with Upper and Lower Canada; however, little was done to achieve this end, and in 1855, Newfoundland gained responsible government. Serious discussions of union with Canada began in the 1860s, but confederation at that time was not successful; the referendum of 1869 was a strong vote for independence (Janes 1991, 498).

In 1892, a great fire destroyed much of St. John's, Newfoundland's urban centre and seat of power. Two years later, the economy was dealt a second blow when an historic bank crash occurred. At the time, two banks existed in St. John's; Union,

established in 1854, and Commercial, established in 1858. After ten years of “poor fish trade and dangerous banking practices” the banks closed forever, on what has since been termed “Black Monday,” 10 December 1894 (Horan 1991a, 120). Bank notes from these institutions had been the primary medium of exchange. Now rendered useless as money, trade halted and unemployment rose quickly. Credit for businesses was suspended and many closed as a result, some never reopening. Many Newfoundlanders became destitute and some lost their life savings, while Newfoundland bordered on bankruptcy (Horan 1991a, 120-21; Horan 1991b, 121).

The desperation of this situation was exacerbated by the fact that the interest on the public debt was due in January 1895. Newfoundland looked to Britain for aid, but was refused a loan unless it agreed to a royal commission to look into their political and financial situation. Newfoundland reopened confederation talks with Canada on 4 April 1895, but they quickly deteriorated when Canada refused to provide Newfoundland with enough money to begin operation of provincial services. Talks came to a halt less than two weeks later on April 16 (Janes 1991, 498).

Once again, Newfoundland turned to Britain for a loan and was refused. Robert Bond, the acting Colonial Secretary, took out three loans on his own personal credit in an effort to save Newfoundland from ruin. In fourteen days, he had raised \$3,725,000 from banks in Montreal and London (Horan 1991b, 122; Janes 1991, 498). Newfoundland was spared, but relations between Canada and Newfoundland were severely damaged: “Even though the crisis had passed, damage was done to the idea of Confederation, as it took

generations for the Newfoundland people to forget that Canada had wavered in giving help when Newfoundland needed it most" (Janes 1991, 498).

Newfoundland's financial troubles, however, were not over. After contributing to the war effort (1914 - 1918) and surviving the Depression, Newfoundland had a public debt of almost \$100 million. The unemployment rate was high; one-third of the people were forced to live on welfare at only six cents per person per day (Janes 1991, 498-99). Wages decreased and tariffs increased, all to the detriment of Newfoundland. Again looking to Britain, the Amulree Royal Commission, under Sir William Warrender Mackenzie, suggested "that self-government be suspended until such time as Newfoundland was financially self-supporting, when at the request of the people, self-government would be restored" (Fitzgerald 2002, 1). The House of Assembly of Newfoundland, which approved the recommendations, "voted itself out of existence" and on 16 February 1934, Government by Commission began (*ibid.*).

With the war effort of 1939, Canadians, Americans, and other foreigners, were brought to Newfoundland, boosting the economy: "The American presence in Newfoundland, the American forces' lavish spending on military equipment, and the construction of military bases throughout the island and in Labrador broke the hold of the Depression on Newfoundland" (Fitzgerald 2002, 21). The strategic location of the island and the rich natural resources (especially mineral) found both on the island and in Labrador renewed Canada's interest in confederation (*ibid.*, 29, 99). By the time the war ended, Newfoundland was self-supporting and its fate was once again open for debate:



responsible government, confederation with Canada, and union with the United States constituted three of the possible futures for Newfoundland.

The Newfoundland National Convention was formed, the purpose of which was to determine which possible futures for Newfoundland would be included on the referendum ballot (Fitzgerald 1992, ii). The leaders of the interested parties began lobbying for their positions, the Confederates led by Joseph (Joey) Roberts Smallwood, the Independents by Major Peter J. Cashin, and the Economic Union with the United States Party by Chesley A. Crosbie. After several failed attempts, confederation talks with Canada were reopened in February 1947. The referendum was held on 3 June 1948. 44.6% of Newfoundlanders voted for responsible government and 41.1% for confederation, with commission government receiving 14.3% of the vote. Since the referendum did not provide a true majority, a second referendum was held on 2 July 1948. This time confederation won with 52.33% of the vote, while responsible government received 47.66% (Fitzgerald 2002, 129; Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage 1999).<sup>10</sup> On 11 December 1948, the Terms of Union were signed and at 11:59pm on 31 March 1949, Newfoundland became the tenth province of Canada (Janes 1991, 499-501; Fitzgerald 2002, 137).

---

<sup>10</sup> The returns of the first referendum are reproduced in Fitzgerald (2002, 120), as are the results for the second referendum (2002, 135-6).

### 1.3 *Terms of Union and Treaty Rights*

It is precisely these Terms of Union that have greatly impacted the lives of First Nations and Aboriginal people in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador in the present day. Prior to confederation, the Mi'kmaq living on the island were largely subject to the same laws as all other residents (Hanrahan 2003, 235; Moss 1988, 3). Perhaps most importantly, Newfoundland Mi'kmaq possessed the right to vote. For those First Nations registered under the *Indian Act* in the rest of Canada, the same could not be said. When Newfoundland joined Canada, the Mi'kmaq in the province did not come under the *Indian Act*. One of the possible reasons for this was the widespread belief that the Mi'kmaq were not indigenous to Newfoundland.<sup>11</sup>

Racist stories such as the "mercenary myth"<sup>12</sup> helped to create and reinforce a stigma associated with being Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland (Hanrahan 2003, 220). The mercenary myth asserted that the Mi'kmaq were brought to the island of Newfoundland to exterminate the Beothuk people, a piece of "British Newfoundland folklore"<sup>13</sup> that was taught in the school systems in Newfoundland until recently (J. Wetzel 1995, 246; see also Anger 1983, 23-6; Bartels 1979, 7-9; Hanrahan 2003, 220; Howley 1915, 25-6; Jackson 1993, 33-42; Stone 1993, 78). While this erroneous story has been refuted by

---

<sup>11</sup> It has often been asserted that only the Beothuk were indigenous to the island of Newfoundland.

<sup>12</sup> The term "Micmac Mercenary Myth" was coined by Bartels in his 1979 article "Time Immemorial? A Research Note on Micmacs in Newfoundland."

<sup>13</sup> This phrase is meant to point out that the mercenary myth became an element of British Newfoundland folk belief, the basis of which was untrue. However, it should not be taken to imply that folklore is necessarily untrue.

Rowe (1977), Upton (1977), and Pastore (1978b), it is still widely known by the general population. Not only did this story depict the Mi'kmaq as violent mercenaries, it also undermined their credibility when asserting themselves as indigenous to Newfoundland, for they were deemed to have moved to the island post-contact.<sup>14</sup>

Bartels and Janzen (1990) assert that the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, who have a significant history of seasonal occupation of the island, migrated to the southwest coast of the province from Cape Breton and took up permanent residence here during the 1760s. There is much evidence to support the claim that Mi'kmaq resided here, at least seasonally, more than 150 years before that (the late 1500s and early 1600s). For example, as early as 1538 Mi'kmaq were observed in White Bear Bay and their villages at St. Georges Bay and Placentia existed in 1594; throughout the 1600s there are accounts of Europeans encountering the Mi'kmaq (see Hanrahan 2003, 220-21 for a summary; see also Stone 1993, 80; J. Wetzel 1995, 138).<sup>15</sup> At the same time, some oral histories cite the early fifteenth century as the time period during which Mi'kmaq came to the island of Newfoundland, while others assert that the Mi'kmaq arrived 9000 years ago (see Anger 1988, 37). When Speck conducted his research in the early twentieth century, he recorded an oral history account that asserted that Mi'kmaw people are indigenous to Newfoundland and that their ancestors, referred to as the "Ancients" (*Sáqwéjijk*) lived in

---

<sup>14</sup> Stone's research suggests that this myth has significantly impacted the struggle for rights and land claims in the province, as it has been used as evidence that the Mi'kmaq have not lived in Newfoundland since "time immemorial" (1993, 78).

<sup>15</sup> An overview of encounters with Mi'kmaq from the time of Cabot onwards is discussed in Jerry Wetzel's thesis, "Decolonizing Ktagmkuk Mi'kmaw History" (1995, 116-156).



Newfoundland before the Beothuk arrived (Speck 1922, 123-24).

On this basis of these oral histories and early documented sources, as well as the treaty signed in Nova Scotia in 1752, Mi'kmaq assert a claim of indigeneity for rights as First Nations people in Newfoundland. When the Treaty of 1752<sup>16</sup> was signed by the Mi'kmaw Grand Chief and other delegates, the now Canadian provinces of Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec were part of Mi'kma'ki, the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaw people (Hanrahan 2003, 219; Tanner and Henderson 1992, 132). According to Tanner and Henderson, the 1763 Proclamation, which remains in effect, "reserved all lands in Atlantic Canada as the 'Hunting Grounds' of the Indian nations and tribes, the only exemption being for land that was either ceded or purchased" (1992, 133). This Proclamation "protected the Mi'kmaq on the island of Newfoundland" (*ibid.*, 144). At least one peace treaty was signed at Codroy Island off the west coast of the province in 1764 (*ibid.*, 149; Bartels and Janzen 1990, 80) and Tanner and Henderson assert that land was never ceded to any government by treaty (1992, 133).<sup>17</sup> In addition, while the details of a land grant in Bay St. George have not yet been found, there is some evidence to suggest that the Mi'kmaq

---

<sup>16</sup> Several treaties of peace and friendship were signed by the Mi'kmaq, including those of 1725, 1726, 1749, 1752, and 1760-61 (see Wicken 2004). The Treaty of 1752 was upheld by the Supreme Court as one which "continues to be in force and effect" in its ruling on the Simon case of 1985 (see Coates 2000, 87). Mi'kmaw rights to subsistence harvesting rights were affirmed (*ibid.*).

<sup>17</sup> In his discussion of the Marshall decision, Isaac notes that, "Since the Mi'kmaq were largely dispossessed of their lands by 1760, the purpose of a land-cessation treaty would have been moot" (2001, 109). Nevertheless, according to the Supreme Court, when interpreting land-cessation treaties and peace and friendship treaties, the same rules must apply (*ibid.*).



were given a land grant there in 1782, at roughly the same time that Miawpukek was surveyed and received a land grant (*ibid.*, 149).

However, any formal or informal treaties, agreements, or understandings that Newfoundland Mi'kmaq had with European settlers were not negotiated or settled when Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, even though the issue had been discussed in the years leading up to Confederation. As Jerry Wetzel (1999; 1995), Tompkins (1998; 1988), Hanrahan (2003), and others have demonstrated, the *Indian Act*, which sets forth the federal government's responsibilities to Aboriginal peoples, was not invoked in the province at the time of Confederation. Financial responsibility for Aboriginal peoples in Newfoundland initially rested with the provincial government, regardless of the guidelines defined in the *Indian Act* and the Constitution of Canada at the time; the federal government's responsibility to Aboriginal peoples was instead implemented gradually over several decades, in a piecemeal fashion.<sup>18</sup> One of the arguments against bringing the *Indian Act* into force in the province was the fact that the negative aspects of the *Act* at that time would also be invoked; Mi'kmaq in the province would be denied enfranchisement and its attendant rights (such as the right to vote). Further, they would be prohibited from purchasing alcohol, and would receive relief payments in lieu of old age pension, all of which would be regressive (Tompkins 1988, 15, 26). However, by not

---

<sup>18</sup> As Stone (1993), Moss (1988), and Jerry Wetzel (1999) have pointed out, however, the *British North America Acts* 1867 to 1946 were written into the agreement and would "apply to Newfoundland as if it were one of the originators of Confederation" (Stone 1993, 93; see also the Terms of Union reproduced in Fitzgerald's *Newfoundland at the Crossroads* on page 144, item 3). The *BNA Act* assigned federal jurisdiction for "Indians and Lands reserved for the Indians" (*BNA Act* 1867, sec. 91 in Government of Canada [1952] or online in Department of Justice [n.d]; see also Stone 1993, 93).

implementing the *Act*, benefits such as the creation of reserves, free education and medical services, family allowances, and tax exemptions were not introduced at the time of confederation. Rather, they were brought into force gradually over the next fifty years (*ibid.*, 15).

Jerry Wetzel's (1999) research suggests a more deliberate action by the parties involved as they decided not to acknowledge the Aboriginal Peoples of Newfoundland:

In 1947, when potential terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada were being discussed, Canada's officials took the position that Aboriginal Peoples in Newfoundland would come under the jurisdiction of the Canadian Government and its Indian Act. This position was put in writing as Appendix XI of the Terms of Union and became part of the agreed upon terms for Confederation between Canada and Newfoundland. However, between 1948 and April 1, 1949, senior Canadian officials *deliberately hid* Appendix XI by not acknowledging its existence. They claimed that there had been no final agreement on the "Term" that would define how the administration of Indian and Inuit affairs in Newfoundland would be implemented. (J. Wetzel 1999, 24 [emphasis added])

Chalker (2006) has also noted that this abdication of responsibility was actually agreed upon by both the governments of Canada and of Newfoundland in the discussions that led to confederation. In the past decade, the advantages and disadvantages of Newfoundland joining confederation have been analyzed and critiqued by many. In outlining the main reasons why confederation was a poor choice for Newfoundland, lawyer James R. Chalker cites the transfer of financial responsibility for indigenous peoples in Newfoundland to the provincial government:

notwithstanding the provisions of the *Indian Act* and the Constitution of Canada at the time, under which the federal government was responsible for all Indian (aboriginal) affairs). Over time, the federal government has

assumed a greater degree of financial responsibility for the aboriginals living in Newfoundland. (Chalker 2006)

His article also outlines other reasons why confederation was a poor choice for all Newfoundlanders, including the financial terms of union which led to fiscal imbalance.

While some Aboriginal people assert that the fact that the *Indian Act* was not initially brought into force in Newfoundland was a grievous error, it should be noted that the *Indian Act* has been somewhat of a double-edged sword. It is this policy that caused great destruction of Native communities, through centralization processes, the creation of residential schools, and divisive regulations for determining registration in the *Act* and on band lists. However, it was this same *Act* that provided (and continues to be a source of) important financial support for programs and services (such as access to health care), and ensured the maintenance (or creation) of reserves.<sup>19</sup> Hence, Anger asserts that, “Confederation brought neither the benefits nor limitations of Indian status to Labrador or Newfoundland” (1983, 88).

It has been noted that the reserve system in Canada has largely been a failure, that it provided a land base “too small and impoverished to implement the policy of self-sufficiency” (Tanner 1983, 17). And yet, as Tanner acknowledges, it was this land base that kept communities together. As Mi’kmaw scholar Bonita Lawrence explains:

It is important to emphasize that real, tangible benefits – including an increased chance of a community’s cultural survival – accrue to those communities who are able to prove their eligibility to be classified as

---

<sup>19</sup> See Jerry Wetzel (1999; 1995), Tompkins (1998, 1988), and Tanner and Henderson (1992) for a more detailed account of this issue as it relates to the Newfoundland context.



a reserve under the Indian Act. The access to funding and programs that reserve status brings enables rural or northern communities to *physically* survive in a colonized world that has destroyed their traditional livelihoods. It is for this reason that other rural Native communities – such as those of the Mi'kmaq and Innu people of Newfoundland who currently do not come under the Indian Act – are struggling for recognition as reserves, even at the cost of accepting colonial definitions of their identities. (Lawrence 2004, 97-8)<sup>20</sup>

The present day political interest in land is linked to subsistence in terms of hunting, trapping, and fishing, as well as the economic base that it provides through industry development (especially natural resources and minerals). Land is significant in terms of cultural meaning and the spiritual symbolism embodied by it (Tanner 1983, 4).

However, the political and cultural importance of a land base is not limited to those Aboriginal people living in rural areas or on reserve. Lawrence asserts that even in urban Aboriginal communities a land base (and language instruction) is necessary in order for self-government in urban communities to be sustainable (2004, 236).

While many scholars have focussed on the positive and negative results of not registering the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq under the *Indian Act* at the time of Confederation, few have considered the impact of confederation in terms of the laws that were enforced and the impact of development in its various forms. Further restrictions on hunting were set in place, which made it difficult to provide for one's family and also prohibited one from selling game. Compulsory schooling to the age of sixteen also

---

<sup>20</sup> The Innu have since been registered under the *Indian Act* and two bands have been created. A reserve has been established at Natuashish for the Mushuau Innu First Nation and a second will be established at Sheshatshiu for Sheshatshiu Innu First Nation (see Indian and Northern Affairs 2002, 2004a).



impacted on the community in several ways. First, it contributed to the loss of traditional Indigenous knowledge. Mi'kmaw children learned traditional hunting and trapping skills, as well as the lay of the land, from their fathers while "on the country"<sup>21</sup>; that is, they learned traditional practices by doing them. Because children were required to attend school until the age of sixteen, there was less opportunity to learn traditional knowledge in this way. Related to this is a second impact of compulsory schooling. While prior to confederation the Mi'kmaq saw the prohibition of the Mi'kmaw language by Father St. Croix, the language had persisted among men while on the country. By requiring attendance in school, Mi'kmaw children not only lost the opportunity to learn hunting, trapping, and guiding skills, but also an opportunity to learn and use the Mi'kmaw language from their parents and elders. Finally, as the Mi'kmaw population in Miawpukek outgrew the size of its school, some students were required to travel to St. Alban's between 1968 and 1979 for their education. This meant that children boarded in St. Alban's during the week, returning to their families and community on weekends, which further eroded the transmission of traditional culture (Anger 1983, 89-92).

A hydroelectric project in the 1950s that would bring electricity to the south coast also brought with it the flooding of an area of land that was part of Mi'kmaw territory and had been used for hunting and trapping. This further impacted the Mi'kmaw subsistence lifestyle. In the 1960s, the construction of a road between Bishop's Falls and

---

<sup>21</sup> "On the country" is an expression used to refer to the practice of going out on the land for hunting or gathering purposes and is also the title of the work by Jackson (1993).

Harbour Breton sliced through the same territory and once again improved access to the area, while also increasing the presence of white hunters who competed for resources (Pastore 1978b, 30). Further, the economic improvement anticipated with the advent of confederation did not come to pass. As Anger has noted, much of Newfoundland remained poor, "and most benefits other than social assistance did not find their way as far as the Indian side of Baie d'Espoir" (1983, 93).

#### *1.4 Status in Newfoundland: Approaches to Redress the Situation*

Indigenous people in twenty-first century Newfoundland, then, are in a particularly challenging position. The struggle for Native rights and for the federal government to acknowledge its responsibility to Newfoundland's indigenous population has been an arduous one, though it has been making gains over the past three decades: Miawpukek Mi'kmaq were granted status in 1984 and a reserve established in 1987.<sup>22</sup> While the Mi'kmaq living on this reserve have access to federal programs and services

---

<sup>22</sup> It is important to note that while this is the year that the federal government officially made Miawpukek (Conne River) a reserve, community historian Philip Jeddore has asserted that oral history dates the reserve as being more than a century old: "The history of Miawpukek goes back much farther than 1987. Our oral history say the reserve was actually established in 1870 when the Newfoundland Surveyor General, Alexander Murray, surveyed it" (1996c). While merely surveying the area does not make it a reserve, Tanner and Henderson have noted that "In 1870 land grants were made to the Mi'kmaq residing at Conne River" (1992, 149), while Tompkins identifies 1872 as the year in which the Mi'kmaq "had been granted a reserve at Conne River" (1988, 5). Tompkins suggests that "with no agency of government responsible for them, the knowledge of their reserve soon slipped from the government memory" (*ibid.*; see also Hanrahan 2003, 235). According to the Government report written in 1982 which asserted that the Mi'kmaw land claim was unjustified, this survey in 1872 was conducted under the Crown Lands Act of 1860. Its purpose was "to clear titles over the island where people had settled without grant or proper authority. After the lands were surveyed, the occupier was granted a license which would be converted into a grant in fee after five years" (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador 1982, 134-35). However, this in fact would mean that after five years, they would have title to the land.

under the *Indian Act*, the Mi'kmaq living outside of Miawpukek do not. Stone has noted that in spite of the existing kinship ties between Mi'kmaq in Miawpukek and elsewhere in the province, "Newfoundland Mi'kmaq groups have been forced to respond in differing fashions according to the political pressures of the day. Thus, the unevenness of benefits and status and ensuing hard feelings which have doubtless resulted, need to be healed" (1993, 115). Stone goes on to state in no uncertain terms the situation faced by Newfoundland Mi'kmaq: "The inequity built into a system which allows related tribal members in differing administrative units different status and rights is a problem" (1993, 121).

Two different groups among the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq have taken action to redress this issue. The Ktaqmkuk Mi'kmaq Alliance, which represents almost 7,000 Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland, applied to launch a class action lawsuit against the federal government and the Newfoundland provincial government, stating that the Mi'kmaq living outside of Miawpukek are the subjects of discrimination by the federal government (1949, APTN, September 28, 2004). Jake Davis, Bert Alexander, and John Oliver, the primary representatives for the Alliance, were seeking "an order from the court that they be registered under the Indian Act and granted any benefits and funding provided other aboriginals in Canada" (D. Moore 2003). Further, they wanted access to federal programs and services to be extended to all Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. The group was seeking the creation of additional bands and reserves in Newfoundland, possibly in Central Newfoundland, the Bay St. George area, the Corner Brook area, and Bay D'Espoir (J.



Wetzel, personal communication, November 23, 2004). However, in February 2007, the Newfoundland Supreme Court denied the application for a class action lawsuit stating that the reparations they seek lie outside the jurisdiction of the provincial government and solely with the federal *Indian Act*.

In contrast, the Federation of Newfoundland Indians (FNI), which represents nine bands in the province, is working towards the creation of a landless band for the Mi'kmaw population living outside of Miawpukek.<sup>23</sup> The Supreme Court's Marshall<sup>24</sup> decision, which upheld some traditional land use rights of Atlantic Mi'kmaq, is asserted "as evidence of the court's recognition of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq," (Kruzenga 2002, 4). This is perhaps because the decision acknowledged Mi'kmaw rights under the treaties of 1760-61, which are protected by the constitution of 1982 (Isaac 2001, 107, 120). Preliminary negotiations to assess support for the creation of a landless band ended in August 2004 and on 12 October 2004, seven hundred Mi'kmaq on the West Coast voted

---

<sup>23</sup> For an overview of the events and factors leading to the creation of FNI and a history of its involvement in the struggle for Native rights, see Anger (1983, 94ff).

<sup>24</sup> In 1993, Donald Marshall Jr, Jane McMillan, and Peter Martin were seen fishing for eels and Marshall was observed selling the eels. All of this took place during a time when the fishery was closed. In the case of *R. v. Donald Marshall Jr*, Marshall was charged with fishing during a closed season and selling eels without a commercial license. The defence asserted that this type of trade was a treaty right and communal treaty rights to hunting, fishing, and gathering were upheld with the Supreme Court Decision. It is anticipated that this decision will have significant implications for fisheries policy; however, the decision did not constitute an "absolute recognition of treaty rights," (Isaac 2001, 164) which means that additional treaty and Aboriginal rights will likely be tested in the courts in the future. See Coates (2000); Dickason (2002, 339-40); Isaac (2001); Wicken (2002).



on whether they would support this path to obtaining status (Mi'kmaq to Vote 2004).<sup>25</sup> Based on the outcome of their vote, negotiations to prepare an agreement-in-principle began in November 2005 and the document was signed on 30 November 2007 (Federation 2006; Indian and Northern Affairs 2004b; Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs 2007).<sup>26</sup> This agreement-in-principle will pave the way "for the negotiation of a final agreement that will see the registration of Mi'Kmaq [sic] who are members of the FNI" (Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs 2007). The rationale for pursuing status under a landless band structure rather than filing a land claim is the length of time required to pursue each: by establishing a landless band, Mi'kmaq will immediately reap the benefits of federal programming, while a land claim in the courts could take decades. Jasen Benwah, former Chief of the Kitpu Band, explained the difficulty of such a situation: "It was a hard sell, in a sense that we didn't want to trade away our treaty rights or our land claim rights. . . . But having it taken off the table to get a landless band, so we can get registered first, is the best way to go" (quoted in Mi'kmaq to Vote 2004). Even though the agreement-in-principle is now signed, it remains controversial for many community members, who see any agreement that does not include a land base as flawed.

---

<sup>25</sup> While the actual breakdown of the votes was not published, CBC Newfoundland reported, "[Chief Jasen Benwah] says almost all the people who cast ballots support the landless band concept" (Tiny turnout 2004). The seven hundred members who voted in the referendum represent only about 10% of eligible voters.

<sup>26</sup> This agreement has since been referred to as *Agreement for the Recognition of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq Band* (2007). On 29 March 2008, members of the Federation of Newfoundland Indian voted to support the agreement-in-principle that will see the creation of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq Band. Once this agreement is ratified by the federal government, it is anticipated that the registration of founding members will take place over the next two years, with the new band established in 2010.

A key issue in the negotiations will be determining criteria under which Mi'kmaq may be registered under the *Indian Act* and included on a band list. As Lawrence (2004) has explained, being legally registered (having status) in Canada and having membership on a band list are often not synonymous and thus can have a divisive effect on communities. Further, the determination of who can and cannot obtain status is complicated, has been (and continues to be) fraught with gender and racial bias, and now makes use of a variety of systems for determining who can be registered, systems that depend largely upon which *Indian Act* was in place during the year that the person seeking registration was born.<sup>27</sup> This necessarily complicates notions of what it is to have Mi'kmaq or Aboriginal identity in legal or organizational terms and in cultural terms.

The maintenance of cultural identity may be challenging in an urban centre. In a reserve situation, one's identity may be reinforced through language, activities, worldview, status under the *Indian Act*, membership on a band list, and the fact that those with Aboriginal heritage form the majority of the on-reserve population.<sup>28</sup> In contrast, urban centres "increasingly represent spaces where boundaries between Native people and the dominant society are maintained neither by appearance or Indian status but primarily by cultural orientation" (Lawrence 2004, 231). Political organizations, such as the Federation of Newfoundland Indians, deliver some cultural programming to their

---

<sup>27</sup> See also Gilbert's (1996) study of entitlement and membership codes as related to the *Indian Act* and its revisions.

<sup>28</sup> It should be duly noted that the populations on reserve are often much more diverse than may appear or be presented.

members and the bands<sup>29</sup> that fall under this organization also arrange their own cultural activities specific to their communities. Pan-Aboriginal organizations such as the St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association<sup>30</sup> provide assistance to Aboriginal people who are visiting or have moved to the city. Such centres "deliver important services that increase the quality of life for Aboriginal people temporarily or permanently living in urban areas" (Hanrahan 2003, 254). Such organizations have also attempted to bring cultural programming to their members, creating a stronger sense of Aboriginal culture and identity in an urban area.

Asserting Mi'kmaw identity in cultural terms and in some cases repatriating lost elements of Mi'kmaw culture have become the focus of revitalization efforts in Newfoundland Mi'kmaw communities over the past three decades. The recovery and maintenance of language, customs, beliefs, rituals, and material culture have become important pursuits for community members. The desire to learn about music, singing and drumming practices, traditional songs, their histories, their functions, and related elements of belief and ritual, is at the forefront of cultural initiatives in the province. This musical focus has led to the creation of drum groups and has been an important factor in the emergence of the powwow as a cultural event in Newfoundland. While this type of event does not have roots in Atlantic Canada, it currently draws on both intertribal and

---

<sup>29</sup> While non-status Mi'kmaq have organized themselves into band structures, each with a chief and council, these bands are not yet acknowledged under the *Indian Act*.

<sup>30</sup> Native Friendship Centres exist throughout Canada and are open to all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, regardless of status under the *Indian Act* or membership in a band.



local traditions.

The present study focuses on traditional and powwow music genres as they are performed and practised in two different communities. Discussion of the first site of inquiry, Miawpukek, begins with the history of powwow in Mi'kma'ki and the reasons for "reviving" this particular tradition. The role of the school in Miawpukek's vitalization efforts, the importance of recording projects in the community, the roles of specific individuals in establishing a local drum group, and the proliferation of powwow as tradition over the past decade are considered. In particular, the way in which more "universal" or intertribal styles are combined with local or Nation-specific elements is essential to understanding cultural expression and music-making in Miawpukek. Community members in this locale have status under the *Indian Act* and have been active in reviving culture for two decades. The community of Miawpukek is the focus of Part One.

The second site of inquiry is the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, home to the Friendship Centre Drum Group. This case-study addresses the situation of urban Aboriginal people and their efforts towards and experiences of cultural revitalization. The diverse cultural backgrounds of the members in this intertribal group include mixed heritages of Mi'kmaq, Innu, Welsh, and Irish, as well as other cultural backgrounds. The drum group possesses a diverse repertoire, with songs from many different Aboriginal traditions, including Mi'kmaq, Cree, and Blackfoot, and recordings are an important mode of transmission. Drawing upon many backgrounds and traditions has created a



drum group specific to the context of one particular urban locale. Only one of the members of this drum group has status under the *Indian Act* (an Oji-Cree from Couchiching). Members with Mi'kmaw heritage have joined the group as part of their quest to learn more about a heritage hidden from them in their youth and to have an outlet for expressing that aspect of their heritage. I demonstrate how aboriginal community and identity is not Nation-specific, but context- and location-dependant. This drum group is the focus of Part Two.

Against the preceding historical and political backdrop, discussion of these two case studies of Mi'kmaw music-making in Newfoundland takes on greater significance. Given the current issues surrounding status, resources, and identity in general, a study encompassing the cultural activities of Mi'kmaq on reserve and in urban areas is essential, for it will illuminate the impact that such issues have on cultural revitalization in the province and also demonstrate how revitalization initiatives play an active role in creating a sense of Mi'kmaw identity. These case studies will nuance the preceding history of colonization and attempted assimilation, presenting alternate, sometimes contradictory and sometimes complementary, layers of history, interpretation, and meaning. Further, while Mi'kmaw scholar Marie Battiste notes that colonization is "a system of oppression," not "personal or local prejudice," and that "it is the systemic nature of colonization that creates cognitive imperialism" (2000, xvii; see also Battiste 1986), this dissertation will demonstrate that the aftermath of colonization is experienced on a personal level and that responses to colonization are often locally-based.

## Chapter Two

### Mi'kmaw Music in Newfoundland: Issues of History and Contemporary Practice

I initially conceived of this project as a response to a lacuna in academic research on the musical traditions of the Mi'kmaw people, which has largely neglected the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. This study of Mi'kmaw (re)vitalization<sup>1</sup> questions how Mi'kmaq in the province acknowledge, create, negotiate, embody, enact, and maintain a sense Mi'kmaw identity and community through the localization of “pan-Indian” powwow culture. The current division of Newfoundland Mi'kmaw communities in terms of status under the *Indian Act* and the separate issue of band membership (as described in the introduction) has had a significant and lasting impact on the sense of a Mi'kmaw community in the province. Through two case studies, one focussed on a reserve community that has had status since the mid-1980s and one centred on non-status individuals in an urban context, this study investigates differences in the practice of culture as a result of the status/non-status divide and questions how one's status (or lack thereof) impacts notions of identity, indigeneity, and community. In the process, it traces the development of cultural (re)vitalization initiatives over the past two decades, while

---

<sup>1</sup> While the proliferation of culture-specific music among Mi'kmaw communities is often referred to as revitalization, it is important to note that some of the styles being “revived” are not historically traditional to the Mi'kmaq. Consequently, Stephen Augustine prefers to refer to musical practices like powwow as vitalization initiatives (personal communication, November 2, 2006). This configuration makes sense given that the “re” in revitalization assumes some previous connection, however tenuous it may be. As both of the terms (revitalization and vitalization) are used throughout Mi'kma'ki to refer to the revival of First Nations culture and traditions, I employ both here, sometimes drawing attention to the process and its source traditions by using (re)vitalization. Nevertheless, it must always be read with these concerns in mind.

also illuminating the relationship between music and identity in the emergent Mi'kmaw cultural (re)vitalization and elucidating the parameters of the label "Mi'kmaw music."

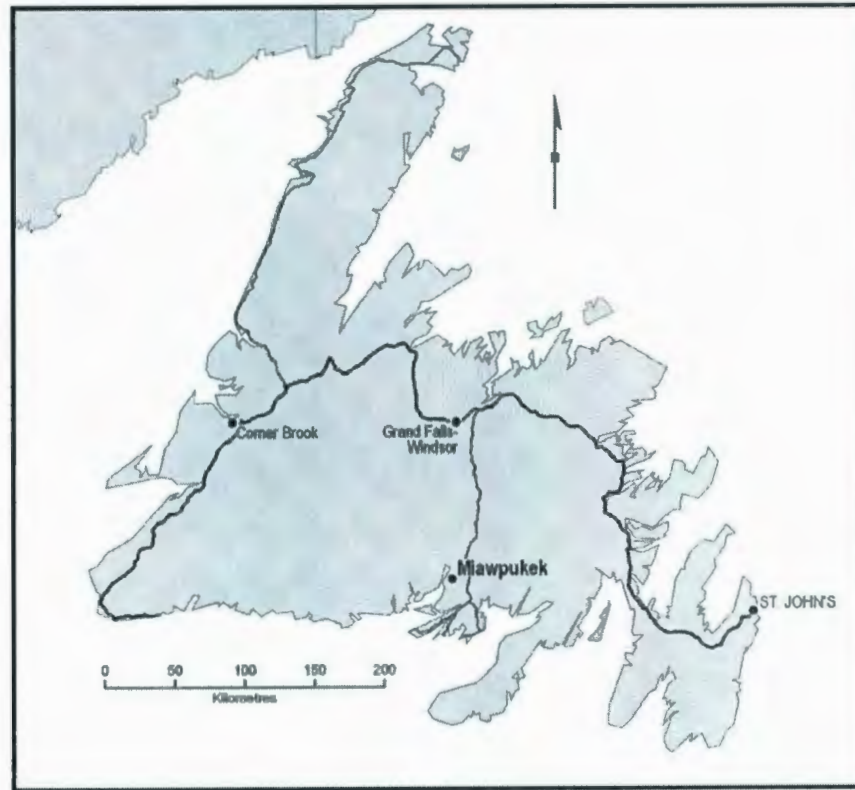


Figure 2.1. Map of Newfoundland. Created by David Mercer, Map Library, QEII Library, Memorial University, using ERSI ArcMap 9.2.

This multi-sited ethnography, concerned with two Mi'kmaw communities and their approaches to cultural and musical revitalization, begins in Miawpukek (Conne River), Newfoundland. Miawpukek has had status as a reserve since 1985, has directed its own school curriculum since 1986, and has been engaged in cultural revitalization efforts since 1987. In this context, I consider how the school through its music



curriculum in particular has been a driving force for cultural revitalization in the community. I trace how encounters with other Mi'kmaw communities and First Nations brought powwow to Miawpukek, how this event became the impetus for the creation of a community drum group named Sipu'ji'j Drummers, and how the powwow as a cultural event has become an expression of local and Mi'kmaw identity.

I then turn to a second site of inquiry: the urban-based Native Friendship Centre in St. John's, which is home to an intertribal drum group. This centre – a non-political, intertribal organization that has incorporated cultural programming initiatives into its mandate – provides services and access to resources regardless of status, band membership, or nation of origin. I investigate how this Centre becomes a space of cultural expression for non-status individuals, how its intertribal nature challenges bounded notions of Mi'kmaw or indigenous identity, and how powwow is used to express a local, unrecognized Mi'kmaw identity.

Each of these “communities” or scenes and their drum groups approach the goal of Aboriginal cultural (re)vitalization and education in different ways and draw upon different but related source traditions for cultural knowledge. The advantage of a multi-sited approach, as noted by Marcus (1998) is that it “moves out from the single sites and local situations of conventional ethnographic research designs to examine the circulation of cultural meanings, objects, and identities in diffuse time-space” (79). Indeed, it allows one to observe and acknowledge the myriad meanings, objects, and identities that exist in any culture, in their aligned and contradictory forms. These two sites of ethnography in

particular might be thought of as two overlapping parts of the Mi'kmaw double-curve motif. This symmetrical image which employs a curve and its mirror-image that connect, intersect, or overlap in the middle is pervasive in Mi'kmaw iconography and has been interpreted in various ways (see for example Speck 1914; Whitehead 1982, 133-35, 162-67).



Figure 2.2. The double-curve motif, which can be used in various orientations.

One interpretation of this motif that may be useful for the purposes of this study is identified in *Visions of Sound*:

Micmac educator Marie Battiste and her husband Sajek Henderson described this symmetrical design as a metaphor for “ways of knowing.” They compared it to a Micmac canoe which was reflected in the water. “Which is the illusion and which the reality?” (Diamond et al. 1994)

Perhaps these two ‘ways of knowing’ are two different, yet coexistent realities. The present study focusses on two ways of knowing and two ways of being Mi'kmaw in Newfoundland, and while these ways of knowing may be distinct, there is overlap and connection between them.

It must be noted from the start that the communities at the centre of this research cannot be narrowly or simplistically defined as homogeneously Mi'kmaw. The drum group based at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre is intertribal (and, indeed,

international), with members from a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural backgrounds, including Mi'kmaq, Inuit, Innu, Irish, and Welsh. While widely regarded as a Mi'kmaw community, the heterogeneous nature of Miawpukek's population has infrequently been noted. For example, in an interview with Marjorie Stoker in 1966, Peter Jeddore explained that there were "only four [pure-blood Mi'kmaq] left here [in Conne River]" and further noted that some families in the community, such as the Johns, were also "Mountaineers" or Montagnais, now called Innu (MUNFLA Tape, 74-230/C2008). Recently Martijn (2003, 80) has asserted that "intermarriage is believed to have been so common that more than half the Mi'kmaq population on the island today can probably claim some Innu ancestry." In the community today, there are also individuals and families of Mohawk and Shawnee, as well as European, descent.

In addition to this diversity in both case studies, it must be duly noted that one's self-identification as Mi'kmaw is only one facet of any person's identity (discussed in Chapter Six). For these reasons, it is necessary to cast the conceptual net broader to encompass the complexity of Aboriginal identities. The purpose of the present research is to tease out these complexities, the multi-faceted nature of identity, and to challenge concepts of community and nation that are based solely on status or band membership. Further, my research considers identity and cultural expression through the lens of localization of culture that is learned through encounter with other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. While these encounters may be temporally diffuse, such experiences and collective memory of them may be layered through time and periodically re-engaged.



Encounter is often narrowly constructed in discussions of First Nation cultures as occurring between First Nations and their colonizers, too commonly implying that innovation only came with colonial contact. Indeed, postcolonial metanarratives of contact and colonial encounter are often couched in terms of assimilation and cultural loss, denying the potential for “transfers of knowledge . . . on both sides” (Cruikshank 2005, 9). And, certainly, much of the current political situation facing Newfoundland Mi’kmaq is attributed to colonial encounter. However, this is not the only kind of encounter that has shaped twenty-first century cultural expression for Mi’kmaq. As Cruikshank has noted, “*Encounters* come in many forms,” (2005,10) and to discuss cultural resistance, incorporation, syncretism, maintenance, and revitalization in Miawpukek and Mi’kma’ki at large only in terms of colonial powers and cultural loss is to misrepresent the multiple and varied types of encounter that occurred through space and time (see Lassiter et al. 2002). Studying encounter only as a colonial event also means that we are narrowly conceiving the responses to and effects of encounter, rather than being concerned with the myriad responses to encounter and colonization.

While encounters often represented as being shaped by colonial power structures may have changed aspects of Mi’kmaq culture,<sup>2</sup> resulting, for example, in widespread Catholicism and use of the English language, encounters with other First Nations brought new modes of expression, in the form of music and dance genres, cultural dress, and

---

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of the impact of residential schools on Mi’kmaq life, see Hanrahan (2008) and Isabelle Knockwood (1992). For a more general discussion of the impact of colonization on traditional Mi’kmaq culture, see Paul (2000).

certain spiritual practices. I am not suggesting such intertribal contact is new – oral tradition asserts this has always been the case to varying degrees, as recorded in wampum belts and voiced through songs such as “I’ko,” which is said to be a gift from the Mohawk (discussed further in Chapter Three). Encounters occurred between longtime friends, allies, and enemies, separate from colonial encounter, and each of these encounters carried a different set of power relations. For generations individual First Nations interacted with other communities and groups as they bordered hunting grounds, met seasonally, intermarried, and shared aspects of culture. Indeed, the alliance between five eastern nations in the Wabenaki Confederacy<sup>3</sup> was a long-standing one in which members of each group would have met and shared knowledge. Encounter itself is inscribed in the imagery of the Mi’kmaq eight-point star (see discussion in Chapter Five).

This dissertation, then, combines an inquiry into colonial encounter, with its resulting political situation for Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland, with consideration of other forms of encounter, among Mi’kmaq and other First Nations communities, to determine the impacts of such encounter on the practice of modern-day Mi’kmaq culture. If colonial encounter has divided a community and caused the loss of many traditions, how does intertribal encounter and cultural revitalization through the localization of intertribal (“pan-Indian”) powwow culture redress this? Given the multiple and complex ways in

---

<sup>3</sup> The Wabenaki Confederacy was formed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, both as a political alliance against colonizers and an economic alliance for trade. Wabenaki means “the people of the dawn,” a reference to these peoples’ location in the East.

which one may identify as Mi'kmaw (status-based, band membership-based, alliance-based, culture-based, and so on), how do Newfoundland Mi'kmaq create and assert Mi'kmaw and First Nations identity? And how is this complexity and indeterminacy performed and voiced through music?

### 2.1 *Mi'kmaw Music, Historically Speaking*

The Mi'kmaq are historically part of the Wabenaki Confederacy, along with the Passamaquoddy, Maliseet, Abenaki, and Penobscot. While each group was and remains its own distinct nation, there are some similarities among their cultural practices, particularly among the Mi'kmaq, the Maliseet, and the Passamaquoddy. As such, the work of Reade (1887) and Nicholas Smith (1955) on Wabenaki songs and dances respectively may provide insight into Mi'kmaw traditions (for example, in the genre of Snake Dance). Similarly, writings on the music and dance of the Passamaquoddy specifically (such as Currier 1971) may display similarities between song genres such as Welcome Songs. However, the use of such materials requires problematization. Allowing descriptions of Mi'kmaw music to stand for that of other Wabenaki nations, and vice versa may conflate the practices of the different nations as if they were not their own distinct groups. Nevertheless, used with caution, such sources may illuminate shared characteristics in the song traditions of eastern nations, as well as exchange that occurred



between members of the Confederacy.<sup>4</sup>

Discussion of music-making among the Mi'kmaq has largely been based on observations in the maritime provinces of Canada and Maine, areas that were the focus of missionaries soon after colonization and for which exploration and missionary accounts of music and dance are available (see, for example, Lescarbot [1618] 1968; Maillard 1758; Le Clercq [1691] 1910; Dièreville [1708] 1968; Hagar 1895). For many writers, music was not the focus of their inquiry; rather it was somewhat secondary to other genres of expressive culture, such as myths, legends, or folktales (see, for example, Rand 1894 and Parsons 1925).<sup>5</sup> Wallis and Wallis (1955), whose work features a substantial collection of Kluskap<sup>6</sup> stories, collected the texts of a few Mi'kmaw songs and briefly discussed music-making related to the annual celebration of St. Anne's Day<sup>7</sup> in Nova Scotia. Similarly, descriptions of St. Anne's Day by Jackson (1993), Prins (1996), and Wilson (1892) include passing references to singing and dancing. Howard's (1965) account is one of the earliest to use the term "pow-wow" to describe the music and dance event featured as part of the celebrations. He also acknowledges intermarriage between

---

<sup>4</sup> Studies of other Wabenaki include Alger (1897), Brown (1892, 1890), Curtis (1935), Eckstorm (1924), Fewkes (1890), Mechling (1914, 1917, 1958, 1959), Prince (1921, 1898), Speck (1915, [1940] 1970), and Vetromile (1858, 1866).

<sup>5</sup> For compilations of some Mi'kmaw stories and legends, see also Whitehead (1988); Robertson (1969); Nowlan (1983).

<sup>6</sup> Kluskap is a mythical figure and culture hero introduced in Mi'kmaw creation stories and featured in many myths.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout Mi'kma'ki, St. Anne's Day is often referred to as the most important celebration of the year. See Chapter Four for brief discussion of Catholicism and Mi'kmaw belief, as well as the veneration of the grandmother figure St. Anne.

Ojibwe and Mi'kmaq resulting in cultural sharing in Mi'kmaq territories, encounter of a different nature than colonial.

Other inquiries into the musical life of the Mi'kmaq were carried out by Helen Creighton (1972), who surveyed the music of the maritime provinces and included some Mi'kmaq music in her collection, releasing what she termed a "war dance song" on Folkways' *Folk Music from Nova Scotia* (1956) and a lullaby in her book *Maritime Folk Songs* (1962). The hymn-singing tradition in Eastern Woodland native communities has been studied by Beverley Diamond (1992), who noted a noon-day singing tradition that existed in the past, but is little known in the present. Cronk et al. (1988) provided a snapshot of Mi'kmaq traditions in the mid-1980s, a time that saw the emergence of powwow teachings in Maritime Mi'kmaq communities – another instance of encounter and sharing between distinct Nations (Cree, Anishnabe, Ojibwe). Franziska von Rosen's ethnographic video entitled *River of Fire* (1991) limits itself to two stories in the oral history of the Mi'kmaq people; however, her study of Mi'kmaq music, stories, and artwork in a community of artists in New Brunswick demonstrates how contemporary musics are "[tools] for personal empowerment and for challenging boundaries," sometimes through fusion of philosophies that emerge from "living in two worlds" and sometimes through the juxtaposition of the same (1998, 36, 142). Such double consciousness<sup>8</sup> is one result of colonial encounter to which some artistic expressions

---

<sup>8</sup> "Double consciousness" was coined by W. E. B. DuBois ([1903] 1986) to express the two-ness experienced by African Americans who were (are) oppressed by a white (western) world. Revill (1998, 199) has summarized the concept as "an identity formed simultaneously from ethnic roots and Western

respond.

A few scholars have focussed on contemporary music-making styles and practices of Maritime Mi'kmaw musicians such as Lee Cremo (Davis 1997; G. Smith 1994<sup>9</sup>), Rita Joe (G. Smith and Alstrup 1995), Thomas George Poulette (Alstrup 2004), and the Simon family and Michael W. Francis (von Rosen 1998).<sup>10</sup> Franziska von Rosen's (1994) performance study of a story told by Michael Francis in particular illuminates the way in which the notion of music is expressed through Mi'kmaw language. The word *welta'q*, commonly used in reference to music, means "it sounds good," which can equally apply to anything that sounds good, such as storytelling. Studies of particular songs and dances have illuminated the meanings behind the Snake Dance (Sable 1997) and a song of friendship called "I'ko" (Alstrup 2004).<sup>11</sup> Sable has also investigated the ways in which songs and chants, particularly those that imitate "sounds and rhythms" in nature, could be mobilized for use in a Mi'kmaq-specific science curriculum (1996, 284).

Early ethnographies provide limited information on historical music-making practices and musical instruments used in Mi'kmaw culture, and while some

---

modernity. This notion has since been used in relation to First Nations to describe a similar experience (see for example Diamond 2002) and aligns well with the imagery of the double-curve motif in Mi'kmaw culture.

<sup>9</sup> One of Smith's interviews with Lee Cremo is printed in *Sound of the Drum* (1990), published by the Woodland Cultural Centre.

<sup>10</sup> Popular sources have also focussed on fiddler Wilfred Prosper (MacDonald 2000).

<sup>11</sup> It has become common practice to capitalize the genres or categories of dance observed at powwows. I have extended this practice to those genres and categories of Mi'kmaw dance. Songs which have actual titles, such as "I'ko," are given within quotation marks.



transcriptions of song texts were made, few transcriptions of the accompanying music were created. Early transcriptions, such as Lescarbot's melody notated with solfege syllables, are of indeterminable accuracy. As Morrison (1996) has noted, "fixed-do *solfege* was coming into fashion in France around Lescarbot's time, and he may well have had the ability to pick up the songs on one close hearing" (17). However, it is also possible that the tunes included were not entirely genuine, and instead provided because songs of Brazil had recently been published (*ibid.*).

While there has been some consideration of song genres, for example, Wallis and Wallis' (1955) discussion of three songs types – *neska wet* (sung at a large gathering without dance), *tcigamaan* (sung at a special event accompanied by dancers), and *neska winto* (sung when there is only one singer present and sometimes accompanied by dance)<sup>12</sup> – instrumentation has been the focus of several important studies. The instruments used in music-making historically are significant for how Mi'kmaw music would have sounded in terms of timbre, but also in terms of sonic possibilities (such as the range of pitches possible with a flute). In the present, instrumentation becomes a key point of interest as the powwow drum moves into the position of now-traditional instrument and emerges as a symbol of identity. The use of any drums historically by the Mi'kmaq has been called into question and the decision to (re)vitalize an element of

---

<sup>12</sup> It is important to consider that while Wallis and Wallis only provide the Mi'kmaw names for three song types, it is possible (and perhaps probable) that others were known at the time (1911, their first wave of research), but that their consultants may have chosen not to share them with the ethnographers for spiritual or ceremonial reasons.

culture that may never have existed may be seen as problematic to purists. However, as this dissertation demonstrates, with encounter, change, and adaptability at the core of cultural practice for centuries, the drum emerges as tradition<sup>13</sup> in the twenty-first century.

Wallis and Wallis (1955) noted that early Mi'kmaw instruments fashioned out of a stick or a rolled piece of birch bark would be struck against another object or the hand to provide a percussive accompaniment to song (119, 184). Creighton notes that at the time of her collecting in the late 1940s, "a stick was used for keeping time" in both Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (1972, 410). In *Visions of Sound*, Diamond, Cronk, and von Rosen (1994) identify several Mi'kmaq instruments including *ji'kmaq* (a term which refers both to a square piece of wood or birch bark that is struck with a stick, and several layers of split ash which are slapped against the hand), *sesuwejk* (rattle), and *pipukwaqn* (flute). While Wallis and Wallis also identified the rattle and flute (both made of birch bark in their account), they also described a birch bark box struck with the knuckles of the free hand (also called a drum) and a roll of birch bark (which may be used as a "speaking trumpet") (1955, 119). Wallis and Wallis noted that these instruments were well-known to their consultants during their first wave of fieldwork in 1911, but were virtually unknown during their second wave of fieldwork in the early 1950s. In Wallis and Wallis' ethnography, like many others, there is rarely a distinction made between

---

<sup>13</sup> As Phillips (2004) has noted, the term tradition which "[possesses] great historical depth," has largely been supplanted by alternative "specialized vocabularies that appear to be free of the stigma of traditionalism" (4). However, when tradition is broadly conceived and no longer set in "false opposition" to modernity, it "becomes a means of raising essential questions about the ways in which we pass on the life of cultures – questions that necessarily include issues of authority as well as invention, practice as well as interpretation" (Phillips 2004, 25).

elements of Maritime Mi'kmaw culture and that of Newfoundland. While there is no doubt that many elements are the same or similar throughout Mi'kma'ki, this approach denies the possibility that there were distinct elements of Newfoundland Mi'kmaw culture (as well as distinct elements of other areas and locales within Mi'kma'ki). Since there are dialects of the Mi'kmaw language, there is reason to think that there would also be other variations in tradition and culture. One possible example may be the extent to which porcupine quillwork, a craft often considered traditional to the Mi'kmaq as both decorative and symbolic art, would have been practised in Newfoundland. The lack of porcupines on the island would have necessitated importing quills in order to create quillwork in the Newfoundland context. This may explain why few examples exist here. Similarly, while baskets were generally woven of ash splints in the Maritimes, in the Newfoundland context they were commonly made of spruce root (Anger 1988, 24). With such locally-based differences emerging in language and material culture, it is reasonable to at least be open to the notion that local differences in music and instrumentation might have existed.

Particularly interesting in these descriptions of musical instruments is the prominence of birch bark, which is highly valued in Mi'kmaw culture and used in a variety of applications, including canoe building and medicine. Birch bark is light-weight, readily-available, and easily portable, all of which would make it an excellent material for constructing musical instruments that could travel with the people while "on the country." Anger, however, suggests that "Newfoundland Micmaes also



relied less on birch bark than did their mainland counterparts” (1998, 24). When Wallis and Wallis conducted research in Maritime Mi’kmaw communities in 1953, these birch bark instruments were no longer made or used, but there were no drums used either. Further, in archaeological records and historic-ethnographic descriptions, there is no discussion of Mi’kmaq using drums. This is not to say that drums did not exist in the culture. It is possible that drums were present and even seen by ethnographers, but not recorded by them, because they did not deem them significant at the time or relevant to their study. Or, if a scholar approached the ethnographic field through a lens of “cultural loss,” then he or she might only identify that which was lost, rather than what was also retained.

Nevertheless, the place of drums in Mi’kmaw traditional culture is disputed (Diamond et al. 1994, 176). Von Rosen notes, “Very few people seemed to know a Micmac word for drum. Some, including a contemporary Micmac drum-maker, told me that the Micmacs never had any drums and suggested that this was why they had no name for it” (Diamond et al 1994, 76). One of their consultants, George Paul, in a presentation in Conne River in 1987, referred to what he called “birch-bark hand drums” (*ibid.*, 176) which seems to align with Wallis and Wallis’ description of a birch bark box (called a drum) that was used as a percussion instrument. Diamond et al. note that in the 1980s, drums were an important part of Mi’kmaw culture, explaining that large intertribal drums were “used by ‘traditionalists,’ people identifying with an intertribal revival of spiritual teachings and ceremonies” (1994, 186). The drum may be a relatively recent addition to

Mi'kmaw culture; however, it has quickly gained a place of importance and prominence in traditional activities and teachings, and, as this dissertation will demonstrate, its use now constitutes a tradition in its own right.<sup>14</sup> This tradition, however, has not wholly supplanted earlier musical practices. The *ji'kmaq*, for example, is still used to accompany solo song.

## 2.2 *Literature on Newfoundland Mi'kmaw Culture*

While the preceding discussion has centred on historical and ethnographic sources on Mi'kmaw music in general, there also exists a body of literature that focusses specifically on Newfoundland Mi'kmaq (though few have focussed specifically on music-making). Speck's (1922) work on the Beothuk and Mi'kmaq is particularly notable, not only for its description of Mi'kmaw culture in Newfoundland, but also its insight into relationships between the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk, and its comparison of elements of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq-Montagnais culture with Beothuk, Maritime Mi'kmaq, Montagnais-Naskapi (Labrador), and the Wabenaki in general. This approach acknowledges that encounter, intermarriage, and innovation occurred in Newfoundland. Speck also recognizes the similarities between what are commonly thought of as distinct

---

<sup>14</sup> In Augustine's catalogue of *Mi'kmaq & Maliseet Cultural Ancestral Material* held at the Canadian Museum of Civilization, he includes only two hand drums, one dated 1913 and the other 1993 (2005, 64, 102). There is one group drum in the collection, also dated 1993 (103). There are, however, several birch bark boxes that appear as though they could substitute for drums. It could be that birch bark boxes were dual purpose during some time period. Of course, this is merely conjecture on my part.

culture groups, possibly indicating cultural sharing between these groups.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, Speck's documentation of a song sung by a woman named Santu Toney, who was of Beothuk descent and was at one time married to a Mi'kmaq, may musically embody such encounter: it has been recently asserted that her performance may have been a combination of three distinct songs or styles demonstrating her cosmopolitan life experience (Diamond 2008; Hewson and Diamond 2007).

Other writings on Newfoundland Mi'kmaq from the first half of the twentieth century are brief and provide general cultural information on the Mi'kmaq and where they reside (Power 1910; Millais 1908), as well as shamanistic practices (F. Johnson 1943). By the last two decades of the century, interest had turned to the migration of the Mi'kmaq to the island of Newfoundland and related land claims (Martijn 2003; Bartels 1991; Bartels and Janzen 1990; Tanner 1983; Bartels 1979), as well as the relationship between the Mi'kmaq and the Beothuk (Marshall 1996, 1988). In more recent years, lawyer Jerry Wetzel (1995, 1999) has written on the lack of provision for Newfoundland Mi'kmaq when Newfoundland joined confederation in 1949. Discrimination and stigmatization that occurred on the west coast of the province, leading to hidden identities (discussed further by my consultants in Chapter Six), was addressed by Bartels and Bartels (2005; see also Anger 1983). Rieti (2008, 1995) has written of the witching

---

<sup>15</sup> During my research, I heard people reference Speck as one who better understood the interactions between groups. It was also believed by some that his documentation of similar traits (such as the use of red ochre) provided evidence that the Mi'kmaq and Beothuk were related peoples. Other similarities (possible sharing) noted between the various groups were wigwam design, dice games, and wood carving designs (specifically the triangle).



beliefs about the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland and how such ethnic folklore, created by non-Natives and based in fear and stereotypes, tells more about those who use it than it does about its subject (the Mi'kmaq). Rod Jeddore (2000), a Mi'kmaw from Miawpukek, has conducted research in that community on the restoration of language and culture.

Research of the past five years has focussed on various types of healing traditions among Newfoundland Mi'kmaq. Alwyn (2004) conducted research into traditional plant medicines, healing processes, and ceremonies, and their relationships to spirituality (for earlier research on Mi'kmaw medicines, see Lacey 1993, 1977). The sources of sweatlodge traditions and other ceremonies observed at the Miawpukek powwow were the focus of Owen's (2005) research. Muise (2003), who writes about the role of Mi'kmaw women in rebuilding a non-status community on the west coast of the province, makes passing reference to her own role in sharing medicines, songs, and other teachings learned from Haudenosaunee, Cree, and Ojibwe she encountered while living in Ontario. Studies focussing specifically on Mi'kmaw music or musicians in and of Newfoundland include Diamond's (2005) work on contemporary recording practices among indigenous musicians, which used the Conne River-produced CD *Miawpukek* as a case study of the relations of production in First Nations recording projects, and my earlier research (2003; 2004a), which centred on the contemporary musical style of Alaska-based Medicine Dream, led by Corner Brook Mi'kmaw Paul Pike.

### 2.3 *Contemporary Expressive Practices and Localization*

Given the fact that the music-making in both Miawpukek and St. John's in the present largely draws upon powwow-based styles and repertoires, consideration of the way that local traditions fit into the larger powwow tradition is relevant to this study. The literature surrounding the powwow as a Native cultural event is extensive. Many studies, following Howard (1955), have considered powwow through the contentious lens of pan-Indianism (see also Howard 1983). Scales (2002a) has summarized the major points of contention cited by those who oppose the notion of pan-Indianism (such as Powers 1990 and Browner 2002):

First, in overemphasizing intertribal homogeneity Pan-Indianism fails to explain the persistence and in fact the increased development of tribally specific practices. Further, Howard's thesis does not explain the complex relationship between Pan-Indianism and tribalism, as the adoption of Pan-Indian practices have often functioned to *promote* and stimulate performance of other tribally specific music and dances. Second, Pan-Indianism is often dismissed as an inappropriate analytic tool for understanding intertribal social dynamics as it fails to take into account complex community interactions [. . .] Finally, Pan-Indianism's stress on homogeneity denies the reality that Pan-Indian events like powwows actually display a wide variety of differences in both form and content across North America. (Scales 2002a, 4)

However, Scales himself finds that the term may be of some value when understood "as a kind of *ethnic* formation, distinct from either tribal or intertribal groupings, [. . .] as an ideology [that] is part of the discourse of ethnicity" (Scales 2002a, 5).

In their move away from approaches built on notions of homogeneity, scholars have also been concerned with re-thinking constructs such as musical style areas (based

on geography), which present vast areas inhabited by many different First Nations as homogeneous. The over-simplified classification of powwow singing as either northern or southern style has also been challenged (see Goertzen 2005; Hoefnagels 2004; Keillor 2006). Where powwow was once represented as a pan-Indian event in which distinct characteristics of the communities involved were supposedly erased or minimized, scholars are now considering the ways in which powwows are intertribal events that reinforce local practices and display increasing variation (Fowler 2005; Goertzen 2005). Similarly, Clyde Ellis (2003) is concerned with what such practices can tell us about Native identity: "I want to know where [powwow] came from, what connections it has to traditional practices, and what its innovations have to tell us about the contours of contemporary Indian identity and belief" (10).

Hoefnagels' (2001) work on the transmission of powwow music via the powwow circuit provides a contrast to the Newfoundland situation, as there does not exist a circuit within the province.<sup>16</sup> While dancers and drum groups from other parts of Mi'kma'ki regularly attend the Miawpukek powwow, dancers and drummers from Miawpukek rarely travel to the Maritimes to partake in the powwow circuit there. The history and structure of the powwow, musical aspects such as singing and drumming, and individual expression through regalia design are addressed by Tara Browner (2002).<sup>17</sup> Comparison

---

<sup>16</sup> The development of a powwow circuit within the province may be in its infancy, however, given that in 2006 a second community in the province (Flat Bay) implemented an annual powwow, held the week following the Miawpukek powwow.

<sup>17</sup> Powwow music is also addressed by Hatton (1986). See Baird (2002) for a study of the role and



of Mi'kmaw powwows with those she describes will demonstrate the flexibility of the genre (in terms of style and structure), as well as possible localizations of the tradition (see Chapter Four).

More recent issues in powwow research have included gender roles in the current configuration of powwows and the way in which "tradition" may be invoked to explain restrictions on women's participation in powwows (Hoefnagels 2007b). While not the focus of my present research, gender does emerge as a recurring theme throughout this ethnography and must be addressed. Specifically, what does the presence of a female emcee tell us about gender roles in Mi'kmaw communities? How is this anomalous in terms of the expectations (Deloria 2004) for gender roles around powwow? Gender also emerges as significant in terms of my participation in the Friendship Centre Drum Group, a topic elaborated below.

Related to this is the discourse of tradition, as well as issues surrounding the commercialization of powwows (Theisz 2005; Albers and Medicine 2005; Aldred 2005; Desjarlait 1997). As demonstrated by Gelo (1999) and Mattern (1998, 1999), the language of tradition (often employing the expression "our way" or the "red path") is regularly invoked by the emcee at a powwow and used to inscribe the event with local cultural values. Such "stage talk" (Bealle 1993) may provide historical background,

---

responsibilities of singers. The relationship of regalia to cultural meaning has been considered by Peters and Haynes (1994) and the production of power through dance has been the focus of research by Axtmann (2001). Research on powwow and its many features and elements is extensive and this is by no means an exhaustive list. For an overview see Clyde Ellis (2003).

explain practices, or enforce protocols. As will be demonstrated, stage talk provides one way in which powwow is localized and made meaningful to the immediate community, even when the history of powwow in the region is relatively short. My discussion of Mi'kmaw music-making in Newfoundland establishes a counterpoint with this literature throughout the body of this work and highlights the strategies used in the localization of powwow.

#### 2.4 *Identity, Music Scenes, and Performance*

Indigenous identity, not unlike often-employed notions of Newfoundland identity, has been presented in singular and idealized ways. As Overton notes in regard to Newfoundland identity, "Rather than acknowledge and explore the contradictions and variations in people's actual behaviour, we have instead a simple, idealized character" (1996, 53). This notion of contradiction and variation has found expression in Samuels' (2004) recent work on Apache identity. Confronting earlier bounded or singular notions of identity related to tradition and pastness, Samuels, through the metaphor of the 'pun,' considers identity and identity construction in aboriginal communities. He explains, "Culture in its contemporary manifestations on the reservation, takes on the nature of a pun – the structure of a sign that points in multiple directions at once" (2004, 8). As an alternative to code-switching, the pun encompasses and embraces contradiction. He concludes that, "Ambiguity and indeterminacy lie at the heart of any identity production" (2004, 233) and that, "Identity is no longer tied exclusively to practices that are

objectifiable as traditions, important as they are" (2004, 244). This research, then, will seek to explore the various and multiple Mi'kmaw identities and apparent contradictions that find expression in Mi'kmaw music and related elements of culture.

Referencing the San Carlos Reservation specifically, Samuels notes that identity "is not maintained simply through the construction of ethnic boundaries. It is also maintained through the ambiguous flow of popular expressive forms across those boundaries, and how and why these forms might be interpreted" (2004, 127-28). In Newfoundland, however, it may be that, after decades of popular expressive forms flowing into Mi'kmaw communities, these same communities are now reconstructing ethnic boundaries in Newfoundland specifically to assert the distinctiveness of their culture. Clearly, there are political motivations for such efforts, particularly among non-status Mi'kmaq who hope to negotiate a deal with the federal government (see introduction). How has powwow become an expression and marker of ethnic identity for Miawpukek and other Mi'kmaw communities in Newfoundland? And how does a performance by the intertribal Friendship Centre Drum Group contradict such an assertion? If as Cohen (1998) asserts, music is "used to define and distinguish people and places according to class and ethnicity" (273) and to reaffirm collective identity in marginalized groups (274), what can be said about such a music when it is sung by members whose heritages combine several different Native and non-Native ethnic backgrounds?

The concept of ethnicity itself is problematic, for as Sollers' (1986) has noted, its



usage and meaning often vacillates between an inclusive notion that everyone is ethnic and an exclusive notion based on “otherness” (24-6). It is a term that seemingly cannot escape exoticization or essentialism, and is often conflated with race, though race is only one aspect of ethnicity (Sollers 1986, 30, 36). Levin suggests that aboriginal identity in comparison to ethnicity is nuanced by being of a particular locale:

To define a people requires a recognition of distinctiveness that attaches uniquely to a group. Ethnic identity is the most widely used basis for legitimacy not only for minorities, but also for majority groups sharing a common culture. [. . .] Aboriginality is a more refined claim to distinctiveness based on historical experience. It emphasizes status as the original occupants of a place, adding depth to the idea of cultural differences. (Levin 1993, 4)

While the Miawpukek case-study may demonstrate that powwow music is an expression of aboriginal belonging, the membership of the Friendship Centre Drum Group might assert an alternative expression of aboriginal becoming. Thus, understandings of powwow, or even what is termed traditional Mi'kmaw music, as an expression of Mi'kmaw or aboriginal identity would display the same ambiguity and indeterminacy that Samuels (2004) notes as a marker of aboriginal identity itself.

Notions of community, nation, or other configurations of collectivity have potentially homogenizing effects on the understanding of a group in the creation and experience of a particular expressive culture. Indeed, a nation-specific approach when working with Aboriginal groups is potentially problematic if it ignores diversity, especially in urban contexts, but also on reserves. A nation-specific approach may neglect the flow of media, technology, ideologies, and even people across cultural

boundaries in a globalized world (Appadurai 1996). Community, a widely used term,

presumes a population group whose composition is relatively stable – according to a wide range of sociological variables – and whose involvement in music takes the form of an ongoing exploration of one or more musical idioms said to be rooted within a geographically specific historical heritage. (Straw 1991, 373)

The notion of community is bound up with assumptions for continuity, a shared history, and some shared experiences among people who live in proximity to one another and move within many of the same spaces, regardless of ethnic or racial diversity. These assumptions associated with the term, then, suggest that such geographically-bounded concepts of group require revision. In an attempt to move beyond such notions, scholars have turned to approaches that emphasize connections between individuals and groups in an effort to elucidate their “multiple interactive worlds” (Noyes 2003, 18). Relation-based approaches like network theory, pathways, and scenes, then, shift the focus from that of collectivity to connectivity. Such approaches may allow one to investigate a practice such as powwow separate from its ethnic group associations.<sup>18</sup>

Noyes (2003) has studied the intersections of the concepts of community and networks, noting that while studies of culture are often bounded by locales for the purposes of grant applications, much can be accomplished with a network or other approach in which relations are studied across boundaries. When one is studying powwow as cultural expression, such an approach becomes necessary, since at the centre

---

<sup>18</sup> It must be duly noted that even the ethnic origins of powwow are contested and varied (see Clyde Ellis 2003).

of these intertribal events are experiences of travel and encounter between different families, communities, First Nations, and non-Native participants. Indeed, the diffusion of powwow to Mi'kma'ki resulted from relationships initiated and maintained across First Nations boundaries.

As Noyes (2003) notes, network theory is particularly useful in the study of the transmission of folklore among groups (here, transmission of powwow and other repertoire, singing style, and related practices). More specifically, Fine (1979) suggests that network approaches are successful for studies of "innovation, rumor, hysterical contagion, and gossip" (88). If we think of musical revitalization initiatives as innovation, we are led to consider how the cultural expression of powwow (its structure, practices, music, dance styles, and so on) were transmitted to Mi'kma'ki and Miawpukek specifically. What encounters and relationships within and beyond Mi'kma'ki led to such innovation in Mi'kmaw culture?

Finnegan ([1989] 2007) in her study of urban music employs the notion of pathways to acknowledge that engagement with a particular type of music or musical group does not always stem from or result in an "all-embracing" notion of community (304). This notion focusses on the individual nature of musical practices, while also implying a larger structure that fosters continuity in established musical practices. Musical pathways have "symbolic depth" (*ibid.*, 306) making them highly valued pursuits among the many engagements of everyday life. Pathways often are well-established, though they may be reconfigured, and engagement with them is flexible and



ever-changing through time. Entry into pathways, while based on a variety of factors, is often determined by heredity; that is, family members often engage the same (or similar) musical pathways (*ibid.*, 308).

The notion of encounter, however, is particularly well aligned with the concept of music scenes: Straw (1991) defines a musical scene as “a cultural space in which a range of musical practices coexist, interacting with each other within a variety of processes of differentiation, and according to widely varying trajectories of change and cross-fertilization” (373). Where a musical community may work towards the “stabilization of local historical continuities,” a musical scene serves to “disrupt such continuities, to cosmopolitanize and relativize them” (*ibid.*). More recently Peterson and Bennett have defined local music scenes as

a focused [sic] social activity that takes place in a delimited space and over a specific span of time in which clusters of producers, musicians, and fans realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene. [. . .] such music scenes characteristically involve other diverse lifestyle elements as well. These usually include a distinctive style of dancing, a particular range of psychoactive drugs, style of dress, politics, and the like. (2004, 8)

When local scenes focussed on a specific genre of music are “in regular contact with similar local scenes in distant places,” the scene may be referred to as translocal (*ibid.*). In translocal scenes, as well as virtual scenes, membership is not necessarily dependent on face-to-face interaction or encounter (*ibid.*, 9), but members are conscious of innovation and development in other places (Straw 1991, 274).

The notion of scene, because of its reliance on genre as a common factor between those engaged with the scene, is sometimes initially seen to imply homogeneity. That is, the music emerging from a scene is seen to display some uniformity (though, on deeper analysis, the intricacies of a particular genre of music may nuance such readings). While the music itself may be heard as homogenous, the members of a scene (making music and listening to music) may represent a much more diverse and heterogeneous population. For example, one might expect hip hop to represent a particular race and socio-economic group; however, practitioners and fans of hip hop display a much greater diversity.<sup>19</sup>

Music scenes are often conceived of in terms of popular music in urban contexts; however, it may be worth testing the application of this concept in rural contexts with a musical genre that is not normally associated with it. Scenes are open to change and the concept itself acknowledges the coexistence of multiple musical genres simultaneously in one place. Thus, it may be useful to consider whether powwow could be interpreted as a scene. As a local scene in Miawpukek, clusters from the larger population engage the powwow genre as a means of distinguishing themselves as Mi'kmaw or aboriginal. However, attendees and participants come from many different communities (and countries, even) and exhibit a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Thus, people from diverse backgrounds gather around the genre of powwow. This music and its characteristic drum, both borrowed from other First Nations and combined with Mi'kmaq-specific elements, is both a music scene and representative of a particular

---

<sup>19</sup> See, for one example, Best's (2007) discussion of hip hop in Newfoundland.

ethnic group at once. Dance style, regalia design, and cultural values round out this distinctive musical scene. The existence of this scene, however, does not negate the existence of others, such as Catholic hymn-singing or popular music. Indeed, multiple genres may intersect during social activities at a powwow, including those built around traditional songs, Irish-Newfoundland music, and popular music (see Chapter Four).

The same scene may be understood as translocal, since similar scenes exist throughout Mi'kma'ki, Native America, and even Europe. These distant scenes may be activated through mediated forms, such as recordings. However, the concept of festival is worthy of consideration here. Festivals, as used in the discussion of translocal scenes,

draw dispersed individuals together on designated occasions [. . .], are large multiday events that periodically bring together scene devotees from far and wide in one place, where they can enjoy their kind of music and briefly live the lifestyle associated with it with little concern for the expectations of others. (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 9-10)

The powwow circuit might be thought of as a series of such festivals throughout the powwow season (generally summer and early fall). Participants who are dancers, singers, emcees, artists, vendors, and fans (and perhaps many of these simultaneously) travel long distances to engage the powwow scene. Indeed, particularly in locales throughout Mi'kma'ki, travel is necessary for devoted members of a powwow scene as most communities hold only one powwow each year. For more continuous and sustained engagement in the powwow scene, travel to other locales is a requirement.

Such an approach in terms of the Friendship Centre Drum Group again creates an openness to the possibility that members who are musicians in this scene are also



members (perhaps fans, perhaps musicians) in other local scenes. The fluidity of membership in scenes, is applicable to both case-studies, but specifically the drum group which has displayed an ever-changing membership. Similar to musical pathways (Finnegan [1989] 2007), members may participate to greater or lesser degrees over their lifetime.

How has life in Newfoundland, with its political history, shaped the musical expression of the Mi'kmaq people? How have alliances established and renewed through the powwow music scene shaped the local musical and cultural experiences of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq? And how is this experience different based on whether one primarily resides in Miawpukek or in an urban centre like St. John's? My research tracks the relationships between individuals and the implications such relationships have for transmission, and whether and how continued contact enabled through powwow is facilitated and mobilized for further cultural revitalization in the province of Newfoundland. I identify significant Elders and innovators – the tradition bearers – who are central to the continuance of particular musical pathways or scenes. However, I also attempt to identify the roots of the particular traditions that are being disseminated to Newfoundland Mi'kmaq, a method often contrasted with “scene”-oriented research, and consider the ways new expressive forms or genres may function within, alongside, or across the traditional cultural frameworks.

Also significant is how mediated communication fits into this study. How do members of a drum group or music scene “interact” and conduct relationships with others

via recording technology? Users of such mediated sound establish a relationship with it, learn from it, and expand their personal networks through it. People may be exposed to information they could not be otherwise, and this interaction, whether mediated or not, impacts the sense of self, the understanding of identity as a Mi'kmaw and a First Nations person, and any notion of bounded or fixed identity. Thus, identities may be defined both in terms of face-to-face interactions and alignments, and with mediated forms of the same.

Recent work by DeNora (2000), Berger (2004), and many others, has focussed on individual experience as an important entry point into the study of identity and expressive culture, as it focusses on the agency of individuals. Identity and the way in which one experiences the self, then, is a complex combination of internal and external forces, of that which an individual can control (perhaps fully or only partially) and that which is beyond control, as well as the individual's agency through response (Berger 2004, 77-78). A focus on the individuals in this study – members of drum groups, teachers, instructors, traditionalists – illuminates the power of individual agency within larger structures, whether conceived as networks, pathways, scenes, communities, or nations.

Performance theory will also illuminate both the way in which identity is spoken about and the way in which it is enacted or performed (see Bauman 1978; Hymes 1974, 1962; Goffman 1959). How are identity and notions of tradition verbally and musically asserted? Is there a disjuncture between what is said and what is done, and, if so, what does this mean? Performance theory is one way of getting at “‘real behavior’ of the

specific musical event, not only its ideal behavior” (McLeod qtd in Seeger [1987] 2004). For this study, that means consideration not of what powwow should be, but what it is in two different Newfoundland locales. Performance theory, then, allows for an analysis of the interplay between text and context. A performance-based approach is particularly useful for a musical study because it affords the opportunity to address the music itself, how it creates or communicates meaning, and how music as a text relates to and interacts with other texts (such as the spoken words of the emcee or the responses of dancers and onlookers).

Seeger argues that musical performance is important in creating and re-creating society and social relations:

music performance is as much a part of the creation of social life as any other part of life, and [ . . . ] the creation and re-creation of relationships through the ceremonial singing creates a social context which influences other such contexts. (Seeger [1987] 2004, 83)

Here, Seeger is asserting the notion that text and context are inseparable and that performance itself may be constitutive of context. Thus, musical performance may actually have the power to enact and establish a sense of community and ethnicity. Performance may be temporarily or permanently transformative (Schechner 1985) and, therefore, may be a means for creating and re-creating Mi’kmaw identity, ethnic or indigenous identity, and the relationships between Mi’kmaw communities or music scenes. If repetition of performance acts is required to constitute gender (J. Butler 2004, 10), how does repetition of performance constitute identity in a space where it may be



denied due to political status?

Further, as in Hymes' (1974, 1962) and Goffman's (1959) sense of performance as a display of competence, a performance approach will tell much about the process of becoming competent in a particular music tradition and the challenges faced by those residing outside a space of sustained contact with a tradition (that is, in an urban context rather than on a reserve with a community of resources to draw upon). In relation to the Friendship Centre Drum Group, I will consider how the desire to display competence among one's peers influences the choices made about repertoire or style.

The language of performance, however, can be problematic. Performance can imply a superficial notion of display and carry with it negative connotations. On a few occasions, I have been corrected by some consultants for using the terms perform and performance. For example, Tony Drew impressed upon me that drumming and singing is "not really a performance" (personal communication, July 2, 2005; see Chapter Four). Instead, he emphasized that such acts were processes of educating those who listen.<sup>20</sup> In contrast, members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group employed these terms, as well as 'gig,' 'practice,' and 'rehearsal,' on a regular basis and have not expressed any concern with their usage or implications.

---

<sup>20</sup> In Diamond's (2002, 23) consideration of the women in contemporary Native music, her consultants relate notions of achievement to learning, the acquisition of knowledge, and a "vision of 'sharing and caring,'" rather than conventional notions of achievement (such as awards).

## 2.5 *The Inescapable Question of Authenticity*

When discussing displays of identity, one cannot escape the question of “authenticity.” As Bigenho (2002) notes, for some indigenous performers authenticity does matter, contentious though it may be (5). When the Friendship Centre Drum Group was asked to record a Snake Dance and a Two-Step for an educational DVD on Newfoundland folk dances, they were only too happy to participate. However, on the day of recording, only three drummers were able to attend instead of what has become the normal four, each sitting in one of the four directions. The group saw no problem with a three-man drum group, nor with its intertribal make-up; however, when the recording was viewed by a few individuals in Miawpukek, they requested that either footage from Miawpukek powwows be substituted or new recordings be made, because the performance was not deemed “authentic.” Authenticity matters.<sup>21</sup> But there are multiple forms of authenticity, a myriad of “truths,” that are personal and context-related, and authenticity itself is more a process of “authentication” than a fixed target or result (A. Moore 2002). While Allan Moore posits a first-, third-, and second-person authenticity model, suggesting “that artists speak the truth of their own situation; that they speak the truth of the situation of (absent) others; and that they speak the truth of their own culture,

---

<sup>21</sup> Another, more personal experience, will serve as a second example. I initially learned the Mi'kmaw Honour Song from Paul Pike, before learning a slightly different version with the Friendship Centre Drum Group. However, while attending the Aboriginal Oral Traditions conference, I was unable to sing along to some parts of the Honour Song when it was sung by Stephen Augustine (from Elsipogtog, NB). I recall commenting on this in passing while in Miawpukek and I was warned that I should be careful, because a lot of people “sing it wrong.” Here, clearly there was an expectation for the “authentic” performance of this Honour Song, rather than an openness to variation in language and dialect.

thereby representing (present) others” (2002, 209), Bigenho (2002, 16) suggests a tripartite model centred on experiential, cultural-historical, and unique authenticity. In this model, experiential authenticity refers to truth or the “real” that is embodied by a musician or performer and “felt as a ‘groove’” (Bigenho 2002, 16). Cultural-historical authenticity “purports a continuity with an imagined point of origin, situated in a historical or mythical past” (*ibid.*, 18). Unique authenticity is often informed by the other two types of authenticity and refers to individual artistic expression that may be split from its source tradition and disseminated via technology (*ibid.*, 20).

At a conference on oral traditions<sup>22</sup> a few years ago, I presented a paper on the contemporary music of Mi’kmaw Paul Pike, employing Allan Moore’s (2002) concept of authentication to demonstrate how pop-rock music made and performed in Anchorage, Alaska (and further disseminated via recording technology) can be an authentic expression of Mi’kmaw identity. Central to this discussion were notions of the singer-songwriter expressing the truth of his own lived experience and the audience feeling that their own experience is validated through this performer’s music (see Tulk 2003). The larger question that I was getting at, if it was left unspoken, was, what is Mi’kmaw music? Worded another way, what are the parameters that define Mi’kmaw music?

In the question period that followed my presentation, a Mi’kmaw woman who responded positively to my paper posed an important question: “Is it still Mi’kmaw

---

<sup>22</sup> “Aboriginal Oral Traditions: Theory, Practice, and Ethics,” hosted by the Gorsebrook Research Institute at St. Mary’s University, Halifax, NS, April 21-23, 2005.



music if *you* sing it?" At the time, I responded quite certainly based on Moore's model that if I, a non-native researcher, sang any of Paul's music, it most likely was not Mi'kmaw music, as I could not claim any authenticity in terms of lived experience, nor was it likely to resonate with a Mi'kmaw audience. She seemed satisfied with my response, but on reflection, I cannot help thinking that the issue is much more complicated than that.

After four years as a member of the drum group at the local Native Friendship Centre, I have reason to rethink my answer. Drawing boundaries in this way is not particularly useful for understandings of Mi'kmaw music, nor the larger issue of authenticity, and perhaps is even misleading. I am certainly not Mi'kmaw and have never claimed any connection to the culture outside of interest borne of friendship with Paul and Christine Pike, but if I sing a traditional Mi'kmaw song like "Ikwanuté" or a Mi'kmaw Gathering Song with a group that includes Mi'kmaq, other First Nations, and non-native members, or sing the same song alone in my home as practice, is it not Mi'kmaw music? What makes any particular music Mi'kmaw? Is it the language of the text, a particular singing style, the underlying structure of the music, the person who sings it, or a localized performance style? In some ways, the question, What is Mi'kmaw music?, underlies this entire text. Can the musical genre be separated from the ethnic identity that produces it? And what can this red-haired Newfoundlander say about both?

Ultimately, authenticity may come down to expectation (see Deloria 2004). Expectations are developed and reinforced, both by insiders and outsiders to a particular

culture – expectations for a type of practice, of sound, of dress as related to a particular genre of music and the ethnic group performing it. What expectations might exist for powwow as a practice of First Nations ethnicity, both by members of that ethnic group and those who are not? Expectations will determine a person's perception of how authentic a particular performance is or is not. The two case studies at the centre of this dissertation both reinforce and challenge expectations for First Nations musical production, particularly in the genre of powwow through processes of localization. Indeed, it will be shown that the two case studies presented challenge notions of "authenticity."

## 2.6 *Representation and Methodology*

Criticizing research conducted by outsiders to the culture, Mi'kmaw author Eleanor Johnson noted that occupying a position outside of a network limits one's understanding of how that network operates: "The social bonds which unite the tribal network remain elusive, even though clearly observable" (1991, 25). Indeed, this is a common criticism of research on First Nations topics by a non-Native researchers:

Some Indian scholars may have the advantage of direct access. Having grown up in an American Indian culture can provide considerable insight and understanding that may take a non-tribal fieldworker years to acquire. Furthermore, the knowledge that an Indian scholar might have about his or her own culture often leads to the investigation of issues that non-Indian or non-tribal scholars might not consider. (Champagne 1998, 182-83)

At the same time, however, Champagne notes that

there is room for both Indian and non-Indian scholars within American Indian studies [. . .] To say that only Indians can study Indians goes too far toward excluding American Indian culture and history from the rest of human history and culture. [. . .] One does not have to be a member of a culture to understand what culture means or to interpret a culture in a meaningful way. (1998, 181-82)

Fixico (1998) provides ethical guidelines to be followed when conducting research into First Nations history, including but not limited to: demonstrating respect for First Nations by visiting the people in their own territories, incorporating a First Nations viewpoint in analysis and interpretation, using appropriate terminology, avoiding a Euro- or Anglo-centric view, and including both written and non-written data in the research process (91). Throughout the research and writing for this dissertation, I have used these principles to guide my work.

As Mihesuah (1998) notes, First Nations are increasingly establishing their own research guidelines or review processes as a means of protecting traditional indigenous knowledge (10-11). The Mi'kmaw College Institute at Cape Breton University has established a review process called Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch to guide research on Mi'kmaw topics and occurring within Mi'kma'ki. I took the additional step of contacting the councils of individual communities within Mi'kma'ki, who then reviewed my proposed research and applied their own sets of requirements and guidelines within which I, as a researcher, could work. These primarily centred on insuring that communities received copies of the results of my work. However, I imposed several restrictions on my own research. First and foremost, I limited the scope of my research to



public events, such as powwows and a Mass in Miquelon, and events to which I was invited (a healing ceremony, a celebration of St. Anne's Day, and S'et A'newey School's mini-powwow). I did not document ceremonial aspects of culture, even if I was present for them (such as a pipe ceremony led by Paul Pike). Having followed the protocols of powwows, I have not documented Grand Entry, Honour Songs, or instances where drums were fanned. Further, in the discussion of powwows in Chapter Four, while my description may indicate that ceremonies such as fanning of the drum or sweatlodges occur, I do not describe spiritual or ceremonial events. As these are not to be recorded via video or photograph in the moment it occurs, it seems inappropriate for me to document them here with words.

One of the primary concerns of indigenous peoples surrounding research in their communities has been the fact that the results of research have not always been shared with these communities and that articles and books rarely receive indigenous editorial review before publication, a fact noted by Mihesuah (1998) in the book *Natives and Academics*. Mihesuah also points out that far too often scholars are content with consulting documents in libraries and archives when they should be consulting members of communities. Throughout the research for and writing of this dissertation, I have provided communities with copies of research materials (such as photographs and video recordings). Members of communities have also had the opportunity to preview and make editorial suggestions on the content, interpretation, and presentation of research results. In this way, I have endeavoured to present accurate and vernacular perspectives

on Mi'kmaw music-making while still engaging in analysis and entering into dialogue with current scholarship.

Here it is appropriate to provide greater detail on how I worked with the communities involved. It is not meant to be self-congratulatory, nor a recommendation for how best to do fieldwork. Rather, following Patricia Tang (2007), I include consideration of how I worked as one way in which my identity as a researcher is “demystified upfront” (13). This study is first and foremost an ethnography, a synthesis of processes of “living, studying, reflecting, and storying” (Goodall 2000,11). Drawing on participant observation and interviews conducted between 2004 and 2008, I describe cultural and musical events in two music scenes to illuminate issues of revitalization and identity. I approach the notion of “living” another culture, however, with great caution. I did not live for extended periods of time in the community of Miawpukek; rather, I visited the community annually for their powwow celebrations and on other special occasions that involved music-making, such as St. Anne's Day and the school's mini powwow. Therefore, I cannot speak about the experience of living in this isolated area, nor of everyday life in that community. I did not experience the quotidian – that is, I did not experience the day-to-day life as a colonized person who is attempting to revitalize her culture – nor could I experience this. Instead, I was present for “moments” (Lefebvre [1961] 2002) of intense cultural expression that signalled new ways of being in a colonized space where many identifiable elements of what many residents describe as traditional culture had been all but erased.

In terms of the urban case study, I lived the experience of a drum group member for four years, meeting weekly for practices. However, I have only lived my own experience as a member of that group, as a white female. I cannot speak to the experience of being a male indigenous member of the group who has rediscovered a once-hidden First Nations identity. For this reason, I privilege the words and ideas of other members. For, as Monson (1996) has stated, “the only ethical point of departure for work in [. . .] ethnomusicology remains the documentation and interpretation of vernacular perspectives” (6). I also employ an autoethnographic approach to both consider my own experiences and how my presence impacted the experiences of other members. My analysis of events is only one of many possible interpretations. Thus, this text features detailed description of events and experiences so that those reading might interpret the materials themselves in alternative or complementary ways. Finally, as Goodall (2000) has noted, “ethnographies are really *two stories* that shape and inform each other – one personal and one professional” (16). Indeed, following four years of research in which bonds of friendship have grown alongside professional relationships, it is quite impossible to separate the personal and the professional, and it would be misleading to do so.

Aspects of this research to which I can speak, are those of gender, the research process, and my participation in an otherwise all-male powwow drum group. How has gender combined with non-Native heritage delimited my participation in and access to powwow as a musical tradition? As discussion in Chapters Six and Seven indicates, my



presence and participation was in a constant state of negotiation. As I reflect on moments of inclusion and exclusion throughout four years, I recall the writing of Kay Shelemay. Before she arrived in Ethiopia to conduct fieldwork, she was provided advice: "I must be careful to maintain my distance from the women of the community. Otherwise I would jeopardize my status and severely limit my access to the males with whom I must work" (1991, 42). She writes of her experience as being a "marginal male" (*ibid.*).<sup>23</sup>

Unconsciously, I believe I created a similar distance while working with the drum group – I stayed by the drum and sang during practices in an effort to learn the repertoire and singing style, instead of going to the other side of the room with the women who danced. I even vocalized as a male at first (see Chapter Seven). Consequently, I vacillated between being "one of the guys" and clearly being set apart at particular moments because I was both female and non-Native. Even when "one of the guys," however, I did not play the drum, even on occasions when I sat at the drum with the men.

Thus, throughout this study I consider my own experience in relation to the rich gendered symbolism of the powwow drum itself and the song and dance traditions with which it is associated through an autoethnographic approach (see Behar 1996; Bochner and Ellis 2002; Carolyn Ellis 2004). Having moved from researcher to full-fledged member of the St. John's drum group, it will be appropriate to reflect upon how my participation as the only female member in this group shaped my experiences of and with this drum group. I will assess my many roles in the group (as "administrator," "song

---

<sup>23</sup> See also Babiracki (1997, 123) on the "ungendered researcher."

keeper,” “ethnographer,” and “singer”), how these roles may be unofficially and informally assigned (or expected) based on gender (Finnegan [1989] 2007), and how my own experiences and culture conflict with or are in harmony with theirs. As Sugarman (1989) has noted, performance may be determined by and reflect gender roles in a particular cultural tradition, but it may also have the power to “[suggest] ways in which they may be refined or revised” (206). Performance can be many things at once, “[embodying] simultaneously the full range of opposing attributes” associated with gender (Sugarman 1989, 206).

Always (perhaps overly) aware of my position as an outsider to these events, I was sensitive to the reactions of those around me. I observed gender-based restrictions, except when I was given permission to subvert them (for example, I stood behind the drummers at practices until the lead drummer offered me a chair to sit in the circle during a recording session). Sometimes I took the emcee’s call to those with cameras to put them down and join the dance circle personally (though I doubt his words were specifically directed at me as one of hundreds with cameras). An earnest ethnographer during my first season of fieldwork, I snapped off many rolls of film and videotaped a wide variety of dances over the course of a weekend. This changed over time: when one dancer jokingly asked me if I had enough pictures of his beautiful face yet, I decided that perhaps less really is more. Consequently, over time I moved from observation and documentation as modes of learning to more experientially-based modes.

Throughout all of my fieldwork, I supported the powwow committee through

donations and the purchase of tickets on various prizes (none of the events I attended charged admission). I also made donations to blanket dances and collections to provide prizes for the children's dances. I saw this as one way of giving back to the communities in which I worked, but also as an opportunity to more fully engage in local practices.

While this research was conducted between 2004 and 2008, I did not propose any interviews<sup>24</sup> during my first summer of research, instead opting to have informal conversations with the people I met. I never wanted to be known as another researcher who came, took what she needed, and never returned. I chose to slowly develop relationships over the long term and remain committed to this. When a few of those I approached for interviews did not wish to participate, I did not pursue the issue further. I recognize both the struggles of the past two decades in gaining recognition in Miawpukek, but also (in some cases) the insecurity that comes with cultural innovation. For many people, powwow as practice is almost as new to them as it is to me. I am certain that some people did not wish to talk about it because they felt there were more knowledgeable people I could consult. For those who were interested in talking about their experiences, I was cognizant of how much time they had for me, allowed them to guide the interviews by using open-ended questions, and employed feedback techniques where appropriate. It has been my experience that people tell you what you need to know or they want you to know, whether you ask the "right" questions or not; hence, I always

---

<sup>24</sup> I employed bilingual consent forms, translated by Bernie Francis from English into the Smith-Francis orthography.



kept eyes and ears open for indications of what my consultants thought was significant. I offered tobacco as appropriate and though I did not remunerate consultants for interviews, I did attempt to provide them with meaningful gifts of thanks for their participation.<sup>25</sup>

In terms of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, I endeavoured to learn the singing style and repertoire in the traditional way presented by the lead drummer. He was adamant that we learn by doing, so I listened carefully to his voice to guide me, watching the movements of his mouth, jaw, and throat to fill in pieces of the puzzle.<sup>26</sup> While I was responsible for creating practice CDs from recordings of our group (at his request), I did not use them myself to learn repertoire. Instead, they became useful tools for analysis.

In addition to making recordings of the group and sharing them with the members, over the past seven years I have collected commercially available recordings, as well as broadcasts and documentaries (both radio and television) related to Mi'kmaw culture. I also expanded my personal library, purchasing as many resources as I could find. I shared all of these with members of the drum group who expressed interest in them. Two means of procuring these resources were central: travelling to events, cultural centres, and other stores off-island to purchase rare and local recordings and books, and surfing the net (particularly eBay) on a regular basis to discover little known items.

---

<sup>25</sup> For example, after a 2-hour interview with Brenda Jeddore, music teacher in S'et A'newey, I sent her a CD of the King's Singers, a group whose music we both enjoy. Following an interview with Jerry Evans, I gave him a gift certificate to Michaels (craft store) so that he could purchase materials for use in his dance regalia.

<sup>26</sup> Discussion of vocal production and style is found in Chapter Seven.

Some of my field recordings were transcribed and translated from Mi'kmaq into English for use in this dissertation where appropriate. I employed several translators over the course of this research and each transcribed the materials into the orthography currently in use in their community of residence.<sup>27</sup> Translation of the Mi'kmaw language to English and vice versa has a specific set of challenges. As Battiste (1997, 149) has noted, the Mi'kmaw language is a verb-based language that focusses on actions and relationships, and does not employ gendered pronouns (like he and she). Thus, making comprehensible translations that express the meaning appropriately is not always an easy task.

The current ethnographic study, then, is primarily based on participant-observation and extensive fieldnotes as a member of the St. John's drum group and as an attendee at the various cultural events throughout the province for the past four years, as well as powwows in Elsipogtog, NB and Eskasoni, NS as a point of comparison. I have consulted historical/archival materials at both MUNFLA (Memorial University of Newfoundland Folklore and Language Archive) and the Beaton Institute at Cape Breton University to flesh out the contexts in which Mi'kmaw and Aboriginal song and drum traditions have historically functioned in Newfoundland and Mi'kma'ki.<sup>28</sup> I have made

---

<sup>27</sup> In one case, a translator in Nova Scotia was unable to finish an audio track that she began and it was completed by a translator in Quebec. I have not attempted to shift one part of the translation into a different orthography. Instead, I indicate the translators for each part. In addition to the Smith-Francis orthography, there is the Restigouche orthography and the Pacifique orthography (still used in New Brunswick).

<sup>28</sup> I have also consulted recordings of Mi'kmaw vocal music in the Allaire collection held at the Centre for Acadian Studies (University of Moncton).

audio recordings, video recordings, and documented events via still photography.

Analysis of this audio-visual material is key to answering the questions set forth in this dissertation. Analysis of powwow excerpts (including spoken text and musical performance) identify the ways in which tradition is spoken about, as well as the way in which it is performed, in a particular music scene. Analysis of recordings from both case studies allows me to consider the sonic results of encounter between Mi'kmaq and other First Nations, as well as the way in which these music scenes assert or contradict notions of powwow as an expression of ethnicity.

## 2.7 *Analysis and Interpretation*

In searching for an interpretive lens with which to make sense of the data collected through this research, I turn to the imagery of the double-curve motif, a geometric design in which two mirrored segments connect, intersect, or overlap in the middle, the point at which they meet. As has been noted, the interpretation of this image has focussed on two ways of knowing, two simultaneous realities. This metaphor is particularly evocative in the present study: the two case studies at the heart of this dissertation which are distinguished along the lines of status embody two ways of knowing, two ways of being Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland. The intersection of the two parts of this design, however, also promotes an understanding that while these two ways of knowing exist separately, they are connected. Indeed, the double-curve motif itself could be seen as a continuum, its ends being polarities and the centre being a space of



connection or shared elements. This image will be a guiding metaphor in the analysis of issues emerging from these two case studies, including the ways that status and non-status, and rural and urban constructs, impact notions of ethnic homogeneity, community and scene, expectations for identity, and music production.

For each case study, then, I will consider both musical and social elements. There will be consideration of aspects of musical structure such as form and contour; instrumentation; singing style, including tessitura and range; and repertoire. There will also be discussion of extra-musical elements present in performance, such as dress. Analysis of musical and extra-musical elements allows one to engage with localization literature, but also establishes powwow as a genre around which a music scene may be formed. I will also compare modes of learning identified in each case study and investigate the creation and use of recordings in each context. Language as a marker of identity and the varied means of dealing with incomprehensibility will be addressed, both in terms of the Mi'kmaw language and other languages (such as Cree). Discursive practices surrounding musical performances of identity, including speech acts at a powwow, presentations by the school choir, and vernacular language around the drum, will be analysed. I will reflect on what each case study tells us about gender as it is constructed and performed in Mi'kma'ki. Finally, I will question what each case study can tell us about strategies for the localization of powwow, as well as larger questions of Mi'kmaw identity, ethnicity, the notion of powwow as an ethnic expression, and powwow as a music scene.

The description and analysis that follows is specific to each case study, though parallels are observed in some cases, and connections and comparisons may be drawn between them. The difference in treatment of each case study emerges from the nature of cultural production that individuals in each case study engage, as well as my access to particular aspects of culture. For example, I did not have access to presentations or weekly practices held by the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, since they retired their drum soon after I began my research. Consequently, quotations from members of the Sipu'ji'j Drummers recount the history of the group more than their experiences or perceptions. Some information, such as the reason the group dissolved in 2005, is not appropriate for discussion herein. In St. John's, while the Friendship Centre Drum Group may perform at many events, the group does not participate in cultural displays in the same way that students from Se't A'newey School do, nor do members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group engage in stage talk during performances. The group is often called upon to open events with an Honour Song, but the actual song performed is never named, nor is anything said to inscribe the particular performance with specific meaning. Thus, the different means of presenting and interpreting data in each case study reflects the different ways indigenous culture "works" in these two locales, a concern that is in fact at the heart of this inquiry. However, it also reflects the degree to which I was able to access both sites of inquiry and the relationships I was able to forge.

The introduction has addressed the ways in which this research ties into the broader issues surrounding the development of urban and landless bands, as well as the

differences between being legally registered (having status) and having membership on a band list – the two are not synonymous. Further, it has indicated the distinct political situation of Newfoundland Aboriginals given the fact that Newfoundland did not join Canada until 1949 and at that time the *Indian Act* was not included in the Terms of Union (J. Wetzel 1999, 1995). The ways in which the present-day configurations of status and non-status, band-member and non-member impact access to resources become significant for music-making, other cultural expressions, and the transmission of indigenous knowledge. As was demonstrated, this political situation complicates notions of identity, of what it is to have Mi'kmaw identity in legal or organizational terms and what it is to have Mi'kmaw identity in cultural terms.

The first section of this dissertation focusses on a study of status Mi'kmaq in the province, located in Miawpukek. Chapter Three provides contextual historical and socio-cultural information, traces the early beginnings of the powwow tradition in Miawpukek, and outlines the early interaction between Miawpukek and Elsipogtog, New Brunswick. This chapter also addresses the way in which powwow has become part of the curriculum in the band-run school. This historical background sets the stage for description of the establishment of a community drum group and the annual powwow in Miawpukek in Chapter Four. Comparison with the powwow in Elsipogtog, NB (as well as Eskasoni, NS) illuminates regional and local elements in the powwow structure, as well as the way in which speech acts such as the invocation that opens the powwow are demonstrative of specific local histories of encounter. Chapter Five further demonstrates strategies of



localization in relation to music, dance, and regalia within the context of Mi'kmaw powwows. In particular, the language employed by an emcee which inscribes the event and practices with meaning and locates them as being "the Mi'kmaw way" is discussed.

The second section of this dissertation focusses on non-status Mi'kmaq in the province, located in an urban centre. The history of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, their involvement in the community, and the challenges they face will be considered in Chapter Six. Individual members of the drum group, their personal experiences with the drum group, and their reasons for seeking involvement with this music scene are presented. This chapter demonstrates how the experience around the drum fits into more complex identities of those involved. It challenges notions of Aboriginal identity and membership in an Aboriginal "community." Chapter Seven centres on the music-making of the urban drum group and how their structure and sound changed over the four-year period of this research. A diversity of cultural backgrounds, sound production, and repertoires demonstrates the complexity of Mi'kmaw and First Nations identities in St. John's and Newfoundland, as well as the way in which powwow may be mobilized to express a local identity. Further, their experiences and understandings of a Newfoundland Mi'kmaw "community" as non-status individuals tells much about the perceived division of the Mi'kmaw Nation in Newfoundland while defying expectations of homogeneity.

In conclusion, comparative analysis of the two case studies at the centre of this dissertation will demonstrate how local traditions fit into the larger powwow tradition, as well as how the powwow tradition becomes localized in specific contexts. I identify three

strategies for the localization of powwow. How this localization plays out in the two case studies differs in important ways. Thus, this study of localization will elaborate on urban–rural issues, the status–non-status divide and notions of community and scene. In conclusion, I consider the ways in which performance may alternately assert and contradict the notion of powwow as an expression of ethnic identity.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **(Re-) Introducing Mi'kmaw Music: Learning, Sharing, and Expressing Culture on the Rez**

The community of Miawpukek is nestled at the mouth of Conne River on the South Coast of Newfoundland. This area of the province is a relatively isolated one, given its location some 140 kilometres off the Trans Canada Highway (Route 1). Visitors to the Coast of Bays region upon turning off Route 1 are greeted by an enormous sign warning them to check their fuel levels before proceeding, for there are no gas stations or convenience stores for the next 130 kilometres. What does exist, however, is an abundance of natural beauty, flora, fauna, and rock formations, to be admired on the drive. In particular, this region of the island is alluring to anglers because it is home to some of the best salmon rivers in the province; however, it is also one of the best areas of the province to see the caribou herd.

The Coast of Bays region (economic zone 13) is not densely populated with approximately 7,950 people, or 1.6% of the total Newfoundland population.<sup>1</sup> The community of Miawpukek is one of the few areas of Newfoundland to report a growing population, with 867 in 2006 (Miawpukek First Nation 2006).<sup>2</sup> Traditional lifeways of subsistence gathering, trapping, and hunting have largely given way to industries of aquaculture and silviculture, with increasing interest in adventure- and eco-tourism

---

<sup>1</sup> Newfoundland's total population in 2006 was 509,700. See *Statistics Canada and Economic Research*.

<sup>2</sup> Membership in the Miawpukek band, however, numbers at 787 on-reserve and 1779 off-reserve (Miawpukek First Nation 2006).



(Miawpukek Mi'kmaq 1997, 9). The school is also an important employer in the community, hiring both teachers and an extensive support staff. Miawpukek boasts an employment rate of 100%, with some members of the community working permanent full- or part-time positions and some members of the community working in temporary or seasonal positions (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, June 16, 2004; see also Miawpukek First Nation 2006).

Like many rural communities in Newfoundland, there is one main road through Miawpukek, on which the majority of businesses and service buildings are located. Amenities in Miawpukek include a school servicing pre-kindergarten through grade twelve, as well as adult education; a health care centre; a community-based policing and justice system; a craft shop that makes and sells souvenirs to tourists as well as regalia to community members; two grocery stores; a garage; and several gas stations and convenience stores. Most shopping and major purchases, however, still require a trip to larger centres such as Grand Falls-Windsor or are accomplished via mail order services, such as those provided by Sears Canada. The school, located next to the Catholic church, serves as a community centre and is open in the evenings, and recreational facilities such as a baseball diamond and soccer pitch are available in season. At the entrance to the community, there are dedicated powwow grounds which are used to host the local powwow annually on the first weekend of July. Around the powwow grounds is a series of walking trails through thick forest, along which old birch bark wigwams may be seen.

Miawpukek gained recognition as a Native community in 1973. At that time, the

need for a study of land use and occupancy by Mi'kmaq in the province of Newfoundland became necessary to support their application for registration under the *Indian Act* and to establish a reserve in Miawpukek. Ethnographer Doug Jackson began research in the community in 1976 and lived there until 1981. The results of his research, now published as *'On the Country': The Micmac of Newfoundland* (1993) were significant both for the political and cultural goals of the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland and as a contribution to Mi'kmaq scholarship, which has largely focussed on Mi'kmaq in the Maritimes and ignored possible regional variation between disparate Mi'kmaq communities throughout the Atlantic provinces and northeastern United States. As his study deals primarily with the Newfoundland context, it is considered a central text for Miawpukek Mi'kmaq, and it appears that it is the preferred history in the school system, with a class set available in the Mi'kmaq Resource Centre.

After an arduous fight and multiple submissions (and re-submissions) to the Federal government for native rights, residents of Miawpukek gained status and were registered under the *Indian Act* in 1984. Progressive in its fight for self-government, Miawpukek took control of its school system and curriculum in 1986 and the following year the community was designated a reserve. Much of the recent economic and cultural vitalization experienced in Miawpukek can be attributed to the vision and efforts of Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe. First selected for the office of chief in the early 1980s, he was re-elected to this position in 1994 and has served in this capacity ever since. Joe is a traditional chief, a *Keptin* (Captain) of the *Sante' Mawio'mi* (Grand Council), and the

spiritual leader of Mi'kmaq in Miawpukek. He has been a strong advocate on cultural issues and has been active in the revival of music in the community.<sup>3</sup>

There has been a Catholic school in this community since 1908 (Jackson 1993, 161).<sup>4</sup> The growing population meant that school-age children soon out-grew the facilities, necessitating the implementation of a boarding school system for some students for a short period of time. In 1979, the current facility was opened. It has become an important centre for increasing cultural awareness in the community and a space for teaching elements of Mi'kmaw culture to community members. As stated in the introduction, Mi'kmaw culture (and especially language) had nearly disappeared or gone underground by the 1980s. Only three known speakers of the language remained at the time that the band took control of the school (E. Wetzel 2006). Thus, administrators made immediate efforts to revive language and culture. Mi'kmaq as a second language was introduced in 1986, for as Verna Kirkness has noted, "language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation" and helps to assert identity ([1981] 1998, 66). That same year, the Cultural Days program was initiated to reintroduce Mi'kmaw traditions and customs to the community.

---

<sup>3</sup> In early performances by the Se't A'newey choir, Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe accompanied the choir on hand drum. As is described below, he supported the early efforts to create a music curriculum and was active in the first Culture Days program. He continues this involvement, teaching grade five boys how to make a powwow drum each year. Joe has also played an important role in recording projects of the choir and the Sipu'ji'j Drummers (discussed in Chapter Four).

<sup>4</sup> Mi'kmaq have practiced Catholicism since the baptism of Chief Membertou in 1610 (see discussion in Chapter Four). The denominational school system in Newfoundland was not abolished until 1997, following the results of a referendum on the issue. The school in Miawpukek remains Catholic.



Through this program, special guests from other communities and nations were invited to Miawpukek to share their culture and teachings. One of the first to share his traditional knowledge in this venue was Mohawk Tom Porter from Akwesasne, Ontario. This program was also supplemented in the early years with trips to other communities in Nova Scotia. For example, for two weeks during summer 1986, students from Miawpukek travelled to Eskasoni to learn Mi'kmaw hymns from Wilfred Prosper (FvR, 'Fieldnotes for October 1987,' p.7; Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006).<sup>5</sup> These efforts made a significant and lasting impact on Mi'kmaw music and culture in Miawpukek.

This chapter will trace the history of powwow in Mi'kma'ki and Miawpukek specifically, and identify the contributions of the Birch Creek Singers at an early Cultural Days event in 1987. Discussion of the 2006 mini-powwow in Se't A'newey School will demonstrate how the Cultural Days program has become locally based and focussed, increasingly relying on local tradition bearers to teach aspects of culture. Further, the way in which powwow is localized and curriculum is modified by the music teacher in Miawpukek will be addressed. Analysis of a presentation by the school's elementary

---

<sup>5</sup> Franziska von Rosen's fieldnotes, recordings, and transcriptions will be referenced according to the system developed for the SPINC project, of which these materials were a part. (The Sound Producing Instruments in Native Communities project files and recordings are currently housed at the Research Centre for Music, Media and Place at Memorial University of Newfoundland.) Thus, her material will be indicated with the abbreviation FvR. Where tape numbers exist, they will be included according to the SPINC numbering system: the digits before the forward slash indicate year, the digits after indicate the tape number (for example, 85/1 refers to 1985, tape 1). In the event that I am referencing a transcription of one of these tapes, a page number will follow the tape number. Should no tape number exist, for example with her fieldnotes, I will provide a shortened form of the title given.

choir will identify elements of Mi'kmaw traditional music and singing style that contrast with that of powwow or intertribal repertoire. In closing I will summarize what the material in this chapter reveals about the strategies for localization of powwow in Miawpukek, through musical and extra-musical aspects of performance, modes of learning and the use of the Mi'kmaw language, discursive practices, and gender.

### 3.1 *Granddaddies of Mi'kmaw Powwow: How Powwow Came to Mi'kma'ki*

One oral history of powwow in Mi'kma'ki asserts that powwow as we recognize it today has existed in Mi'kma'ki for twenty-two years. According to this history, the first powwow was held in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick in 1986. In the Spring of that year, a group of Mi'kmaq travelled to gatherings in Western Canada and the United States and brought these teachings back to their respective communities. These practitioners of powwow, with an interest in returning to or incorporating "traditional ways," were termed "traditionalists" as a means of distinguishing them from those Christians (or more specifically Catholics) who maintained their faith in the church and continued to practice that religion exclusively (Laverna Augustine, personal communication, October 1, 2006). While all of the practices they adopted were not necessarily Mi'kmaw traditions, the label "traditionalist" indicated a choice to practice First Nations traditions rather than those introduced (and enforced) by colonizers.<sup>6</sup> Though earlier accounts of gatherings

---

<sup>6</sup> It must be duly noted that these two belief systems and related practices need not be mutually exclusive; rather, both may exist simultaneously. As will be demonstrated below, elements of both become fused in the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow. Robinson (2004) in her study of religious practices in

and music-making suggest events similar in some ways to powwows, Elsipogtog community history asserts that powwow arrived in the 1980s thanks to the Birch Creek Singers, the “Granddaddies” of Mi’kmaw powwow (Laverna Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006). It was this group that was particularly influential in disseminating powwow to the Miawpukek community; in 1987, they travelled to Newfoundland and conducted a series of cultural workshops culminating in a powwow in the school gymnasium.

Earlier gatherings in Mi’kma’ki shared some elements, such as music and dance, with the now common powwow tradition. Howard’s account of the 1962 St. Anne’s Day celebrations on Chapel Island (Cape Breton Island) notes the prominence of two men who helped introduce Native music, dress, and dance: Edward Kabatty<sup>7</sup> and Don Wells (Howard 1965, 7). Even as early as 1962, Howard noted the influence of neighbours to the west:

Edward Kabatty, Don Wells, and Kabatty’s children donned their Indian costumes and proceeded to stage a small Indian dance in the grassy area before the church. Since Kabatty is Ojibwa, and since Wells’ Indian lore also stems largely from the further west, this particular pow-wow was not particularly Micmac in flavor, though the Kabatty children are, of course, half Micmac. (Howard 1965, 9)

This early influence was not only observed in terms of music, but also in terms of dress.

Howard describes:

---

Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, identifies three fluid categories: Catholics, traditionalists, and Catholic-traditionalists.

<sup>7</sup> Kabatty’s name has also been spelled Kabatay (see Diamond et al. 1994).



The costumes worn by Kabatty, Wells, and the Kabatty children were largely modern Ojibwa in origin, with a strong Plains or Pan-Indian influence apparent in the warbonnets, bustles, and geometric-design beadwork. The only piece which might be considered old Micmac in style was a large turtle carapace, worn as a breastplate by one of Kabatty's sons. (Howard 1965, 10)

Howard notes that even specials, such as the Hoop Dance, were performed at this time (*ibid.*). When discussing Kabatty in an interview with Franziska von Rosen in 1987, Simon Marshall noted that Kabatty's music and dance were "a lot different than the Mi'kmaq way" (FvR, "Interview with Simon Marshall," July 31, 1987, p.12).

While it may be tempting to label this (or even earlier accounts) as the "first powwow" in Mi'kma'ki, and indeed Howard himself refers to the gathering as a powwow, it is interesting to note that a central element of powwow is missing in his description – a powwow drum and drum group. Kabatty is described as the sole singer, accompanied by a hand drum. Cronk et al. have noted that the term powwow has been used in myriad ways, sometimes depending on geographical location: "in Quebec and the Maritimes, powwows may combine music and dance, games, feasts, and fireworks" (1988, 72-4). Later uses of this term in the Maritimes have referred to events at which a powwow drum is played, regardless of whether the event employed the structure of the powwow (Cronk et al. 1988, 78).

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some traditionalists from Mi'kmaw communities travelled widely to receive teachings from other spiritual leaders and Elders, and to participate in gatherings and ceremonies, often throughout Alberta, North Dakota,

and South Dakota (Cronk et al. 1988, 78). Teachings, such as rituals, were learned from Cree, Mohawk, and Anishnaabe nations (Owen 2005, 6). Others more interested in reviving Wabenaki-specific traditions travelled throughout Maine and the eastern region. Still others have searched much closer to home to revive Mi'kmaw songs and dances still held in living memory by community Elders (Cronk et al. 1988, 78). For example, in the 1960s, the late Sarah Denny formed a Mi'kmaw dance troupe called the Eskasoni Mi'kmaq Dancers in an effort to preserve traditional Mi'kmaw chants and dances. Sable and Sable (2007a) note that, "The Grand Council gave her special permission to record the chants that traditionally only men have performed." She worked to maintain songs such as "l'ko," "Ikwanuté," the Pine Cone Dance (a women's dance), and the genre referred to as Ko'jua. Her work centred on Mi'kmaq-specific traditions rather than powwow and she used a rattle or hand drum for accompaniment. Throughout the 1980s her dance troupe travelled and performed specials<sup>8</sup> at powwows and other gatherings. Such efforts for revival were necessary because, "Unlike the Iroquois and Ojibwe nations from Ontario, the Wabenaki nation (including the Micmacs, Maliseets, Penobscots, and Passamaquoddy) has lost many of its traditional cultural teachings, particularly with regard to ceremonies, rituals, songs, and dances" (Cronk et al. 1988, 77).

Sharing between many First Nations continues in the present. While describing a small gathering of women in a private home on the west coast of Newfoundland, Muise

---

<sup>8</sup> The category of specials at a powwow may include Nation-specific dances, display dances (such as the Hoop Dance), storytelling, craft demonstrations, or other activities that do not fall into the dance categories commonly observed at powwows, such as Fancy Dance, Grass Dance, or Men's Traditional.

notes, "They want me to share again what I have learned about feasting, the drum, songs and fasting from the Ojibwe, Cree, Haudenosaune and the Mi'Kmaq living in Ontario" (2003, 35). Other nations, then, continue to be sources and resources for First Nations traditions in an area where culture was underground for several decades.

An early recording by Mi'kmaw traditionalists, titled *Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door*, was dedicated to and honours the Elders who brought their teachings to the Mi'kmaw people: Albert Lightning (Buffalo Child), Sam Augustine (Bald Eagle), Paul Prisk, and Tom Paul (Spotted Eagle). On that recording, James Augustine states:

My closing remarks for this production would not be complete if I did not mention the fact that in the more recent past, a lot of hard work and dedication has gone towards reviving and waking our people to these very special ways. They were our pioneers, paving the road to spiritual enlightenment. People like Albert Lightning from Hobema, Alberta, Paul Prisk from the Pabineau Reserve in New Brunswick, Tom Paul from the Eskasoni Reserve in Nova Scotia, and of course my father, Sam "Bald Eagle" Augustine from Big Cove, New Brunswick. I raise my hand to honour these brave and courageous men who have passed on to the spirit world, in a special salute, knowing that their spirits are with us, in everything we do. (*Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door* [n.d])

As this concluding statement makes clear, efforts to revive and reintroduce indigenous traditions and culture in Mi'kma'ki were made by many key players who were interacting at this time. However, Tom Paul<sup>9</sup> has been singled out as the driving force behind such

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Michael Paul from Eskasoni, Nova Scotia served in the American forces in Vietnam and was a "veteran of Indian protests at Wounded Knee, S.D., and Restigouche, Que." (Nova Scotia Museum 2007, MP1113). A supporter of the Mohawks at Oka in 1990, he died in 1992 at the age of 49 while awaiting trial (*ibid.*)



revitalization efforts.<sup>10</sup> Free Spirit's recording *MicMac (Mi'Kmaq) Songs* was dedicated to Tom Paul; the inscription reads: "Dedicated to the memory of Tom (Spotted Eagle) Paul who returned the drum traditions to our Nations and to all our Mi'Kmaq elders for keeping the traditions alive in their hearts" (1990).

In 1985, the Birch Creek Singers underwent a metamorphosis when Tom Paul of Eskasoni, Nova Scotia, who had a great interest in intertribal songs<sup>11</sup> and powwow repertoire, took over the responsibility for teaching and leading songs. Thus, the repertoire of Birch Creek Singers expanded from traditional Wabenaki songs originally learned under George Paul (Red Bank, New Brunswick) to encompass the high-pitched powwow songs from the west (Cronk et al. 1988, 78; FvR, "Connecticut River Powwow," August 1986, p. 2-3). While the group began attending and drumming at powwows outside of Mi'kma'ki, in the Maritimes they had largely drummed "at gatherings, summer games, school events and private homes" (*ibid.*, p. 2). At the first powwows they attended, Birch Creek Singers tended to sing only for intertribal dances, as they had not yet learned songs for competition dances, such as Fancy Shawl or Jingle Dress (FvR, "Wikwemekong Powwow," August 1986, p. 4).

While there are accounts of Mi'kmaw gatherings throughout the twentieth century, my consultants indicated that the first powwow was organized and held in

---

<sup>10</sup> There is even a group devoted to Tom Paul on the popular social networking website Facebook. "In memory of Spotted Eagle (Tom Paul)" had 249 members as of 20 January 2008.

<sup>11</sup> Intertribal songs are those at a powwow which can be danced by everyone present, whether they are wearing regalia or not. They are songs that are shared between Nations.

Elsipogtog (Big Cove), New Brunswick in 1986. Located 10km from Rexton, New Brunswick, Elsipogtog is honoured in the present day for its historical significance as home of the oldest powwow in Mi'kma'ki.<sup>12</sup> On Labour Day Weekend 2006, the community celebrated its twentieth powwow by organizing a contest or competition powwow, unlike the non-competitive "traditional" powwows of previous years. This host community has a population of approximately 2500, with other Mi'kmaw communities situated in close proximity (*Elsipogtog Community* [n.d]).

A historically significant honouring during this weekend was a Friendship Song on Sunday for Tom Paul, in the form of a Round Dance. The emcee, Mike Doucette, spoke about Tom Paul and his contributions to the Mi'kmaw community:

Kitpu Singers, we have an Honour Song<sup>13</sup> to honour a pioneer that's responsible for bringing back our songs and the drums to our community.

---

<sup>12</sup> George Paul, in his biography asserts that he was responsible for "hosting and organizing the first Pow Wow in [his] community [Red Bank] in 1981" ([www.artsnb.ca/aboriginal/pdf/georgepaul.pdf](http://www.artsnb.ca/aboriginal/pdf/georgepaul.pdf) accessed February 21, 2007). However, as has been noted, the label of "powwow" does not necessarily indicate an event that would now be known as powwow. I have not found further reference to a 1981 powwow; however, a powwow on May 3, 1991 is noted in the Mi'kmaq Book of Days: "1991 - At a Powwow held at Indian Brook, George Paul urges those present to remember Mi'kmaw traditions and keep the old ways alive. The weekend features chanting and drumming" (<http://mrc.uccb.ns.ca/calendar.html>, accessed February 21, 2007). The only other entry for a powwow in this diary of significant days is July 10, 1988: "10 - 1988 - Powwow '88 closes in Halifax. Held at Seaview Park, July 6-10, the event attracts over 5,000 visitors" (*ibid.*). Given the fact that these events made it into the Mi'kmaq Book of Days marking historic events, it would seem that they would be some of the earliest powwow events to occur. Again, just what powwow means in each reference is unknown. Owen suggests that Joe Paul of Red Bank was "the first to bring the drum" (2005, 6); however, this ambiguous phrasing does not indicate the type of drum, the date, or whether he was the first to bring the drum to the area or into the sweatlodge, which is the primary topic of her investigation. Franziska von Rosen's notes indicate that a Joey Paul was a member of the Birch Creek Singers; thus, he may have been the "first to bring the drum" as part of this collectivity (FvR, "Fieldnotes for October 1987," 6).

<sup>13</sup> The term Honour Song refers to the function of a particular song (to honour), rather than a specific song style. Consequently, while there are songs that are specifically created as Honour Songs, a Friendship Song could also be an Honour Song if used in that way.

The gentleman was a guy by the name of Paul from Eskasoni. His name was Tom Paul. And I'm calling on all you drummers, you older guys, us older guys – when we first started singing, it was Tom Paul who sat us down and taught us the songs, taught us the protocols and about the drum, the big drum. [. . .] And an honour song has been requested in memory of Tom, 'cause Tom Paul brought the teachings of the drum, the big drum back to our territory. (September 3, 2006)

Other speeches throughout the weekend, such as that by Eugene Augustine Senior, expressed pride in the return of traditional music and dance to Mi'kmaw communities. Augustine was active in the repatriation of Mi'kmaw music in the 1980s and travelled with the Birch Creek Singers to Miawpukek in 1987 to share teachings with Newfoundland Mi'kmaq.

Tom Paul, Eugene Augustine, Henry Augustine, Garland Augustine, Joey Paul, George Paul, and Bill Hearney travelled to Miawpukek in mid-October of 1987, having been invited to take part in the Cultural Days program held at Se't A'newey School. On Tuesday evening, 13 October 1987, a dinner was held at the school. Before supper, the Birch Creek Singers sang an intertribal and Ko'jua,<sup>14</sup> and following supper, the group returned to the drum and invited Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe to join them (FvR, "Fieldnotes for October 1987," 6). In her fieldnotes, Franziska von Rosen reflects: "Billy Hearney gave the chief an eagle feather. He felt this was an important moment, when the chief of the most easterly reserve of the land sat and drummed. He expressed hope that this would

---

<sup>14</sup> There are several Mi'kmaw songs that have been called "Ko'jua" based on the first word of the song. One, referred to as "Ko'jua" by Eastern Eagle Singers is often used as a Grand Entry song, while the other, which they call "Ko'jua kena" is a quick traditional dance requiring agility while dancing the fast footwork. The song sung here by Birch Creek Singers is the "Ko'jua" used as a Grand Entry song. The Ko'jua genre is discussed further in Chapter Five.



encourage other chiefs to follow suit" ("Fieldnotes for October 1987," 6). Those in attendance, however, seemed "generally unfamiliar with the repertoire" and did not participate in music-making or dancing (*ibid.*, 7). Indeed, her video footage from this event shows a somewhat subdued audience. This indicates not only that powwow was not a tradition in this community at that time, but also that members of the community had largely not been exposed to powwow.<sup>15</sup>

The following day, Wednesday, 14 October 1987, during a general assembly, Sam Augustine addressed the community and spoke about concepts related to First Nations' worldview. Those visiting to share traditional knowledge were then organized into separate groups that would instruct concurrently on the topics of teachings, language, dancing, and drumming and singing over a two-day period (*ibid.*, 7). Thursday evening would include a presentation to the adult education class, to help inform students who would be writing a paper on the topic of Native culture. On Friday, Cultural Days would conclude with a feast and powwow (*ibid.*, 7-10).

During workshops on music and dance, a distinction between eastern and western genres was made, eastern referring to Iroquoian repertoires and western referring to powwow repertoires (*ibid.*, 9). Henry Augustine in his presentation noted that many of the

---

<sup>15</sup> This is not to say that older people in the community did not know Mi'kmaw song repertoires. Marjorie Stoker recorded Chief Peter Jeddore in Miawpukek singing what appears to be a Ko'jua song in 1967 (MUNFLA Tape, 89-067/C11946).

eastern songs are named for animals, such as the well-known Rabbit Dance<sup>16</sup> and the Snake Dance<sup>17</sup> (other imitative dances, including Duck Dance<sup>18</sup> and Alligator Dance<sup>19</sup> were also introduced). He explained that these eastern dances, (including the Stomp

---

<sup>16</sup> Also known as a two-step, the Rabbit Dance is a couple's dance. In the local or regional variant that I have observed during my research, pairs of men and women face each other and hold hands. All of the couples line up behind the head dancers and "follow the leader," imitating the movements of the head couple, which may include turns or more complicated patterns such as a bridge. In this move, two dancers create a bridge or an archway with their arms and the couple behind them dances under it. Then each couple creates a similar arch for all to dance under in turn. It is danced to a song with a dotted drum beat (long-short pattern). This is the same basic pattern identified by Burton (1993, 77-79) as "Indian Two-Step." Shea and Citron describe it as "an Indian modification of the white settler's square dance" (1982, 77). When I have seen this dance at Mi'kmaw powwows, it has been lady's choice; that is, women are free to select the male partner of their choice. If the man refuses, he must pay the woman a pre-determined amount of money. Mi'kmaw group Sons of Membertou refer to this dance as an Owl Dance (*Wapna'kik* 1995). An earlier description of a Rabbit Dance that imitates the behaviours of rabbits is found in Densmore (1947: 75).

<sup>17</sup> The Snake Dance, popular with children, features a single line of dancers behind a head dancer or in some cases two lines of dancers (often divided based on gender) that move around the grounds like snakes, sometimes crossing through each others' lines. Densmore's description notes that dancers "[coil] and [uncoil], or [move] in sinuous curves" (1947, 76). The Mi'kmaq song for this dance begins at a moderate tempo, slowly increasing in speed, until it is extremely fast at the end with those at the "tail" of the snake struggling to hold on to the person in front. This is similar to the Snake Dance described by Howard and Levine (1990, 59-60). The Snake Dance appears to be one of the older dances practiced by Mi'kmaq and Sable and Sable (2007b) note that, "Some Mi'kmaq believe they gave the Snake dance as a gift to the Mohawk Nation at a Grand Council meeting in 1749." For a more detailed discussion of the serpent dance, see Sable (1997). See also a description of a single-line Snake Dance in Shea and Citron (1989, 76-7).

<sup>18</sup> The Duck Dance is an imitation dance that features a pair of males followed by a pair of females, and so on alternating through the line of dance. In it, the pairs would imitate the actions of ducks (see Densmore 1947). Howard and Levine (1990) explain, "At a change in the song, each pair of women passes under a bridge formed by the joined arms of the pair of men just ahead of them and move on to the next pair of men" (53). The description of this dance in von Rosen's field recording appears to be in line with the description by Howard and Levine in that an archway is created here by the males that is then danced under backwards by the females (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p.7).

<sup>19</sup> Densmore (1947) notes the existence of an imitative dance called Alligator Dance, but does not indicate how it would be danced. While the Birch Creek Singers stated that the Alligator Dance is a Mi'kmaw dance, they did not provide any further information on it (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 5). I did not encounter it while conducting fieldwork.



Dance<sup>20</sup>) were “Six Nations or Iroquois or Mohawk” (FvR, 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 4-5).<sup>21</sup> Grass Dance<sup>22</sup> and Fancy<sup>23</sup> were illustrative of western styles, while Henry pointed out that Round Dances are found in both eastern and western repertoires (*ibid*). Students were encouraged to participate in a Stomp Dance, Round Dance,<sup>24</sup> Mosquito Dance,<sup>25</sup> and Duck Dance.

While being exposed to eastern and western songs and dances, students learned about extra-musical aspects of these traditions. For example, the gender roles often

---

<sup>20</sup> In this presentation, the origins of the Stomp Dance were not noted, nor was the dance style recorded. The Choctaw, as well as the Creeks and Seminoles, have a dance referred to as a Stomp Dance; however, as Howard and Levine note, while there may be musical similarities between the Stomp Dance performed by the Choctaw and that performed by the Creeks and Seminoles, the choreography is entirely different (1990, 40). At present-day Mi'kmaw gatherings, there is no dance performed that is referred to as a Stomp Dance.

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of some of the different imitative dances, see Densmore (1947). See also Sable and Sable (2007b) for imitative dances specific to the Mi'kmaq.

<sup>22</sup> Grass Dance is a men's dance said to have been used prior to gatherings to beat down the grass in the area that the gathering would take place. Dancers of this style wear regalia that features fringe or yarn. At some powwows in the present, Grass Dancers ceremonially bless the grounds before the powwow begins (Laverna Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> In this presentation, there was no distinction made between men's and women's fancy styles of dancing. Women's fancy style is normally called Fancy Shawl. It is a style often danced by young women and is recognized by its cloth (often satin) dresses accompanied by a shawl with ribbon fringe. It is an athletic style of women's dance that is sometimes described as being imitative of a butterfly. Men's Fancy is a free-form athletic dance normally danced by young men. The regalia is often bright and features multiple bustles, and may include fringe that “[creates] an effect of constant motion” (Browner 2002, 59).

<sup>24</sup> The Round Dance is a social dance that is intertribal in nature; that is, anyone can participate in it. Sometimes called a Friendship Dance, participants form a circle around the arbour, holding hands. They sidestep in a clockwise fashion around the arbour to a song with an uneven beat (short-long). Sometimes indication will be given to change directions and sometimes multiple concentric circles are formed (which may move in opposite directions). In Miawpukek, this dance always ends with the dancers rushing the arbour three times, each time yelling “Ta’O!”

<sup>25</sup> Based on the description spoken by Henry Augustine, it appears that the Mosquito Dance is a couple dance that alternates between clockwise and counter-clockwise motion. (FvR, 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 6)



observed around the powwow drum, particularly that women may sing and dance, but do not drum on the big drum,<sup>26</sup> were introduced: “The men and boys they sing around the drum, and the girls and women they stand outside of the drum and the uh, women could use rattles and sing or dance” (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 3). Nuances of playing the drum, such as playing honour beats<sup>27</sup> and recognizing musical cues that indicate the end of a song, were also taught by Garland Augustine. Further, related spiritual elements and practices observed while making a drum were addressed by Tom Paul, the lead singer:

Getting back to our customs that were given to us. The drum, one of the most important parts of our customs, our culture. But when we sing with the drum, we are praying. We are praying to the Creator, we are praying with the spirits that are around us, constantly. There are spirits with us all the time. Ones who have gone to the spirit world ahead of us are here with us today, they are here with us everyday. The little people, are here, the spirits, the eagle is here. There is always somebody that is looking over us. Always somebody watching us and how we are conducting ourselves on Mother Earth.

The four legged brother has sacrificed his or her life so that we may use the hide to cover the shell. So in return we, we have to give something of ourselves as well. And that is fast, fasting, keeping fasting for whatever, how long it takes. Four days or whatever it takes. In order that we may construct such an instrument which gives such a beautiful sound. It comes from the heart. We are part of the drum, as soon as we touch the drum, the stick, the beater, at that time we are linked to the

---

<sup>26</sup> While the powwow drum is often referenced as having some spiritual power, for example, to call and honour the ancestors at a gathering, the powwow drum primarily serves a social function. It is not normally considered sacred in the same way that the grandfather drum of the Midewiwin Lodge of the Anishnabe is. However, in Nations that do not have similar sacred drum traditions, the powwow drum may take on a sacred or spiritual significance to greater or lesser degrees.

<sup>27</sup> Honour beats are accented drum beats that may occur on the second-half of a push-up or verse of a powwow song. They are strongly accented beats, often occurring in groups of four (though may also occur in groups of 6, 8, or 9, depending on the song) that are usually played by the lead drummer. As a sign of honour and respect, when these are played, dancers raise their eagle feathers, eagle fans, or right hand above their heads. Jason Morrisseau explained that he has been taught that these four beats represent the beaver flapping his tail to the four directions (personal communication, January 23, 2008).

drum. So whenever we are singing the singing comes from the heart. When the drum was given to us we were told how to take care of it. Instructions were given to us. We were told how to use it. Most of all we were told to give it a lot of respect, as we would our grandparents. (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 2)

Interest in the drum generally and who can make a drum more specifically was evident among the students in the adult education class. In responding to such questions, Henry Augustine emphasized a value for learning through oral means and experience, rather than the written word. Henry, who made his first drum in the early 1980s, instructed on the prohibition on drugs and alcohol while around the drum and the need to be committed to the drum and what it stands for. He also pointed to gender roles and the fact that women who are menstruating or “on their time” may be powerful enough to harm the drum (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 8). Garland Augustine then spoke about care for the drum, comparing the drum to a heartbeat (FvR 87/21 & 87/21B, p. 9).

Notable is the fact that these early practitioners and instructors acknowledged that the powwow drum was not part of Mi'kmaw traditional culture. Comments from various presenters point out the newness of this tradition. For example, Tom Paul stated that Elders used different percussion instruments such as stick beaters and rattles when they sang (*ibid.*, 3). George Paul spoke more extensively on the big drum, saying:

And there are big drums like this one here that are mostly used out West. Over here in the Eastern part, North-eastern part of Canada along the coast, among the Mi'kmaq people, we didn't have such a drum as that. We had birch bark hand drum. And on blocks of wood that we used to use and rattles. [. . .] But everything has changed in time. And our culture is

related to only hand drum. (*ibid.*, 13)<sup>28</sup>

He also described traditional instruments such as the *ji'kmaq*.<sup>29</sup> Interestingly, while George Paul suggests the culture is only related to hand drums, Simon Marshall has estimated that hand drums were only introduced to Mi'kmaw culture in the 1940s at the earliest (FvR, "Interview with Simon Marshall," July 31, 1987, p.7).

On Friday, 16 October 1987, the week of cultural education culminated in a feast and powwow in the school gymnasium. Franziska von Rosen's video recording reveals a well-attended event, with young, school-age children, adults, and even grandparents in attendance. Her fieldnotes from the event state that the feast consisted of soup and sandwiches for everyone in attendance and around 1:30pm, the powwow began. There were two flag carriers for Grand Entry, carrying the Grand Council flag and the Mi'kmaw flag. An opening prayer that combined the Mi'kmaw language and a reading from a Bahai prayer book was given by Sam Augustine. Then *Ko'jua* was sung. Dances at this powwow included intertribals, Iroquoian social dances, and Round Dances, among others. Some children and community members danced, some boys drummed, and others simply observed the celebration. The audience responded to the events in a positive manner, largely demonstrated through enthusiastic clapping (even after the prayer). The

---

<sup>28</sup> See also Diamond et al. 1994, 176.

<sup>29</sup> The *ji'kmaq* is sometimes referred to as a rattle. It is a percussion instrument made of split ash that is struck on the hand.



powwow then concluded with a Thanksgiving Song, followed by the AIM Song<sup>30</sup> (FvR "Fieldnotes for October 1987," p.11-12).

The schedule of powwow events provided for participants outlined protocols to be followed while participating in the powwow. This schedule identified the basic segments of the proceedings and gave brief indications of some protocols to be followed (see Figure 3.1 below). Differences are observed between the structure (order of events) of the 1987 powwow and the powwows held between 2004 and 2007. The feast which started the 1987 event would now commonly be held late in the afternoon, after Grand Entry and several hours of dancing had already occurred. Similarly, in current powwow celebrations in Miawpukek, the prayer occurs later in the ceremony, after the first three songs have been sung – Grand Entry, the Flag Song, and the Veterans Song.<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> Franziska von Rosen's fieldnotes indicate that the song now known as the AIM Song was originally given to Elders in Oklahoma, but that it was later taken over by the American Indian Movement (FvR, "Social at Pleasant Point," p.25). Indeed, one story of its origins is that it was given to Eddie Benton Benai (see discussion at <http://www.powwows.com/gathering/northern-singing/13626-i-m-song-2.html>, accessed March 15, 2008). This movement emerged in Minnesota in 1968 and continues to protest United States public policy and lobby for change. An urban-based movement, AIM originally gained prominence as a "copwatch program" to combat the harassment of American Indians in the United States by police (Vizenor 1990, 159). The Movement soon became known for its protests on other fronts, particularly "issues of legal and economic injustices" that American Indians faced (Vizenor 1990, 161). The organization was supported in Canada by some First Nation people, who participated in protests and in their own country were confronting the assimilationist 1969 White Paper. Through this policy, the federal government hoped to end Indian status and thereby end its responsibility for status Indians (Lawrence 2004, 59). Some Mi'kmaq were active in the American Indian Movement, the most famous of which is Anna Mae Aquash Pictou, who was found dead in 1976. Brand states that, "The evidence suggests a conspiracy to prevent the discovery and investigation of the murder of Anna Mae Aquash" (1993, 26), and the case is not yet resolved. The story of Annie Mae Aquash has been the focus of a documentary by Mi'kmaq film-maker Catherine Martin, called *The Spirit of Annie Mae* (2002). See also Matthiessen (1991) and Means (1995).

<sup>31</sup> Browner (2002) indicates another possible variation of this order. After Grand Entry and the Flag Song, she notes that prayers and the welcoming of guests occurs, followed by the posting of the flags (colours), and then a Veterans' Dance (89-91).

ST. ANNE'S SCHOOL - CONNE RIVER RESERVE

OCTOBER 1987

POW-WOW SCHEDULE

- Feast
- Grand Entry  
Join the opening circle or stand up.
- Opening Prayer  
Everyone should be standing for the opening prayer.
- Micmac National Anthem  
For the Micmac National Anthem everyone should stand.
- Opening Drum Song and Dance  
For this you can either dance or just stand up.
- General Dances and Honour Dances  
During an Honor Song everyone should stand up or join in the dance.
- Giveaway  
This is when gifts are presented to our guests.
- Closing Song  
You can either dance or stand up.

Note: At all general dances, there is no need to be standing up at your chair.

Figure 3.1. Powwow Schedule at Se't A'newey School, Miawpukek, NL, October 1987

At the 1987 powwow, the opening prayer was followed by what was called the “Micmac National Anthem” – Ko’jua. While this was not called a Flag Song (as it is in current powwow terminology), a connection between national anthems and the posting of flags is present. There was no Veterans Song as there would be in a present day powwow; rather, after the so-called national anthem, an “Opening Drum Song and Dance” was presented, during which those in attendance could either dance or stand.

After this opening portion of the powwow, the singing and dancing appears to have continued in a manner not unfamiliar to those attending powwows in the early twenty-first century. The program handed to participants indicated that during any Honour Dances, “everyone should stand up or join in the dance” (see Figure 3.1 above). The order of events on the program suggests that, not unlike powwows in the present, a Giveaway<sup>32</sup> was held towards the end of the powwow but before what we would now call “retiring the flags” or, in some areas of Eastern Canada, “Grand Exit.” The powwow would then conclude with what was simply termed “Closing Song,” during which those in attendance could dance or stand as a sign of respect. Interestingly, given that recordings of this event were made and that a prohibition on photography or recording was not noted in the powwow schedule, it would seem that the now common restrictions on recording were either not articulated or adhered to strictly at this time.<sup>33</sup> Table 3.1

---

<sup>32</sup> A Giveaway is a ritual of gifting that occurs at the end of powwows and to mark special occasions (such as a dancer’s first powwow). It is used to thank those involved for their contribution to the event, each person being called in turn to receive (or select) an item.

<sup>33</sup> There were also fewer non-Native visitors attending events at this time, so it may be that it was assumed everyone present already knew about and observed these protocols.



compares the 1987 order of events with those now observed at the annual powwow.

Table 3.1. Powwow Order of Events<sup>34</sup>

1987	2006
Feast	Grand Entry
Grand Entry	Flag Song
Mi'kmaq National Anthem (Ko'jua)	Veterans Song
Opening Prayer	Opening Prayer
Opening Drum Song and Dance	Opening Intertribal
Dancing	Dancing
Giveaway	Feast
Closing Song	Giveaway
AIM Song	Grand Exit/Retire the Flags

Brenda Jeddore, the music teacher at Se't A'newey School, after viewing von Rosen's recordings of the 1987 Cultural Days, commented: "The 1987 cultural days [DVDs] were an Oscar winning experience. [ . . . ] It was definitely the first drum on the reserve and most definitely the first 'pow wow dance' exhibition! It just goes to show we have come a long long way!" (Personal communication, July 21, 2006). And, indeed, Miawpukek celebrated its 12<sup>th</sup> annual powwow in 2007, the school currently holds

---

<sup>34</sup> There are two minor variations to be noted regarding the printed schedule of events (Figure 3.1) when compared with both von Rosen's video recording of the event and her fieldnotes: the Mi'kmaq National Anthem (Ko'jua) was sung after the Grand Entry and before the Opening Prayer (not after the Opening Prayer as printed). While not listed on the schedule, the AIM song was sung after the closing song (FvR, "Fieldnotes for October 1987," p.12).

cultural workshops and a mini-powwow annually, and powwow has become part of the music curriculum.

### 3.2 *The Cultural Days Program Becomes Community Based*

According to Brenda Jeddore, the Cultural Days program started in 1987 and was strong until about 1991. Brenda noted that many important Aboriginal and specifically Mi'kmaw people were invited to come to the school from other areas of Canada and share their culture and their experiences, including members of the Augustine family from Elsipogtog, New Brunswick.<sup>35</sup> Prior to these events in 1987, to the best of her knowledge, there was no powwow drumming in the community (personal communication, May 18, 2006). As members of the community became more familiar with Mi'kmaw traditions and culture, and gained competence in specific areas such as medicines or drumming, there was less need to bring in practitioners from other communities to conduct workshops in the school. Instead, community members took the lead in teaching the young children.<sup>36</sup> For many years, this meant that the community drum group, Sipu'ji'j Drummers, were responsible for drumming at the school's annual event.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> This connection to other Mi'kmaw communities is now quite limited in terms of exchange. Brenda notes that now outside communities are engaged primarily for purposes of language translation (personal communication, May 18, 2006).

<sup>36</sup> Jean Knockwood (2003, 196) notes that accessing local resource people is an important means of generating wealth for the community.

<sup>37</sup> Sipu'ji'j Drummers will be discussed in Chapter Four.

In more recent years, the week-long Cultural Days program has morphed into a one-day “mini-powwow” held in May. The need for a more extensive program is no longer felt, as guest presentations occur throughout the year. In the current day-long model, the morning is filled with workshops led by community members who are regular presenters at the school, while the afternoon features a mini-powwow in the school gymnasium. In 2006 when I was invited to attend by Rod Jeddore, there were six concurrent sessions running throughout the morning, with students moving between sessions every 20 minutes (see Figure 3.2 below). Kelly Drew presented dance in one end of the gym for the girls, while the boys joined Kitpu<sup>38</sup> at the other end for drumming. Tammy Drew addressed spirituality, while Chief Mi’sel Joe spoke about spirituality and medicines. Two members of Brenda’s performance choir conducted a session on Mi’kmaw singing and chanting,<sup>39</sup> in lieu of a Mi’kmaw language workshop that was cancelled because Rod Jeddore had to be out of town. Finally, Mardina Joe taught Mi’kmaw crafts.

---

<sup>38</sup> Kitpu is the drum group formed by the Denny brothers from Eskasoni. In prior years, the Sipi’ji’j Drummers had participated in this event; however, as they retired the drum it was necessary to bring in a drum group that would sing for the event and provide instruction to younger drummers. In 2006, Kitpu was joined by the Grade Five Drummers, alternating songs with them.

<sup>39</sup> The distinction made between singing and chanting here is one of text versus vocables.



Figure 3.2. Culture Day Schedule at Set'A'newey School, Miawpukek, NL, May 19, 2006

TIME	ROOM 1 GYM KELLY DREW DANCING (GIRLS)	ROOM 2 GYM DRUMMERS (BOYS)	ROOM 3 MUSIC ROOM TAMMY DREW SPIRITUALITY	ROOM 4 GRADE 7 CLASS MARDINA JOE CRAFTS	ROOM 5 H.S. LIBRARY CHIEF MISEL JOE TRADITIONAL MEDICINES	ROOM 6 GRADE 8 CLASS CHANTING & MI'KMAQ LANGUAGE
9:00 - 9:20	GRADE K & 1	GRADE 2 & 3	GRADE 4 & 5	GRADE 5/B.A.	GRADE 6 & 7	GRADE 8 & 9
9:25 - 9:45	GRADE 2 & 3	GRADE K & 1	GRADE 8 & 9	GRADE 4 & 5	GRADE 5/B.A.	GRADE 6 & 7 X
9:50 - 10:10	GRADE 4 & 5	GRADE 5/B.A.	GRADE 6 & 7	GRADE 8 & 9	GRADE K & 1	GRADE 2 & 3 X
10:15 - 10:35	GRADE 5/B.A. X	GRADE 4 & 5	GRADE 2 & 3	GRADE 6 & 7	GRADE 8 & 9	GRADE K & 1
10:40 - 11:00	GRADE 6 & 7	GRADE 8 & 9	GRADE 5/B.A.	GRADE K & 1	GRADE 2 & 3	GRADE 4 & 5

The Grades attending the presentations include K to 9. Two grades will be paired up, so there will be 5 groups from St. Anne's School plus the Grade 5 from Bay D'Espoir Academy.

Due to scheduling conflicts, three groups will not be attending one presentation each.  
 Grade K & 1 will not be attending the Room 3 presentation.  
 Grade 2 & 3 will not be attending the Room 4 presentation.  
 Grade 4 & 5 will not be attending the Room 5 presentation.

The workshop on singing and chanting was of particular interest to me, for it would demonstrate the type of teachings received by the students in the school. Two ninth grade girls sang four songs for the young children gathered and provided commentary on the meanings of songs, while also demonstrating various musical instruments, such as hand drum, horn rattle, wrist (jingle) bells, five-hole cedar flute (here called a whistle), *ji'kmaq*,<sup>40</sup> and a Brazilian rain stick (which they said was used in many different cultures). These instruments, which are regularly used in the school's music program, have been obtained from a variety of sources. The rattles were ordered from Saskatchewan, as no one in the community currently makes rattles.<sup>41</sup> The rain stick was hand-made by an Anishnabe man in Ontario. The school has a set of five cedar flutes, which also were ordered from away. Brenda Jeddore said that no whistles or flutes have been or are made in Miawpukek, to the best of her knowledge. Drums used in day-to-day music classes have been gifted by visitors to the school, such as Mi'kmaw poet Rita Joe, or have been mail-ordered from a variety of companies, including Remo<sup>42</sup> in the past (personal communication, May 18, 2006; June 6, 2008).

The girls' presentation began with "Yu'ahaia," during which the students present

---

<sup>40</sup> While *ji'kmaq* are traditionally made of split ash, one of the grade nine students who led the singing and chanting workshop described an alternate construction in which thin strips of wood are glued together at one end and that end is wrapped in fabric to create a handle.

<sup>41</sup> However, in the past, a student has made a rattle for her heritage fair project (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006).

<sup>42</sup> Remo is a company specializing in drums and related products from many different cultures, all of which are available via mail-order. See <http://www.remo.com/>, accessed March 15, 2008.

were asked to stand in a circle and hold hands. They could join in singing and participate in a Round Dance at this time, while the presenters played hand drums and traded leads. “Yu’ahaia” is attributed to Joel Denny of Eskasoni on the *Miawpukek* (2000) CD and is also known as “Messenger” on a recording by Les Messagers [n.d]. The song featured a dotted rhythm throughout ( ˘ ˙ ) and the form<sup>43</sup> of the song is AA<sup>1</sup>BC. Further audience participation occurred with a second Round Dance, “Ikwanuté,” during which rattles, wrist bells,<sup>44</sup> and a *ji’kmaq*n were distributed to the children sitting in a circle so that they might play along. “Ikwanuté” features a similar dotted rhythm and its form is ABA<sup>1</sup>C. For each of these two songs, the lead (A) was sung by a solo voice and then the remainder of each push-up<sup>45</sup> was sung by both presenters and some audience members. Both songs were also sung four times before ending.

The third song of the presentation was “I’ko,” accompanied by hand drum. One of the presenters explained that it is a peace song between the Mi’kmaq and Mohawk and is

---

<sup>43</sup> One of the goals in presenting formal analysis of the songs considered herein is to demonstrate the differences and similarities between Mi’kmaq and powwow or intertribal song structures. Thus, while it would be possible in some cases to further sub-divide the sections of each song as indicated into even smaller phrases or segments, I have chosen this level of analysis to clarify and emphasize the differences in overall form.

<sup>44</sup> Wrist bells consist of four jingle bells equally spaced along a plastic or leather strap that goes around the wrist. Brenda Jeddore explained that these are used during some choreographed dances (personal communication, May 18, 2006).

<sup>45</sup> The term push-up is commonly used by members of powwow drum groups to refer both to the short solo call by the lead singer that is then answered by the group in a powwow style song and to each round or ‘verse’ of the song. In the present day, it is common to sing four push-ups of each song.



used in the sweatlodge.<sup>46</sup> Their presentation of “I’ko” opened with a loon call played on Native American flute and was accompanied by a straight drum beat.<sup>47</sup> The form of the entire song is AB A<sup>1</sup>B AB B<sup>1</sup>. Here, each section consists of two short phrases. The slight melodic variation heard in A<sup>1</sup> exists to accommodate a different Mi’kmaq lyric sung the second time through. B<sup>1</sup> indicates that the song closes with the second half of B (a coda). Drum tremolo occurs during B<sup>1</sup> only. “I’ko” has been called an “Ancient Mi’kmaq Gathering Song” by Eastern Eagle on *Good Medicine* (2004) and a Welcoming Song on their earlier CD *Traditionally Yours* (1996).<sup>48</sup> It has also been called a Friendship Song by Free Spirit on *MicMac Mi’Kmaq Songs* (1990).

After these three songs, the girls demonstrated each of the different instruments and how they produce sound. While for many of these instruments, the information presented focussed on construction, the hand drum was explained as representing the heartbeat of mother earth and the rain stick was identified as being used in many cultures.

---

<sup>46</sup> Rita Joe (1997) recounts the story of learning “I’ko” from Sarah Denny and the response she got after singing it on one occasion: “Everything went well but the next day an educated individual put me on while I was hitchhiking in my community. ‘I saw you on television last night. It was good, but the song you sang was Mohawk,’ he said. That part was reasoned out that when the other tribes had dealings with us, the exchange was gift-giving. If you do not have anything you give a story or song which is true” (1997, 262). Kevin Alstrup notes that while the original text of “I’ko” is neither Mi’kmaq nor Mohawk, the song “has symbolic value to the Eskasoni Mi’kmaq as an invocation of Mi’kmaq traditional music culture, and perhaps as an allusion to historical ties between the Mi’kmaq and Mohawk nations (2004, 5).

<sup>47</sup> A straight drum beat refers to a steady pattern of evenly placed drum beats which could be represented by a series of quarter notes (♩ ♩ ♩ ♩).

<sup>48</sup> As sung by Eastern Eagle, the form is ABC A<sup>1</sup>BC repeated (perhaps several times) and closing with the second half of C (that is: ABC A<sup>1</sup>BC ABC A<sup>1</sup>BC C<sup>1</sup> on the *Good Medicine* recording). This version has two additional phrases as compared to that of the girls presenting at Se’t A’newey School.

The girls then concluded the presentation with “Apoqnmuinen,”<sup>49</sup> a song by Donna Augustine (Mi’kmaw) and Morley Loon (Cree) that the Se’t A’newey Mi’kmaq Choir recorded on *Miawpukek* (2000).<sup>50</sup> In the cultural workshop presentation, the song was accompanied by a single drum, while one of the presenters demonstrated the sign language that accompanies these texts. This song combines vocables and Mi’kmaw language in the following form:

AAAB	AAAB	AAAB	B (coda)
vocables	text	vocables	vocables

As the repetition indicates, the verse (AAAB) is essentially sung three times in this performance. The accompaniment heard on the *Miawpukek* (2000) recording is much more diverse and lush, with rattles, more active percussion, Native American flute, and synthesizer. However, given the limited performance forces for this presentation, such instrumentation was not possible.

---

<sup>49</sup> From the root meaning to help or to assist.

<sup>50</sup> This song is also called “Yo Ya He Yay,” as recorded by Donna Augustine on *Ancestral Fire* (2002).

Table 3.2. Comparison of forms and musical features of songs presented in the workshop prior to the mini-powwow on May 19, 2006.

	Yu'ahaia	Ikwanuté	I'ko	Apoqnmuinen
Category	Round Dance	Friendship Dance	n/a	n/a
Form of one push-up*	AA <sup>1</sup> BC	ABA <sup>1</sup> C	AB**	AAAB
# of repetitions	4	4	3	3
Range	C4 – A4	C4 – B <sup>b</sup> 4	A3 – G <sup>#</sup> 4	B <sup>b</sup> 3 – G 4
Instrumentation	hand drum	hand drum + rattles	flute + hand drum	hand drum
Tempo	54 bpm	55 bpm	50 bpm	50 bpm
Tail or coda?	no	no	yes (B <sup>1</sup> )	yes (B)
Honour beats?	no	no	no	no
Closing pattern	no	no	tremolo	tremolo
Ta'O! to end?	yes	no	no	no
Language	vocables	vocables	vocables	Mi'kmaq + vocables
Origin	unknown	Mi'kmaq; Trad.	Trad.; gift from Mohawk	Donna Augustine & Morley Loon

\* or verse

\*\* Each repetition begins a semi-tone higher than the last in this performance, creating a slightly wider range than normal for this song.

When this twenty-minute presentation on singing and chanting was complete, the large group of students moved to another classroom to participate in another workshop. The two grade nine students remained in the classroom and gave their presentation a total of five times during the morning to five different groups. After all of the students rotated through the various workshops throughout the morning, a feast was held in the gymnasium. Pizza was prepared for students and for adults there was home-made moose



soup and chicken soup available. At 12 o'clock the powwow started in the gymnasium, with Tammy Drew as emcee. Kitpu served as host drum, alternating songs with the school's grade five drummers.<sup>51</sup> The event proceeded along the now-standard powwow form observed by the community at its annual powwow, with community Elders as flag carriers and Eagle Staff carriers. Some students and teachers dressed in regalia, while others danced in their everyday clothes. The types of dances were similar to those held annually at the powwow, including "Indian Breakdancing" (to be discussed in Chapter Four). The only noticeable differences between this mini-powwow and the annual community event are the shortened length of the event and the absence of ceremonies. No one fanned the drum, turning it into an Honour Song, no one blew an eagle bone whistle, no feathers were dropped necessitating a Retrieval Song, and no special honourings took place. The dancing continued until 2pm, at which time students were dismissed for the long weekend.

This event both teaches and reinforces Mi'kmaw culture in the community. Many community members arrived to observe or participate in the event with their children and grandchildren. Members of the former Sipu'ji'j Drummers were also present, two of whom participated in "Indian Breakdancing" on the male team. This event also serves as an opportunity for sharing culture with those outside the community, as Brenda invites a

---

<sup>51</sup> The day before this mini-powwow, after interviewing Brenda Jeddore, the grade five drummers joined us in the music room and sang "White Skies." I sent a copy of the field recording I made to Brenda and later learned that it had been copied multiple times and distributed to family and friends. Recordings made both by the school itself and other parties serve as affirmations of the cultural revitalization that has occurred in the Miawpukek community.

different school to come and participate each year:

What I'm doing right now is inviting a school that has not witnessed the music, the culture [to attend the mini-powwow]. So, every year we pick a school. Last year I think it was Gander and the year before was St. John's. And South Bight has been down. We forgot about those that live really close, we just assumed [they had experienced the culture]. So this year I took Bay D'Espoir Academy and they're coming tomorrow. (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

The sharing of culture that began twenty years ago between visitors to the reserve and Mi'kmaw students, then, has since blossomed into a sharing of culture between Miawpukek Mi'kmaq and other communities interested in learning more about Mi'kmaw culture.

### 3.3 *Powwow and Mi'kmaw Music as Curriculum*

Cultural workshops were and continue to be important elements of Se't A'newey School's cultural programming. Music education has long been highly valued in Newfoundland and Labrador schools, with music largely being taught by music specialists whose instructional time is dedicated primarily to that field. However, in the small and isolated community of Miawpukek, there was no music specialist teaching in the local school. The current music teacher, Brenda Jeddore, a non-Native, accepted her first teaching position in the community after graduating from Memorial University of Newfoundland with a Bachelor of Arts in Education, and in 1980 she arrived in Miawpukek as a Grade One teacher. Within months, Brenda identified a need for music instruction in the school system and began introducing songs as part of her own lesson

plans. Brenda's own musical training began in a Catholic school system with Mercy Nuns, where she was a member of choir. She also learned basic piano skills. In 1983 and 1984, she undertook music courses through Memorial University and she attended a Kodály Institute. By 1986 in Miawpukek, she had implemented a music curriculum for Kindergarten to Grade Nine students that was taught in the afternoons. Attending workshops whenever possible to improve her skills, Brenda has created a Mi'kmaq-focussed music curriculum at Se't A'newey School (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006; June 6, 2008).

The only instrument Brenda learned to play was the recorder, taught to her by Sister Mulligrew when Brenda was in seventh grade. She now teaches recorder to her students in grades three through six, in keeping with the Newfoundland and Labrador music curriculum. Having never learned to play piano is not an insurmountable concern when teaching music and accompanying students for performances; Brenda has the accompaniments recorded by pianists with whom she works. Sometimes the students perform using the taped accompaniments and when possible they perform with live accompaniment. In fact, Brenda sees the use of recordings as an instructional advantage:

[The accompanist] will play it, I'll take the score and teach myself how to sing it, then I'll teach them. Everything is recorded, all music is recorded here. And it works out perfectly 'cause you're never behind a piano. You're dead centre with them at all times. You're learning with them. (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

While recordings have an important role to play in terms of accompaniment in both educational and performance settings, Brenda is careful to point out that she does not use



recordings of songs themselves to teach the students. She learns the parts from cassettes or CDs on her own and then teaches them orally to her students.

At Se't A'newey, all students learn to sing. While music is not required in high school grades, it may be used to fulfill the graduation requirement for an arts elective. In designing the music curriculum at Se't A'newey, Brenda Jeddore used the learning outcomes identified for each grade by the Department of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador. She then searched for ways to make the education process more culturally meaningful and relevant:

I take the outcomes from the board, and I – say in Grade Two you have to teach ta, ti-ti, rests, and stuff like that – I do that all with percussion instruments and with their own First Nations, like the *ji'kmaq*n. And I'll use the drum, and the rattles I'll use. So I do it that way, but they still learn what they're supposed to. (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

The curriculum is further localized through choice and substitution of repertoire, and the extra-musical material that accompanies music education. For example, Brenda noted that instead of singing "There was an Old Woman all Skin and Bones" when covering Halloween songs, they have made up their own song in Mi'kmaq. If the guidelines suggest that students learn "Cod Liver Oil," a Newfoundland folksong, then she compares cod liver oil as traditional medicine to Mi'kmaw medicines like cherry bark, and then teaches a Mi'kmaw "Medicine Song."

The program heavily focusses on choral music; Brenda noted that approximately 80% is based around choral music and 20% is based around drama. It is under choral

music that drumming is classified:

The drum I put under the choral program because in order to drum you have to sing. There's no such thing as a drummer. It's always choral first because that's how you communicate, you see. The drum is a wonderful tool, but it just accompanies. So that's the premise on how I teach. (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

The curriculum does not only feature learning to play instruments and sing, but also includes the construction of instruments. In particular, all students will make a hand drum in the primary grades. In addition to the construction of the instruments, students learn the associated teachings about animals, worldview, and the four directions. Brenda explains:

They all make a drum, like a little hand drum. In making that drum they all have to use leather and I teach them all about the animal giving up its life and how everything moves in a clockwise<sup>52</sup> fashion. Everything of the Mi'kmaq culture is circular, circle because everything is connected and everyone is equal. There's nobody bigger, nobody smaller. And then I teach them about the directions when they bless the North, South, and the eagle that's the protector of the children who live in the east. Then after that, the parents come in and they talk about their drums to their parents, how they made them, and then they sing a little song with their drums and then they do chanting through their drums. That's another little technique into using the drum as communication: "Way back in times before telephones," I would say, "they would have to communicate in drum beats." So they'll all learn a little chant that they can answer each other with. (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006)

Students also are required to make a traditional Mi'kmaw folk instrument 'from scratch,' whether a *ji'kmaq*n or some other type of rattle.

---

<sup>52</sup> Interestingly, while many current teachings specify clockwise dancing, Joel Denny (Eskasoni) has asserted that traditionally Mi'kmaq dances would be danced in counter-clockwise direction (see Sable and Sable 2007b).

Each year, the grade five class also makes its own powwow drum, an event that is overseen by Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe who takes care to ensure it is done in a good way. In the spring of the year, the newest group of grade five boys will join the Chief, participate in a fast, enter the sweatlodge and talk about the drum, and then come out to make their drum.<sup>53</sup> The animals have already been taken in an appropriate manner by members of the community and hides already cleaned for the children because they are so young. Using these prepared hides, they make the drum in the Chief's garden. Brenda referred to this process as a rite of passage in which the male students participate. Brenda did not mention a comparable rite of passage for the female students.



Figure 3.3. The music room in Se't A'newey School, Miawpukek, NL.

---

<sup>53</sup> I have not observed this event. This brief outline of activities was provided by Brenda Jeddore (personal communication, May 18, 2006).



Higher grades in Se't A'newey School learn native dance, participate in drama, and learn to play recorder and Native American flute. The song repertoire for the program includes traditional and contemporary Mi'kmaw and First Nations' music, Newfoundland folk songs, and sacred music, often translated to Mi'kmaq and sung for First Communion or Confession. Special units feature classical composers such as Bach, Beethoven, and Mozart, as well as First Nations and Aboriginal musicians, such as Paul Pike, Susan Aglukark, Buffy St. Marie, and Eastern Eagle Singers. The music featured in the program, then, is quite diverse. The practice of translating songs into Mi'kmaq is used extensively. While Brenda herself is not a fluent speaker of Mi'kmaq, she studied Mi'kmaq during the summers in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia with the late Mi'kmaw Elder Wilfred Prosper, as well as Catherine Stevens and Roddie Stevens. Language translation may also occur in consultation with language instructor Rod Jeddore, the First Nations Help Desk in Nova Scotia,<sup>54</sup> or more recently linguist Bernie Francis (of Membertou).

In keeping with some teachings about the powwow drum, gender roles are observed by students participating in the music curriculum. Male students sit at the drum and participate in both drumming and singing, while the girls stand around them and sing.<sup>55</sup> Females are taught this protocol at an early age. Brenda explained, "They know that they're not allowed because they're the givers of life, and [the boys/men] drum in honour of them" (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006). Further,

---

<sup>54</sup> Their online resources are available at: <http://firstnationhelp.com/> (accessed February 27, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Females may play other instruments, such as rattles, flute, or hand drum.

Brenda noted that they are quick to uphold these standards should another female not observe them: "If you sat at that drum, within seconds the littlest one will say, 'You're a lady and you have to get away from the drum.' And then they'll say, 'The Mi'kmaw drum is not for women'" (*ibid.*).

Interestingly, these same children have never questioned why Brenda herself sits at the drum and plays it while teaching. She explained, "I'll sit at the drum. I think I'm the only female that has played this traditional drum. My place is usually right there [pointing to a chair]." When I questioned Brenda about this she continued, "I drum. I do. I'm allowed because I'm instructional. Do you know who told me that? Nobody. The spirits told me, they said. And the Chief's caught me a thousand times and he hasn't said a word yet, but I just turn really red" (*ibid.*) There are many possible explanations for why Brenda seems to exist outside of this gender restriction. It may be that her role as an educator allows her to cross boundaries so that, in the absence of a male teacher who can instruct on drumming, Brenda fills the role. Interestingly, when the grade five drummers sang at the 2006 powwow, Brenda also appeared to exist outside the general protocols surrounding drummers and singers in the arbour. Women generally are not permitted in the arbour unless they are singing; however, Brenda was able to enter and stand with the group before and while they were singing, both for support and to help them choose songs from their limited repertoire.

While Brenda has modified the Newfoundland and Labrador music curriculum to suit the needs of the Miawpukek community, she wishes that some element of Mi'kmaw

culture could be injected into the music curriculums in schools throughout Newfoundland and Labrador. While she can see some challenges for teachers and students learning Mi'kmaw songs, particularly in terms of language and the coordination of vocals with drum, she maintains that featuring Mi'kmaw music in the Newfoundland and Labrador curriculum must be in practical terms of music-making rather than a listening and/or history component. Brenda spoke with great passion in this respect: "No, no, no, no, you gotta bring it alive. The only way to bring it alive is through the music" (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006). As for how music teachers throughout the province can accomplish this goal given an oral-based culture rather than a written score of a Mi'kmaw song and the related language concerns, Brenda notes that teachers should go about teaching music in the same way that she has, as a music teacher who does not read music: "If you don't know it, the music teacher has to tear it apart first and do her job" (*ibid.*).

Brenda, however, is not a one-woman show. She makes extensive use of guest presentations in the music curriculum she designed. She notes that she has a guest presenting in her classes in some form almost every day. "Oh, I use people and I abuse them," she jokes (personal communication, May 18, 2006). Making practical use of resource people in the community, Brenda expands the music curriculum to include extra-musical elements, such as dance and story-telling. For example, she invites Kelly



Drew, an accomplished dancer who specializes in Fancy Shawl and Jingle Dress,<sup>56</sup> into the classroom to teach dance steps (from basic to more advanced depending on the grade), as well as one's presentation during the dance (such as posture). Brenda explains that Kelly will teach one particular dance step, such as a twirl spin, and once the students have mastered it, Kelly will return and teach another step. Likewise, Tammy Drew, a respected traditional dancer, will be invited into the classes to teach "how to walk and dance during the Honour Song" or to teach about items such as the eagle bone whistle (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006). Further, when Brenda is teaching a unit on First Nations musicians, such as Mi'kmaw Paul Pike and his group Medicine Dream,<sup>57</sup> Tammy will be invited to "tell them a story about Paul Pike, who he is, what he likes to eat, where he lives, why he sometimes likes to come to the powwow," as Tammy is a friend of Paul's (*ibid.*). With an informal style, Tammy will engage students by providing context and biographical information about a Mi'kmaw musician who has danced at the community's powwow and is respected for his traditional ways. In the past two decades, then, members of the Miawpukek community have become increasingly knowledgeable about both intertribal and local repertoires and practices, and now actively engage in the transmission of cultural knowledge to younger generations.

---

<sup>56</sup> Browner (2002, 53) notes that the Jingle Dress Dance is a "healing prayer" and "its spiritual power . . . originates as an energy generated from the sound of the cones that sing out to the spirits when dancers lift their feet in time with the drum." The Jingle Dress itself will normally have 365 metal cones or "jingles," one for each day of the year. For several variants of the story of this dance's origin, see Browner (2002, 53-58).

<sup>57</sup> Paul Pike, his band Medicine Dream, and their music was the focus of my earlier research. See Tulk (2003, 2004a).

### 3.4 Presenting Mi'kmaw Culture

Students at Se't A'newey School are often involved in cultural presentations requested by various groups and organizations outside of Miawpukek.<sup>58</sup> These presentations combine singing, chanting, and dancing with explanatory narration to teach the audience about Mi'kmaw culture. In 2006, a presentation for the Harris Centre Regional Workshop in the Coast of Bays region was requested and Brenda Jeddore organized a small group<sup>59</sup> to travel to Head Bay D'Espoir and present a 20-minute program to delegates. Dressed in regalia,<sup>60</sup> the young children conducted a cultural workshop of sorts, largely without the involvement of their music teacher, who stood out of sight. Around the octagonal shaped powwow drum sat six young boys in varied dress: two wore ribbons shirts (one red, one white), one wore a white muslin shirt with tanned hide fringe, one wore a complete outfit of buckskin leggings and vest, and two others

---

<sup>58</sup> An early presentation by students is included in the documentary *Conne River* (1995, *It's About Time Series*, Vision TV, Prod. Sadia Zaman).

<sup>59</sup> Because of limitations for transport of the children to the venue, Jeddore randomly selected twelve students. Se't A'newey School also has a performance choir which consists of eight to twelve members selected from the student body. This choir was formed specifically for a presentation for the Canadian Principals' Association meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland in 1993. Their repertoire includes unison singing of some traditional Mi'kmaw songs, Mi'kmaw hymns for use in the Catholic church, songs translated into the Mi'kmaw language (such as "O Canada" and "Amazing Grace"), arrangements of other First Nations music, and standard choral repertoire. They have performed at a variety of events in Newfoundland, were part of the Viking celebrations in 2000, and travelled to Japan with the Mount Pearl Show Choir in 2005. Their singing is heard on *Miawpukek* (2000), *Wli-nuelewi: Mi'kmaw Christmas Music* (2001), *Full Circle* (2002), and *Wjit Nijaninen Wunijet* (2007). Such recording projects serve as affirmations of the cultural revitalization that has occurred in the Miawpukek community. As I did not have the opportunity to observe and record a complete presentation by this group, I have chosen to focus on a presentation by the elementary drummers and singers. Discussion of the creation of the performance choir appears in Jonas (2001).

<sup>60</sup> The various styles of Mi'kmaw regalia are discussed further in Chapter Five.

wore white vests with a blue beaded detail near the collar (a version of the double-curve motif).<sup>61</sup> Some wore beaded chokers and some wore medicine pouches, but all wore moccasins. The girls stood in a circle around the drummers, spaced equidistant apart. Two wore white traditional buckskin dresses with pink embellishments of beaded roses and pony beads at the end of the fringe. The other four dressed in jewel-tone fancy shawl regalia. Some wore beaded earrings and chokers, and all six wore moccasins. One girl held a Native American flute.



Figure 3.4. The Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers at the Harris Centre Regional Workshop, Vancor Motel, Head Bay D'Espoir, October 3, 2006.

---

<sup>61</sup> See Whitehead (1982, 162-67).



After the group was introduced, a young girl went to the microphone and their presentation began. Each of the five songs, the Honour Song, Gathering Song, "Song of the Earth," Friendship Dance, and "White Skies," was preceded by a brief introduction made by one of the students. Below I will intersperse excerpts of the transcript<sup>62</sup> of their 3 October 2006 presentation with comments on each song to illuminate aspects of structure, style, and instrumentation, while contextualizing the place of each in current Mi'kmaw repertoire. Observations of form, range, and particular musical gestures (such as glissandi, discussed below) will demonstrate the ways in which Mi'kmaw or local music styles differ from that of the genre of northern powwow music, as well as the ways in which aspects from each may be synthesized, resulting in a localized powwow tradition.

Announcer: The Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers here on the floor. The choir here today, performing here today, is a group of elementary school students from the Miawpukek reserve, Conne River, the First Nation school in Conne River. They range in age from seven to eleven years old, eleven years of age. As part of their music program, their music teacher Ms. Brenda Jeddore, this young lady over here, has incorporated courses in Mi'kmaq drumming, chanting, and dance. This drum group is the youngest traditional performance group on the reserve. They have already made memorable performances at Terra Nova National Park this past summer for Heritage Canada, as well as drumming on their reserve for two powwows. The group uses the men's two-headed caribou drum, skin drum, and a variety of traditional rhythm instruments. Chief Mi'sel Joe will be holding a spiritual sweatlodge ceremony in the early fall with the male members of this drumming group. After this ceremony they will create their

---

<sup>62</sup> I am grateful to Brenda Jeddore for permission to record this presentation.

own new caribou skin drum which will be used in future performances. And just a minute ago the young fella there was telling me that Chief Joe now has a new caribou hide and is ready to do that in the fall. The intent of performances by this group is to help people gain a broader understanding of the Mi'kmaw culture. So ladies and gentlemen, I present to you Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers.

Student 1: *Weli-kiskik*. Good day. My name is Michelle<sup>63</sup> and I am a grade six student at the First Nation School of Se't A'newey, Conne River. Let us show respect for our culture my friends. We have gathered here to welcome and honour our ancestors, our community visitors, and each other. We pay special attention and honour to those visiting this area today. We have been placed on this earth for a purpose. Let us stand and sing together our Nation's Honour Song. It is considered respectful if you would stand and remove your hats in the singing of the song. Pictures can be taken after the singing of this song "Kepmite'tmnej."

Song: "Kepmite'tmnej" <sup>64</sup>

This Honour Song opened with four loon calls played by a female on the Native American flute, each alternating with four opening honour beats, played by one male drummer, before the song began. Once the singing started, the females began dancing. The Honour Song has an overall descending melodic contour and this performance features a unique musical gesture of a glissando on the last syllable ("nej") of the lead "Kepmite'tmnej." The overall form of this song as performed was AABCC<sup>1</sup>, where C consists of vocables. The drummers sang only two complete push-ups or rounds of the

---

<sup>63</sup> The names of students have been changed.

<sup>64</sup> Gertie Mae Muise (2003, 35) suggests one translation of this song as being, "The people gather together, greet one another, respect each other, respect our ancestors and walk in the way the Creator intended us to walk." The Mi'kmaw Honour Song was transcribed by Gordon Smith and published in Joe (1996, 184-85).

song; however, because of the structure of the song and the repeated A section, the lead appears to be heard four times. Honour beats are heard in the B section of the song during the Mi'kmaw lyrics, and also during the singing of vocables in section C<sup>1</sup>. Thus, honour beats were heard here four times, twice on each complete push-up. The young girls were not heard singing, though it may be that their voices were simply not audible over those of the drummers. On the honour beats during each push-up, the girls raised their right arms above their heads. The drummers concluded the song with "Ta' O!" (sounds like Ta-ho). While other groups do not consistently end their singing with this exclamation (and in fact, it is quite rare to hear at powwows), Simon Marshall in an interview with Franziska von Rosen suggested that it was the appropriate way to end a song (FvR, "Interview with Simon Marshall," August 11, 1987, p.17).<sup>65</sup>

Of particular interest is the use of the glissando at the end of the lead. This glissando was also employed by the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, who used it on their recording *Miawpukek* (2000) and always included it during live presentations at powwows or other gatherings. However, this glissando does not appear to be a standard element of the Mi'kmaw Honour Song. Indeed, on the recording *Traditional Micmac Chants* (1991) by George Paul, who received the Honour Song during a fast, he does not sing a glissando on the word "Kepmite'tmnej," nor do the members of Eastern Eagle Singers incorporate glissandi. A survey of recordings demonstrates that the glissando is a rare addition to the

---

<sup>65</sup> "Ta'O!" is a saying used after a dance, song, or prayer, presumably to signify "the end" or "That's all."



Honour Song, employed only by the Sipu'ji'j Drummers and the Denny Family, as heard on the recording *Mi'kmaq Chants* (1995). As the Sipu'ji'j Drummers learned many songs from this recording (see Chapter Four) and would have had the opportunity to learn the songs orally at powwows and other events attended by the Denny Family (Kitpu), it seems that the use of the characteristic glissando can be traced directly to the singing of Kitpu from Eskasoni. Also interesting is the form. According to performance instructions I received in an email from Paul Pike, the C section of vocables should be sung twice only on the fourth and final push-up (June 8, 2005).<sup>66</sup> Clearly, then, in the singing of the Honour Song, as well as other traditional songs as will be demonstrated, there is a great deal of variation in form, structure, singing style, and embellishments. This largely results from learning through oral means and through the use of recordings, but also from the development of personal and group styles among drum groups.

Student 2:     *Weli-kiskik. Ni'n teluisi* Danielle [My name is . . .] A spirit lives as sure as the blood that flows between our veins. Our ancestor's spirit is alive as we embrace this journey to understanding and peace. Our next selection is a gathering chant called "Wetjkwitajik." It calls all our people together with the beat of our drum. *Wela'lioq*. [Thank you.]

Song: "Wetjkwitajik"

The second song, "Wetjkwitajik," also has a form that is unlike that of most powwow songs. "Wetjkwitajik" is antiphonal in nature; the first three parts of the song

---

<sup>66</sup> These instructions suggest a slightly different formal structure for this song: AABC sung four times with an additional C serving as a coda at the end.

feature a short “lead” that is then answered by the group, creating a call and response structure. Each of these calls invites a different group to join the gathering: the Mi’kmaw people, the grandfathers, and the relatives/relations. The fourth part is sung by the entire group and features vocables, set to the same tune as the other parts, with some variation. Thus, the music of a single push-up would be represented by AA<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup>A<sup>3</sup>, with different text for each iteration of the tune. It is the rhythm of the text that necessitates slight variations in the melody to accommodate Mi’kmaw words. Normally this song would be sung four times through. If one were to think of this song in terms of a powwow form, where a lead indicates the start of a new push-up, it would seem as though the group had sung six leads, one on each of A, A<sup>1</sup>, and A<sup>2</sup> (which would also give each member of the group the opportunity to sing a lead before the song was finished). However, they in fact sang through the complete song only twice in this performance. There are no honour beats in this song, and once again the drummers ended it by exclaiming, “Ta’ O!” No additional instrumentation was heard during the performance of this song, nor were female voices heard as the girls danced clockwise around the drum.

While this Gathering Song is referred to as a traditional song (like the Honour Song), it too is understood to be “owned” by George Paul and is featured on his recording *Traditional Micmac Chants* (1991). On this recording, the form of the song is exactly as sung by these young drummers, with two repetitions. Of this song, he says:

At every gathering when our people used to get together, all the relatives would come, and all the grandfathers, and all the aunts and uncles, and all the relations would, we would get together. And this is a chant that is

directed towards all the relations. When we say all our relations we include even the spirit world and all the ones who have passed on in ancient times. And we call them with the beat of the drum and the chant in the song. (*Traditional Micmac Chants* 1991)

A similar recording of Mi'kmaw songs with explanatory materials was *Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door* (n.d) which featured George Paul, James Augustine, Donna Augustine, Joey Paul, Ivan Paul, and Morning Star. Here the Gathering Song is spoken of as if the song itself had existed for many years: "This song was always sung when people got together in large gatherings. And it was to welcome all the people and all the families that gathered there. It was also to welcome all our ancestors that passed on. And we sing this Gathering Song to welcome everyone" (*Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door* [n.d]). This points to the fact that George Paul's Gathering Song was quickly adopted as part of the Mi'kmaw tradition, but it also explains the traditional function of any Gathering Song that may be known and sung by Mi'kmaw people.

Student 3: *Kwe'.* [Hello.] *Ni'n teluisi* Albert. This next song encompasses many beliefs about the nature of music and its relationship to the earth. This is a very strong song, written for females. It is called "Song of the Earth." Enjoy.

Song: "Song of the Earth" (June Boyce-Tillman; contemporary)

In contrast with the limited instrumentation of the first two songs in this presentation, additional sonorities were explored in the contemporary "Song of the Earth." Sung entirely by females, it is accompanied by males with both powwow drum and rattles, as well as a pre-recorded piano accompaniment featuring western harmonies.



Also heard is the Native American flute and a Brazilian rain stick. Instrumentation changes between the verse and chorus of this song, as shown in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3. Instrumentation for "Song of the Earth" as performed by Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers

Intro	Chorus	V 1	Chorus	V 2	Chorus	V 3	Chorus	Coda
piano	group	solo	group	solo	group	solo	group	group
	piano	piano	piano	piano	piano	piano	piano	piano
	flute	drum	flute	drum	flute	drum	flute	flute
	drum		drum		drum		drum	drum
	rattles		rattles		rattles		rattles	rain stick

These changes in instrumentation also create a change in texture and dynamics, which allows for the young female solo voices to be heard over the accompaniment. Interesting is the use of the rain stick in this work. It is used only once at the very end of the coda, signalling the end of the song in a similar way as a drum tremolo might. The Brazilian rain stick is a percussion instrument that is often used in the Se't A'newey classroom. It would seem that the borrowing of instruments from other cultures is more appropriate to contemporary songs, such as this one, than songs referred to as traditional Mi'kmaw songs. As the rain stick recreates the sound of rain, it relates to the lyrics of the song which refer to various elements in nature, such as the mountains, trees, and sky. Thus, the rain stick functions in much the same way that the Native American flute does in this piece, to imitate the sound of birds (loon calls and others). Both are musical imitations of the sounds in nature.

That it is introduced as a strong song specifically for females is striking, made more so with lyrics that link the “Song of the Earth” with life-giving or birth. In such references are associations of women with nature that in some ways harken back to the justifications for preventing women from playing the powwow drum – that they are life-givers, that they already have an established relationship with mother earth and do not ‘need’ the drum as men do (see Diamond et al. 1994, 35; K. Anderson 2000, 177), or that women form a “protective circle” around the drum (Benton Benai 2004). While the specific prohibition is not discussed in the presentation, it is made clear through performance – females do not play or sit at the powwow drum; rather, they dance around it while the men sing *or* they perform physically separated from it on a stage. Females also did not lead push-ups of traditional or intertribal songs. While such gender roles are still fiercely maintained in Miawpukek, as Anna Hoefnagels’ (2007b) research has demonstrated, these gender roles are currently being challenged by some First Nations women throughout North America.

Student 4: *Kwe’ Ni’n teluisi* Sherry. Chief Dan George writes: “I am growing old. There is no promise that life will live up to the hopes of the age. Those who have worn out their shoes many times know that nothing belongs to us. Of what there is, of what you take, you must share.” “Ikwanuté” is one dance that keeps the Mi’kmaq culture alive. We celebrate together the great circle of life. We would like to invite everybody up to sing and dance this piece with us. We will make a circle of friendship as we sing and dance “Ikwanuté.”

Brenda: So anybody who wishes to partake in the circle of friendship may come forward. The girls will lead you.

Song: "Ikwanuté"

The Friendship Song, "Ikwanuté," is the only song in this presentation that does not have a straight (even) beat. Rather, it features an uneven dotted rhythm (♩ ♪). The structure of this song is more similar to that of powwow songs; however, it does not feature the characteristic repeat of the lead found in powwow songs. The opening structure instead maintains the call and response feature of the other traditional Mi'kmaw songs. Thus, the tune for each push-up might be represented as ABA'C, and four push-ups are heard, which tends to be a standard number of push-ups at powwows. As with the Honour Song, a glissando is heard on the final syllable of "Ikwanuté" on each lead (A) and sometimes at the end of B.<sup>67</sup> During this song, the females were scattered throughout the circle of participants from the audience, demonstrating the dance. Many of them were singing while dancing, as were other participants from the audience. Again the song ended with, "Ta' O!"

Like the Honour Song, "Ikwanuté" is not always sung with the use of glissandi on the A section (or the B). Once again, the glissandi are not employed by Eastern Eagle, as well as many other singers who have recorded this song. However, the glissandi are included on recordings by both Free Spirit (1990) and Sons of Membertou (1995), often on the lead (A), but also sometimes on the response to the lead (B). It would seem likely

---

<sup>67</sup> When Sipu'ji'j Drummers sang this song at powwows I attended, they often would turn the glissando into a competition of sorts where each person singing the lead tried to make the glissando last longer than the person before him. Their presentations of this song also would feature rising pitch when a drummer would decide to bring the pitch up by a semi-tone or tone.



that this glissando was learned either by listening to these recordings or through face-to-face interaction during powwows throughout Mi'kma'ki (rather than being cultivated independently by each group). However, it should be noted that the use of glissandi in this way does not normally occur in powwow singing style or powwow (intertribal) repertoire. Thus, when a glissando is employed, it is usually within the context of a traditional Mi'kmaw song.

Student 5: *Weli-kiskik*. My name is Alphonsus. Our next piece is known as an intertribal song called "White Skies." During this song at powwows, all races, ethnic groups, and people of different nationalities, are invited to dance and share the culture with us. Let us share the powwow chant with you. *Weliag*. [It is good.]

Song: "White Skies" (Intertribal)

The closing selection, an intertribal called "White Skies," was comprised entirely of vocables and relates to a more standard powwow form in that it includes a repetition of the lead by the entire group. The phrases of "White Skies" may be represented as AABC. Vennum (1989) and others (such as Nettl 1954) have noted that most powwow or Plains style songs are in a form termed incomplete repetition, in which,

a typical performance consists of a lead singer's introduction, followed by the group repeating his phrase, adding several more phrases in a gradual melodic descent and terminating usually on the lowest tone. The melody is then repeated without its first phrase, the whole of this constituting one statement of the melody. (Vennum 1989, 19)

Thus, incomplete repetition form is often diagrammed as A A' || B C :||.

The structure of "White Skies" satisfies the first part of Vennum's definition;

however, in this performance the subsequent repetition of the melody without its first phrase is not heard. Instead, the lead, A, is sung solo first and then reiterated by the entire group, which then completes the push-up with two subsequent phrases (AABC). In this performance, six push-ups were sung, one for each drummer sitting around the drum.<sup>68</sup> Normally the melodic contour of this song is descending and the song terminates on the lowest pitch; however, in this performance the final phrase (C) was sung at a higher than normal pitch. I expect that this was done to compensate for the boys' unchanged voices which simply do not have the range to encompass the full octave given the tessitura of the song; they cannot sing as low as the song would normally require. Thus, the lowest pitch sounded is that at the end of phrase B. Again, only male voices were heard with the powwow drum and the song ends with an enthusiastic "Ta' O!"

"White Skies" is also known as "White Sky" on a recording by Les Messagers (*Tiens ça simple*, [n.d]) and "Wapna'kik" as recorded by Sons of Membertou (1995). On both of these recordings, the song is sung in the expected incomplete repetition form described by Vennum (1989), and on both recordings the song ends on the lowest pitch of the range, following a descending melodic line. The recording by Sons of Membertou is striking in the tessitura chosen, which is quite high in comparison to the tessitura selected by most eastern drum groups, who often chose to sing at a more moderate

---

<sup>68</sup> It has become standard practice, particularly at contest or competition powwows, to sing four push-ups of each song. This was not always the case; one of Franziska von Rosen's consultants in the 1980s indicated that songs should be sung with either four or seven push-ups (four for the cardinal directions or seven for the cardinal directions plus earth, sun, and moon) (FvR 86/22). This same consultant noted that when a song is for dancing, it could go on for as long as the drummers and dancers wanted.

tessitura than is characteristic of the northern style further west.

Student 6: *Weli-kiskik*. My name is Paul. There is no word in our language for goodbye. Instead we say, "*Nemu'ltis app*," which means, "We will see you later." We have come to the end of our performance and we hope to greet you again someday. We will leave this meeting place with the hope that we have shared an important aspect of our culture with you, our Mi'kmaq language, and cultural music. Music is the universal language of all mankind. Through presentations such as this one, we hope that together we will help educate people of our sacred culture and make them feel welcome and important. *Wela'lioq*, which means, "Thank you to all of you." *Nemu'ltis app*.

Announcer: Miss Brenda and choir, we'd like to thank you for coming by today to share with us your dancing and song. And on behalf of the organizers and everyone here, have a good day and we thank you again.

In this presentation the emphasis on cultural values and pride is evident. The opening comments by the announcer emphasize the spiritual ceremony required to make a new drum, while educating the audience (albeit briefly and in a limited manner) about the construction of the drum. Further, these comments stated the purpose of the presentation – to share Mi'kmaw culture with other Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaw audiences and facilitate cultural understanding through music. Significant is the use of the Mi'kmaw language throughout the presentation, primarily because it is spoken before its English translation and students introduce themselves in their traditional language. As these students are learning Mi'kmaq as a second language and are not yet fluent, the presentation cannot occur entirely in Mi'kmaq. However, a presentation entirely in



Mi'kmaq would be incomprehensible to audiences and limit the group's ability to achieve their goal of cultural sharing. Nevertheless, the use of Mi'kmaw language as each student introduces himself or herself and in songs such as the Honour Song, is an important marker of Mi'kmaw identity in the presentations. It also provides a brief glimpse into Mi'kmaw worldview, by demonstrating that there is no word for goodbye in the Mi'kmaw language, but rather Mi'kmaq say, "Nemu'ltis app" or "I will see you later."<sup>69</sup>

The student-led presentation also instructs on Mi'kmaw values, cultural protocols, and appropriate behaviour. The honouring of ancestors does not only demonstrate a Mi'kmaw value; it also emphasizes the worldview that the spirits of ancestors live on and are present when Mi'kmaq gather to dance, pray, and celebrate. While learning about Mi'kmaw belief, the audience also learns of the now common prohibition on photographs during Honour Songs and the appropriate demonstration of respect during an Honour Song (by standing), both of which apply when attending a powwow. The audience is introduced to terminology such as intertribal and the type of participation permitted during such a song. Further, those who participate in the friendship dance actually learn about Mi'kmaw culture kinesthetically – they embody the dance and song. Thus, such a cultural presentation brings awareness to the behaviours appropriate at gatherings and powwows, and affords the audience greater understanding of cultural practices by

---

<sup>69</sup> Paul Pike suggested a more accurate translation of this expression might be "I'll see you again" (personal communication, May 13, 2008).

participating in them.

The presentation itself demonstrates the multiple influences on Mi'kmaw music and indicates the fluidity of "Mi'kmaw music" as a label. The songs presented here include three songs that are understood and presented as "traditional" Mi'kmaw songs: "Kepmite'tmnej" or the Mi'kmaw Honour Song, "Wejkwitajik" or the Gathering Song, and "Ikwanuté" or the Friendship Song. Interestingly, two of these songs, the Honour Song and the Gathering Song, are owned by George Paul (in the 1980s). Both of these songs are in Mi'kmaq, while "Ikwanuté," I have been told by some, consists of vocables.<sup>70</sup> Stephen Augustine suggested that these lyrics may have had a meaning that was understood in the past and that the words themselves may actually have referred to a swinging movement of the arms (personal communication, November 2, 2006).<sup>71</sup> In addition to these traditional songs, the group performed an intertribal and a contemporary song. Each of these five songs makes use of the powwow drum to greater or lesser degree, and some incorporate Mi'kmaw rattles, Native American flute, and even a rain stick. Thus, Mi'kmaw music in this presentation displays quite a broad understanding of the multiple influences on the Mi'kmaw traditions and culture, which are incorporated into and demonstrated through their music.

---

<sup>70</sup> When distinguishing between singing and chanting at a practice session before the workshops and mini-powwow in May 2006, Brenda Jeddore used "Ikwanuté" as an example of a chant. Brenda indicated that a chant does not use real words and is more spiritual, or in other words, it makes use of vocables to express a feeling (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006).

<sup>71</sup> I have found no other evidence for this.

Table 3.4. Comparison of forms and musical features of songs presented at the Harris Centre Regional Workshop on October 3, 2006.

	Kepmite'tmnej	Wejkwitajik	Song of the Earth	Ikwanuté	White Skies
Category	Honour Song	Gathering Song	n/a	Friendship Song	Intertribal
Form of one push-up*	AABCC <sup>1</sup>	A <sup>1</sup> A <sup>2</sup> A <sup>3</sup> A <sup>4</sup>	verse-chorus	ABA <sup>1</sup> C	AABC
# of repetitions	2	2	3	4	6
Range	A3 – C5	D4 – C5	B <sup>b</sup> 3 – E <sup>b</sup> 5	D <sup>b</sup> 4 – B4	C <sup>3</sup> – D <sup>b</sup> 5 **
Instrumentation	flute + powwow drum	powwow drum	rattles, powwow drum, rainstick, piano	powwow drum	powwow drum
Tempo	156 bpm	160 bpm	70 bpm	78 bpm	148 bpm
Tail or coda?	no	no	yes	no	no
Honour Beats?	yes (B and C <sup>1</sup> )	no	no	no	no
Closing pattern?	drum pattern	drum pattern	rain stick	no	drum pattern
Ta'O! to end?	yes	yes	no	yes	yes
Language	Mi'kmaq + vocables	Mi'kmaq + vocables	English	vocables	vocables
Origin	George Paul	George Paul	Contemporary, June Boyce-Tillman	Trad.	Intertribal (Eastern)

\* or verse

\*\* normally this song would go a third lower, to A3

### 3.5 "The Spirits Drive"

Over the past two decades, the musical life of Mi'kmaq in Miawpukek has been greatly fortified through the efforts of many key community members and Mi'kmaq



residing in other areas of Mi'kma'ki. Some continuity is observed between the initial teachings given to Miawpukek by a Mi'kmaw drum group in 1987, the teachings given to students by their music teacher over the years, and the teachings given to non-Mi'kmaw delegates at a workshop by elementary students in 2006. Gender roles around the drum are maintained, while the metaphor of the drum as heartbeat also continues as a central tenet. Teachings of how drums are made, the appropriate protocols to follow, and the ceremony involved remain important aspects of traditional knowledge that must be understood before one becomes a drummer. The emphasis on learning through oral means, whether through a workshop, at a powwow, or in a school's music room, indicates the cultural value placed on oral culture and oral modes of transmission, and results in variations in musical structure and singing style.

It is clear that the cultural workshop format remains an effective means of sharing aspects of culture, even twenty years after the initial workshops were held. The shift, however, has been to a more locally-based system in which community members who have gained competence in various aspects of Mi'kmaw culture and tradition over the past twenty years now serve as the facilitators of workshops in their own community. This is a great source of pride for those who have dedicated themselves to bringing (back) First Nations and Mi'kmaw traditions to Mi'kma'ki. When I told Birch Creek Singers at the Elsipogtog powwow in 2006 that I was researching how powwow came to Miawpukek, the members exclaimed with great enthusiasm: "We brought it to them!" (personal communication, September 1, 2006).

A significant shift in the representation of powwow as tradition, however, is also observed. While the 1980s “traditionalists” active in the (re-)introduction of musical traditions largely acknowledged the cultural borrowing and innovation in which they participated, today powwow is represented as a Mi’kmaq tradition. After 20 years of intensive efforts by many Mi’kmaq from several different communities, perhaps powwow has become tradition, just as it has become curriculum. For her own efforts, Brenda Jeddore could only say that something greater was driving her and responsible for the results:

I’m doing it. Like everything else I do, the spirits drive. I’m telling you, here the spirits drive. No, no, I really believe it. I was here, I was put here for a purpose. How else would I survive teaching music for 25 years? Can’t read a note. It’s impossible, it’s impossible. It’s spirit driven. Absolutely, that’s true. (Personal communication, May 18, 2006)

Here Brenda is revealing a Euro-centric socialization, one in which the ability to “read” music is valued, one that she has overcome. As Brenda indicates, it was the continued efforts of many with spirit guides and a vision for the cultural future of the Mi’kmaq people that eventually led to the organization of an annual community powwow in Miawpukek and spawned the creation of the community drum group, Sipu’ji’j Drummers (discussed in Chapter Four).

### 3.6 *Localization Strategies In Se’t A’newey School*

The preceding description has traced the history of powwow in Mi’kma’ki and demonstrated the key role of the school in cultural revitalization efforts in Miawpukek,

Newfoundland, both as the locus for the historic sharings of the Birch Creek Singers, who brought powwow to Miawpukek and Mi'kma'ki more generally, and through the localization of powwow, which has become part of Se't A'newey's music curriculum. This space of cultural activity is half of the first case study, focussed specifically on status Mi'kmaq in the rural part of the province. (The second half of this case study, which centres on the annual powwow in the community, follows in Chapters Four and Five.)

There are several points to be drawn out from the preceding description that will prove significant as they recur or are contrasted throughout this study. The first is negotiation of a cultural preference for oral transmission and the (sometimes necessary) role of technology. Members of the Birch Creek Singers were adamant that traditions be learned through oral means and not from books. The Cultural Days program at Se't A'newey school has focussed on bringing tradition bearers into the classroom to share with students, rather than relying on printed or otherwise published resources (such as recordings). In music classes, while teacher Brenda Jeddore may learn songs or the parts to songs by listening to recordings herself, she does not use these as a means of teaching songs to her students. Instead, they learn them by rote. Jeddore employs this teaching strategy because it is an effective means of engaging students in a way that simply listening to recordings in a classroom might not. Further, for many of these songs, such as the Snake Dance, while there may be transcriptions of the text in Mi'kmaq, there are



not transcriptions of musical notation.<sup>72</sup> While such musical transcriptions<sup>73</sup> could be commissioned, as Brenda has noted, she does not read music. Rote is likely the process through which Jeddore herself learned music while attending Catholic schools as a youth, as it was commonly employed in choral singing classes. With textual transcriptions, students learn to recognize the sounds of the Mi'kmaw language and pronunciation is corrected in class. Nevertheless, this does not preclude the use of recordings in the classroom or in performance, particularly in terms of piano accompaniment for choral or contemporary works. Accompaniment CDs are a practical solution to the problem of not always having access to a pianist who can play for the choir. Thus, the tension between when recordings are used and when they are not is a function of several concerns: cultural preference for a particular mode of transmission, effective modes of teaching in a classroom, and practical considerations, such as the ability to read scores and play piano.

As has been noted, the implementation of a Mi'kmaw language program was one of the first initiatives undertaken when the band took control of the school system. While the school has been successful in constructing a basic Mi'kmaw language curriculum, due to time constraints resulting from the need to meet other educational requirements,

---

<sup>72</sup> These transcriptions are written in the Smith-Francis orthography, not in phonetics. The school obtained permission to transcribe these texts where appropriate from those people who created (or received) the songs, such as the Denny family, Donna Augustine, and George Paul.

<sup>73</sup> Musical transcriptions are in use in other Mi'kmaw schools among music teachers who do read music; for example, in Eskasoni, NS, and transcriptions appear in the autobiography of Rita Joe (1996), as she felt that musical transcriptions have high pedagogical value (Gordon Smith, personal communication, June 19, 2008). Such musical transcriptions, she felt, would "make the songs accessible to a broad, inclusive audience" (Smith and Alstrup 1995).

the school is not yet able to devote enough time in the schedule to produce fluent Mi'kmaq-speaking students. Basic expressions, such as "My name is . . ." or "I'll see you," as well as vocabulary, such as the days of the week or colours, provide only an introduction to the Mi'kmaw language. Music class, which focusses primarily on singing, is an important space in which students actually use the Mi'kmaw language, for it is largely not spoken in the community of Miawpukek.<sup>74</sup> While students may have an understanding of the meaning of songs, few have the linguistic skills to translate them directly. In presentations by the choir, Mi'kmaq is used as a marker of identity as students introduce themselves in their own language first. Such presentations, however, do not occur entirely in the Mi'kmaw language. This is partly because the students are not fluent in the language (although, they certainly would be capable of learning and memorizing the brief sections of text if this was desired). It is worth remembering a practical aspect and purpose of this presentation – to share their culture with others. A presentation constructed entirely in Mi'kmaq would not be comprehensible to most, both in the specific example of attendees at a Regional workshop in Bay D'Espoir, and more generally in the community of Miawpukek, where Mi'kmaq is not widely known or used.

Thus, while the school may not be cultivating a functional fluency in the language, I would suggest, as Szego (2003) has in a Hawaiian context, that the sound and

---

<sup>74</sup> I noticed this during my research once I attended a powwow in New Brunswick as a point of comparison. During my research in Miawpukek, I initially did not notice that almost everyone around me at the powwow was speaking English, except for a few visitors from away (such as the emcee). However, when I attended the powwow in New Brunswick, and later in Eskasoni, the increased use of Mi'kmaq was marked – it was, in fact, rare to hear the people around me speaking in English.

use of the Mi'kmaw language is meaningful, even if it is not comprehensible by those singing it (or those listening to it). Indigenous languages possess "considerable symbolic significance" (Szego 2003, 316) even if they hold no denotative meaning for singers or listeners. As Berger has noted, "native languages or regional dialects may be iconic of the colonized peoples or marginalized groups that speak them; songs set in such languages may function as a powerful affirmation of identity for their singers and listeners" (2003, xiv). This holds especially true for songs such as "I'ko" or the Kwanuté songs (of which there are several versions). Linguist Bernie Francis has noted that these songs have no semantic meaning in the present (though they may be composed of archaic word forms that are no longer understood); rather, they are expressions of feeling in the moment that they are sung (see Christmas 1980, 11-12). As songs that are considered to be traditionally Mi'kmaw,<sup>75</sup> they are vocalizations of a Mi'kmaw identity.

The ways of talking about the drum and song repertoire are significant in this case study, as there are both continuities and discontinuities between the initial teachings by the Birch Creek Singers and the teachings in the current school system. Teachings about the powwow drum given by the Birch Creek Singers are similar in many ways to those teachings that accompany the hand drum. Both invoke the cultural symbol of the eagle (*Kitpu*), but in slightly different ways. For the Birch Creek Singers, the eagle along with the ancestors watched over the Mi'kmaw people and saw their actions towards Mother

---

<sup>75</sup> It should be duly noted that the Passamaquoddy also have Kwanute (Kwanotey) songs, a genre of welcoming songs (see von Rosen forthcoming). Thus, the genre may actually be a regional one specific to the Wabenaki.



Earth, seemingly suggesting that people should be aware of how they conduct themselves, both around the drum and in daily life. In Brenda Jeddore's music class, the eagle is described as the protector of Wabenaki children, but without implication for children's actions. Early teachings asserted that by singing with the drum, the members were praying to *Kisu'lk*, the Creator. While the more recent teachings do not explicitly suggest that drummers are praying with their drums, they do include the notion of blessing the four directions. Teachings of the four directions have become an important metaphor in many First Nations communities and have been adopted by Mi'kmaq. In both sets of teachings, it was important to acknowledge that an animal's life was taken to provide skin for the drum. In return, the Birch Creek Singers noted that those making drums should fast. While a similar notion is not present in the making of hand drums, Brenda did note that a fast is part of the process followed when the grade five boys make their own powwow drum under the guidance of the Chief. Finally, the comparison of the drumbeat to the heartbeat of Mother Earth was presented both by the Birch Creek Singers and by the grade nine girls in a workshop on the day of the mini-powwow. There is continuity observed, then, between some of the teachings about the drum given by the Birch Creek Singers and those now taught via music curriculum at the Se't A'newey School.

A point of interest and contention is that of the presence of a drum at all. Presentations by the Birch Creek Singers were clear in asserting that the powwow drum, and even hand drums as we now know them, were not historically part of Mi'kmaw

culture. Rather, rattles, birch bark, and a wooden dish-like instrument (see Diamond et al. 1994, 76) were used as time keepers when singing. Current displays of Mi'kmaw culture unproblematically employ these drums, as well as other instruments, without explicit acknowledgement of their historic place in the culture. While in the introduction to the presentation at the Harris Centre Regional Workshop the announcer states, "The group uses the men's two-headed caribou drum, skin drum, and a variety of traditional rhythm instruments," there is nothing to overtly suggest that the two-headed (powwow) drum is not also a traditional instrument. Nothing, however, is said of the Native American flute (a Plains style cedar flute that is not traditional to the Mi'kmaq<sup>76</sup>) and the Brazilian rain stick (which, in the workshop prior to the mini-powwow was referred to as an instrument found in many different cultures). This eclectic combination of instruments, then, is unproblematically presented in some contemporary displays of Mi'kmaw culture.

The ways in which song genres and repertoire are discussed differ between the early teachings and current presentations by students at the school. In the 1980s when the Birch Creek Singers were sharing song repertoires throughout Mi'kma'ki, they presented both the drum and songs as tradition while acknowledging the borrowed nature of both.

---

<sup>76</sup> While there are many Mi'kmaw stories of Mi'kmwesu, a flute-playing trickster figure, there are no flutes (or flute recordings) found in archives. Instead, it appears that small whistles may have been used in Mi'kmaw culture historically. Tuck (1976, 238) has described whistles made of bird bones, as well as small flute-like instruments of 15-20cm in length, at an archeological site in Port au Choix, Newfoundland. However, this site has archeological evidence of the Maritime Archaic, Dorset, Groswater Paleoeskimo, and Recent Indians. The whistles he describes were found in Locus II, a Maritime Archaic burial site. While some Mi'kmaq assert that their ancestors were the Maritime Archaic, and others suggest they were the ancestors of the Beothuk, this link has not yet been proven through the study of material culture. The only visual evidence to suggest flutes in this culture is an image from 1845 in the Mi'kmaq Portraits Collection (see: <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq/>, image # MP0160; also Library and Archives Canada C-116273).

In the presentation for the Harris Centre Regional Workshop, the “youngest traditional performance group on the reserve” (see transcription above) presented five songs. Comments such as, “We will leave this meeting place with the hope that we have shared an important aspect of our culture with you, our Mi’kmaw language and cultural music,” locate all of the preceding musical selections within a Mi’kmaw tradition. Of the five songs presented, only “White Skies” is singled out with an identification of the genre or song type – intertribal. “Song of the Earth,” one could argue based on the use of English language, western harmony, and the diverse instrumentation, is somewhat obviously contemporary or non-traditional. The other three songs presented, however, are not obviously identifiable in a similar way. Instead, there is an ambiguity created by both leaving the genre or song type unidentified and not acknowledging the person who “owns” two of the songs (George Paul), and this absence of information leads to the implication that they must be traditional and/or local songs. So, “Ikwanuté,” a traditional Mi’kmaw song which makes use of vocables, is presented next to two Mi’kmaw songs in the Mi’kmaw language for which a composer is known, without any distinction made between the two types of song. These two songs, even if they are spoken of as ancient, are known to have been received (or created, depending on how you understand the process) in the 1980s.

Consider the way in which a variety of sources talk about the Gathering Song: juxtaposed with the performance by the choir, they demonstrate a discourse of ancient songs that are actually rather new. This does not suggest that the song types themselves



are new, but that the particular version may be quite new.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the way in which people talk about particular songs may “link the performance to a particular perceived past” (Bealle 1993, 64). However, I would suggest that what is not said in a given performance is just as relevant. And audiences may be generally inclined to interpret the unfamiliar as “tradition” unless guided to do otherwise. As Sarkissian (2000) has noted, notions of “our music” may in fact display great diversity, encompassing music that was rediscovered (from variously published sources) and passed on orally, and music that was created anew and passed on in a similar way (89). Through a process of “domestication,” the particular pasts of specific songs are conflated and in some ways erased, becoming “part of the larger story residents tell about themselves and, ultimately, contribute in their own small way to the rewriting of history” (Sarkissian 2000, 101-2). In some ways, there is a rewriting of Mi’kmaw musical and cultural history that may be important in some understandings of authenticity, history, and tradition. The Miawpukek narratives might be said to illustrate, as Tony Mitchell has stated, that “notions of musical purity and authenticity are an idealistic form of colonialist nostalgia” (1993: 335). Nevertheless, unproblematic usage of the term “traditional” must be critically considered when studying current musical practices of the Mi’kmaq.

While the discourse blurs distinctions between musical sources, aspects of form and performance style are often better indications of the localized histories of songs.

---

<sup>77</sup>For example, the Snake Dance is understood to be an old genre and was recorded by Speck. However, as Franziska von Rosen has noted, due to the poor condition of the recording, Tom Paul of Birch Creek Singers created a new version (see von Rosen, forthcoming).

They may also reflect specific lines of transmission. Selections that are understood to be traditional Mi'kmaw songs, such as the Gathering Song or "Ikwanuté," have a structure and form unlike that of powwow repertoire. Often the lead is not repeated by the group, nor is the second half of the form repeated (an element of incomplete repetition form). Form is also fairly fluid, meaning that the form heard in a particular performance of a song may be different from another (in terms of the repetition of sections). The number of push-ups sung of any given selection also remains unfixed in contrast to the expectation of four push-ups in powwow music. While eastern songs are mostly sung at a more moderate tessitura than northern style powwow singing, practical considerations may necessitate a change in the melodic contour where young voices do not yet have the range to perform a particular song. A glissando may be featured at the end of the lead or incipit of a Mi'kmaw song (and the response to it in some cases); however, this is not found in powwow or intertribal singing. While additional sonorities may be explored in contemporary music, traditional and intertribal repertoires are generally limited to percussion instruments of drums and rattles. Finally, Mi'kmaw songs heard in this case study end with the exclamation "Ta'O!" which is not normally heard at a Mi'kmaw powwow. Of the repertoire included in this study of music in the school, all except one employed either the Mi'kmaw language or vocables. Thus, it would seem that this combination of elements and features would help to identify a local or regional singing style, while distinguishing traditional or newly-composed Mi'kmaw songs from songs of other origins. However, it must be noted that the song repertoire cultivated in music

classes and by the school's choir exhibits great diversity and includes, for example, Catholic hymns and other choral works.

Another important marker of identity employed is that of dress. For choirs, it has become convention that all members dress in the same outfit (or at least similar colours and styles). The members of the Se't A'newey Elementary Drummers and Dancers, however, wore a variety of regalia styles that have become popular at powwows. For example, the females wore either buckskin dresses with beadwork or fancy shawl regalia, two female regalia styles that are most common at the Miawpukek powwow (see Chapter Four). The dress of males also displayed variety in that they either wore ribbon shirts,<sup>78</sup> buckskin vests, or shirts with fringe. Other elements, such as moccasins, medicine pouches, and chokers were worn. While none of this dress is specifically Mi'kmaw or what has come to be understood as traditional Mi'kmaw regalia (see Chapter Five), the beadwork on the buckskin vests employed a Mi'kmaq-specific motif – the double-curve. Thus, while regalia style itself may signal borrowing from other nations, the way in which it is embellished may identify it (or the person wearing it) as Mi'kmaw.

One of the important ways in which tradition was invoked in the discourse of performance was in relation to gender. In the 1980s, the Birch Creek Singers taught that women did not play the powwow drum and that women who were menstruating were

---

<sup>78</sup> Cloth shirts, usually made with brightly patterned material and often decorated with satin ribbons.



powerful enough to harm the drum.<sup>79</sup> The restrictions on women continue to be taught today. Females do not beat the powwow drum, nor do they sing leads in traditional songs. As Brenda indicated, even the youngest children know that “the Mi’kmaw drum is not for women” (Brenda Jeddore, personal communication, May 18, 2006). And yet in some ways the preceding description of cultural activities in Miawpukek conflicts with widely held understandings of the role of women in powwow. While teachings of the powwow drum were given primarily by males during the 1980s (members of the Birch Creek Singers), in the present, those teaching powwow in the school system are largely female teachers (Brenda Jeddore, Tammy Drew, the two grade nine students). The presence of a female emcee at the mini-powwow may also disrupt expectations for women’s participation in this musical genre.<sup>80</sup> Women do not normally take on these types of roles at powwows (Anna Hoefnagels, personal communication, February 3, 2008; Christopher Scales, personal communication, March 2, 2008). So, while traditions of gender restrictions in terms of performing powwow music may be observed, other common gender restrictions are not. This may suggest an inversion of expectations that might be based on a more inclusive attitude towards the participation of women in powwow. In this case, a single powwow context would simultaneously maintain expectations for gender roles and subvert them (Sugarman 1989). Alternatively, the presence of a female

---

<sup>79</sup> It should be noted that the public story of gender roles around the drum may have been different in practice, perhaps for instructional reasons (Franziska von Rosen, personal communication, June 23, 2008).

<sup>80</sup> At the 2004 powwow in Miawpukek, though there was a male emcee for the event, a female announcer introduced all of the dancers during Grand Entry.

emcee may be indicative of a practical consideration, such as knowledge of the event and dances, knowledge of those participating in the Grand Entry, and so on, given that the emcee for the annual powwow travels to Miawpukek from a community on the Mainland.

Also of note is the way in which Brenda Jeddore seems to exist outside of common gender restrictions in terms of playing the drum, as well as being present in the arbour when not singing. She explains that she is permitted to play the powwow drum because she is “instructional.” Indeed, in this case, it may be that the category of “teacher” supercedes or is prioritized over that of gender, allowing Brenda access to events and communication modes that would not normally be open to a female in this context (see Moisala and Diamond 2000, 8). Indeed, it may be that there is a set of responsibilities, including that for the continuity of tradition, that overrides gender restrictions. In Mi’kmaw culture women have often acted as cultural mediators with outsiders (Diamond 2008, 80),<sup>81</sup> and, indeed, the revival of Nation-specific songs in Mi’kma’ki was led by a woman, the late Sarah Denny, who collected and transmitted traditional songs to younger generations. Women’s performances in all of these roles, then, both conform to expectations for gender roles and subvert the same. As Sugarman (1989) has noted, performance may be determined by and reflect gender roles in a particular cultural tradition, but it may also have the power to “[suggest] ways in which they may be refined or revised” (206). Performance can be many things at once, “[embodying] simultaneously the full range of opposing attributes” associated with

---

<sup>81</sup> See Kidwell (1992) for a more general consideration of this issue.

gender (Sugarman 1989, 206). While the preceding description suggests simultaneous and conflicting notions of gender roles surrounding powwow in this local context, gender restrictions are re-emphasized when considering the all-male Sipu`ji`j Drummers and annual community powwows held in Mi`kma`ki, discussed in the next chapter.



## **Chapter Four**

### **Making Powwow Local: The Community Drum and Powwow**

Through the Cultural Days program (discussed in Chapter Three), students of Se't A'newey School and members of the Miawpukek community were exposed to Nation-specific music, localized powwow music, and related (sometimes localized) aspects of culture. Less than ten years later, the first community drum group was formed and the community hosted its first annual powwow in conjunction with an international conference on traditional medicine. Clyde Ellis (2003) has noted that the cultural form known as powwow combines in complex ways notions of both pastness and modernity, as well as both shared and Nation-specific values:

Clearly linked to pre-reservation societies, institutions, and practices, but also molded by modern values and needs, powwow culture reflects a considerable fund of cultural capital. It is a deeply complicated institution, simultaneously binding people from different communities, tribes, and traditions together even as it enforces social and cultural codes and relationships that are connected to tribally specific practices. (Clyde Ellis 2003, 6)

The present consideration of powwow will illuminate this complex interplay between notions of pastness and modernity, between local practices and those that are more widely observed by many First Nations. It will demonstrate that the strong community base at Miawpukek is positioned to respond deeply to the powwow's capacity, particularly through processes of localization manifesting in sonic and visual elements.

The following chapter traces the development of the community drum group and

the ways in which they learned repertoire, as well as some of the protocols they followed as a group and their views regarding the importance of the drum for the community. An ethnography of the local annual powwow follows (drawn from fieldwork conducted between 2004 and 2007), as well as consideration of how this traditional powwow compares to other powwows in Mi'kma'ki. Specifically, the Miawpukek traditional powwow will be compared to a contest powwow held in Elsipogtog, New Brunswick. Within this description will be transcriptions of prayers and other speech acts that occur during Mi'kmaw powwows and serve to localize the event. In Miawpukek, prayers or invocations are normally translated to English or are said in a combination of English and Mi'kmaq because the population for the most part is not fluent in Mi'kmaq; however, in Elsipogtog (as with Eskasoni), prayers, invocations, and speeches largely occur in Mi'kmaq without translation.

After describing both powwows generally and drawing conclusions as to some characteristics of Mi'kmaw powwows, I will focus specifically on a speech act that occurred during powwows in Miawpukek. Analysis of such "stage talk" (Bealle 1993) will demonstrate the way in which more globally-accepted values, such as the prohibition of drugs and alcohol at powwows, may be localized, spoken of in terms of a "traditional way," and constructed as part of First Nations' identity. Such speech acts are used to invoke pastness through language of the "traditional way" and serve to educate both Native and non-Native participants and attendees at a Mi'kmaq powwow. Further, they indicate the way in which seemingly "pan-Indian," or more appropriately termed

intertribal, activities can be viewed as an expression of Mi'kmaw culture. To conclude, I will summarize the localization strategies arising from this case study, through the use of the Mi'kmaw language, speech acts, and gender roles. Analysis of repertoire, dance and singing styles, and regalia common to Mi'kmaw powwows will follow in Chapter Five.

#### 4.1 *The Sipu'ji'j Drummers*

The Sipu'ji'j Drummers sat under the arbour at the Miawpukek powwow for nine years, beginning with the first official community powwow held in July of 1996. This event coincided with a conference on traditional medicine and healing hosted by the Miawpukek Health and Social Services Department in the community July 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup>. Inspired by an international traditional medicine conference<sup>1</sup> held in St. John's two years earlier, the conference in Miawpukek sought to create a space for the "sharing of information among *all* peoples interested in traditional and newer forms of alternative/complementary care" with an Aboriginal focus and perspective (qtd in. Phil Jeddore 1996b, 1). Participants from around the world gathered to hear presentations, view films, and participate in spiritual walks, sweatlodge ceremonies, and sunrise ceremonies (*ibid.*). This three-day conference was immediately followed by the community's first powwow.

An event some six months in the making and funded through the efforts of the

---

<sup>1</sup> This conference was the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference of Traditional Medicine and Folklore, held in St. John's, Newfoundland, August 18-21, 1994. Its proceedings were published by Memorial University's Faculty of Medicine in 1998.



planning committee, whose fund-raising events included a community car wash, the first powwow in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador began on July 5, 1996 with emcees Mike Doucette and Albert Jackpine guiding the event (Phil Jeddore 1996e, 13; Phil Jeddore 1996a, 6). Drums present for this first powwow included Kitpu and Free Spirit from Nova Scotia, Eastern Wind from New Brunswick, and Miawpukek's community Drum.<sup>2</sup> Philip Jeddore's description in *The Coaster* describes an event similar to that experienced a decade later, with dancing, singing, ceremonies, craft vendors, and food vendors selling caribou, moose, and salmon meals (1996a, 6). Of the sweatlodge ceremonies, he writes: "There was even an all night Sweat, which only the most daring or most fervent traditionalists take part in. First timers who took part in this ceremony were all admired for their faith and perseverance" (*ibid.*).

Jeddore also wrote about the importance and potential impact of this powwow, while briefly rebutting what appears to have been some early criticism of the powwow as non-traditional:

Many think, however that the stability of the positive impact of this Pow Wow will be the beginning of Miawpukek's positive growth.

Maybe now, being native will be normal and natural. For the skeptics who dismiss this event as "Hollywood" or "foreign", the goodness that even the non natives "could feel in the air" was real. And it was natural. And it was normal. It was aboriginal. And it was Mi'kmaq! (*ibid.*)

Now more than a decade old, the Miawpukek powwow has become an annual event in the community.

---

<sup>2</sup> The term "Drum" may be used to refer to a drum group, while "drum" refers to the instrument.

This annual event and the community drum group named Sipu'ji'j<sup>3</sup> had their genesis in the Cultural Days program at the Se't A'newey School (see Chapter Three). Present at the 1987 series of cultural workshops was Tony Drew, who became a founding member of the community Drum Sipu'ji'j Drummers.<sup>4</sup> In his early teens at the time, Tony recounted this early experience with First Nations music:

When I was around thirteen years old, the drum group that was there at today's [2005] powwow – the Birch Creek Singers – they had a visit to Conne River. And one of the guys in the group stayed at my house, my mom's house. And I was only a teenager and he brought out the drum and started teaching me. So that's the little bit of knowledge I had before we started Sipu'ji'j. (Tony Drew, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

It was not until 1996 that he was inspired, along with other members of the community, to establish a community-based drum group. A mini-powwow held on February 15<sup>th</sup> of that year brought guests from Elsipogtog, New Brunswick and Eskasoni, Nova Scotia to the community once again to instruct on powwow etiquette and protocols through a series of seminars and a mini-powwow (Phil Jeddore 1996d, 1). This event was held in anticipation of the upcoming first annual powwow in Miawpukek and provided the impetus for several young men in the community to form their own drum group. Originally referred to as "Miawpukek's own Mi'kmaq Drummers" in coverage of the first powwow, this group later became known as the Sipu'ji'j Drummers (Phil Jeddore

---

<sup>3</sup> Sipu'ji'j means little river or brook.

<sup>4</sup> At the time that I began my research in Summer 2004, Sipu'ji'j Drummers were active. However, when I returned to conduct interviews in Summer 2005, several members, including Tony Drew and Rod Jeddore, had left the group. By May 2006, the remaining members had retired the drum and given it to the young drummers at Se't A'newey School, in the hope that they would continue on.

1996a, 6; Rod Jeddore, personal communication, April 13, 2007).

About ten men formed the original group and participated in the construction of the powwow drum in Miawpukek. At that time, Randy Augustine from Big Cove, New Brunswick was living in Miawpukek and was asked to lend a hand. He acted as a mentor and shared some songs with the group. Tony explained: "He taught us a few songs and then we gathered up other songs from different groups at the following powwow and began to learn them" (personal communication, July 2, 2005). While an effort was made to learn songs from a knowledgeable person or drum group through oral means, other methods were sometimes necessary. In its early stages, recordings proved valuable, especially for traditional Mi'kmaw songs. Rod Jeddore, who joined the group upon returning to the community post-university, noted that the Denny Family recording by the Kitpu singers called *Mi'kmaq Chants* (1995) was essential, as was Free Spirit's *Micmac (Mi'kmaq) Songs* (1990). The group would also learn songs from other Drums attending the Miawpukek powwow, sometimes by recording their songs to learn them for the next powwow season. Rod noted that one method of learning songs would be to take a recording and have each member of the Drum learn one song, and then teach it to the rest of the group (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005). This method was more productive than having everyone learn all of the songs at once. It also entrusted the responsibility for learning new songs to each member of the group.





Figure 4.1. The Sipu'ji'j Drummers at the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Powwow in Miawpukek (2005).

Tony Drew quickly emerged as leader. When the group was forming, Drew says he was chosen early on to fulfill the role of lead drummer because he showed the most interest at the time and was more outspoken than the others; he did not mind leading songs in front of a crowd. Tony explained:

The rest of the guys in the group decided I would be head drummer because I showed the most interest at the time. And where I was good friends with the guy from New Brunswick, a lot of my teachings were more firsthand. So they decided I would probably be head drummer. Well, for one thing, I was more outspoken and whatnot. So I didn't mind leading a song if I was in a crowd and whatnot. (Drew, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

Tony also pointed to his previous experience and knowledge gleaned from spending time

with a member of Birch Creek Singers a decade earlier as a factor leading to this decision.

As lead drummer, Drew was responsible for maintaining the harmony or balance between the drum and the voices, choosing which songs to sing, leading the songs, or determining when to end the song. While in some Drums it is also the responsibility of the lead drummer or another individual to care for the drum, the Sipu'ji'j Drummers made this a shared role among all members who were entrusted with protecting and honouring the drum at all times and especially during powwows. He explained the serious nature of this responsibility, drawing an analogy to parenting:

The care of the drum is a big responsibility 'cause basically when you're at a gathering, you care for a drum like you care for a child. You protect it, you honour it, you make sure no one else harms the drum, or whatever. You gotta know when to cover the drum or how to act in a certain manner around the drum. [. . .] When I was there, it was a shared role for a while. I initially started it and it was quite difficult at times. [. . .] When you get into a situation when there's alcohol or something around, you gotta make sure it is covered properly. You have to not take it around alcohol or drugs because it is a spiritual thing and not an instrument as such. (Drew, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

Further, the nature of drumming itself is serious and spiritual. Drew impressed upon me the fact that, "It's not really a performance," but rather an act of educating and teaching the listeners when the Drum sings (*ibid.*).

Rod Jeddore was away at university when the group formed and its early structure and traditions were established, but was introduced to the group when he returned to the

community to conduct research on language acquisition.<sup>5</sup> In the beginning, members of the drum group “were singing songs that they didn’t know the meaning of,” Rod explained (personal communication, July 2, 2005). Given his advanced knowledge of the Mi’kmaw language, Rod saw this as a space in which he could share his knowledge and talents with the community:

I thought it’d be nice if I just came back and sat down with them and said, “You know, this is a bit of what the songs are saying.” And so I said better than just sit down and explain the songs, I’d give drumming a try. And they were really interested in my songs. And I was drumming, and my brother was drumming at that time, and Tony, we grew up together, so he thought I would be a good fit. So I said to the boys, “When I get back, I’ll give it a shot.” And that’s what I did. When I got back, I sat down and the boys asked me to come out drumming and I started. I’ve never stopped ‘til this year [2005]. (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

The repertoire sung by Sipu’ji’j largely consisted of what is termed traditional Mi’kmaw songs, as reflected on their recording *Miawpukek* (2000).<sup>6</sup> Traditional songs were primarily learned from the recordings of the Denny Family (Kitpu) and Free Spirit. From the Denny Family recording, the group learned “Wejkwitajik,” the Honour Song, the Snake Dance, and “Kwe Kisu’lkw” (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005). Rod explained, “We were a traditional Drum, so we stuck more to the traditional songs” (*ibid.*). These traditional Mi’kmaw songs were largely in the Mi’kmaw language

---

<sup>5</sup> His master’s thesis was titled “Investigating the Restoration of the Mi’kmaq Language and Culture on the First Nations Reserve of Miawpukek” (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 2000).

<sup>6</sup> The *Miawpukek* CD is one of four case studies in Diamond’s (2005) investigation of the recording practices of Native American musicians and the relations of production into which musicians enter in the recording process.



or incorporated vocables. Rod noted that a great deal of powwow repertoire consists of intertribals, which come from Cree and other western Nations: “Until recently, when Eastern Eagle started making intertribals that were more Mi’kmaq-based, most of the intertribals were Cree-based” (*ibid.*). In describing the songs sung by Sipu’ji’j, Drew said they were songs that “[make] you feel good inside” and are “strong, spiritual, and knowledgeable” (personal communication, July 2, 2005). Drew’s favourite style to sing, however, is the intertribal. He explains, “I love doing intertribals. [. . .] It gives you that good inner feeling, like a spiritual high. Gets the blood flowing. The beat is there and you can watch the dancers dance as you sing” (*ibid.*).

One of the group’s achievements that inspires the most pride is the creation of their own song. The “Community Song” was the product of a group effort to create a song specific to Miawpukek. It benefited from consultation with Joel Denny of Eskasoni, who assisted with translation of the song into the Mi’kmaw language. This community song, titled “Miawpukek,” is striking in structure and range. Like many of the traditional Mi’kmaw songs, this one makes use of minimal musical material and is based on only two phrases that are repeated (each A in the form below consists of ab). Further, the form is unlike that of many northern style songs in that it does not begin with a lead; rather, the entire group sings vocables. An extra A section (called A<sup>1</sup> below) is added at the start of the second push-up (and subsequent push-ups) that incorporates Mi’kmaw text in a call-and-response structure, followed by the four iterations of A using vocables.

Table 4.1. Community Song by Sipu'ji'j Drummers.

Song:	Miawpukek
Sung by:	Sipu'ji'j Drummers
Category	unknown (possibly used as intertribal)
Form of one push-up	AAAA (first push-up) A'AAAA (subsequent push-ups)
# of repetitions	4
Range	E♭3 – E♭4
Instrumentation	powwow drum + rattles
Tempo	156 bpm
Tail or coda?	no
Honour beats?	yes (fourth A)
Closing pattern?	no
Language	vocables + Mi'kmaq
Origins	Mi'kmaq; Sipu'ji'j Drummers in Miawpukek

This song, then, though newly composed, maintains a structure common to those songs referred to as traditional Mi'kmaw songs, including the Gathering Song by George Paul (see Chapter Three) and some of the Ko'jua songs, such as “Jukwa'luk Kkwe'ji'juow” (see Chapter Five). It also employs a vocal range that is lower and narrower than the majority of northern style powwow songs.

The creation of this song was one of the factors that lead to the *Miawpukek* CD, recorded in conjunction with the Se't A'newey Mi'kmaq Choir. The goals of the

recording were to create something that would represent the groups involved and the community, and to produce something that they could all feel good about (Drew, personal communication, July 2, 2005). The two groups consulted with each other and decided which songs each would sing, so that there would be no duplication on the CD. Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe also played a role in the production of the recording, securing the appropriate permissions needed to record some traditional Mi'kmaw songs and songs that were created by George Paul and Donna Augustine (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005).

Even when a drum group sings songs at a powwow with no one recording them, they still must follow protocol to obtain permission to sing the songs of others. Rod Jeddore explained that the group would offer tobacco at a powwow to sing another group's songs. He chuckled as he recalled the group's overly diligent early efforts in this respect:

Now I know on the drum, what we've done in the past, is when we're in a powwow, and the Kitpu singers are there and we are going to sing one of their songs, we offer them tobacco to say, you know, "Can we sing your song?" And we did that for three years, I think. And the boys said, "Look, we gave you permission already. You don't need to do this." (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

Of course, when it comes to appropriate cultural protocols, it is perhaps best to err on the side of caution.

In the early years of the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, the group frequently travelled around the island to participate in a variety of events, including cultural events in other



communities such as Corner Brook, where in the late 1990s and early 2000s the efforts of Paul Pike resulted in a few well-attended cultural celebrations called the Elmastukwek Mi'kmaq Mawio'Mi.<sup>7</sup> During such cultural presentations or presentations, members of the group often dressed in either ribbon shirts or fringed shirts.<sup>8</sup> The Sipu'ji'j Drummers have travelled off the island to other powwows and events infrequently, however, as family and work commitments prevented the drummers from long distance trips. Rod noted that the age of the members of the drum group has much to do with this; many drum groups are comprised of young men in their early twenties who are more mobile than men in their late thirties and forties who have young families. Nevertheless, in addition to drumming at the annual local powwow, Sipu'ji'j has travelled occasionally for special events and in 2004 went to Miquelon as part of the Acadie 400 celebrations. While the group has sung at fewer events in the past several years, Rod noted that the events the Sipu'ji'j Drummers sang at in its final years as a drum group were often more prestigious. For example, one of their final presentations was singing at a special event for the Mattie Mitchell<sup>9</sup> dedication at a newly installed site in Gros Morne National Park during the 2005 season (Rod Jeddore, personal communication, July 2, 2005).

---

<sup>7</sup> The 1999 event is described briefly in the introduction of Tulk (2003).

<sup>8</sup> During the 2004 powwow, while some members wore these shirts, many wore t-shirts.

<sup>9</sup> Mattie Mitchell is recognized as an important Mi'kmaq and Newfoundlander, who worked as a guide on the Northern Peninsula of the island, was integral in the first attempts to map this area, and discovered mineral deposits significant to the mining industry. For more detailed information about his life, see Colbourne (1991). For artist Jerry Evans' rendering of this important historical figure, see [http://www.fni.nf.ca/main%20page/Mattie%20 Mitchell.jpg](http://www.fni.nf.ca/main%20page/Mattie%20Mitchell.jpg) (accessed 21 February 2007).

Rod Jeddore explained to me the purpose of the drum, saying that “[it] sings on behalf of the community” (*ibid.*). Its prominence has given the community another voice through which they can express their culture and traditions. Drew was sitting at a picnic table with his young son on his lap when I asked him why it was important to have a drum group in Miawpukek. Drew replied, “Right here in my arms. So that you can teach the children and carry on the tradition. Like my boys, I’ve got two and even this little fella sometimes likes to drum” (personal communication, July 2, 2005). The Drum, then, is seen as being particularly important in the community for future generations, as a vehicle for transmitting tradition and culture. During the summer of 2005, the torch was passed to the next generation, as both Drew and Jeddore retired from the group. The responsibilities were transferred to many young members who seemed keen to continue and both Jeddore and Drew hoped that they would enable the tradition started almost a decade ago to endure well into the future.

At the time of writing, however, the Sipu’ji’j Drummers have disbanded and retired their drum. Their recent absence from the arbour at the Miawpukek powwow has been noticed by many, a fact voiced by the emcee at the 2005 powwow. While calling for more participants in a round dance, Mike Doucette spoke directly to a former Sipu’ji’j member, trying to entice him into the arbour:

Dancers wanted, dancers wanted.

Sipu’ji’j Singers or Sipu’ji’j Drummers. What happened to Sipu’ji’j Drummers? Hey?

What's wrong Bob?<sup>10</sup> Forgot how to open your mouth and scream? Your girl got you weak, boy. She don't even let you go in the arbour anymore.

We take drum hoppers<sup>11</sup> you know. There's a few groups here are willin' to take on a drum hopper. (July 3, 2005)

Doucette used humour to address the absence of Sipu'ji'j in an attempt to appeal to former members and bring them back to drumming, a largely male activity. While he invited them to participate as drum hoppers, none of the former members of Sipu'ji'j entered the arbour to sing with other groups.

The decision to retire the drum was made as a group; however, not all members agreed or were content with the end result. One former member of Sipu'ji'j with whom I spoke in 2006 told me he was disappointed with the decision to retire the drum. He felt that retiring the drum and giving it away to the young boys in Se't A'newey School had been a mistake, because that drum was a piece of them, part of their soul. He expressed hope that Sipu'ji'j would be reborn or that a new community drum would emerge in the near future.

#### 4.2 *Types of Powwows*

Powwows presently are divided into two categories; the labels "traditional" and "contest" (also called competition or contemporary) help to identify modes of action and

---

<sup>10</sup> The name of the drummer has been changed.

<sup>11</sup> Drum hopping is a practice often seen at traditional powwows and during non-competition segments of contest powwows. Members of other drum groups or friends and family who are present may join a drum group for a song or two.



participation at a powwow, while dictating the roles of singers and drummers, dancers, emcees, and other participants. Further, the type of powwow chosen by a community largely determines the styles of music and dance featured and those that may not be included. For example, there may be fewer social dances at a contest powwow or Nation-specific dances, such as Ko'jua in Mi'kma'ki (see Chapter Five), may not take place due to time constraints. Scales (2007, 2) notes that, "The competition powwow circuit began to form in the 1950s as a loosely related aggregate of song and dance events that offered modest cash prizes to participants." By the 1980s, Albers and Medicine<sup>12</sup> (2005) note that contest dances had largely overtaken powwows, which also featured "specials" or exhibitions by visiting performers (37). With increased funding for prize money and a proliferation of contest categories (distinguished on the basis of dance style, musical style, and age group), competition dancing flourished. In recent years, an occupational class of professional powwow dancers, singers, announcers, and judges has even emerged (Albers and Medicine 2005, 37-8).

The lure of the contest powwow and its associated prize money makes it a popular event for many; however, the traditional powwow has its own appeal: "Some of the small celebrations are now gaining reputations for putting on good 'traditional' events and are attracting more participants who wish to experience the sociality and intimacy of an 'old-style doings' rather than the glitter, bustle, and anonymity of the big powwow" (Albers and Medicine 2005, 40). Such events afford the opportunity to hear one's native

---

<sup>12</sup> Beatrice Medicine is of Standing Rock Sioux heritage.

language, engage in Nation-specific practices and local customs, and renew familial and social ties (*ibid.*, 40-41).

Desjarlait, of Minnesota Ojibwé-Anishnaabé<sup>13</sup> heritage, notes the primary distinction between the two types of powwow: "In one, we dance socially; in the other, we compete for prize money" (1997, 116). The traditional powwow, termed "in-group" by Albers and Medicine, according to Desjarlait is "a community-based, intercultural event primarily composed of local residents and dancers/singers from nearby [ . . . ] communities" (*ibid.*). In contrast, the contest powwow, termed "intertribal" by Albers and Medicine, is described by Desjarlait as a "community-sponsored, intertribal event predominated by nontribal<sup>14</sup> [ . . . ] dancers and singers" (*ibid.*). While many of the fundamental elements of powwow are common to both types, including many dance categories, controversy ensues over some traditions, such as the use of eagle bone whistles and the role of female drum groups, which Desjarlait suggests may be more common in contest powwows than in traditional ones (*ibid.*, 116, 124). In either type of powwow, spectators form the largest group of people attending a powwow, outnumbering singers, dancers, and vendors.<sup>15</sup>

While the purposes of traditional and contest powwows may be distinctive, one

---

<sup>13</sup> Here I maintain the spelling of Ojibwé-Anishnaabé as used by Desjarlait in his article.

<sup>14</sup> Dejarlait uses nontribal to refer to dancers who are not of the same First Nation as those hosting the powwow; in his specific case, non-Ojibwé participants.

<sup>15</sup> Of course, membership in these categories may be fluid, since spectators may also dance, dancers may also form part of the audience when not dancing themselves, and drummers may also join the dancers periodically.

with a goal of expressing “tribal-centricity” and the other providing a space for intertribal competition (Desjarlait 1997, 126), traditional and contest powwows are both valued modes of cultural expression and participation.<sup>16</sup> Desjarlait asserts that competition dancing “helps build confidence, character, stamina, and balance, [ . . . ] allows the spectator the opportunity to see the best dancers within their respective categories” (1997, 128). In addition, contest powwows have greatly expanded powwow musical repertoires. The traditional powwow, on the other hand, may serve to “retain and express” the distinctive qualities of a particular Nation (Desjarlait 1997, 126). While both types of powwow have their own benefits, Scales (2007) suggests that “Competition powwows are uniquely powerful in creating intertribal bonds because this essentially *social* work is achieved through *cultural* means” (24). Both types of powwows are held in Mi’kma’ki, though no contest powwows have occurred yet in Newfoundland. The description of each type in the Mi’kmaw context demonstrates, however, that elements of both contest and traditional powwows are found in each event, and that both modes of action are localized to express Mi’kmaw culture. After describing the two types of powwows, I will focus on a specific speech act that occurred during the Miawpukek powwow to illuminate discourse of the “traditional way” and to demonstrate how speech acts are used to reinforce traditions observed at powwows.

---

<sup>16</sup> In the Hawaiian context, hula competitions have similarly been considered in terms of two related modes of cultural expression and participation using the terms “inward-reaching” and “outward-reaching” (Stillman 1996). Both categories, which overlap, have played a role in the continuance of hula dancing, while providing a space in which innovation may occur (*ibid.*, 358).



#### 4.3 *The Traditional Powwow in Miawpukek*

In Miawpukek, the community hosts a traditional powwow, normally each year on the first weekend of July and often coinciding with Canada Day celebrations. Throughout the summer in the Coast of Bays region, communities host their own local events to which members of neighbouring communities travel. The first weekend of July has been recognized by non-Indigenous communities in this region, as well as other Mi'kmaw communities in Eastern Canada, as the weekend of the Miawpukek powwow. Since its inception in the mid-1990s, dedicated powwow grounds at the entrance to the community have been constructed, with new amenities added over the years: vendor booths, a stage for the emcee and evening entertainment, a shelter for Elders to sit shielded from the sun, and an arbour in the centre of the grounds that shelters drummers and provides a space for the posting of the flags.

The Miawpukek powwow is arranged in what Browner describes as sacred fire layout (as opposed to sacred hoop), placing the drum, often called the 'heartbeat of mother earth,' at the centre of the proceedings.<sup>17</sup> Concentric circles of participation and involvement are evident: drum at centre, surrounded by drummers, encircled by female "back-up" singers<sup>18</sup> if any are present, surrounded by a circle of flags posted at the pillars

---

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of these two cultural metaphors as they relate to the organization of powwow grounds, see Browner (2002: 96-98).

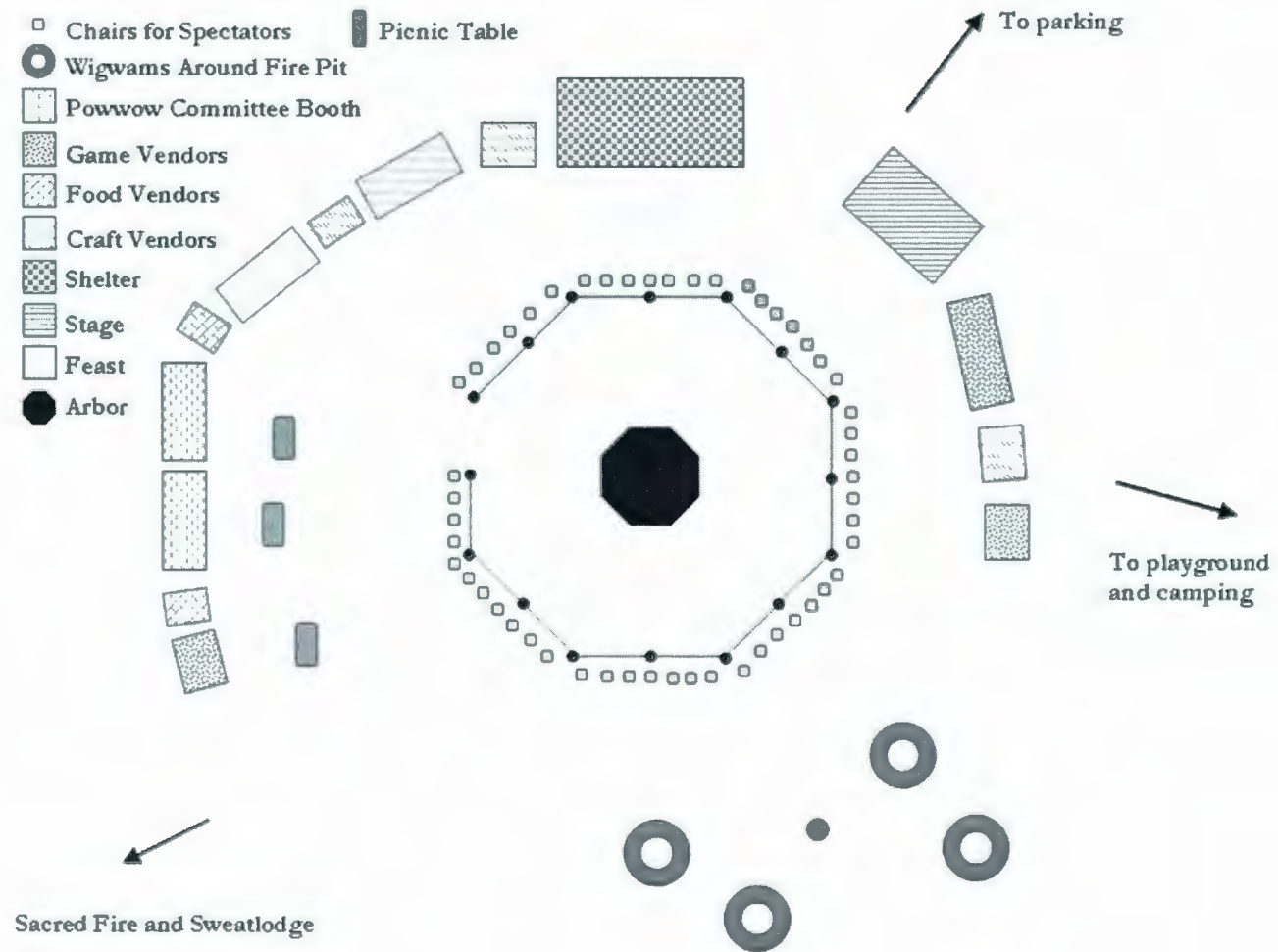
<sup>18</sup> While it is rare to see an all female drum group at powwows, women do participate in music-making, most often in the role of back-up singers. These women stand behind the drummers and generally sing on the second half of phrases, an octave or two above the men. See Browner (2002, 73). While I have observed this at the Miawpukek powwow, it was less common than at the Elsipogtog powwow.

of the arbour, followed by an area for dancers, then spectators, next vendors, and in the outermost circle the campers and tents of those staying on the powwow grounds (see Figure 4.2 below). Browner (2002) notes that there are many more layers involved in the layered circles of participation than non-Native people normally perceive. While some may reduce the space to four circles – musicians, dancers, audience, and traders – it is possible to observe more nuanced layers that include drum, drummers, women back-up singers, dancers, Elders, audience, and spirits. This final layer of spirits acknowledges an unseen spiritual element of the powwow (Browner 2002, 98). Von Rosen (1998, 24) speaks of similar concentric circles as a healing circle in which the self is at the centre, surrounded by family, then community, then world.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>19</sup>For a discussion of circle imagery, see also Diamond et al (1994: 21-33).

Figure 4.2. Layout of Powwow Grounds in Miawpukek, NL.





There is normally anywhere between three hundred and five hundred people on the grounds in Miawpukek at any given time. They participate in the event in various ways, by singing, dancing, watching, engaging in conversations, purchasing goods not always available in the community or souvenirs, or indulging in a favourite food – fry bread or Indian tacos.<sup>20</sup>

The powwow celebrations in Miawpukek actually begin the evening before the powwow. Approaching the grounds just before suppertime, you find them bustling with activity. Preparations for the social night<sup>21</sup> are made. This open mike setting in which community members and visitors alike perform is sometimes referred to as a kitchen party.<sup>22</sup> Between 2004 and 2007, Angela Brown acted as organizer and host of this event, joined by singer-songwriter Paul Pike the first two years and Reg Brown, a musician

---

<sup>20</sup> An Indian taco is a single piece of fry bread topped with ground beef, shredded lettuce, salsa, and cheese. Fry bread and Indian tacos have both become strong symbols of tradition and ethnicity, even in the relatively short time that powwow has been in Newfoundland. For example, when a friend described the 2007 Flat Bay powwow to me, she expressed surprise that there was no fry bread available: "It's not a powwow without fry bread."

<sup>21</sup> For powwows running Friday through Sunday, the social night occurs on Thursday evening. For powwows running only Saturday and Sunday, the social night occurs on Friday evening.

<sup>22</sup> The use of the term kitchen party references a particular type of Newfoundland house party. In discussions with my colleague Kelly Best, she pointed out that in recent years, the term kitchen party has been used to advertise intimate concerts performed in small venues by Great Big Sea and since then other staged performances labelled as a "kitchen party" have been cropping up. The concept of the kitchen party has also been invoked by Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe during the Acadie 400 celebrations in Miquelon in 2004. The community's drummers and dancers travelled to Miquelon to honour the historic exchange between these communities. During an evening session at the community's theatre, Joe made clear that they had not come to perform for the people, that it was not a performance. Rather, they were honouring the people of Miquelon and he jokingly told those present to think of it as a Mi'kmaw kitchen party (17 July 2004). For discussion of the creation of a cyberspace "kitchen" for and among Newfoundland diaspora communities, see Hiller and Franz (2004).

from the West Coast of the province, the past three years.<sup>23</sup> Musicians from nearby communities such as St. Alban's and Milltown also perform on stage, contributing to the eclectic mix of traditional Mi'kmaw song, contemporary Native music, Irish-Newfoundland music, traditional accordion tunes, country songs, and Top 40 hits. For example, the 2005 "kitchen party" included such Medicine Dream songs as "Invitation to Breathe" and "If You Dream of Eagles," Angela Brown's contemporary song "Mardena," a traditional song<sup>24</sup> on hand drum sung by Paul Pike, and local musicians performing traditional and popular songs such as "Tell My Mom" (or "Tell Me Ma," traditional), "Molly Bawn" (Ryan's Fancy version), "The Old Man and the Old Woman" (traditional reel), "The Northern Lights of Labrador" (by the Newfoundland duo Cory and Trina), "Music and Friends" (by Bud Davidge of the group Simani), and "Redneck Woman" (as sung by Gretchen Wilson). Music plays into the night as participants arrive and set up their tents, vendors set up and arrange their wares, families and friends reconnect over moose burgers and fry bread, and children play with

---

<sup>23</sup> Reg and Angela Brown have been performing throughout Newfoundland for two decades. They have produced several audio and video recordings, available throughout the province and especially in the Corner Brook area. Angela's most recent work is available on the CD *Bay D'Espoir Cancer Benefit Album* 2005; it is a song called "Mardena," written in honour of a Miawpukek community member. This CD is available locally in Miawpukek, Head Bay D'Espoir, and St. Alban's or online at [www.steadfast.hg.ca](http://www.steadfast.hg.ca). Paul Pike, a Mi'kmaw from Corner Brook, is the lead singer of Medicine Dream, a contemporary Native music group based in Anchorage, Alaska. Medicine Dream has recorded two albums with Canyon Records, was the 2006 recipient of a Native American Music Award (NAMMY) for Best Video, and has released its third CD titled *Learning to Fly* (independent). More information about the group and how to purchase recordings is available at [www.medicinedream.com](http://www.medicinedream.com). (See also Tulk 2003; Tulk 2004).

<sup>24</sup> Incipit: Ska-lu-ska; possibly of Ponca origins.

glow-in-the-dark jewellery, Hi Bounce and Hedge Balls, and other toys.<sup>25</sup>

The diversity of music that is heard on social night is significant, for it demonstrates the varied and multiple musical expressions that exist *in* a place (Miawpukek, but also Newfoundland) and are constitutive *of* a place (Casey 1996: 19; see also Wrazen 2007). Samuels (2004) in his discussion of the San Carlos Reservation has noted that identity

is not maintained simply through the construction of ethnic boundaries. It is also maintained through the ambiguous flow of popular expressive forms across those boundaries, and how and why these forms might be interpreted as a critical part of the formation of how it feels to be from the reservation. (Samuels 2004, 127-28)

Certainly, these different musical styles that are both Native and non-Native, Mi'kmaq, Anglo-Irish Newfoundland, and possibly even Ponca, are part of the musical life of individuals in Miawpukek and Newfoundland more generally that are engaged in varying ways at different times.

In this space, traditional Newfoundland folk songs such as "I'se the B'y" may be localized through lyric substitutions. For example, in 2005 instead of singing "Fogo, Twillingate, Moreton's Harbour, all around the circle," Reg Brown sang, "Fogo, Twillingate, Moreton's Harbour, all around Conne River." Those keen on geography will note that the three communities in the original version are quite distant from Miawpukek, in the north central area of the province (termed the Kittiwake Coast). However, this

---

<sup>25</sup> Pictures of Hi Bounce Balls and Hedge Balls can be found online at <http://www.partypalooza.com/IndlItems/Balls-Bounce-Balls.html> (accessed 21 November 2006).



detail is unimportant in this context. Significance lies in the inclusionary effect of such a lyric change, which elicits laughter and cheers from the audience. A similar localization of song lyrics occurred in 2006 when Reg Brown sang "Dirty Ol' Town" and altered the lyrics in the final verse to reference a local fish plant. While the original lyrics read, "I met my love by the gas works wall," Brown sang "I met my girl by the fish plant wall," directly referencing an industry in Miawpukek (and Newfoundland more generally). A song about Dublin, "Dirty Ol' Town" has established a firm place in the repertoire of Irish-Newfoundland musicians in the province and may even be thought to reference a Newfoundland locale. Brown's substitution of lyrics further localizes a song that is known trans-nationally. With reference to the Apache community of San Carlos, Samuels (2004) has noted that this practice "localizes mass-distributed songs by replacing text with more locally salient places and characters" (140). I agree with Samuels that such substitutes are a form of punning in that they point in several directions at once: the Irish connection in Newfoundland, a trans-national music industry, and the local context. Thus, music indexes several identities, all of which are experienced by members of the local community to varying degrees.

Each morning<sup>26</sup> of the powwow begins with a sunrise ceremony at the sacred fire; then breakfast is consumed, often cooked by female volunteers from the community, and dancers and drummers set about the task of preparing for Grand Entry while the powwow

---

<sup>26</sup> While this powwow generally spans three days (Friday, Saturday and Sunday), it has in the past been abbreviated to a two-day powwow (Saturday and Sunday only).

grounds are arranged for the day. Microphone cables are run and sound checks completed, chairs are set out around the perimeter of the dance area, and workers in concession stands begin preparing food. Registration for dancers, Drums, flag carriers, and eagle-staff carriers is run by women and called around 11am or 11:30am, with an anticipated Grand Entry at 12 noon. There are no registration fees, nor is admission charged at this powwow. At this time, Drums are also called to the arbour for warm-up songs. The Drums participating each year vary in number, but are predominantly (if not entirely) Mi'kmaw groups. For example, in 2004 and 2005, all of the drum groups participating were Mi'kmaq visiting from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. In 2006, three of the four drum groups were Mi'kmaq, while the other was an Anishnaabe drum group visiting from Ontario.

Grand Entry is normally anticipated at 12 noon, the powwow usually begins around 1pm. While there is an emcee present from a Mi'kmaw community in Nova Scotia or New Brunswick to oversee the event, a local community member is often responsible for announcing guests and dancers during Grand Entry. For example, in 2004, Tammy Drew joined Jimmy Augustine at the emcee booth and announced each dancer in order, a practice that helps to localize the event. Grand Entry, the Flag Song and posting of the flags,<sup>27</sup> and the Veterans' Song<sup>28</sup> are conducted with strict protocols;

---

<sup>27</sup> While the new arbour features flag holders into which the flags can be inserted, in previous years, the flags would be fastened to the post of the old arbour using duct tape.

<sup>28</sup> Clyde Ellis (2003) notes that Flag Songs and Veterans' Songs acknowledge the military service of First Nations people and suggests that this "emphasis on courage, sacrifice, and service are clear echoes of older, traditional society practices that have survived to assume renewed important in the powwow" (43).

photographs are not permitted at this time. Immediately following these three songs, there is an opening prayer or invocation, often said in a combination of Mi'kmaq and English by a visitor from another community such as Elsipogtog or Restigouche. At the 2006 powwow, Don Caplin offered the opening invocation<sup>29</sup> on the third day of the celebrations:

Hello, my name is Don Caplin. I'm from Restigouche, Quebec, Canada. I want to ask each one of you to pray in your own way, and healing for everyone of us ask the creator, take some healing, some medicines back for your families. Because, we all cast the same shadow. God didn't make no junk. We can create junk, but God didn't make no junk, so we're all His children no matter what, if you believe it or not. Pray in your own way for all the children that's here, and the women, the young women, the women, the Elders, the dancers, the drummers, young guys, young men, men, Elders. Because I have a hard time to pray in English.

*Ni'n na Mi'gmewa'j. Gesatm Mi'gmawigtug a'sutmai.* [I am from the Micmac tribe (or I am a Micmac person). I love to pray in Micmac.]

This is the language from my heart.

*Mesta gisi't Gisulg elita'sualulneg ap mejit newt gisgug ugjit ula's'gtn ntmimajuaqanminal ta'n te'sieg peita'ieg ula nige' mawio'mi.* [Creator of all, we rely on you again one time today for our lives to turn out well for all who arrived at this gathering.]

*Etawei ula's'gtn ugjit ms't goqwei ta'n te'sit mijua'ji'j, e'pite'ji'j, lpa'tuj pegising aq ta'n te'sit maljewe'j epite'sg, e'pjiig, gisigui'sgwaq aq lpa'tujg, ji'nmji'jg, ji'nmug, gisigu'g.* [I ask that you give us for all to go well for every child, girl, boy who arrives and all youth, young women, women, elderly women and boys, young men, men and elderly men.]

*Etawei Gisulg ugjit ms't goqwei ula's'gtn ta'n te'sioq peita'ioq ula tett.*

---

<sup>29</sup> The Mi'kmaw sections of this invocation were transcribed and translated by Janice Vicaire of Listuguj (Restigouche), Quebec.



[I ask that you give us Creator, for everything to go well for all of you who arrive here.]

*Me' gatu mi'watmeg Mesta Gisulg.* [We are very grateful, Creator of all.]

Siaw lita'sualulneg ula ta'n telgi'g na'gweg tewji gelulg mimajuaqan ignmuieg. [We continue to rely on you here for the whole day, the very good life you give us.]

*Nujiamalgaltieg aq ula Mi'gmewaq, usgijinu'g, nujigtapegia'tieg.* [We the dancers and the Micmac people, people, singers.]

*Me' gatu wela'lieg Gisulg ta'n tel mawa'lieg.* [Very much you do us good (or thank you so much) Creator for gathering us.]

*Etawei ugjit ms't wen ulgwijinn gisgug.* [I ask that you give us, for everyone to be happy today.]

Now, the end of the prayer. Old Henry Knockwood, every time he used to come to our powwows, he would say, "I wanna hear everybody say 'Ta'O!'"

Participants: Ta'O!

Caplin: I'm hard of hearing. Can I hear one more time, louder!

Participants: Ta'O!

Caplin: Oh, one more time. You'll win a million bucks. [chuckles] One more time, Ta'O!

Participants: Ta'O!

Caplin: Wow, that is good. I love that. Powwow time!

At other times, Miawpukek Elder Priscilla Drew says the Lord's Prayer in Mi'kmaq as an invocation.

Christian incorporations are common at Mi'kmaw powwows, especially those in

Miawpukek, as demonstrated with the use of the name God in place of Creator and the reference to those gathered as God's "children" in the English sections of Caplin's prayer. This is not surprising, given that the Mi'kmaq adopted and adapted Christianity (specifically Catholicism) to their belief system very early on, starting with the baptism of Chief Membertou in 1610.<sup>30</sup> Mi'kmaq from all areas of Mi'kma'ki still celebrate St. Anne's Day and Christian hymn-singing remains an important musical expression in many communities.

Following the invocation or prayer, opening remarks often by Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe are then given in English (see discussion below).<sup>31</sup> The predominance of English at a Miawpukek powwow is directly related to the number of fluent Mi'kmaq-speakers in the community. While Don Caplin is a fluent speaker of Mi'kmaq, if he gave the entire

---

<sup>30</sup> Prior to contact, the Mi'kmaq practised their own religion, a spirituality Daniel Paul describes as being based on three fundamental principles: "the supremacy of the Great Spirit, respect for Mother Earth, and people power" (2000, 12). Within a tradition that followed the laws of the Creator, encouraged stewardship of the land, and advocated democracy among its people, the Mi'kmaq flourished. The Mi'kmaq believed that after death, they would be reunited with the Creator and their ancestors in the "Land of Souls" (Paul 2000, 19, 29). The Mi'kmaq perceived some similarities between their religion and Christianity, for example: a single God who was responsible for Creation paralleled their belief in the Great Spirit, and saints who provided spiritual guidance were similar to the ancestors who provided guidance to the Mi'kmaq. For these reasons, the religions were not completely at odds with one another. Coupled with a loss of confidence in their own Shamans, because they were unable to protect the Mi'kmaq from recently introduced diseases such as smallpox to which the Catholic priests seemed immune, the Catholic religion was accepted by the Mi'kmaw people (Prins 1996, 44-47, 71). Conversion to Christianity was further encouraged by the creation of a writing system that could be used to teach the Mi'kmaq the underlying principles and beliefs of the Catholic Church. This system was developed by Father Chrestien LeClerc, using ideograms to represent ideas (see Schmidt and Marshall 1995). Anne-Christine Hornborg notes that the introduction of St. Anne further "increased the likelihood of their conversion" (2002, 238), for the Mi'kmaq regard St. Anne, the grandmother of Jesus, as an Elder, a person who is wise, has experienced life, and shares that wisdom and experience with others.

<sup>31</sup> Browner (2002) notes a slight variation in this order. After Grand Entry and the Flag Song, she notes that prayers and the welcoming of guests occurs, followed by the posting of the flags (colours), and then a Veterans' Dance (pp. 89-91).

invocation in Mi'kmaq, few people from Miawpukek would be capable of understanding what he has said. However, he switches from Mi'kmaq to English because he has "a hard time to pray in English" – Mi'kmaq is how he best expresses himself.

This invocation is followed by an intertribal dance open to everyone in attendance, regardless of whether they are wearing regalia. The remainder of the day features a combination of social dances and category dances. Round Dances, Spot Dances,<sup>32</sup> and Two-Steps are interspersed between Men's Traditional,<sup>33</sup> Fancy Shawl, Jingle Dress, and other styles of dance. Traditional Mi'kmaw songs may be heard, especially for Round Dances and the Snake Dance. Singers generally use a more moderate tessitura for these songs than for northern style powwow songs, and often do not follow incomplete repetition form. As has been previously noted, many of the intertribals and category dances heard at Mi'kmaw powwows are Cree in origin, or come from other western Nations. When drum groups from other Nations are present, as in 2006, songs specific to their Nation and in their traditional language are also heard, such as a Bear Song or Eagle Song as sung by the group Neshnabé Ojibwe.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> A Spot Dance, as observed in Miawpukek, is usually a dance for children, though adults may participate. The head dancers select a spot on the dance grounds, but do not give an indication to the other dancers of where "the spot" is. A long song is requested of the drum group, sometimes lasting 10 minutes or more, and everyone dances until the song ends. At the end, all dancers stand where they took their last dance step and whoever is closest to the spot previously chosen by the head dancers wins a prize (usually cash).

<sup>33</sup> Men's Traditional style dancing is a "free-form" style of dance that normally tells a story of hunting or of war (Browner 2002, 50-51). The regalia worn for this dance style is discussed below.

<sup>34</sup> Neshnabé is a cognate of Anishnabe which refers to the people now called Potawatomi. The Potawatomi were part of the Three Fires Confederacy, along with the Ojibwe and the Ottawa. See Chapter Seven for more detailed discussion of these two songs.



While drum groups at the Miawpukek powwow generally sing as their own distinct groups, drum-hopping is permitted and frequently occurs. In some cases, a friend or family member may enter the arbour and join a group for a song or two. However, members of drum groups may also combine their efforts with other groups to sing some songs, gathering around one drum. This was particularly noticeable at the 2006 powwow when the grade five drummers from the Se't A'newey school participated in the powwow as one of four drum groups. On the first day of the powwow, the young boys were asked to sing the opening Veterans' Song, for which they sang the Mi'kmaq Honour Song. Members of Stoney Bear left their own drum and joined the young boys, introduced as Wowkwisk'ji'j (Little Foxes),<sup>35</sup> some sitting at the drum and some standing in a circle around them.<sup>36</sup> The following day, drummers of Stoney Bear and Eastern Star were jumping from drum to drum and singing a variety of songs. After the feast, when they were the only Drums remaining, Stoney Bear gathered around the Eastern Star drum and sang with them, about 12-14 young men powerfully singing around one drum.

While dancers in regalia participate in category dances, participants without regalia dance during social dances and intertribals. Children and youth enjoy a sort of

---

<sup>35</sup> There seems to have been some mis-communication with the emcee, for he introduced them by that name for the entire powwow. However, the group's name actually is Paqtism'ji'j meaning "Little Wolves."

<sup>36</sup> There were stylistic differences between the two groups' singing that became quite apparent during this "duet." The most obvious of these differences was the grade five boys' use of an extended glissando at the end of the lead which suspends the drum beat for an undetermined amount of time. As noted in Chapter Three, this glissando is featured on the recordings of the Sipu'ji'j Drummers and the Denny Family. Stoney Bear clearly did not normally employ this glissando and the timing was thrown off. There also appeared to be slightly different pronunciations used in the singing of the Honour Song.

challenge dance that takes place each year, called “Indian Breakdancing,” in which girls face off against boys in a competition to determine who dances the best. Two lines of dancers, one male, one female, face each other. When the emcee calls forth one female to dance, all of the male dancers must imitate whatever dance move she does. Then a male chooses a slightly more difficult dance step and all the girls must imitate his dancing. This continues as the dance steps become more and more difficult. Audience applause determines the winner and the winning “team” gets bragging rights for the year. I was told by some that the women always win, perhaps because of their complicated Fancy Shawl dance steps. I wonder, however, what the results would be if there were Men’s Fancy Dancers involved in this competition.<sup>37</sup> Sable and Sable (2007c) note that competition has long been a feature of seasonal gatherings: “Mi’kmaq would dance to prove their physical prowess and endurance. [. . .] The best dancer, the one who danced the longest, would win and bring honour to his or her community.” Here, however, it would seem that those competing bring honour to their gender.<sup>38</sup>

Like “Indian Breakdancing,” the Ko’jua dance – a traditional Mi’kmaw dance with quick footwork, accompanied by hand drum – also appeals to many of those in attendance. Round Dances usually performed to the songs “Ikwanuté” or “Yu’ahaia” similarly attract increased participation by those present, especially when the emcee,

---

<sup>37</sup> I have never observed a Men’s Fancy Dancer at the Miawpukek powwow. See discussion of dance styles in Chapter Five.

<sup>38</sup> In the Hawaiian context, competition provides a space that fosters creativity and innovation in hula (see Stillman 1996).

Mike Doucette, employs his trademark phrase: "Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way!"<sup>39</sup>

While a variety of dances that foster participation by everyone present are featured, those present may also participate in the powwow in alternate ways, by watching the dances, purchasing tickets for various prizes, and socializing. Some may leave the area and go swimming nearby, while others drop in for a few minutes and then leave the grounds again.

At 5pm, a feast open to all in attendance<sup>40</sup> begins and often features moose and other carved meats, baked or boiled potatoes, salads (such as macaroni), pan fried fish, shrimp, homemade bread or rolls, and partridgeberry pie for dessert. Members of the community, often women, who are central to this aspect of the powwow may be "unseen participants." Volunteers prepare food for the feast in their own homes, several of them coordinating to cook or bake for hundreds of people on each of three days of powwow, and then join the flurry of activity on the powwow grounds as the feast is set up. Others participate by driving through the community, collecting the food once it is prepared, and delivering it to the powwow grounds in time for the feast. Their efforts in the creation of this event are perhaps not as visible as that of emcees, canteen workers, or security, but this "backstage" contribution is an important part of the event that reinforces cultural

---

<sup>39</sup> Both the Ko'jua dances and Doucette's phrase "Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way!" are discussed in Chapter Five.

<sup>40</sup> The order for participating in the feast is Elders, registered participants, and general public.



values of hospitality.<sup>41</sup> While some powwow workers, such as security, are paid for their work by the Band Council, other workers, such as the women preparing food for the feast, are not remunerated for their efforts. Rather, they are honoured during the giveaway at the end of the powwow. During the feast, Mike Doucette, the emcee, may entertain children by holding special dances, such as a powwow version of musical chairs, with donated monetary prizes. Dancing continues into the evening and ends just before sunset when the flags are retired.<sup>42</sup> There is no evening Grand Entry on Friday or Saturday at this powwow.

Approximately an hour later, once the sound system has been reconfigured, the evening will feature karaoke on the stage. A preference for country music may be indicated by the selection of songs available; the song catalogue from which singers choose their selections boasts 1000 country songs.<sup>43</sup> An audience of about 40-50 gathers in front of the stage, often shivering from the cool evenings near the water, while others roam the grounds or otherwise amuse themselves. 49ers<sup>44</sup> are also heard at this time, usually sung in one of the large wigwams some distance from the stage. Two sonic spaces exist at the same time and while some “bleeding” may occur, they coexist

---

<sup>41</sup> As Goffman (1959) points out, the many hours of work that go into the preparation for the performance of an event are somewhat concealed in the performance as it is observed by outsiders (44).

<sup>42</sup> Here retiring the flags is sometimes referred to as Grand Exit.

<sup>43</sup> In 2006, when participants requested more pop-rock or Top 40 songs, they were unavailable.

<sup>44</sup> 49er songs feature a round dance beat (dotted rhythm in long-short pattern) and are often sung with a combination of vocables and English text, which is either romantic and/or humorous in nature.

amicably. The evening may also be a time for participating in a sweatlodge ceremony, during which strict protocols govern participation: the participant must be sober for four days, female participants must wear a skirt, and female participants cannot take part if they are menstruating. While these "rules" are not printed in materials that advertise the powwow to tourists and others who choose to attend the event, the protocols are passed on and enforced informally and through oral means. For example, in 2006, some tourists who travelled to the region specifically to attend the powwow, hoped to participate in a sweatlodge; however, they were disappointed to find that because they did not bring appropriate attire (skirts) and/or had not been sober for four days, they could not partake in this part of the powwow. One asserted that these guidelines should have been included on the one-page mail-out prepared by the powwow committee. Alternatively, the powwow committee might consider posting such information on the band's website, since it appears this is an important source of information for tourists wanting to attend the event. However, another tourist noted that the lack of a skirt was not problematic for her because a local Mi'kmaw woman offered to lend her a skirt for this purpose.

The following days of powwow, usually Saturday and Sunday if the powwow begins on a Friday, continue according to a similar order of events; however, on the Sunday, Grand Entry begins an hour earlier than usual to facilitate travel for those who will leave at the end of the day. Also, before retiring the flags, a giveaway ceremony takes place, in which all who contributed to the powwow are honoured and invited to select a gift of thanks. Dancers and drummers do not receive their honoraria at this time;

rather, they receive it before or after the giveaway. After the powwow grounds are cleared, a community BBQ may take place, hosted by one of the organizers.

Special ceremonies may be interspersed throughout the days of powwow, based on need or request. For example, if an eagle feather falls to the ground, the powwow stops and a Retrieval Song is sung.<sup>45</sup> This very particular protocol surrounding the way in which a fallen feather may be retrieved is always observed in this type of situation and the explanation for it asserted in Miawpukek, as in Desjarlait's work, is that "a dropped feather symbolizes the warrior who fell" (1997, 122).<sup>46</sup> Desjarlait also describes the use of eagle bone whistles, items that in many Nations are deemed sacred and are carried by a select few (*ibid.*, 123). While these may be used at some powwows, I have not seen them in the Miawpukek context. However, some male participants in Miawpukek have fanned the drum with an eagle fan. Immediately the song turns into an Honour Song and restrictions on recording are set in place, the song is repeated four more times after the initial fanning, and the dancer is invited to speak about his personal reasons for fanning the drum if he cares to share them.<sup>47</sup> Additional ceremonies in honour of particular community members who have passed away or families who have been mourning the

---

<sup>45</sup> Desjarlait (1997) refers to this as a Picking Up The Feather Dance (121), while Browner (2002) refers to the song accompanying this ritual as a "Charging the Feather" song (95).

<sup>46</sup> In-depth descriptions of ceremonial events at the Miawpukek powwow are not included in this study. For a description of this type of ceremony, see Browner (2002, 95) and Desjarlait (1997, 121-22).

<sup>47</sup> Again, I have chosen not to describe or discuss this ceremony or the personal reasons given for fanning the drum by some dancers I observed. As they are not permitted to be recorded in the moment that they occur, I will not record them here. For a description of the use of an eagle bone whistle, see Desjarlait (1997, 122-23).



loss of a loved one may be conducted as appropriate or requested.

The functions of this traditional powwow are multiple. A combination of the social and the spiritual, this community celebration provides an opportunity to renew social ties and maintain relationships with Mi'kmaq and other friends and family visiting from within the province and other areas of Mi'kma'ki. It even provides an opportunity for Mi'kmaw youth to meet and sometimes matches are made (though they may be fleeting relationships that fade with the last notes of the powwow). At the same time, spiritual ceremonies take place that have important significance for those participating. As Sable and Sable have noted:

Mi'kmaq have always danced to pray, court marriage partners, trade, hunt, prepare for war and celebrate important events such as weddings. Dances also sealed treaties, celebrated birth, mourned death, gave thanks and bestowed honour. [. . .] Today, some people continue to dance to heal their community's wounds. (2007a)

Clearly, there are many functions of expressive culture and folklore within this powwow: to validate culture, to integrate members of groups or maintain conformity, to provide escape, to educate, to entertain (Bascom 1965, 288-94). However, these are not the only functions of expressive culture. Others include problem-solving, social, economic, and political functions, and the demonstration of the continuity of a group (see Mattern 1998). As will be demonstrated through comparison to the 2006 Elsipogtog powwow, contest or competition powwows in some communities may serve many of the same functions as traditional powwows.

#### 4.4 *Elsipogtog Celebrates 20 Years: A Mi'kmaw Contest Powwow*

Located 10km from Rexton, the community of Elsipogtog, New Brunswick is home to the oldest powwow in Mi'kma'ki. This host community has a population of approximately 2500, with other Mi'kmaw communities situated close by (*Elsipogtog Community* [n.d]). In 2006, to celebrate 20 years of powwow, Elsipogtog held their first contest powwow. Discussion of this powwow will highlight the ways in which traditional and contest powwows are both similar and dissimilar. Further, it will provide a point of comparison and help place the Miawpukek powwow in a wider frame of reference as one of many powwows held throughout Mi'kma'ki. It must be noted that the powwow in Elsipogtog normally takes the form of a traditional powwow. The contest powwow in 2006 was an anomalous event commemorating a historic 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

While powwow has a longer history in New Brunswick than in Newfoundland, the community of Elsipogtog does not presently have a dedicated space for the powwow, nor are there permanent structures for vendors, the emcee, or drum groups. The location of this powwow has changed over time, from a location on the outskirts of the reserve to one more centrally located. Currently held on the track and field site adjacent to the local school, temporary wooden structures are erected for the emcee and the concession stands, while nylon shelters or gazebos provide shelter for the drum groups. The feast area, which also serves as a shelter for Elders, consists of a large white canvas event tent, and individual vendors supply their own set-ups.

Powwow committees regularly give honoraria to Drums, dancers, flag carriers,

and eagle staff carriers as thanks for their participation in the event. At a contest powwow, prize money is awarded to the top dancers in each category of dance and to the winning drum groups participating in the competition. Consequently, there are stringent restrictions imposed on dancers and drummers at a contest powwow that govern their participation and eligibility for prize money. In Elsipogtog, a minimum number of drummers was required (6) for a group to be included in the drum competition. It was also required that they all be present for registration and be ready at their drum when called upon during the powwow. Drummers were required to keep their areas clean and to have a member sitting at the drum at all times. Further, women were not permitted in the arbours during competitions unless they were back-up singers and drum hopping was not permitted during contest songs.<sup>48</sup> Failure to observe these regulations would result in a point reduction. The prohibition of drugs and alcohol which is standard at most powwows, whether traditional or contest, was also observed and carried a stricter penalty – disqualification. On the first day, while the emcee was announcing the rules for drum groups, he issued a warning to any drummers who wanted to have a drink that night to celebrate: “Don’t bother coming back. You can kiss your honoraria goodbye” (September 1, 2006). To the best of my knowledge, there was no need to further enforce this rule.

The rules governing dancers were not publicly voiced in the same fashion. Rather, as young dancers registered, they were informed that their honoraria would be

---

<sup>48</sup> These rules were posted at the powwow committee booth and also on a website in advance of the powwow.



determined based on their participation, their performance, and their presentation during the powwow. In terms of participation, being present for Grand Entry each day and the number of dances in which one participates would be reflected in one's honorarium.

Performance is a term I have chosen to encompass the skill, enthusiasm, and energy with which one dances.<sup>49</sup> The powwow coordinator suggested to participants that enthusiasm and energy were most important. Finally, a dancer's presentation at the powwow refers both to the state of one's regalia (clean, appropriate attire, and design) and the way one presented oneself while wearing regalia (appropriate language and behaviour).

Presumably the awarding of prizes would be based on similar categories (for example, dancers were judged on their regalia and posed in front of the judges after dancing to highlight the best features<sup>50</sup>); however, I only ever heard participants speaking in terms of honoraria, not prizes.

The physical layout of this powwow varies from the Miawpukek powwow in that it is arranged in sacred hoop rather than sacred fire. Consequently, the Drums are in a ring outside the dance area. At the centre of the space is a six foot pole wrapped in evergreens. It is here that the flags and eagle staffs are posted. Surrounding the flags is

---

<sup>49</sup> While this is a common understanding of the term performance, it must be noted that there are dancers who object to calling their dancing a performance because of its spiritual significance.

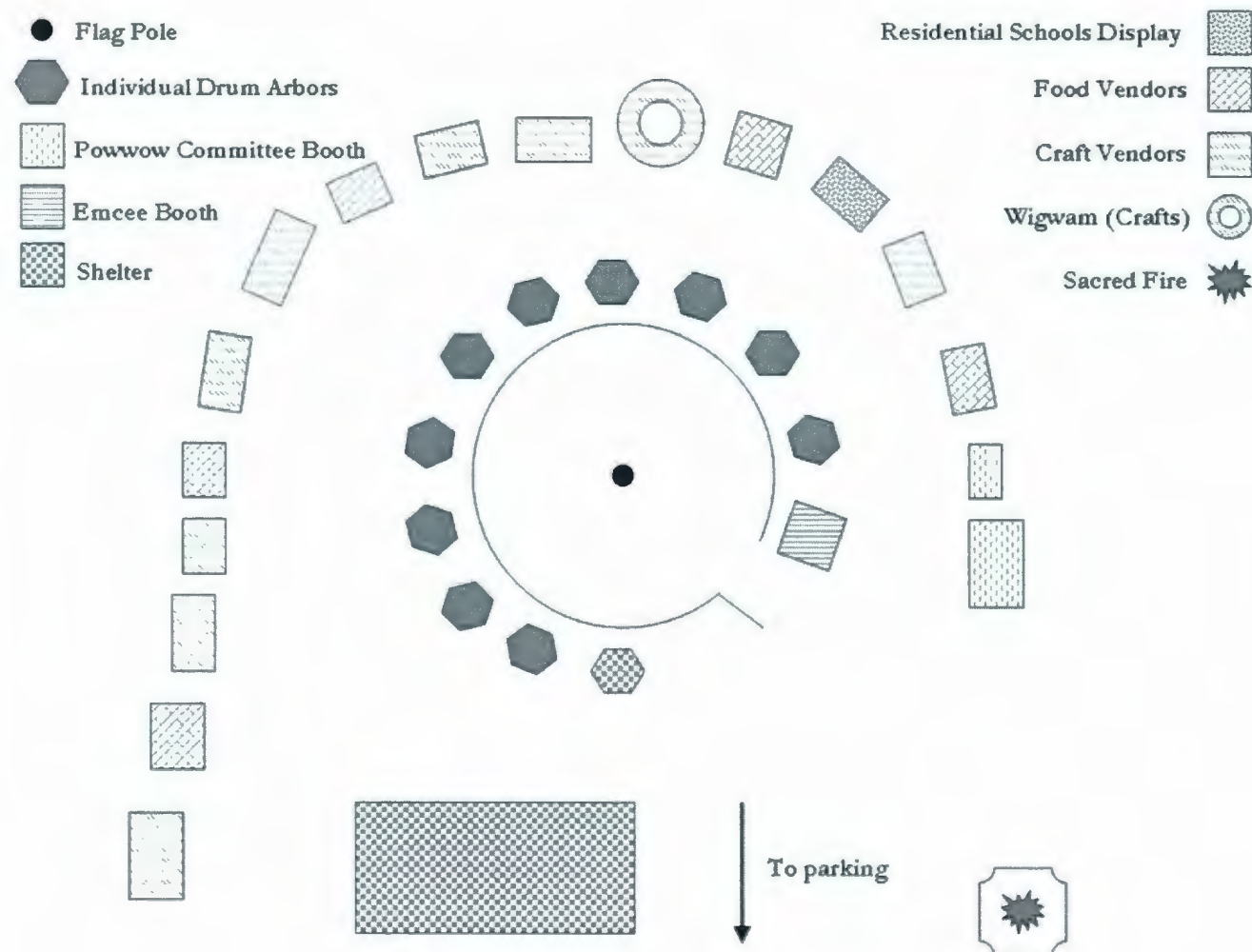
<sup>50</sup> Having the dancers pose in front of the judges also facilitates the correlation of performances with participants by allowing judges to record numbers. However, given the small number of competitors at this powwow and the fact that for the most part everyone knew each other, such a practical reason for viewing regalia was not particularly necessary. It was clear by the choice of stance and positioning of the body that dancers were strategically posing to display the best aspects of their regalia.

the dance area, edged with cedar to protect the dancers.<sup>51</sup> Next are the drum groups, encircling the dance area, followed by the spectators, then the vendors, and then the campers and tents (see Figure 4.3 below). While the difference in orientation between sacred hoop and sacred fire may appear to be minor, and indeed sacred hoop is a common layout for drum competitions, it distances the spectators from the action of the dancing. Interestingly, it becomes very difficult to observe the dancers from the space reserved for spectators, which Desjarlait suggested is one of the important functions of competitive powwow dancing (1997, 126). In fact, this layout combined with rules for participation may make even a regular powwow-goer uncomfortable. During a brief conversation with a Mi'kmaw woman visiting from another community, she said to me, "They're more strict here. [ . . . ] I don't even know where to stand" (September 1, 2006). I believe this comment indicates the problem of being a spectator when unfamiliar with the restrictions of contest powwow, but also when confronted with a sacred hoop layout that changes the way one experiences the space and relates to other powwow participants. However, while the sacred hoop layout of a powwow may distance the observer from the dancing, it brings one closer to the music-making.

---

<sup>51</sup> Laverna Augustine explained the protective function of cedar lining the dance grounds to me (personal communication, October 11, 2006). Browner notes that the grounds may be "blessed by members – usually the elders – of each community, who perform that function by burning tobacco or sage, an act accompanied by prayers and songs. By doing so the grounds are cleared of negative spirits and influences" (2002, 95).

Figure 4.3. Layout of Powwow Grounds in Elisipogtog, NB





The Elsipogtog powwow in 2006 started on a Friday evening, with registration commencing about 3pm and dancing starting at 5pm. Drum groups and dancers were required to register if they wanted to participate in the contest; however, unlike many contest powwows, there was no fee to participate (nor was there an admission fee to help raise prize money).<sup>52</sup> Grand Entry here was in keeping with many powwows, but different in comparison to the Miawpukek powwow. Before Grand Entry the Grass Dancers were called upon to bless the grounds before the powwow would start, then Grand Entry took place, followed by a Flag Song and Veterans' Song. This initial Grass Dance does not take place in Miawpukek because there are generally only a few Grass Dancers present and the task of blessing the grounds would be an enormous one for so few dancers (Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006). After Grand Entry, prayers were said and speeches were made. While in Elsipogtog I heard much more Mi'kmaq spoken than at the Miawpukek powwow, on the first day of this event, greetings were brought by the Chief and by the mayor of a neighbouring town, both in English. The invocations on subsequent days were given in Mi'kmaq (see below).

Following Grand Entry and the invocation, a variety of category dances took place, as well as intertribals; however, only those wearing regalia danced with few exceptions. The drums present were predominantly Mi'kmaq, with nine of ten groups

---

<sup>52</sup> While there were no registration or admission fees, a blanket dance was held to raise funds. Other fundraising efforts, such as powwow bingos, took place in the months leading up to the event and donations from businesses were also solicited (Laverna Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006).

attending from various areas of Mi'kma'ki. The tenth group, Nakoda Lodge, travelled to Elsipogtog from Morley, Alberta. Not all of the drum groups participated in the competition; only four of the ten groups registered and competed. These four drums largely sang in what has been described as northern style, with a much higher tessitura than that of some other Mi'kmaw groups such as Birch Creek Singers.

This initial day of powwow was quite short, as the flags had to be retired before sunset, around 7:30pm. However, the powwow did not end at this time; the rotation of intertribals was finished once the flags had been retired and another round of intertribals followed, each drum being dismissed as they finished their song. Drumming continued informally, many drummers gathering around the Free Spirit drum and singing a variety of songs they all knew. This was later followed by karaoke and, for those interested, there was also a powwow bingo at another location.

The following days of powwow observed a similar itinerary, with Grand Entry at 1pm. The opening prayer or invocation<sup>53</sup> on this second day of powwow was given by community Elder Joe John:

*Ni'n teluisi Musikisk. Welta'si mawitayk nike' kiskuk.* [My name is Sky. I am happy we are gathered here today.]

*Elita'suatmek kiskuk alasutma'tinen, Mi'kmawita'sultinej.* [We rely today on prayer. Let us think on our being Mi'kmaw.]

*Msit wulayiktn, aqq wulo'taqitinen. Knekk mimajuinu'k wejita'jik.* [Let everything go well today, and let us be happy. People come from far away.]

---

<sup>53</sup> This prayer was transcribed and translated by Helen Sylliboy of Eskasoni, Nova Scotia.

*Nike' Kji-Niskam tamanej:* [Now, let us ask of God:]

*Kji-Niskam, elita'sualnek, elita'suatmek ta'n telukutiek.* [Great God we rely on you, we rely on you for what we do.]

*Apiksiktuinen, apiksiktuinen. Kepmite'lmu'kik aqq kepmite'tmek ta'n telukutiek.* [Forgive us, forgive us. We honour them, and we honour what we do.]

*Alasutma'tiek nike' ukjit mimajuinu'k ta'n kesnukutijik, aqq wulo'taqitinew. Ta'n kesnukutijik, Wji-ula'siktn wktininewaq.* [We pray now for people who are sick, and for them to be well. For those who are sick, let there be goodness in their bodies.]

*Alasutmelsewk mijua'ji'jk, wulo'taqitinew kiskuk, aqq wulayiktn kiskuk ta'n telo'ti'kw.* [Let us pray for the children, to feel good today, and for things to go well for the way we are.]

*Alasutmelsewkik nike' amalkewinu'k, wulte'lsultinew kiskuk, aqq drummersik wji-wulayiktn kiskuk. Wulta'sulti'kw, wuta'sultinej.* [I pray for the dancers, to think well of themselves today, and the drummers, for things to go well today. Have good thoughts! Let us have good thoughts.]

*Ke' Niskam tamanej wulo'taqatinew kiskuk.* [Let us ask God for things to go well today.]

*Ta'n te'ioq, No'kmaq, wela'lioq.* [For all my relatives, thank you.]

Unlike Don Caplin, who spoke first in English for the Miawpukek gathering so that those present could understand him, Joe John speaks entirely in Mi'kmaq because the majority of the population in this community were able to understand him. The similarities between both prayers are striking: both pray for healing, for the children present, that everything will go well during the powwow, and for participants such as dancers and singers. The incorporations from Christianity are striking here, particularly in the way



that it asks for forgiveness and then prays for the healing of those who are sick, for the children, for the drummers. In some ways, this structure recalls a part of the Liturgy of the Word in the Catholic mass that is referred to as general intercessions. During this part of the mass, petitions are made for the Lord's intervention and the congregation replies with "Lord, hear our prayer." The lector who reads them, phrases them in this way: "For those who are sick, let us pray to the Lord." This structure is very similar to that employed by Joe John in his prayer, even though there is no group response to his petitions.<sup>54</sup>

Competition dances and intertribals followed throughout the day. Additionally, there was a special I have not seen at the Miawpukek powwow – a Hoop Dance.<sup>55</sup> There were few social dances, most on the final afternoon (Sunday) once the judging of all contest categories was completed. Because the weekend was filled with competition dances and a drum competition, there was little time for such commonly seen dances as Ko'jua or the Round Dance. Consequently, Mike Doucette's familiar phrase, "Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way," often said in relation to Mi'kmaw Round Dances, was not heard at this powwow (see Chapter Five). Sunday afternoon also featured dances for

---

<sup>54</sup> While it may be possible to further deconstruct these invocations, for example, another dimension that could be explored is that of sentence or phrase structures, my concern has been to demonstrate how these invocations are a performance of a particular localized history of contact and how the Mi'kmaw language is a marker to greater or lesser degrees of Nation-specific identity within the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow.

<sup>55</sup> This is not to say that there has never been a Hoop Dance performed in Miawpukek. However, I did not observe one while conducting this research, 2004-2007.

children: a Snake Dance, Eagle Dance (Kitpu),<sup>56</sup> and a dance involving candy scattered over the dance grounds.<sup>57</sup> During the feast there were also additional children's dances, including a game of musical chairs set to powwow music. After another hour or so of dancing, the flags were retired at sunset, before the evening activities (for example, 49ers and karaoke). Like the Miawpukek powwow, there is no evening Grand Entry at this powwow on any of the days.

As at Miawpukek, there is a feast each day at the Elsipogtog powwow, around 4:30 pm. Shepherd's pie, stew, corn, and dinner rolls were served, along with cake and sweet breads.<sup>58</sup> Also, many spectators lined up at vendors' stands to purchase fry bread (sometimes topped with whipped cream and berries), Indian tacos, grilled corn on the cob, hotdogs, hamburgers, and french fries. Very popular with children as well was a vendor selling various types of candy and chocolate. During the feast on the last day there was a final push to sell raffle tickets, with the draws taking place just after 5pm and the winners being announced by the emcee. After a few more dances, a giveaway was held, honouring all who participated in the powwow. Next, the winners of the dance and drum competitions were announced and the winning drum group sang a Victory Song.

---

<sup>56</sup> The Eagle Dance is a children's dance that mimics the flight of an eagle. The children stand in single file and follow their leader, in this case an Elder, who may make soaring movements or spiral into a circle.

<sup>57</sup> In this dance, the powwow grounds were littered with wrapped candy. Those participating danced around the grounds until the music stopped. When it did, they grabbed as much candy as possible before the music started again. This continued until all of the candy was picked up. While it was a children's special, adults participated.

<sup>58</sup> The serving order for the feast is Elders, drummers, dancers, and community.

The powwow closed with the retiring of the flags.

While there was no sweatlodge constructed on the powwow grounds, there was an opportunity to participate in a sweat on Saturday afternoon. The sweat was held at the home of a community member and was listed on the summary of powwow events posted at the canteen.<sup>59</sup> The ceremonies that occurred at this powwow were similar to those in Miawpukek, honouring families and individuals, such as a young dancer who was returning into the circle after a year in mourning. These Honour Songs were sung after Grand Entry and usually before the competition began for the day. An eagle fan was dropped at one point, as was a feather, both necessitating a Retrieval Song and the requisite ceremony. There was one instance of fanning the drum and, unlike Miawpukek, an eagle bone whistle was used at this powwow by the male head dancer to whistle a Drum.<sup>60</sup> This same dancer, also a hoop dancer, introduced a new tradition on the final day of powwow during the Veterans' Song in which he alone danced in a counter-clockwise motion to honour the soldiers who never returned while all other dancers continued in the usual fashion.<sup>61</sup>

Speeches given by members of the community focussed on the celebratory nature

---

<sup>59</sup> While no restrictions on participation were listed, I expect that the same protocols surrounding participation were observed here as was described in relation to Miawpukek. One reason for this is that the sweats conducted in Miawpukek are often led by Mi'kmaq visiting from this and other communities in the Maritimes.

<sup>60</sup> Whistling a drum is similar to fanning a drum in that it turns whatever song is being sung into an Honour Song and extends it by at least four more push-ups.

<sup>61</sup> The explanation was announced by the emcee at the request of the dancer (September 3, 2006).



of this twentieth powwow in Elsipogtog and honoured those traditionalists active in the 1980s. For example, Eugene Augustine Senior joined the emcee on the stage and spoke:<sup>62</sup>

HEY! HEY! Once more, HEY! My name is Eugene Augustine Senior. At twenty years ago, my family, George Paul *aq* Joey Paul *aq* Paul Plisk *aq* Tom Paul, Sam Augustine, we start this powwow, and me. I'd standing on stage like this and I take sweet grass and I told the people, "I'm going to plan the powwow. This reserve is going to have a powwow." So, right now down there, twenty years ago they call me. This powwow, I start the powwow down there, and I couldn't keep up with it now – too many powwows, every reserve I just go once. If I can reach it I go the powwow.

*O', Nisgam, me' gatu wela'lioq, nige' a'sutmai ugjit pow-wow! ta'n te's'gl.* [Oh! God. Very much you do me good (or thank you very much). Now, I will pray for all powwows.]

I just remember you, *ta'n te's'gl pow-wow!*, [the many powwows] my family in there even didn't say we'll be there, *ta'n tujiw pow-wowig*, [when there is a powwow] every powwow starts, we'll be there. No matter if you're not going seen us, but we're there. Our spirits will be there. So, don't forget us, we are Augustine family. [inaudible]

HEY! HEY! 20 years anniversary. [inaudible]

*Me' gatu wela'lioq no'gmatutg.* [Very much you do me good (or thank you so much) my dear relatives.]

[. . .]

*A'na no'gmaq me' gatu wela'lioq.* [So my relatives, very much you do me good (or thank you so much).]

*Gi'l Nisgam, wa'so'q etamulneg ta'n te's'g pow-wow migwitelmitesnen, Se'sus.* [You God, in heaven, we ask that you give us for every powwow, remember us, Jesus.]

*Aq a', mu na goqwei winjig eigtnug ula pow-wow mawio'mi'l.*

---

<sup>62</sup> This speech was transcribed and translated by Janice Vicaire of Listuguj, Quebec.

[And ah, nothing bad is present at this powwow gatherings.]

*Gi'l Se'sus, me' gatu wela'lieg.* [You Jesus, very much you do us good (or thank you so much).]

*Se'sus, apigsigtuaqan etawei ta'n te'sit mijua'ji'j aq elder aq youth.*  
[Jesus, forgiveness I ask for each child and Elder and youth.]

[. . .]

We danced together, all those guys, Elders we danced together. And we start this powwow. And they learned, give us songs and everything, *getapegia'tieg.* [We sing.]

*Ijga' awani'sultieg'p aq awantesultieg'p.* [Somewhat, poorly speakers we were and poorly dancers we were.]

Now, I'm still dancing in my 20 years and I'm proud of it too.

*Me'gei nogmatutg aq me'gei ta'n teli peita'ioq ula aq nige' ulta'sit's gilew tli good-luck-ewultioq na st'ge ms't ninen.* [I am proud, my dear relatives and am proud for your arrival here and now I will be happy if you will have (or be blessed with) good-luck like all of us.]

O', no'gmatutg, me' gatu wela'lioq. [O! My dear relatives, very much you do me good (or thank you so much).]

Ei! Ei! *Elsipugtugowaq.* [Hey! Hey! People of Big Cove.]

Ta'o'. [So be it.]

Throughout this speech, Eugene Augustine Senior switches between English and Mi'kmaq with no explicit reason for the shift. The English segments tend to reference the history of powwow, while those in Mi'kmaq tend to pray to God, Jesus, or "all my relations." While this could indicate some sort of sacred-secular split, it is perhaps more likely that the history of the powwow tradition (here largely noun-based) is more difficult

to express in Mi'kmaq, a language which is verb- and relation-based. Augustine's words emphasize how far the Mi'kmaw people have come in the revival of culture, as he notes their level of ability more than twenty years ago. Like Don Caplin and Joe John, Augustine prays for relatives and those who have travelled to be part of the powwow and for only good things to be present at the powwow. He, like Joe John, prays for forgiveness. This is an indication of the prevalence of Christianity (specifically Catholicism) in Mi'kmaw communities and recalls the Lord's Prayer, often said by Elder Priscilla Drew at the Miawpukek powwow. Indeed, it may be read as a performance of a local history of encounter.

While Eugene Augustine Senior's invocation honoured all of the traditionalists active in the revival of culture in the 1980s, as noted in Chapter Three, a Friendship Song was requested on Sunday to specifically honour Tom Paul, and it was the only Round Dance of the weekend. All drummers who had ever drummed with Tom Paul were invited to join the circle and dance to honour him. Approximately fifteen men entered the dance grounds, including the emcee and the Birch Creek Singers, the group to which Tom Paul belonged. After one rotation around the circle, spectators and others joined in. This community participation was a fitting tribute to such an important figure in the history of Mi'kmaw powwow. This event, combined with other speeches throughout the weekend, demonstrates an important function of this powwow – to display and state the history of a people and their customs, while honouring key players in that history and helping to create the history of the future.



While one of the functions of this contest powwow was to celebrate twenty years of powwow in the community, the choice of a contest powwow for the most part had the effect of limiting community participation (with a few notable exceptions). While the gate counts would suggest attendance of 2,000 over the weekend, at any given time there were between 300 and 500 people on the powwow grounds (Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006). However, these people largely took on the role of spectator. Because of the large number of contest dances and the rules surrounding registration and participation, only those in regalia participated in the majority of dances on the first two days. The exceptions to this included those dancing for special songs honouring particular families and individuals, and two young women who danced in partial regalia (with shawls only) after the flags had been retired. While the emcee encouraged everyone present to dance during intertribals, whether dressed in regalia or not, those not in regalia did not take him up on the offer.

Widespread participation is a goal of many powwows, bringing together family and friends through music and dance to socialize and partake in local customs and traditions. In social dances at a powwow, "participation with friends and family is the key to enjoyment" (Browner 2002, 60). However, social dances are not only about entertainment. They serve several functions: demonstrating the continuity of a particular cultural group, integrating members of that group, and renewing social ties. When it comes to a contest powwow, however, as Browner has noted, the social dances (Snake Dance, Round Dance, Two-Step, and so on) may be secondary to the competition dances:

Although contests and traditional events share many of the same characteristics, the demands of competition can alter the basic sequence of events at a pow-wow, sometimes in profound ways. Traditional powwows, not bound by the requirements of holding a certain number of contest rounds (usually four per dance category), have far more flexibility in scheduling specials and more exotic types of intertribal dances such as Snake or Buffalo Dances, where participants can dance who are not wearing regalia. But a contest pow-wow is obligated to have one or two opening contest rounds for all who enter in a specific category and one or two final rounds the next day if requested by the judges. Often, if the point system is designed poorly, dancers who have tied in points for a specific place (either first, second, or third) must participate in a final 'dance-off,' which further takes the time that could be used for intertribals or specials. (Browner 2002, 88-89)

Powwow, then, as a time in which First Nations "come together to celebrate their culture through the medium of music and dance" (Browner 2002, 1) may enable or restrict participation and include or exclude community members depending on the type of powwow chosen.

#### 4.5 *Mi'kmaw Powwows*

The traditional and contest powwows in Miawpukek and Elsipogtog respectively were both relatively small gatherings that were predominantly attended by Mi'kmaq even though they were intertribal in nature. Thus, the oppositional categories of traditional and contest powwows, one a small, Nation-specific or "in-group" event in which participants hear their own language and practice their own local customs, the other a large, intertribal event sponsored by a community but attended predominantly by members of other First Nations, is not particularly meaningful in the Mi'kmaw context. At the Elsipogtog

powwow, nine of the ten participating Drums were from Mi'kma'ki, while the tenth Drum was visiting from Morley, Alberta. Similarly, the Miawpukek powwow featured three Mi'kmaw drum groups and an Anishnaabe drum group visiting from Ontario. Desjarlait's (1997) distinction between a community hosting a traditional powwow and sponsoring a contest powwow does not seem to be particularly useful in this context, as both were clearly hosted by the communities in which they were based with their own community members being the primary participants.

Prize money, often cited as a factor that lures dancers and drummers to participate in contest powwows, is of questionable significance at the Elsipogtog powwow. Just how "luring" was the contest money in the Elsipogtog context? While I have not observed other powwows in this community, it would seem that while the powwow saw an increase in participation in terms of gate count,<sup>63</sup> many of those present likely would have participated whether it was a contest powwow or not. While large contest powwows such as Gathering of Nations in Albuquerque, New Mexico give away more than \$150,000 in prizes,<sup>64</sup> the Elsipogtog committee was working with a budget that was less than one-fifth that amount (Augustine, personal communication, October 11, 2006). This money largely went towards honoraria for the drummers and dancers, while also paying for the feast, the

---

<sup>63</sup> Laverna Augustine noted that the attendance at this powwow has been on the rise for the past three years, with a gate count of 1000 at the traditional powwow in 2004, 1500 at the traditional powwow in 2005, and 2000 at the contest powwow in 2006 (personal communication, October 11, 2006).

<sup>64</sup> This is the figure stated on the Gathering of Nations website for the 2007 powwow. See Gathering of Nations, <http://www.gatheringofnations.com/powwow/index.htm> (accessed 23 April 2007). Albers and Medicine also note that it is common for powwow prize money to exceed \$100,000 at large competitions (2005, 38).



services of the emcee, the rental of the sound system, and other costs associated with the powwow. Further, monetary rewards for dancers and drummers were mostly spoken of in terms of honoraria, rather than prize money. While the financial aspect of a powwow is an important one, it does not seem to be a determining factor for participation in the Mi'kmaw context. Vendors and dancers with whom I have had brief conversations have stated that they are content just to earn or receive enough money to defray their travel costs. The normal functions and goals associated with a contest powwow, then, may not take priority when this type of powwow is chosen to celebrate a historic anniversary of a community. Participation to win prize money, to display one's abilities, or to observe the talents of others may be secondary to the desire to celebrate the successes, history, and continuity of a community.

This is not to say, however, that the competitive spirit was not present at the contest powwow. Many dancers endeavoured to perform to their fullest potential during the competition. On the second day of dancing, during a Women's Traditional, this desire to compete to the best of one's abilities in a fair competition was highlighted. On the last push-up of the song, the drummers unexpectedly decided to sing *a cappella*,<sup>65</sup> the lead singer beating the drum only on honour beats. The dancers were unclear as to the appropriate action and stood in place, bending their knees in time with the song and

---

<sup>65</sup> Without accompaniment.

raising their eagle fans on honour beats.<sup>66</sup> After leaving the circle, these women voiced their feeling that it was unfair of the drum to have done this, one dancer saying, “That’s not right,” while another said, “Why did they do that to us?” (September 2, 2006). These women clearly felt that their ability to perform for the judges was impeded by the drum’s actions. Concerns regarding *a cappella* singing and appropriate dance are unlikely to have the same significance at a traditional powwow.

Albers and Medicine (2005) note that, as the terms traditional and contest imply, the two types of powwow have:

become more differentiated and specialized. The in-group qua traditional powwows, whether small or large in size, are emphasizing old-style protocols and turning away from commercialism and competitive dancing. By contrast the intertribal contest powwows have become much more commercialized, regimented, and “professionalized” in relation to what they do and perform. (Albers and Medicine 2005, 41-42)

This differentiation may indeed be true when comparing traditional powwows to the larger contest powwows and some aspects may prove relevant on the smaller scale. However, as the above case studies of Mi’kmaq powwows have demonstrated, the distinctions between traditional and contest powwows are not always as clear-cut as they may appear, especially when contest regulations are observed but prize money is replaced with honoraria. Further, such distinctions may reveal more complex levels of powwow action and participation which may be locally or regionally based. Thus, as

---

<sup>66</sup> When I asked Jason Morrisseau, lead singer of the Friendship Centre Drum Group about this, he explained that the dancers should continue dancing until the song is finished, regardless of whether the drum is sounding (personal communication, April 24, 2007).

Scales (2007) has noted, traditional and contest powwows are better understood as “distinct but overlapping worlds” (6). This, once again, recalls the imagery of the double-curve motif in Mi’kmaw culture that references two ways of being simultaneously.

The Elsipogtog contest powwow is best understood in the context of local history, which identifies the significance of this commemorative powwow for the community, as well as the celebratory function it was meant to fulfill. In this local context, the “sociality and intimacy” (Albers and Medicine 2005, 40) associated with traditional powwows is present, along with Mi’kmaw language, Mi’kmaw customs, and the strengthening of familial and community ties. Competitive dancing without prize money (but with collective bragging rights for the year) may occur at a traditional powwow in the form of “Indian breakdancing,” as at the Miawpukek powwow, while games with donated cash (or candy) prizes for children can become more competitive than some contest dances.

Thus, rather than consider powwows in terms of categories of traditional and contest, categories which are more fluid than their labels appear, it is more productive to examine elements of Mi’kmaw powwows in relation to their local contexts and histories, as has been noted by Fowler (2005). The genre of powwow is localized through a variety of sonic and visual elements which express regional and Nation-specific culture and traditions.



4.6 *The Traditional Way: "Even a dumb, old Indian like me knows after eleven years you're not allowed to have alcohol and drugs on sacred ground."*

Powwow is also localized through the speech acts of those present. For example, widely held powwow principles, such as the prohibition on drugs and alcohol during a powwow, may be localized through speech acts at a powwow that invoke rhetoric of the "traditional way." Much of the speaking heard at a powwow is done by the emcee, who provides historic background to practices, enforces customs and related practices, and makes announcements as necessary (see Gelo 1999; Mattern 1998). While Gelo (1999) speaks of the oratory skills of the emcee and his role in inscribing the powwow proceedings with meaning through rhetoric of "our way," other participants at a powwow who are invited to the microphone by the emcee may also act in much the same way and fulfill a similar purpose. At the 2004 Miapukek powwow, an overt assertion of the traditional "way" of Mi'kmaw people was heard in relation to abstinence from alcohol and drugs in a speech given by Northern Traditional dancer Paul Pike: "[T]o be able to have an event like this with no alcohol and drugs. That's part of our traditional way. People talk about beginning a traditional way. That's a part of our tradition, to be clean and sober; to be respectful of each other, to life-givers, women." Paul's speech continued, noting the connections between and solidarity of all Native peoples in the effort to live and pass on traditional ways in Native communities:

All the Mi'kmaw people here in Ktaqmkuk, we come together and we join with our brothers and sisters from up on the mainland, the rest of Mi'kma'ki, and the many other Nations that are gathered here, that we show respect to one another in the good way. And I thank all the people

for their prayers for this community and many other communities abroad. Even at this time I've got brothers that are from the West that are sundancing for the people here and in Alaska they are also praying a lot just for the people here as well, for our unity, and to pass on these traditional ways to our children. (July 2, 2004)

Certainly Pike's comments can be seen in this light as he asserts being alcohol-free as part of a traditional Mi'kmaq way. Much like a musician's stage talk as described by Bealle (1993), participants at a powwow who move from the dance arena to the microphone may assert interpretive control over the event or indicate a frame through which the event is to be viewed and understood. This may be achieved by indicating links to a "particular perceived past" or drawing attention to the locale, performers, audience members, elements of the music, or history (Bealle 1993, 64). Here by invoking notions of the "traditional way," Pike references a past when Native communities were free of both alcohol and the assimilation pressures which led in some cases to substance abuse.

Powwows are commonly alcohol- and drug-free events. Liz De Roche's (2005) brief article outlining powwow etiquette in the 2006 *Powwow Calendar* places this prohibition on drugs and alcohol at the top of the list of guidelines that guests should follow at a powwow. A more detailed explanation of this restriction was explained on a website advertising a powwow on the west coast of Newfoundland in Bay St. George:

Other than the obvious reasons of wanting to promote a healthy way of life and keep our events safe from abuse, we want to recognize that drugs and alcohol are killing so many First Nations people, and in fact many peoples from all over the world. They are *Not* a part of our Aboriginal cultures, and out of respect for our Nation, and of the many people who have suffered, we choose to promote wellness, and protect our people, guests, ceremonies, and gatherings from harm. This is the example we

wish to pass on to our children. (Bay St. George 2005)

Values regarding the presence and use of alcohol at a community event such as the powwow do sometimes come into conflict. At the 2006 powwow, one of the non-aboriginal vendors that had set up on the powwow grounds in a camper was found to have and be consuming alcohol during a social evening on the grounds. The following morning, long before the powwow started for the final day, I encountered their camper purchasing gas in Head Bay D'Espoir, after having been asked to leave the powwow grounds. Later that day, during Grand Entry, Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe used the opening remarks after the invocation as an opportunity to inform those present that alcohol and drugs on the powwow grounds would not be tolerated and that, in the future, the powwow committee and community would implement stronger repercussions for offenders.

Joe's comments, however, also point to the newness of the powwow tradition and the fact that the Mi'kmaw people in Newfoundland have learned the protocols associated with powwow. By saying, "Even a dumb, old Indian like me knows after eleven years you're not allowed to have alcohol and drugs on sacred ground," Joe is implicitly indicating that he has learned the powwow tradition over the years since its introduction to the community (July 9, 2006). Of course, he is also suggesting that if he has learned these traditions and their requisite protocols, those visiting from outside the community should also take the time to learn them. It should be noted, however, that it is not only cultural outsiders who break the restrictions on alcohol and drug use on the powwow



grounds. While it is extremely rare, I have observed one case in which a community member was asked to leave the grounds because of intoxication. He agreed and left promptly. At no time have I seen the enforcement of the alcohol and drug prohibition escalate such that offenders have been escorted from the premises.

#### 4.7 *Localization Strategies in Mi'kmaw Powwows*

While the previous chapter outlined the sharing of music and culture between Mi'kmaq and other First Nations in the West and South, the health conference which served as a space for the first annual powwow demonstrates an openness in the Miawpukek community to form alliances and share teachings internationally and across all cultural backgrounds. There have been several international healing conferences held in Miawpukek over the past decade.<sup>67</sup> One held in 2000, titled "International Conference on Understanding Healing Through Diversity of Practice," gathered together practitioners and experts from other First Nations in Canada, as well as England, Australia, and Mexico. This conference, which encompassed traditional, alternative, and conventional or Western medicine, had a stated goal of exploring "how information can be shared and to understand the place of traditional healers in the context of 'western medicine'" (Miawpukek Mi'kamawey Mawio'mi 2000).<sup>68</sup> Thus, while local traditional knowledge is

---

<sup>67</sup> The next healing conference in Miawpukek is scheduled for 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Alwyn suggests that this openness extends to alternative practices such as energy healing and describes giving the Chief in Miawpukek a piece of rose quartz for use in the healing lodge when she first met him, and later a set of gemstones (2005, 14, 209-11).

highly valued, the traditions and practices of others are welcomed into local practice if they are perceived to be of use or value to the community.

As with the description of powwow as curriculum at Se't A'newey School in the previous chapter, the preceding discussion demonstrates a preference for learning through oral means. For the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, this meant not only learning via face-to-face interaction, but also through the use of recordings. However, when employing regional recordings to expand their repertoire, they devised a system for sharing that brought cultural values for oral tradition and egalitarianism to the forefront. That is, each drummer learned one song from a recording and then taught it to other drummers via oral means. This is not unlike Brenda Jeddore's method of learning a song first from a recording and then teaching it to her class by rote. Through these various means of learning, a drum group is able to learn both powwow and traditional repertoire and engage with the genre of powwow. Technology, then, may be mobilized to serve local needs.

The discussion of both the traditional powwow in Miawpukek and the contest powwow in Elsipogtog demonstrates that referring to participants at a powwow as a "community" or a powwow as a community event does little to address the diversity of those in attendance and therefore requires problematization. Firstly, the entire community does not participate in powwow. In Miawpukek, approximately half of the population attended or was involved in the powwow in some way. In Elsipogtog, while attendance was higher with a larger local population, still only about half were present at some point

throughout the weekend. For those who do attend the powwows, such engagement with the genre occurs to varying degrees, from observable participation through singing, dancing, or emceeing to more “backstage” involvement, such as preparing food for the feast or hosting visitors in one’s home. And, many people living in the host community do not attend. Some may choose not to attend because of the prohibition on alcohol (a reason I have heard in Miawpukek), while others may not consider themselves traditionalists and remain staunch practitioners of the Catholic faith to the exclusion of powwow (a reason I heard in Elsipogtog). Certainly there is a wide variety of explanations for why segments of the population choose not to participate in powwow.

Nevertheless, those Mi’kmaq who do attend the powwow come from a variety of communities and bands throughout the Atlantic Provinces and speak different dialects of Mi’kmaq to varying degrees. Mi’kmaq who travel great distances to attend another community’s powwow often take a “frontstage” or visible role in the powwow, as head dancers, drummers, emcees, or vendors; however, this is not always the case. In addition to local Mi’kmaq and visiting Mi’kmaq at a community powwow, there are visitors from other First Nations. Again, these visitors often have a role in the proceedings, perhaps as members of a visiting drum group or perhaps as an assistant to the Mi’kmaw emcee (as I have witnessed in both Miawpukek and Eskasoni). Finally, these powwows also attract non-Native vendors and observers (who are often referred to as tourists), and the occasional non-Native researcher. Thus, while a powwow may be organized by a segment of a community’s population, the population it attracts is much more



heterogeneous. It is for this reason that it may be useful to conceive of such *mawio'mi* (gatherings) as “scenes” around which practitioners and fans of powwow organize, for scenes are based in particular genres and musical tastes (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 8). Indeed, with several local scenes in contact and engaging with other local scenes that are defined by neither community nor Nation, powwow may be seen as “translocal” (*ibid.*).

Participation in powwow is at times clearly gendered. The powwow coordinators that I have met have all been women and a large percentage of the organizing committees is female. Women often run the powwow committee booth in Miawpukek and in both locales women are responsible for registration of dancers and drums prior to Grand Entry. Finally, women are central to a successful feast at each powwow, often preparing the food and serving it to those in attendance (an impressive task when one considers that each day they will feed several hundred Elders, drummers, dancers, and other attendees). Thus, women often serve in essential organizational and service roles at powwows, sometimes ‘behind the scenes.’ As Goffman (1959) has noted, in the presentation of self it is the final product that is presented for all to see and often “the long, tedious hours [. . .] of labor [. . .] will be hidden” (44). This veiled labour also occurs in large group performance contexts, such as a powwow, and serves to conceal the processes at work in favour of the end product.

While there certainly is preparatory work completed by males in advance of a powwow, it primarily occurs in a public, observable space (such as running cables for the sound system, or constructing arbours, and so on). The work of other males in the

powwow event takes place on a stage (emcee) or in the centre of the dance arena (drum groups), where it is clearly “frontstage.” However, the preparatory work by females is largely concealed, occurring spatially in the home (preparing the feast) or temporally well in advance of the powwow (for planning purposes). On the grounds during the powwow, women who work in organizational or service roles largely are found some distance from the arbour (in many ways “frontstage”), in one of the outer concentric rings of the powwow layout. This is not to say that the work of all women is “backstage” or hidden in a powwow – certainly the female dancers are an example of women participating in the front region (Goffman 1959, 107). However, the gendered division of labour observed at a powwow means that women largely engage in essential work that takes place in the “back region” (*ibid.*, 112).

Goffman (1959) suggests that there is a contradiction<sup>69</sup> between the front and back regions and, certainly, one may perceive a sort of contradiction between these spaces within the context of a powwow. The front stage of the powwow may be interpreted as one of display that comes across as largely effortless in its running to audiences present. The back stage, one of significant effort, is a space in which the work

---

<sup>69</sup> In particular, Goffman suggests the back region may “knowingly [contradict]” the front region; that there is a political sub-text that can be read using this analytical lens (1959, 112). Further ethnography may demonstrate whether this notion of “knowing” contradiction is at play in powwows. Goffman’s configuration of front and back regions has been especially relevant to studies of cultural tourism, where it has been used to consider the staging of authenticity, as well as the way in which particular elements may be hidden from tourists because they are at odds with their own values and/or contain things that tourists do not want to see or experience (see, for example, MacCannell 1999). This concealment may be particularly relevant in terms of eco- and adventure-tourism, in which hunters may conceal their activities for fear of offending tourists (see Grekin and Milne 1996, 90). Thus, notions of front and back regions may be a productive lens for further consideration of powwow as cultural display and as tourist event.

of caring and sharing is done. There is important cultural value placed on hospitality, taking care of visitors, providing for their needs, and sharing meals with them. The central role of women in the back region may be seen as inconsistent with their subservient role in the display of powwow (for example, in music-making).

That said, women also appear in unexpected “frontstage” roles at Mi’kmaw powwows. As has been indicated in the previous chapter, women do not normally take on the role of emcee at a powwow. In Miawpukek during my first year of research, a female did function as co-emcee for the event, primarily for the introduction of dancers during Grand Entry. This also occurred at the Elsipogtog powwow. While neither powwow employed a female emcee for the entire event, in contrast to the mini-powwow at Se’t A’newey School, females were present in an important role at the microphone for the start of each powwow.

Interestingly, speeches and invocations were largely not given by women. Two exceptions to this were the English-language welcoming made by Chief Susan Levi-Peters in Elsipogtog and the Lord’s Prayer (Our Father) said in Mi’kmaq by Priscilla Drew in Miawpukek. Otherwise, most speech acts were made by men. Some, such as those given by Paul Pike and Don Caplin, specifically honoured women, the life-givers of the community. Gender roles are also observed in relation to men, though often through performance and not explicit statements. A rare exception to this was the explicit statement by the emcee that one of the former Sipu’ji’j Drummers was “weak” because he no longer goes in the arbour. The emcee suggests, jokingly, that this is because his



partner is controlling him, and the emcee even emasculates him to some degree by referring to him as “boy.” This comment asserts and reinforces notions of drumming as an essentially masculine pursuit (and certainly there are no females who played powwow drums at the events I attended). Thus, that which is asserted through “powwow patter” (Gelo 1999) or stage talk (Bealle 1993) is also observed in performance.

As has been demonstrated by the specific speech acts of men at these powwows, the choice of language largely is based in practicality. One consideration is whether those listening can understand the Mi'kmaw language. In a locale where this is not the case (or at least largely not the case), the speech or invocation may be given entirely in English or started in English and then combined with Mi'kmaq. In contrast, if the population in a locale largely is fluent or at least able to understand Mi'kmaq, speeches and prayers will feature a higher proportion of the Mi'kmaw language. A second consideration is the speaker's own level of fluency in Mi'kmaq. While many in Newfoundland have some knowledge of the language, many also could not give an entire speech in the language. Thus, while Mi'kmaq may be understood as a marker of Mi'kmaw identity, and most people who speak at the Miawpukek powwow employ basic greetings and thanks in Mi'kmaq, comprehensibility and personal fluency may necessitate the use of English.

Language as it is used in prayer is particularly striking, for it demonstrates through performance the incorporation of Catholicism into Mi'kmaw belief systems and identity. Those providing invocations at Mi'kmaw powwows invoke the language of God, Jesus, God's children, and requests for forgiveness to some degree. In some cases,

this style of prayer is directly drawn from Christianity (as in the Lord's Prayer), while in others it is structurally similar to the petitions heard during general intercessions within the context of a Catholic mass. For some, it can be tempting to unproblematically cast this practice of Catholic prayer as assimilation and cultural loss.<sup>70</sup> However, as Lassiter, Ellis and Kotay (2002, 19) have noted, the seemingly incompatible combination and co-existence of Native and Christian practices is indicative of a "more complex encounter in which both sides made concessions." Further, it is yet another demonstration of the "punning" metaphor described by Samuels' (2004) in relation to indigenous identity. These prayers, which invoke God and the Creator, which speak of powwow and dancing while asking forgiveness, point in two directions at once and are performances of the diversity and seeming contradiction that is part of indigenous identity in the twenty-first century (Samuels 2004, 11). Further, while these prayers do not explicitly reference a particular history of encounter and conversion, they are a performance of it.

Regardless of the language employed, speech acts may enforce customs and traditions (Gelo 1999; Mattern 1998), and inscribe the proceedings with meaning. Often, such speeches utilize rhetoric of the "traditional" way or "our way" in an effort to emphasize the importance of particular cultural values or to enforce them. That is, the language chosen specifies an interpretive lens (Bealle 1993) through which the proceedings should be seen (here, tradition or local, as opposed to "pan-Indian"). Thus,

---

<sup>70</sup> Indeed, the use of Catholic prayers at the Miawpukek powwow was interpreted as a sign of the degree to cultural loss in the community by Jason Morrisseau, lead drummer of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, discussed in Chapters Six and Seven (personal communication, April 28, 2005).

the prohibition on alcohol observed at many powwows becomes part of the localized “Mi’kmaw way” and a form of social control. At the same time, such speeches emphasize the connectedness of all First Nations, for example, by mentioning members of other communities in Alaska who are praying for the unity of the Mi’kmaw people in Newfoundland.

In the next chapter, discourse of the “traditional way” or “our way” (Gelo 1999) will be considered in association with the song and dance genre referred to as Ko’jua, which is considered to be a distinctively Mi’kmaw genre. The musical features of and singing style associated with this and other styles of traditional Mi’kmaw music will be compared to those of powwow or intertribal repertoire to demonstrate a local or regional singing style employed in Mi’kma’ki. Regalia styles, which commonly are associated with particular dance styles, will be considered. First I will discuss various notions of a “traditional” Mi’kmaw regalia style and its historical origins. Then, I will turn to the ways in which regalia styles associated with powwow dance categories are localized or made Nation-specific in the context of a Mi’kmaw powwow.



## Chapter Five

### Mi'kmaw Powwows: Music, Dance, and Regalia Styles

The traditions, customs, and rituals practiced at a powwow are the product of continued and prolonged contact between many different First Nations; however, processes of localization serve to make these traditions meaningful to individual communities. Variation in type, form, singing style, dance style, and regalia<sup>1</sup> is observed at these cultural celebrations, and scholars such as Goerzten have noted that such variation is both “considerable – and growing” (2005, 288). Within the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow, one may hear both northern and eastern singing styles juxtaposed through Nation-specific and intertribal repertoire. In some cases, one may even hear traditional Mi'kmaw songs that are adapted to a standardized powwow song structure and sung in northern style. As emcee Albert Jackpine (Anishnabe) stated at the Eskasoni powwow in 2007, during Mi'kmaw powwows one hears “some eastern songs in a Mi'kmaw style, and some Mi'kmaw songs in an eastern style” (June 23, 2007). As this chapter will demonstrate, one also hears some “Mi'kmaw” songs in a “northern” style and some “northern” songs in a “Mi'kmaw” style. In other words, the labelling of styles is not precise and often veils the complexity of structure and style within any given performance of a particular song.

The dance styles featured at a Mi'kmaw powwow are equally diverse, and include

---

<sup>1</sup> Regalia refers to cultural dress worn by First Nation peoples, particularly when they participate in powwows.

social dances, Nation-specific dances, and categories of dance found at powwows more generally (for example, Men's Traditional or Fancy Shawl). While the regalia styles associated with specific dance categories follow a standardized form, dancers may use decorative elements that employ motifs or techniques that are Nation-specific or are expressions of personal history and aesthetic preference. There has also been the emergence of a distinguishable "Mi'kmaw" regalia style that has been termed "traditional" dress in Mi'kma'ki, often worn by women who dance in Women's Traditional style. There remains a great deal of variation between what is considered "traditional" in this context, and the most common form of dress that draws upon a historical period of contact exhibits synthesis of Mi'kmaw and European design elements.

The following discussion addresses the construction and performance of a local or Nation-specific identity through a culturally significant dance associated with the discourse of the "Mi'kmaw way." I will analyze two Ko'jua songs from the vast Ko'jua repertoire that formed part of the Miawpukek powwow in 2006. Then I will discuss the other styles of dance commonly found at all powwows, such as Men's Traditional. I will demonstrate how a song normally understood as a traditional Mi'kmaw song may be adapted to incomplete repetition form and a northern singing style within the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow. I will also provide an example of an intertribal made by a Mi'kmaw drum group, as well as examples of intertribal songs performed by groups visiting from Ontario. This will permit comparison between form, range, tessitura, melodic contour,

and instrumentation in an effort to determine how local elements are used within powwow and how powwow itself is localized. I will then turn to a discussion of the regalia style associated with each style of dance, illuminating the ways in which they may be inscribed with meaning. I will conclude by summarizing what this material tells us about gender and language as indicators of localization, as well as the larger question of whether powwow can be understood through the lens of a local or translocal 'scene.'

### 5.1 *"Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way": Mi'kmaw Song and Dance Styles*

As Gelo (1999) and Mattern (1998) have demonstrated, much of the negotiation that occurs at a powwow is presided over by the emcee. His role is to facilitate the flow of the event, to provide contextual or historical background on practices and customs, to enforce customs and traditions, and to make announcements and speeches as necessary for the smooth running of the powwow event. Further, the emcee may play a key role in what Mattern terms "acting in concert" or "community-based political action through music" (1998, 4) by raising issues or making assertions that can form the basis of dialogues. In terms of music and dance, two prominent features of the powwow, often the emcee supplies information about the context or history of a song and its related dance. Mattern notes that explanations are often directed at non-Native people or Natives visiting from other Nations; however, they are also used purposefully to remind Native peoples "of the meaning of their practices" (1998, 124) and reinforce collective memory



(1998, 125). His comments resonate with performances in Newfoundland.<sup>2</sup>

While waiting for school-age Jingle Dress dancers to assemble at the 2004 Miawpukek powwow, emcee Jimmy Augustine (from Elsipogtog) spoke of the 365 jingles on each dress and the fact that “as [the girls] dance, they pray” (July 4, 2004). Augustine continued, “You can offer tobacco to these young ladies to have a dance and pray.” He was prepared to provide additional details about the history of this dance, but ended his speech abruptly when the girls started dancing. Augustine was both educating spectators and reminding those present of the significance of the dance.<sup>3</sup> However, emcees may also call upon knowledgeable visitors to serve the same function and explain the meaning of dances. For example, in 2007, emcee Mike Doucette called all Jingle Dress dancers to the front of the stage and invited a visiting Potawatomi man to give them the teachings of the Jingle Dress. Mike told the young women, “He has a teaching you need to hear” (July 8, 2007).

The contextual or historical information associated with a particular dance, however, may not always be provided. As these powwow category dances are relatively new elements of Mi'kmaw tradition, an emcee who is unaware of the background of an adopted dance tradition may not be able to speak about it in a meaningful way. I suspect

---

<sup>2</sup> This knowledge of the meaning of the practices observed in powwow is an important consideration when selecting an emcee. However, as Laverna Augustine pointed out, other considerations are involved, including financial ones such as the emcee's fee and whether he provides his own sound system (personal communication, October 11, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> As has been noted in Chapter Three, the Jingle Dress dance is a “healing prayer” and “its spiritual power [. . .] originates as an energy generated from the sound of the cones that sing out to the spirits when dancers lift their feet in time with the drum” (Browner 2002, 53).

this may be what was going on when one of the emcees I observed at a Miawpukek powwow, made a joke about a style called Chicken Dance: "I'm not sure quite why they call it a Chicken Dance, 'cause it's all men that dance. Maybe it should be called a Rooster Dance." While there are many different explanations of the Chicken Dance, one asserted by Blackfoot Confederacy on their recording is that the Chicken Dance is a "sacred dance of the Blackfoot people" (S. Butler 2005). An online article of reflections by dancer George Ceepeekous (1999) recounts a personal experience of a joke being made about the Chicken Dance which caused great offense to dancers. Thus, not having the ability to establish a historical context for a particular song or dance style could potentially cause unintended offense (though this did not appear to be the case in Miawpukek).

An interesting admission by Jimmy Augustine while emceeing the Miawpukek powwow in 2004 is one not often heard from emcees at the Miawpukek powwow. While attempting to provide contextual and historical information about the dances, Augustine pointed out, "A lot of these dancers, ah, or dances, they are borrowed from our brothers and sisters from the West. A lot of these dances are not really ours, but they correspond" (July 4, 2004). Like the Birch Creek Singers in presentations to Se't A'newey School, Augustine acknowledges the borrowing that occurred. However, his comment that "they correspond," also is a means of localizing these borrowed dances by relating them to Nation-specific ones that might have existed in the past. Other emcees do not always discuss this borrowing, but instead refer to borrowed dances as "traditional." Thus, a

somewhat confusing “history” of powwow tradition emerges as one contemplates the many comments of the emcee, who within the event may speak knowledgeably about a tradition, joke about it, or even admit that the tradition is an adopted one.

One of the social dances that appears to be common to many different First Nations is the round dance. Interestingly, the round dance is one of the few dances at the Miawpukek powwow that makes use of a Mi’kmaw (local) song rather than one borrowed from powwow repertoire. The round dance in Mi’kma’ki generally combines the friendship song “Ikwanuté” interspersed or alternated with the song “Yu’ahaia.” On the 1991 cassette *Traditional Micmac Chants*, George Paul describes “Ikwanuté” and the significance of the round dance: “This dance is to recognize the teachings the Creator has given us since the beginning of time and the cycle of life itself. And everything moves in a clockwise fashion.”

Mike Doucette, who emceed the Miawpukek powwow from 2005 to 2007, is known for his phrase: “Swing and sway the Mi’kmaw way,” most often said in relation to the round dance (perhaps because of the swinging of the arms and the sideways stepping movement involved in the dance).<sup>4</sup> It is interesting to note that Eastern Eagle Singers included a song called “Swing and Sway” on their 1995 recording *Maq-Attaq*. While this may have been the inspiration for Mike Doucette’s phrase, it is important to note that the song “Swing and Sway” is not a round dance, nor is it a traditional song (or a song in a

---

<sup>4</sup> As was noted in Chapter Three, Stephen Augustine (Mi’kmaq) suggests that these lyrics may have had a meaning that was understood in the past and that the words themselves may actually have referred to a swinging movement of the arms (personal communication, November 2, 2006).



traditional style) – it appears on a CD of contemporary powwow repertoire by Eastern Eagle Singers.

An example of Doucette's use of this phrase comes from the 2005 powwow, during which he was encouraging people to get up and join a round dance. After specifically noting the participation of Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe in the dance, Doucette began calling on groups of people to join in the dance, saying "Good song, good song. Let's get some more dancers out here now. All you people with the camcorders and the cameras, why don't you come out here take a picture of the audience while you're dancing around. Dancers wanted, dancers wanted." He continued, calling for more women to join the circle:

Dancers wanted. We almost got a complete circle here. We need at least three thousand more people to come on out here, but I'd settle for eighty.

Dancers wanted, dancers wanted. C'mon now, don't be shy. The boys won't stop singin' until there's a complete circle.

All blonde-haired women, all blonde-haired women, we request you come out and dance and dance with us, us in a round dance. All blond-haired women.

Alright, all brunettes. All brunettes. C'mon out here, don't be shy.

All redheads. My friend here requested all redheads. Come on out.

Now we're gonna call on all the men. All you real men, you know [growl] macho tough guys. C'mon out here, don't be shy. Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way! (July 3, 2005)

This has become a sort of catch phrase for Doucette, one which takes a variety of forms.

It is implied in simple phrases like, "Oh yeah, now we're swinging!" Alternatively,

"Swing and sway" may be used on its own, with its ending "the Mi'kmaw way" simply being implied. Interestingly, in one case where the emcee said only "Swing and sway," I heard Jerry Evans, a member of the Friendship Centre Drum Group (St. John's), respond to the emcee by finishing the phrase. In fact, in the weeks preceding the powwow, Jerry had set his personal message on MSN Messenger to, "In July, swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way."

I would suggest that the phrase "Swing and sway the Mi'kmaw way" asserts a localized claim to tradition. Gelo describes a type of emcee rhetoric of "this is our way" and says it is "a standard device in which the emcee addresses onlookers to explain the significance of ritual details" (1999, 48). In its various uses, "our way" may preserve ritual order, demand respect, assert cultural values such as generosity and hospitality, or justify powwow customs (Gelo 1999, 48). In the Miawpukek context, rhetoric of "the Mi'kmaw way" may justify the powwow customs that are at play; however, it is also a means of fostering esteem for Mi'kmaw culture and identity. It is not an overt assertion that the dances are Nation-specific, nor are there many overt assertions of the local origins of dances to be heard at this powwow. However, language of "our way" does have a subtle influence on the understanding of the powwow event and its place in Mi'kmaw history and customary practice. Indeed, when seen through the lens of stage talk and "interpretive control" (Bealle 1993), one finds that such formulaic speech provides a frame through which the proceedings can be understood as part of Mi'kmaw identity and culture.

Perhaps the clearest example of Mi'kmaw tradition occurring within the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow is the Ko'jua dance. According to Rand's dictionary, *kojua* is a noun meaning "Mi'kmaq dance" and George Paul refers to it as "the dance of vigour" (*Traditional Micmac Chants* 1991). At the Miawpukek powwow in 2006, emcee Mike Doucette called it one of the "categories" of dance while announcing a round of "features." At this time, he called for all "Ko'jua dancers" and "wannabe Ko'jua dancers" to come to the dance area, saying that Ko'jua was a "traditional Micmac<sup>5</sup> dance." Then he said, "This is *our* dance."<sup>6</sup> Next a single member of Stoney Bear sang four Ko'jua songs accompanied by hand drum. The dance style was unlike that of the other categories and similar in some ways to the Haudenosaunee Smoke Dance in its quick footwork and need for agility – a similarity demonstrated by the fact that there was a Smoke Dancer present who "smoke danced" to the Mi'kmaw song Ko'jua. Throughout, Doucette encouraged some male dancers to "show them how it's done" in a competitive manner and told male dancers that this was their opportunity for "snaggin."<sup>7</sup> After seeing them dance, the emcee said, "Holy, that's smoke dancin' there" (July 9, 2006).

These Ko'jua songs had an incredibly quick tempo, between 260-290 strikes of

---

<sup>5</sup> Here I use the old spelling of Mi'kmaq to demonstrate Doucette's own pronunciation.

<sup>6</sup> Emphasis added to reflect that in the original.

<sup>7</sup> Snaggin is a word associated with powwow culture used to refer to meeting and "getting" a girl at a powwow. It is often used in the expression "snaggin' blanket," which I have heard used by Jason Morrisseau on many occasions; he often sang a 49er that made reference to a snaggin blanket. Here Doucette was telling the young men to come out and show their stuff so that they could impress the women who were present and potentially make a match.



the drum per minute.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, Ko'jua songs usually last less than a minute and a half. Usually played with a straight beat, Ko'jua songs may periodically seem uneven because the drum may drop out momentarily or the rhythm may shift to half-time.<sup>9</sup> Of the four Ko'jua songs presented, I was able to analyze two (due to recording quality): one is referred to simply as Ko'jua (or Ko'jua Kena) and the other is known as "Jukwa'luk Kkwe'ji'juow" (which means, "Bring your little sister" according to George Paul on *Traditional Micmac Chants* [1991]). These Ko'jua songs have a narrow range of a sixth, are sung in a more moderate vocal range (or lower tessitura), and feature a 3-part form, as shown in Table 5.1.

---

<sup>8</sup> This is approximately the same tempo as a Smoke Dance.

<sup>9</sup> That is, it may shift to half as many beats per minute or sound as though only every second beat is played.

Table 5.1. Comparison of two Ko'jua songs.

	Ko'jua (dance of vigour)	Jukwa'luk Kkwe'ji'juow
Sung by	Member of Stoney Bear	Member of Stoney Bear
Powwow	Miawpukek (June 9, 2006)	Miawpukek (June 9, 2006)
Category	Ko'jua	Ko'jua
Form of one verse	ABA	AA <sup>1</sup> A <sup>2</sup>
# of repetitions	4	8
range	F3 - D4	A b3 - E4
instrumentation	hand drum	hand drum
tempo	290 bpm	264 bpm <sup>10</sup>
Tail or coda?	no	no
Honour beats?	no	no
Closing pattern?	no	no
Language	Mi'kmaq	Mi'kmaq
Origins	traditional; Mi'kmaq	traditional; Mi'kmaq

Note: Each form provided is a representation of the larger sections of each song, composed of short phrases. In the form of the second song, represented as AA<sup>1</sup>A<sup>2</sup>, the A<sup>2</sup> is clearly heard as a modification of the previous sections, even though it begins by outlining a slightly different chord.

Ko'jua is believed to be at least two hundred years old. Sable and Sable (2007b) explain: "We know the Koju'a [sic] dates back to at least into the 1800s because elders today have said they learned it from their parents and grandparents." Ko'jua is regularly found at community celebrations, such as weddings, as well as at Mi'kmaw powwows.

---

<sup>10</sup> Here the drum was struck every second beat, which could lead one to think the tempo was half that given (about 132 bpm). However, the song and the dancing that accompanies it is at 264 bpm.

At Christmas celebrations in the past, Ko'jua would even be danced to fiddle music (*ibid.*).<sup>11</sup> Most often, however, Ko'jua is accompanied by hand drum or *ji'kmaq*. It is not accompanied by a powwow drum. When I asked dancer Laverna Augustine to describe the Ko'jua dance, she said it is very “energetic,” but also “smooth, and with grace” (personal communication, October 11, 2006). She explained that this social dance historically was done by girls to show boys what they had to offer. Interestingly enough, she asserted that usually only women dance Ko'jua (*ibid.*). At the Miawpukek powwow, both men and women participated in the Ko'jua dance. This style of dancing is the dance for several different traditional songs, including “Plawejuey” (Partridge Song on *Mi'kmaq Chants* by the Denny Family) and a song by the same title (“Ko'jua”). My consultant Jerry Evans pointed out, “They did both [songs] at the powwow this year but the dancing is the same I believe” (personal communication, October 16, 2006).

In fact, there are at least sixteen songs that are referred to as Ko'jua and danced in that manner (Sable and Sable 2007b). This traditional genre of Mi'kmaw song and dance is not a static one; rather, change and variation occurs. Chanter Beverley Jeddore in an interview with Franziska von Rosen explained:

Koju'a [sic] has a unique dance to it. You can sing different variations, different songs but it is still Koju'a [sic]. If you say Koju'a [sic] people will know what it means. [. . .] You will have the complete celebration when you have Koju'a [sic]. It is like repeating: Jiwa luket jijuo, jiwaluket jijuo – it means bring your little sister over, bring your sister over, bring your family or bring the one you love over and let's dance together. But I

---

<sup>11</sup> Ko'jua may also be sung on more solemn occasions; for example, at a funeral (Gordon Smith, personal communication, November 4, 2006).



sing it differently with different variations of Koju'a [sic] just so we have a variety, not just the one song. (Beverley Jeddore 2007)

The proliferation of variations of Ko'jua songs is one indicator of the cultural importance of this Mi'kmaw dance. Beverley Jeddore made this clear: "Koju'a [sic] is like a signature for our culture, for the Mi'kmaq. It is the most unique dance" (*ibid.*).

A further indication of the cultural significance of this traditional dance is that Ko'jua has inspired a contemporary song by the same name recorded by Morning Star, a Mi'kmaw music duo. In a country idiom that features the quotation of a traditional Ko'jua song, the social importance of Ko'jua, as well as the need for it to be passed on to future generations, is expressed. The text in translation (found in the liner notes of the CD *A Little More Understanding*, 1999) explains the esteem for Ko'jua held by Elders, and encourages the continuity of culture by dancing and singing Ko'jua in the present. Ko'jua, then, is a Mi'kmaw dance *style* and song *genre*. Further, it is a source of cultural pride as something that is distinctively Mi'kmaq in the context of an Eastern powwow and demonstrates the coexistence of both "old" and "new" traditions.

## 5.2 *Eastern Woodlands, Northern, or Regional: Songs and Singing Styles at a Mi'kmaw Powwow*

Powwow drum groups are normally categorized as employing either northern or southern singing style, labels which leave little room for localized singing styles.

Northern style singing has often been described as featuring a high tessitura accompanied

by heavy vibrato<sup>12</sup> or pulsation. In contrast, southern style tends to sit in a much lower tessitura. Nettl (1989, 67) has noted that Plains singing style intensified over the past century and has become “increasingly differentiated from that of white music,” perhaps due to the interaction of different Nations or in an effort to create an “ethnic musical identity.” Primarily he is referring to the observation that northern style singing increasingly features louder dynamics and higher tessituras.<sup>13</sup> Browner has noted that it is possible for women to sing northern style music at pitch with the men, but virtually impossible that they would have the range to sing southern style songs in the same way (2002, 73). Hoefnagels has noted further differences between the two styles, including means of increasing tempo, the placement of honour beats, and geographic diffusion of these styles (2004, 12). The shared characteristics of these two styles include the form of incomplete repetition (A A<sup>1</sup> ‖ B C ‖) and a descending (often terraced) melodic contour. Within these general stylistic features, however, Goertzen asserts that much variety is possible, in more nuanced elements such as the length of phrases and the rhythmic interaction between the drum and voice (2005, 289). Thus, local elements may be incorporated into these singing styles, or the styles themselves may be localized by the performers.

At the same time, however, the distinctive qualities of northern style singing are

---

<sup>12</sup> Here I am using vibrato to refer to a pulsation (amplitude vibrato) rather than a vibrato based in pitch (frequency).

<sup>13</sup> As Browner (2000, 226) notes, drum groups on the northern powwow circuit often compete to sing higher, subscribing to a “higher is better” philosophy.

also being subverted through locally- or regionally-based singing styles. Goertzen notes that drum groups are injecting more originality and variety into their songs: "Indian composers in both styles now write more songs that trace increasingly involved contours. Also, more drums in both styles are performing 'word songs,' in which the main vocal burden of vocables yields to a phrase or two of words in the repetition part of incomplete repetition form" (2005, 290). Such word songs may function as markers of a Nation-specific identity. Thus, while songs heard at a powwow may appear to exist within the conventions of Plains style, either northern or southern, "both tune and text have the virtue of being at once local and general" (Goertzen 2005, 290).

Indeed, in her work on powwow songs, Browner notes that the division made between northern and southern singing styles is really a false dichotomy that is becoming increasingly reinforced by commercial recordings (2002, 66-7). She notes that regional and local styles of vocal production emerge: "[C]hoice of singing style can vary greatly and depend on a number of factors, including personal style preferences and the presence of influential singers not native to the region in which they live" (2002, 66). Like Browner, Hoefnagels notes that the boundaries between northern and southern are becoming "more fluid" (2004, 12) and the "repertoire is dynamic and changing" (2004, 23). Singing styles are becoming increasingly difficult to 'neatly' classify and they demonstrate the influence that the local has on the singing style and repertoire of a drum group (see Hoefnagels 2001).

Traditional singing styles employed in Mi'kma'ki have often fallen under the



classification of eastern woodlands<sup>14</sup> and in comparison to northern style feature a “much more relaxed” voice (Goertzen 2005, 291). Indeed, these songs are sung at a more moderate tessitura, have a more limited range, employ less vocal pulsation, and make use of significantly less vocal tension in the production of sound. As Goertzen notes, such songs are often accompanied by an instrument of “less imposing” timbre than the powwow drum, such as a rattle or hand drum (*ibid.*). Differences are also observed in terms of contour, which is often more arch-shaped, and rhythm, which features less rhythmic “tension between drumbeat and vocal line” (*ibid.*).<sup>15</sup>

As indicated in the discussion of form for the Mi’kmaw Honour Song, Gathering Song, and Friendship Song in Chapter Three, as well as the discussion of Ko’jua songs above, songs deemed to be traditional Mi’kmaw songs are often in a form other than incomplete repetition form. Melodic contours vary from song to song; while the Honour Song, Gathering Song, and Friendship Song all display overall descending melodic contours, other songs, such as some versions of Ko’jua, feature several arch-like phrases that return regularly to the starting pitch. In Mi’kmaw material culture, this shape is called a rainbow or stepped motif (Whitehead 1982, 139-42). Still others, such as the

---

<sup>14</sup> First Nations musical styles and instruments were first mapped in terms of geographic distribution by George Herzog in 1928 and Helen Roberts in 1936. In 1954, Nettl divided North America into six style areas, a classification system that was employed for the greater part of the second half of the century (see for example McGee 1985). More recently, however, these style areas have been subject to revision. For example, Keillor (2006) has employed a classification system based on eight regions, setting the Mi’kmaq apart from “Eastern Woodlands” by grouping them with the Beothuck and Maliseet under “Maritime.” As noted in Chapter Three, such notions of regional style have homogenizing effects and do not acknowledge the flexibility and variation inherent in singing styles and song forms.

<sup>15</sup> Goertzen notes that there may even be a metric feel to these songs (2005, 291).

Partridge Song, are almost triadic in structure, regularly returning to an upper pitch and creating an upside-down arch not unlike the figure featured in the double-curve motif (discussed below). While early recordings of these traditional songs feature hand drums or rattles and are sung as solos, many of them are now played on the powwow drum and sung by a group.<sup>16</sup> Such songs are regularly sung in a moderate tessitura, while employing a relaxed vocal style that is devoid of heavy pulsation or vibrato, or the more strident qualities of northern style singing.

When traditional songs are transposed to a powwow idiom, like northern style, modifications are often necessary. The form may be altered to be more in line with incomplete repetition form, the tempo may increase dramatically, and honour beats may be added. Further, the movement of the melodic line may be altered to better match the driving rhythm employed in some northern style songs.

---

<sup>16</sup> The current exception to this, at least in terms of live performance at a powwow, appears to be the quick tempo Ko'jua songs, which are normally sung by a single voice and accompanied by hand drum or *ji'kmaqñ*. However, it should be noted that on *Traditionally Yours* (1996), Eastern Eagle played a Ko'jua song on powwow drum ("Ko-ju Wa-Kena"). Further, the Grand Entry song Ko'jua is regularly played on powwow drum in live settings.

Table 5.2. Comparison of “I’ko” sung at the cultural workshop in Se’t A’newey School and at the Eskasoni annual powwow.

	I’ko	I’ko
Sung by	two female students	Stoney Bear
Event	Workshop (Miawpukek, May 19, 2006)	Eskasoni Powwow (June 23, 2007)
Category	n/a	Men’s Traditional (straight)
Form of one push-up (verse)	AB	: ABA'B'C :   *
# of repetitions	3	15
Range	A3 - G4	B♭ 3 - A♭ 4
Instrumentation	Native American flute; hand drum	powwow drum
Tempo	50 bpm	160 bpm
Tail or coda?	yes (B¹)	no
Honour beats?	no	every second B¹C
Closing pattern	tremolo	tremolo
Language	vocables	vocables
Origin	traditional; gift from Mohawk	traditional; gift from Mohawk

\* Two iterations of this pattern constitutes one complete push-up, as Honour Beats sound on every second B¹C.

This powwow or northern style version of “I’ko” was sung as a Men’s Traditional at the 2007 Eskasoni powwow. A great deal of diversity is observed in this particular dance category, including Mi’kmaw songs and songs borrowed from other Nations. The



vast majority of male dancers seen at a Miawpukek powwow participate in this style of traditional dancing. One of the most popular song styles in this category, at least in Miawpukek, is called a Duck n' Dive,<sup>17</sup> though Sneak Up dances are also popular. This category of dance may be accompanied by a Mi'kmaw song sung in a more northern style (see "I'ko" above) or by a newly composed Mi'kmaw song in northern style.

While significant changes may be made in transposing a Mi'kmaw song to a powwow idiom, when compared to other northern style songs that are not adaptations of traditional songs, one finds that there are still idiosyncrasies that may be indicative of a Mi'kmaw song style (see Table 5.3 below). For example, the antiphonal structure that is common in many traditional Mi'kmaw songs (such as the Gathering Song) is maintained here. The A section is always sung as a solo, with all other sections sung by the group. The oral effect is that one hears two leads within each push-up. Further, the addition of honour beats may be essential to determining the form of this song, for they appear on the second half of each push-up. Without them, this song would not be heard as incomplete repetition form (and the number of repetitions would double).

---

<sup>17</sup> Duck n' Dive appears to be a relatively new addition to powwows. A discussion about its origins on PowWows.com from 2003 indicates some debate over whether it came from the Nez Perce or the Crow. It may be danced for Men's Traditional or Chicken Dance specials. Some contributors assert that this dance has been around for quite some time and that the appropriate protocol is to stand when it is done, while others indicate that they have only seen it once or twice (<http://www.powwows.com/gathering/printthread.php?t=11974>, accessed 18 April 2007). On a single loud honour beat, the dancers duck down, as if dodging a bullet. In 2005 at the Miawpukek powwow, the emcee gave most of the men a hard time because they kept missing the beat by a second. This dance may be popular in particular regions; Paul Pike indicated at the 2005 powwow that the first time he had seen or danced a Duck n' Dive was at the 2004 Miawpukek powwow and that the dance was not done at powwows in Alaska (July 3, 2005). Eastern Eagle recorded "Duck and Dive" on their most recent CD, *Sipekne 'Katik* (2006).

Table 5.3. Comparison of Two Men's Traditional Songs.

	I'ko	Duck N' Dive
Sung by	Stoney Bear	Eastern Eagle
Powwow	Eskasoni (June 23, 2007)	Miawpukek (July 4, 2004)
Category	Men's Traditional (straight)	Men's Traditional
Form of one push-up (verse)	$\parallel : ABA^1B^1C : \parallel ^*$	$A A^1 \parallel : B C : \parallel$
# of repetitions	15	4
Range	B $\flat$ 3 - A $\flat$ 4	B $\flat$ 3 - D $\flat$ 5 (C3 - E $\flat$ 5 in 4 <sup>th</sup> push up)
Instrumentation	powwow drum	powwow drum
Tempo	160 bpm	172 <sup>18</sup>
Tail or coda?	no	no
Honour beats?	every second B <sup>1</sup> C	no
Closing pattern	tremolo	no
Language	vocables	vocables
Origin	traditional; gift from Mohawk	contemporary; Mi'kmaq

\* Two iterations of this pattern constitutes one complete push-up, as Honour Beats sound on every second B<sup>1</sup>C.

While Men's Traditional is the most popular category for male dancers in Mi'kma'ki, some men participate in Grass Dance. The number of Grass Dancers present

<sup>18</sup> While the bpm of this song (and accompanying dance) was 172, periodically the drum was beat at half time. This did not change the speed of the song or the dancing that accompanied it.

at a Miawpukek powwow in any given year rarely amounts to more than four or five and, consequently, an opening Grass Dance to bless the grounds prior to Grand Entry does not take place (see Chapter Four). In Elsipogtog, however, the number of Grass Dancers present is significantly higher, with more than double the number at the Miawpukek powwow. I have not observed a Men's Fancy Dancer at the Miawpukek, Elsipogtog, or Eskasoni powwows; however, I have been told that in the past there has been one at the powwow in Miawpukek (Evans, personal communication, 18 April 2007).

Women participate in Traditional, Fancy Shawl, and Jingle Dress Dance styles. By far the majority of young dancers choose to dance Fancy Shawl, while older women tend to participate in Traditional. Jingle Dress is the least common female dance style seen in Miawpukek, Elsipogtog, and Eskasoni, with at most eight or nine dancers in a given year. These dancers are often quite young, the majority under the age of 12, and only a few wear a dress with the complete set of 365 jingles. Songs appropriate to each dance style are sung. While Fancy Shawl and Jingle Dress are not traditional dances in Mi'kma'ki, Mi'kmaw songs in the appropriate (northern) style have been made for them, primarily by Eastern Eagle, but also by other groups. Thus, the songs accompanying these dances may originate in western Nations or from within Mi'kma'ki, but are always in the singing style appropriate to the intertribal dance genre.

Song types regularly heard at Mi'kmaw powwows, then, include those common to powwows throughout North America. While each of these dance styles are featured on each day of powwow in Mi'kma'ki, intertribals are the most common songs at the



Miawpukek powwow. These intertribals again may have been received from western Nations or made by Mi'kmaw drum groups. Intertribals are open to everyone in attendance at a powwow and may be categorized as social dances. One of the most popular in recent years is "Good Medicine" by Eastern Eagle Singers. This intertribal employs incomplete repetition form (aa' bcbc'c bcbc'c, where "a" is the solo lead),<sup>19</sup> a descending melodic contour, and a higher tessitura associated with northern style. However, leading the song into the repeat is a second solo phrase (c') in the extreme lower range of the song, which fleetingly sounds almost southern style. This song, then, is also demonstrative of a preference for an antiphonal style of singing associated with traditional Mi'kmaw song forms such as the Snake Dance, with two leads per push-up. It also breaks with normal expectations for range and tessitura of a northern style song in that the lowest pitch is below the usual "northern" style tessitura.

Even when Eastern Eagle Singers are not present at a Mi'kmaw powwow, their popular song may be requested by the emcee. This was the case at the 2006 Miawpukek powwow. One of the drum groups present sang it as best they could; however, it was clear that they did not have the power in the lower register to successfully perform this song.<sup>20</sup> However, intertribals may also come from other Nations, such as the "Bear Song"

---

<sup>19</sup> Here I have analysed at the level of the smallest phrases so that the second lead in the middle of the song could be emphasized.

<sup>20</sup> The difficulty observed in the lower register could be due to the fact that they are young singers who have not yet developed this singing range; however, it may also be that given their own choice of northern style and Mi'kmaw repertoire, they have not needed to develop this part of their singing range.

by the group Neshnabé Ojibwe,<sup>21</sup> sung at the 2006 powwow. This song employs a strict form of incomplete repetition and features an overall descending melodic contour. It does not feature a “second lead” in each push-up as is heard in “Good Medicine.” The features of both are compared in Table 5.4 below.

The remainder of dances featured are other social dances and specials. It is here that traditional Mi’kmaq songs are more commonly heard for social dances such as the Round Dance and Snake Dance. A Two-Step may be accompanied by a Mi’kmaq song or a song from another Nation, as is true for children’s specials (described in Chapter Four). Each day of powwowing will also often feature a “seventh inning stretch” – that is, a dance for the drummers who have been singing for the duration of the powwow. All but one drum group leaves the arbour and the drummers dance, often still carrying their drum sticks.<sup>22</sup>

The open-ended category referred to as “specials” may also include non-danced events held within the powwow, such as demonstrations, story-telling, or flute playing (Goertzen 2005, 296). Goertzen notes that such specials “offer a much-needed break to the dancers, who tend to be fewer than at contests” (*ibid.*). Such non-danced specials, however, are not found within the structure of the Miawpukek powwow, nor were they

---

<sup>21</sup> Neshnabé Ojibwe is from Ontario, with members from Mississauga First Nation.

<sup>22</sup> It was suggested by Jason Morrisseau that at the 2004 powwow a recording was played for the “seventh inning stretch,” giving all drummers a short break from singing. He also said that recordings were used throughout the powwow, a practice he had never observed before (personal communication April 28, 2005). My fieldnotes and recordings neither confirm nor disprove this assertion. However, recordings of powwow music, as well as the contemporary native music group Medicine Dream, were played over the sound system in the hour or two prior to Grand Entry.

Table 5.4. Two intertribals heard at the Miawpukek powwow.

	Bear Song	Good Medicine
Sung by	Neshnabé Ojibwe	Eastern Eagle Singers
Powwow	Miawpukek (July 8, 2006)	Miawpukek (July 4, 2004)
Category	Intertribal	Intertribal
Form of one push-up (verse)	A A'   : B C :	A A'   : B C :
# of repetitions	8	7 <sup>23</sup>
Range	C3 - G4	C#3 - C#5 <sup>24</sup>
Instrumentation	powwow drum	powwow drum
Tempo	134 bpm	135
Tail or coda?	no	no
Honour beats?	no	no
Closing pattern?	no	no
Language	vocables + Oji-Cree	Mi'kmaq + vocables
Origins	unknown	contemporary by Eastern Eagle

<sup>23</sup> There were 7 push-ups before the drum was fanned. This means that there would have been at least 4 more push-ups; however, there could have been more. I have no way to determine this as the recording ends, in observance of recordings restrictions.

<sup>24</sup> At times in this song, parallel octaves could be heard, as well as octave displacement as different singers took turns singing the lowest sections. I expect this was simply due to limitations on the range of individual voices.



observed within the Elsipogtog and Eskasoni powwows. Artisans who did demonstrate their crafts did so concurrent with the dancing. Events such as story-telling or the guest presentation by Parks Canada in 2005 titled "Guides of Gros Morne" may occur on powwow weekend, but are scheduled outside of the powwow dancing. For example, "Guides of Gros Morne," a story-telling presentation that featured Newfoundland songs such as "Trois navires de blé," "The Badger Drive," "Lukey's Boat," "Kelligrews' Soiree," and "Gotta Get Me Moose B'y," was scheduled as the first part of social night, the evening before the powwow began. Story-telling is also regularly scheduled in the morning prior to Grand Entry.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the musical repertoire featured in this story-telling event was in keeping with the musical repertoire featured on the stage during social night (see Chapter Four).

The music and singing styles heard at a Mi'kmaw powwow, then, are varied and multiple. While much of the singing, especially for category dances, may be in northern style and follow the conventions associated with it, singing (and songs) may be localized or demonstrate regional aesthetics through melodic contour of phrases, the selection of more moderate tessitura, a narrow range, phrase lengths and relationships, or the use of the Mi'kmaw language.<sup>26</sup> Traditional songs heard at a powwow are more demonstrative of a regional style or aesthetic preference, in that they regularly feature more varied

---

<sup>25</sup> Even though story-telling is scheduled for the mornings, I have never witnessed it. When I have inquired about it, I have been told that it was cancelled.

<sup>26</sup> This topic will be explored further in chapter six in terms of the singing style employed by the Native Friendship Centre Drum Group (St. John's).

musical contours, more moderate tessituras, more relaxed vocal production with less vibrato or vocal pulsation, and a form other than incomplete repetition. Selections from the repertoire heard at a Mi'kmaw powwow may be demonstrative of either northern style or eastern woodlands; however, some songs cannot be classified as one or the other.

### 5.3 *Mi'kmaw Regalia: Dance Styles, Aesthetics, and Personal Expressions*

While the style of regalia worn by dancers is directly related to the style of dancing one chooses to practice, the dress associated with a borrowed dance style may be localized through motifs that have been used in Mi'kmaw expressive culture for centuries. Browner notes that, "Each type of contest dancing has a pre-existing template for regalia, largely determined by custom. [ . . . ] The average dancer wears a mixture of homemade, inherited, gifted, and purchased regalia" (2002, 49). While many styles of regalia are based on Plains dress, elements such as the materials used, the particular designs employed, or the other ways in which they are embellished may, and often do, point to a specific Nation. Regalia styles are primarily passed on via non-written forms of transmission, with dancers participating in events and seeing styles of regalia that they can replicate. They may also learn about styles specific to their Nation by talking to Elders. However, archival pictures from the past or books featuring various styles of regalia may also be consulted.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> The danger of consulting such sources may be demonstrated by the experience of Men's Northern Traditional dancer Paul Pike. Pike added an item to his regalia having seen it in a book and appreciating it for its aesthetic value, not knowing what it was or represented. At a powwow in Chickaloon,

Albers and Medicine (2005) note that with the growth of competitive dancing at powwows, contest dance categories proliferated as dancers were grouped according to age. Further, the process became more regimented, with registration as a dancer and participation in Grand Entry both required to enter in the competition. With the increase in prize money available to winning dancers and a general "professionalization" of powwow participants (drummers, dancers, emcees, directors, and judges who make a living through powwow participation), powwow dress has become more elaborate and regimented (Albers and Medicine 2005, 37-9). Goertzen explains, "In all of these [standard powwow] dances[,] convention governs both regalia and dance steps but leaves lots of room for individual expression: dancers perform simultaneously rather than in ensemble" (2005, 289).

As may be expected, the regalia styles seen at a Mi'kmaw powwow largely follow the conventions for each particular dance style. Women who dance in Jingle Dress style wear a conventional jingle dress with 365 jingles,<sup>28</sup> which may be personalized in terms of colour, style, and the choice of silver or brass jingles (the former being more common). The same holds true for Fancy Shawl dancers, who personalize their regalia in terms of colour, style, and embellishment. However, greater freedom for regalia style is

---

Alaska, another dancer told him he was carrying a "belly ripper," a weapon of war. Paul immediately decided to drop this item from his regalia because of its violent implications (May 25, 2002).

<sup>28</sup> For practical reasons, as has been noted, young girls may not wear the complete set of jingles on their dress (for the dress of a young girl may be too small to accommodate the full set of jingles). At the Miawpukek powwow I have seen perhaps four Jingle Dress dancers who had all 365 jingles. The young girls may have as few as 40 or 50, depending on their size. The same is true for dancers at the Elsipogtog and Eskasoni powwows.



exhibited in the Women's Traditional category. Browner has noted that the traditional category for both men and women is a "catchall category, and regalia styles not considered Fancy, Grass, or Jingle Dress are thrown into it by default" (2002, 51). Thus, these dancers may wear buckskin dresses, ribbon dresses, or even simple skirts (sometimes wrap style). For example, in 2004, one of the dancers wore rawhide boots that laced up, a long skirt of brown suede, and a long sweater. Christine Pike, who was attending the powwow for the first time and is a Mi'kmaw from the west coast of the province, said this was the outfit to which she felt most connected, that this was how she imagined her ancestors dressed (personal communication, July 3, 2004). When I later asked her about this comment, she explained that her mother has always been one to "make do" with what she has and that her family is "simple," getting by with just the basics (Christine Pike, personal communication, April 26, 2007). Christine imagines this trait has been passed down through her family and is her explanation for why she is connected to this particular style of dress; she interpreted this style of dress as reflecting her family's "make do" values. Further, in Christine's opinion, it is more important to be of "good heart" at a powwow, conducting oneself in a respectful manner and participating for the right reasons, than to be dressed in an elaborate outfit (personal communication, May 12, 2008).

Still other dancers, however, choose to wear what is understood in the present to be traditional Mi'kmaw dress. The expression "traditional Mi'kmaw dress" currently refers to a style of dress seen in water colours from the 1800s and photographic

collections from the late 1800s and early 1900s.<sup>29</sup> Whitehead notes that from the time of contact until approximately 1750, there was a gradual shift away from “materials and techniques utilized in pre-contact Micmac [sic] costume, in favour of cloth, ribbon, beads, and ready-made European clothing” (1980, 16). By the nineteenth century, men wore dark, knee-length military-style coats edged with piping, ribbons, and beadwork. Leggings were replaced with pants, and a European style cap was worn. For women, dress of this time period featured a long fabric skirt over leggings, short fabric jacket, moccasins, and a peaked cap. The skirts were often trimmed in parallel strips of coloured fabric featuring motifs of scallops, peaks, triangles, and curves. Similar edging was found on the accompanying short jackets. The peaked cap, which is believed to have been a product of contact with the French and was in use as early as 1791, was embellished with intricate designs, often in the double-curve motif. In the past, the peaked cap would have been decorated by moose hair embroidery or, more likely, by quill embroidery, which has a similar appearance to beadwork. However, with trade and the availability of beads, these caps were soon decorated with beadwork (Whitehead 1980, 15-29).

Whitehead’s study of Mi’kmaw quillwork notes several motifs common throughout Mi’kmaw material culture: rainbows, stepped patterns, chevrons, half-chevrons, double-curves, crosses, eight-legged starfish (also called eight-point star,

---

<sup>29</sup> These water colours and photographs are available online at the Mi’kmaq Portraits Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum. See: <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq/>. See also *Mikwite’lmanej Mikmaqi’k: Let Us Remember the Old Mi’kmaq* by the Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq and Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology (2001).

discussed below), circles (and intersecting circles), diamonds, and squares or rectangles, among others (1982, 133-99). The double-curve motif has been found carved into the rocks at Kejumkujik Lake in Nova Scotia and it is thought that the design motif existed pre-contact (Whitehead 1980, 26). A symbol that exists in many variations, one of the Mi'kmaw terms for this motif is *aboodalooak* and it may have represented plants, though its original meaning is unknown (Whitehead 1982, 162-4).

Jasen Benwah, a Mi'kmaw on the west coast of Newfoundland, has noted the desire of some to return to this "traditional" clothing: "Today there is renewed interest in the knowledge and art of making traditional clothing that is mostly used for traditional ceremonies and celebrations" (n.d.). It is striking that this "traditional" dress is actually one that emerged after contact, but has been selected as distinctively Mi'kmaq. Indeed, at the Miawpukek powwow over the past four years, there has been a handful of women who dance in this traditional Mi'kmaw dress.<sup>30</sup> However, I have not seen any male dancers dressed in clothing from the same time period. In fact, the only time I have seen the male version of this traditional dress was at a healing ceremony in Corner Brook in 2004. It was worn by Paul Pike, who had organized and was leading the ceremony. Paul refers to this style of dress as ceremonial and does not wear it at powwows. As a northern traditional dancer, he wears the regalia appropriate to his dance style. Male dancers at a Mi'kmaw powwow, then, tend to wear conventional powwow regalia associated with their dance styles of Men's Traditional, Grass Dance, or Fancy Dance (when present).

---

<sup>30</sup> The same appears to be true for the Elsipogtog and Eskasoni powwows.



Dancers who do not have elaborate traditional or Grass Dance regalia may dance in buckskin leggings and vests (often over a ribbon shirt), or ribbon shirts and pants.

Some Mi'kmaq attending powwows have chosen to return to the dress associated with other moments in history or to incorporate elements of past styles of dress into regalia that largely follows the conventions associated with the dance style. For example, at the 2006 Elsipogtog powwow, I observed a Men's Traditional dancer in fairly standard regalia. The only deviation from convention for that dance style was that instead of wearing a roach,<sup>31</sup> he wore what is best described as a crown of feathers.<sup>32</sup> This style of headpiece is seen in some pictures from the 1880s and 1890s in the *Mi'kmaq Portraits Collection*. Whitehead notes that this headdress, essentially a headband with erect feathers attached, emerged around 1885 (1980, 26-8). Some members of the drum group Kitpu (the Denny boys) have chosen a pre-contact technique for embellishing their regalia. Their skin clothing is not decorated with fabric strips, embroidery, or beadwork; rather, they have chosen to paint designs on the hide.<sup>33</sup> However, the style of the regalia does not employ pre-contact style loose robes with leggings. Instead they wear hide vests and pants with painted decorative details over ribbon shirts.

Mi'kmaw artist Jerry Evans suggested that Kitpu's regalia style was more

---

<sup>31</sup> A roach is a headpiece commonly seen in Men's Traditional regalia made of porcupine hair that stands erect usually on a base of stiff leather. It is held in place with a pin that may be beaded or otherwise decorated, and usually has a feather or two hanging from it.

<sup>32</sup> Crown of feathers is used to distinguish it from the more flowing Plains war bonnet style seen in some Nations.

<sup>33</sup> For more on the painting of Mi'kmaw regalia, see Denny (2006).

“Mi’kmaw” than other styles present at the Miawpukek powwow. After explaining that he would like to learn men’s Northern Traditional, he spoke about traditional styles of dress:

If I was younger I’d be a Grass Dancer or a Fancy Dancer, but I guess I’m getting old, I suppose. And Northern Traditional – it’s traditional you know. Tradition is very important, but the thing is it’s pan. It’s not us, at least I don’t think it is. So much has been lost here. Even the language here and in Nova Scotia is completely different, you know? So you know, what were our dances? You look at the regalia of the people at Conne River. The Denny Boys are probably the people that dress more Mi’kmaw than, you know, anyone else. The guys wearing the bustles and robes – that’s not our tradition, you know. [It’s] adopting something that is not traditional, even the plains headdress. We’ve got the Chiefs here that are wearing the Plains head dress. [. . .] I guess it’s all about sharing. I mean, so much has been lost we have no other choice but to share I guess. (Jerry Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2005)

Whitehead notes that, “In the 1600’s, painted designs included realistic and geometric motifs, parallel lines and broken chevrons, and ‘lace-like patterns’ which may have been the double-curve motif later used in beadwork” (1980, 14). Members of Kitpu are the only men whom I have seen wearing this style of regalia in Miawpukek. A female dancer at the Elisipogtog powwow also wore a skin dress decorated in a similar fashion and I did not observe this style while in Eskasoni. This style of regalia, then, differs from conventional powwow regalia in decorative technique and materials.

At the Miawpukek powwow, I have also observed a practice of carrying a drum while dancing, presumably as an embellishment to the regalia since the drum is not played while dancing (though, based on its construction, it does appear to be functional). I have not seen this at the other powwows I have attended. However, over the course of

the past four years, I have seen a very small percentage of dancers – both men and women – carrying hand drums or small double-headed drums while dancing. When the women carried drums, it was during a dance that preceded their own special. Immediately following this dance they moved under the arbour and sang. Thus, I would not suggest it was part of their regalia; rather, they were carrying the drums in preparation for singing. However, for the males who carried drums the same explanation did not hold true. They carried drums the entire weekend and did not play them at any point. During a feedback interview in which Jason Morrisseau and I watched video footage of a Miawpukek powwow, he commented, “I don’t know why this guy is carrying a drum; I thought drums were for playing. Anyway, that’s another thing that I’ve never seen in my life: dancing with the drum. [. . .] I know a lot of the Elders frown upon that” (personal communication, April 28, 2005). Jason suggested that the newness of the traditions in this area, as well as what he perceived to be a lack of guidance regarding traditions, would explain this anomaly. However, the carrying of a drum while dancing could be an individual’s creative addition to his regalia.

As has been noted, the observance of current regalia conventions does not preclude individuality or Nation-specific embellishments, as regalia is a deeply personal expression. At the 2004 powwow, emcee Jimmy Augustine spoke about the sources of materials used in and inspiration for regalia, while also educating the attendees about appropriate terminology:

Ok, right now ladies and gentlemen, we’re gonna feature some Men’s



Traditional dancers. Now, these guys, if you look at their regalia. And by the way, you never call what they're wearing costumes 'cause they're not costumes. It's not Halloween, it's not something that you dress up. It's a symbol of the people. And the eagle feathers that these dancers wear, sometimes we will have an eagle that was killed by, ah, sittin' on a wire or someone shot it by accident, or it just died of old age. But we don't go out and hunt eagles. That's one thing that we, you know, that's unheard of. We don't go kill eagles. So we really show a lot of respect for eagles, as you can see. And, ah, sometimes these, these dancers collect those eagle feathers for a long, long time. And their regalia takes a long, long time to make. And a lot of times, ah, how they want their regalia, it'll come to them in a dream, on a fast or fasting by themselves. They won't drink any water or sometimes they won't eat for so many nights. Or sometimes in sweatlodge. (July 4, 2004)

How these regalia hold meaning for each individual dancer, however, requires an examination of regalia on an individual basis. As Northern Traditional is the most common male dance style seen at the Miawpukew powwow, I will examine the conventional Northern Traditional style dress and demonstrate how it is personalized or localized by one dancer.

The conventions associated with Northern Traditional style dancing have been described by Browner:

Typical contemporary Northern Traditional dance regalia includes a roach topped (ideally) with two eagle feathers, a bone-pipe breastplate, an eagle feather bustle, and a feather fan (made from bird-of-prey feathers) held in the left hand. All of these items were elements of the old Omaha dancer's regalia, but all were also used by most warrior societies. (Browner 2002, 25)

She further points out that such regalia normally features "two cloth trailers hanging from [the bustle]" and that "modern dancers almost always wear full shirts and leggings,

reminiscent of the dance clothing worn only in the winter months of the late 1800s” (2002, 51). It is this style of regalia that serves as a template for the dress of Northern Traditional dancer Paul Pike.

Over the past seven years, I have developed a close relationship with Paul Pike, who has provided guidance and served as a source of information and encouragement countless times. I have been honoured to help him prepare and dress in his regalia at the 2004 and 2005 Miawpukek powwows, and also perform ‘spot checks’ throughout the day. Pike, a non-status Mi’kmaw from Corner Brook, Newfoundland who now resides in Alaska, was given permission to dance in Northern Traditional style by the Lafever family (Northern Cheyenne). Due to the fact that he is non-status, he has two sets of regalia, one for each of his homes. This is necessary because he cannot travel with eagle feathers, as a non-status person. The base of his regalia (leggings, vest, ribbon shirt, cuffs, moccasins, breastplate, shield, and other related items) is common to both sets; however, he has two of each element of regalia that includes feathers (such as his bustle and roach pin).



Figure 5.1. Paul Pike in his Newfoundland regalia at the 2005 Miawpukek powwow.

In 2004, Paul spoke about the many personal elements of his Newfoundland

regalia:

- Paul: Does everything look ok?  
 Janice: Yeah, it looks great.  
 Paul: I gotta take a minute to catch my breath.  
 Janice: Paul, how long did it take you to make that?  
 Paul: [chuckles] Years.  
 Janice: It's a work in progress, I know, but . . .  
 Paul: A lifetime, yeah. Well, the beadwork, wampum, making the bonework, and the cuffs, and the staff, ah. Just that took three years. And then, doing the vest – Dee [his wife] did most of this vest. And ah, ah, where else...Just preparing everything. It took a lot of time, yeah, to put it all together.  
 Janice: It's a major operation.  
 Paul: And are all the feathers found, or were they given, or?  
 Paul: No. Yeah. This came from an eagle, a whole eagle. This claw and all these tail feathers were given to me from



someone else.

The outer part of my bustle came from a very old bustle from Lame Deer, Montana, from Northern Cheyenne Reservation. And it was pretty bad and I fixed it up quite a bit, and changed a lot, made it me.

And I added inner feathers. That's from the same eagle as these came from [motions to eagle staff].

Then there's hawk feathers.

These are red tail hawk feathers [on shield]. And, ah, they came from the original outfit that this came with. And I've got some small golden eagle feathers here, but I have some bigger golden eagle feathers in Anchorage, in Wasilla. Like these two little ones here. Those there and these little ones down at the bottom here, those are golden eagle. But I have large, very large ones up in Alaska.

Hard to find around here. I think I heard there are some out around the Tablelands.

Janice: Really?

Paul: There are some golden eagles out there. They're usually high country type of animal, bird. [pause]

This is two braids of sweetgrass that I've been dancing with

since I barely ever danced. When I came out [as a dancer], the guy who gave me my bustle, my other bustle from Montana, he had died. KC [Lafever].<sup>34</sup> It was supposed to go to him. And out of respect for him, I've got two braids here – one for my family and one for him. So he's always with me when I dance. I wouldn't had, I wouldn't have gotten the bustle without him. (July 2, 2004)

Paul's description demonstrates the way in which a dancer's regalia may be assembled from a variety of sources, especially through the process of gifting. Further, it demonstrates how a dancer's regalia can come from quite distant places and different

---

<sup>34</sup> Paul wrote the song "True Friends" on his first album *Identity* (1998) about his friend K.C. Lafever, who having lost his battle with drugs and alcohol committed suicide. The proceeds from the sale of this album were donated to a Memorial in K.C.'s name and the group continues to contribute to recovery and sobriety programs. This song also appears on *Mawio'Mi* (2000).

Nations, and then be remade to reflect the individual and the Nation of his own heritage. An event the following year demonstrates the fluid and changing nature of regalia, which may be repaired, tweaked, revised or added to over a lifetime. In 2005, Paul added eagle feather shoulder caps to his regalia when a dancer gave them to Paul from his own regalia.<sup>35</sup> However, his description also resonates with that given by emcee Jimmy Augustine at the 2004 powwow, in that it emphasizes creating regalia over a long period of time.

Items, such as a double braid of sweetgrass held while dancing, may have very personal meaning for a dancer, as a memorial to a friend. However, it is often the imagery used to embellish such regalia that is indicative of a particular locale, Nation, or family. Paul's regalia makes use of three primary images that are of significance to him. The first is the crow, for his mother was of the crow clan. A crow is featured on the shield on his left arm, while smaller versions of this image are beaded onto the front of his vest. Both items also feature the Mi'kmaw eight-point star.



Figure 5.2. Mi'kmaw eight-point star.

---

<sup>35</sup> This same dancer, from Nova Scotia, passed his bustle on to a dancer in Miawpukek who has danced at every powwow in the community since 1996, but has never had a bustle.

On Paul's shield, a crow is flying over an eight-point star (or is superimposed on it), while small red and white eight-point stars outlined in black are beaded onto his vest (see Figure 5.1, above). An eight-point star is also found on his breech-clout,<sup>36</sup> as well as a clip that secures a red scarf around his neck. Finally, elements of Paul's regalia, such as his vest and cuffs, have edges embellished with black beadwork in the double-curve motif and flowers. While the image of the crow is a very personal expression of Pike's family, it also demonstrates kinship ties. Images such as the eight-point star and double-curve motif have broader meaning for the Mi'kmaw Nation and have been in continual use for several centuries, if not longer.

Whitehead has studied the eight-point star as a decorative symbol and determined that it was only found in one type of Mi'kmaw expressive form – quillwork on birch bark base – and not in beadwork, petroglyphs, or earlier styles of quillwork.<sup>37</sup> She terms this symbol the *Kagwet* or “Eight-legged Starfish,” a term conveyed to the Nova Scotia Museum's Curator in 1933 by a Mi'kmaw artisan (Whitehead 1982, 133). The symbolism of this and other quilling motifs, claims Whitehead, has been largely forgotten. Based on the findings of her research, she asserts that:

The eight-point star was, in all probability, a purely geometric motif, which came into use after the acquisition by the Micmac of the

---

<sup>36</sup> Breech-clout refers to the cloth worn to cover the loins.

<sup>37</sup> A piece of quillwork featuring the Mi'kmaw eight-point star has been employed as a symbol for the contemporary Native group Medicine Dream and appears on recordings, as well as posters advertising their upcoming concerts. They have also had jewellery made featuring the same design (see Tulk 2003). Paul Pike explained, “I wanted people to know just by looking at the cd that . . . the songs were composed by a Mi'kmaq [sic] person” (personal communication, May 13, 2008).



drawing compass. This pattern could then have been given a name, 'Starfish,' in the way that quilting patterns are often named. (Whitehead 1982, 176)

However, Whitehead does not offer a date at which such an acquisition would have occurred. From her research we are able to ascertain that the symbol has been in use as a quillwork motif since at least the early nineteenth century (Whitehead 1982, 176).

Whitehead also describes an older variant of this star-motif, a five-point star carved into the rocks at Lake Kejimikujik. This symbol was later used to represent "Heaven" in a system of writing developed by Father LeClerc and the Abbé Maillard (Whitehead 1982, 180).

Other sources identify the eight-point star as being older than the 200 years asserted by Whitehead. The Louisbourg Institute notes that the eight-point star was located "as a petroglyph tracing at a rock site in Bedford, dating back more than 500 years" and served as a symbol of the sun, a figure of power in Mi'kmaw cosmology (Louisbourg Institute [n.d]). This directly contrasts with Whitehead's earlier assertion that the eight-point star did not appear as a petroglyph. The Nova Scotia Museum, which published Whitehead's research in 1982, in more recent sources concurs with the Louisbourg Institute's findings and states that the eight-point star appears "in Mi'kmaq hieroglyphic writing as a symbol of the sun" (Nova Scotia Museum 2007). In describing this symbol in modern artwork, Mi'kmaw artist Barry Stevens claims that it represents the sun, but also contains the four winds and the four seasons (see Houston North Gallery [n.d]). Another terms it a symbol for unity, which shows the four directions. Each

direction is said to parallel the four directions within a person and by doubling them (two points facing each direction), the star represents the fact that “there is more than meets the eye” (Invitation Project [n.d]). This explanation goes on to point out: “Elders explain the eight-point star as representing the original seven Mi’gmaq [sic] districts plus the 1752 agreement with the Crown that made all inseparable from one another” (*ibid.*).<sup>38</sup>

This interpretation of the symbol as a joining of the Mi’kmaq and British in peace is given credence in an explanation provided by the Lennox Island First Nation Cultural Centre in Prince Edward Island:

The eighteenth century treaties on agreements between the Mi’kmaw nation and the British are still regarded by the Mi’kmaq as stages and renewals of a larger agreement *entitling Britain to join the Wabanaki Confederacy*. The Mi’kmaq symbolized this important relationship by adding an eighth point – Great Britain – to the seven point star representing the seven districts of the Mi’kmaw nation. (Moore 2003, emphasis added)

---

<sup>38</sup> The 1752 treaty was a renewal of the friendship between the British and the Mi’kmaw people that was originally initiated in 1725, an agreement that marked the end of the fourth Anglo-Wabanaki war (Prins 1996, 138). While instituting peace between the groups, this agreement also made explicit guarantees of hunting and fishing rights, as well as provisions, if the Mi’kmaq upheld their responsibilities to encourage similar treaties among other Native Nations, to defend the Crown, and to save any shipwrecked persons (in Davis 1997, 67-69; see also Prins 1996, 145-47; Paul 2000, 119-123). The entire treaty is reproduced in Davis (1997) and Paul (2000). It must be duly noted that this agreement was not as amicable as it may appear; it dissolved and was reinstated multiple times over the course of history. First in contact with European sailors who came to fish in Atlantic waters, then with the French in the sixteenth-century, Mi’kmaw life changed rapidly in terms of rights, land ownership, and religion. They were allies of France at a time when France and England were both making claims for the land area that the Mi’kmaq occupied. When the English sold a band of Wabanaki as slaves to the Portuguese in 1676, the Mi’kmaq retaliated and the first of many Anglo-Wabanaki wars ensued (Prins 1996, 123).

In 1713 France surrendered control of the area inhabited by the Mi’kmaq to Great Britain. Treaties with the English were signed and broken many times as the Mi’kmaq retained their allegiance to France. The 1752 peace treaty was short-lived, until 1760 when the British had defeated the French, at which point the Mi’kmaq reaffirmed their alliance with the British (Prins 1996, 151). Colonial oppressive rule continued to affect their culture and life-way. Nevertheless, it is this alliance that is referenced by the Mi’kmaw eight-point star, as being a symbol of peace and unity. The historical sources consulted do not discuss the genesis of the symbol.

Indeed, this was Paul Pike's explanation of its meaning when we attended a traditional powwow together in Chickaloon, Alaska (June 11, 2002). This understanding of the symbol appears widespread at present. The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq have adopted this symbol as a logo for the Tripartite Forum, a group dedicated to securing equality and strengthening ties between the Mi'kmaq, Nova Scotia, and Canada. They explain their use of this symbol:

The historic Mi'kmaq symbol had seven points to represent the traditional seven districts of the Mi'kmaq Nation. An eighth point representing the British Crown was added when the Mi'kmaq began signing treaties with the British Crown. All discussions of the Tripartite Forum will be guided by the spirit and intent of the treaties and the treaty relationship. (Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq 2002)

Thus, while there appears to be some discrepancy as to the origins and length of use of the eight-point star in expressive culture, the star has nevertheless become a symbol of the Mi'kmaw people, while also being understood in a variety of different ways.<sup>39</sup>

It is not surprising, then, that this icon is the most common one seen on regalia at a Mi'kmaw powwow.<sup>40</sup> While it is incorporated into Paul Pike's regalia in a variety of ways, more sizeable and striking versions are found on the regalia of other dancers who have chosen it as the primary symbol embellishing their regalia. For example, I observed

---

<sup>39</sup> Yet another variant of this motif's meaning was voiced by Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe in an interview with Ted Blades on the CBC radio show *On the Go* (June 17, 2008). Here the chief explained that the eighth point of the star represents Christianity and commemorates the baptism of Chief Membertou.

<sup>40</sup> These symbols may also be observed among participants other than dancers. Such visible markers of identity may be used by participants as a "point of conversation" that marks a body as Aboriginal where physical features alone might not, thereby facilitating integration into a community and discussion with others of Mi'kmaw heritage (see Sharpe 2007).



a Men's Traditional dancer at the 2005 Miawpukew powwow whose entire back was covered with a yellow, orange, red and purple image of an eight-point star. This same dancer also embellished the outer seams of his regalia with the double-curve motif. That same year, four Fancy Shawl dancers wore regalia featuring the same image realized in a variety of colours, one with a large version in pastels appliqued to her shawl. A single Women's Traditional dancer wore regalia featuring this icon; on the back of her cloth dress was sewn a Mi'kmaw eight-point star in the four colours often used for the medicine wheel: white, yellow, red, and black.<sup>41</sup> Finally, a young Grass Dancer at the 2006 Elsipogtog powwow wore an apron on which this star was embroidered in navy and white. Many of the same dancers were observed in Eskasoni and the regalia of other dancers in Eskasoni followed similar patterns for Mi'kmaw regalia.

Other motifs are seen on the regalia of Mi'kmaw dancers, some being more general and found on the regalia of several dancers, while some are seemingly more personal and seen only on one dancer. Among the general imagery seen on regalia is the medicine wheel (commonly on Men's Traditional regalia, but also observed on a woman's hair clip), a flower with four petals (seen on both Fancy Shawl and Jingle Dress regalia), and geometric shapes such as diamonds and triangles (found on a variety of

---

<sup>41</sup> The medicine wheel has origins in the western First Nations, but has been adopted by Mi'kmaq (and many other First Nations). There is a "cross" motif in Mi'kmaw quillwork that was first collected during the contact period; however, as Whitehead notes, "At times it is hard to decide whether a quillworker has used a cross motif, or is simply quartering the design area in an elaborate way" (1982, 170). When the cross motif appears in quillwork, it does not employ four different colours; rather, most often one quarter of the circle is the mirror-image of another. There is no record of teachings analogous with those of the medicine wheel that have been recorded for this geometric design. The eight-point star circumscribed by a circle is a more common motif.

regalia styles). The seemingly more personal images unique to a single dancer's regalia, many of which were found on Fancy Shawl regalia, include: a turtle, a wolf, stars, a geometric shape resembling an arrowhead, a butterfly, and a bear paw. Similarly, personal images appeared on the regalia of some Grass Dancers, such as an eagle on red regalia. Such motifs, along with choice of colour, serve as a means of personal expression on regalia that by convention has a more general design that is recognized throughout North America. That is, personal aesthetics can influence the look and feel of regalia, while still maintaining the tradition of dress associated with a particular powwow dance style. Motifs such as the eight-point star and the double-curve, along with some geometric patterns, however, are more indicative of a regional or Nation-specific decorative style.

Both regalia styles and singing styles observed at a Mi'kmaw powwow, then, may be based on the conventions and templates dictated by more generally recognized styles of dance and music observed at a powwow. However, these conventions do not preclude creativity, personal expression, or Nation-specific aesthetics. With the categories of Women's and Men's Traditional dance allowing for particularly broad interpretation of its label "traditional," dancers are free to select a historic moment that they understand to represent their own experience, community, or Nation. Likewise, while drum groups may be guided by general characteristics of northern style singing, they may also inject Nation-specific musical aesthetics, as well as language or antiphonal structures, into their own singing and compositions thereby establishing a local or regional style.

#### 5.4 *Localization Strategies in Mi'kmaw Dance, Singing, and Regalia Styles*

Localization strategies within the context of Mi'kmaw powwows occur in two ways: the elements observed at powwows throughout North America may be localized or “made Mi'kmaw” through Nation-specific decorative styles or regional singing styles, and local elements, such as the Mi'kmaw dance Ko'jua, may be included in the powwow event. Diversity of singing styles and repertoire is observed at a Mi'kmaw powwow. Traditional Mi'kmaw songs often feature a narrow range (less than an octave) and are sung in a moderate tessitura. Their melodic contours are varied and may be arch-like or outline triadic structures. They often feature call and response elements, often are in tripartite forms that do not conform to incomplete repetition form, and are primarily accompanied by hand drum or rattle. Northern style songs, on the other hand, often encompass more than an octave range and sit at a higher tessitura. The melodic contours are generally descending overall, though the melody may be more complex than such a descriptor implies. Northern style songs are always accompanied by the powwow drum and sung by a large group of men, sometimes with female back-up singers.

This said, when a traditional Mi'kmaw song is transposed for performance by a powwow group in northern style, elements of both styles are present. A preference for antiphonal styles may be maintained and incomplete repetition form may be slightly altered. However, the tempo may increase to one appropriate for a particular dance style, honour beats may be added as appropriate and even play a part in indicating a shift in formal structure, and the relationship between the vocal line and the drum may be



adjusted to conform with northern style singing (as demonstrated in the example of “I’ko” above). Thus, there is a blurring between northern and Nation-specific or regional singing styles and musical structures. As Goertzen (2005), Hoefnagels (2004), and Browner (2002) have noted, then, there is a proliferation and diversification of singing styles and repertoire at northern powwows.

In these songs, there is also linguistic diversity. Songs borrowed from other Nations may employ other languages and visiting drum groups often sing songs in their own languages (for example, Oji-Cree). Mi’kmaw drum groups like Eastern Eagle Singers are increasingly writing songs in their own language, which is becoming a marker of identity. However, Mi’kmaw identity is also marked through the use of particular vocables in traditional Mi’kmaw songs. It has been suggested that “I’ko” and “Ikwanuté” (as well as other permutations of the Kwanuté genre) have no semantic meaning, that they are chants composed of vocables (see Chapter Three). These vocables, which sound like “ee goh” and “hey quan doh day,” however, are more diverse than and distinctive from those heard in many northern intertribals which employ sounds such as “wey ya hey yo.” Thus, Mi’kmaw language as well as Mi’kmaw vocables may be markers of a Nation-specific identity while singing.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, groups such as Eastern Eagle Singers are composing new intertribals that employ the northern style vocables, often incorporating Mi’kmaw text. While Mi’kmaw songs are also being

---

<sup>42</sup> The vocables heard in “I’ko,” given that it is believed to be a gift from the Mohawk, may also mark the relationship between the Mi’kmaq and Mohawk.

composed for other dance categories, such as Fancy Shawl, traditional Mi'kmaw songs are still commonly heard during social dances.

The stage talk of the emcee presents an important interpretive lens for understanding music and dance, especially Ko'jua, within the context of a Mi'kmaw powwow. Rhetoric of the Mi'kmaw way inscribes a special meaning to traditional songs that are Nation-specific, asserts continuity with the past, and fosters pride in traditional ways. At the same time, borrowed traditions are also explained by the emcee as they are embodied on the dance grounds, adding layers of meaning to new dance styles that are adopted.

The language employed by the emcee, however, is not gender neutral. It is suggestive of the way that gender should be (perhaps is) performed within the context of a powwow. Just as the emcee asserted that drumming is a sign of masculinity and strength in Chapter Four, here the emcee invites the "macho tough guys" to join a round dance, simultaneously asserting that men should be strong while also suggesting that it is masculine to dance (an activity that is not necessarily considered macho in some western value systems). His emphasis on the macho-ness of the men is emphasized by his rough growl. Interestingly, though, this growl and call to male participation immediately follows a request for women to join the dance, here called to the dance grounds by their hair colour (with redheads as a special request from the emcee's friend, or so he says). It would be easy to read this as an objectification of women; however, the playful tone of the emcee might direct one to a reading that is less insidious.

The emcee discourse surrounding Ko'jua is worthy of note. In one instance, the emcee appealed to the men to participate by inviting them to Ko'jua dance as a means of "snaggin'" a woman, while also encouraging competition by saying, "Show 'em how it's done." Clear is the notion that Ko'jua should be a display of ability, both for the other sex and in competition with members of the same sex. The language chosen by the emcee was always playful, but may in fact reflect a particular set of gender roles that are performed within the context of a powwow. Of course, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Three, sometimes gender roles are embodied or performed in multiple ways simultaneously.

Thus, by contrast, it is interesting to note a difference in the representation of Ko'jua by Laverna Augustine. She suggested that it was a women's dance done to show 'men what you've got,' inverting who participates in display and has the power to attract and 'snag.' This description also suggests that Ko'jua dancing is part of courting practices that may occur at Mi'kmaw gatherings. However, the focus on competition in her description shifts to one between the women, not the men.

Both men and women may express themselves in one (or more) of several dance styles seen at a Mi'kmaw powwow. Men primarily dance and dress in Men's Traditional, which emphasizes male roles in hunting and war. The majority of older women dance in Women's Traditional, a style that is often described as graceful and dignified, while younger women dance in Fancy Shawl, an athletic style that is often described as imitating a butterfly. While men's regalia may permit various degrees of dress (or



undress, as it may be), women are expected to clothe themselves in a manner that usually involves covering the majority of the body in one way or another. Indeed, even if one is participating only in intertribal dances, there are some who feel that women should only dance an intertribal if wearing a skirt. I have also been told that shorts and tank tops are inappropriate dress inside the dance grounds.

Regardless of notions of propriety, all regalia is a complex combination of convention, personal history, and personal aesthetics. In all dance styles, regalia may be localized or personalized through design elements, including choice of material, style, design, and colour. Individuality is valued in dance regalia, for dancers, unlike drummers, perform simultaneously and not as an ensemble (Goertzen 2005, 289). Icons such as the eight-point star and the double-curve motif may be indicators of Mi'kmaw identity when appearing on Fancy Shawl or Men's Traditional regalia. The ability to interpret these symbols, of course, is variable. In some cases, aspects of regalia have meaning that is known only to the dancer and his or her immediate family. Throughout Mi'kma'ki, a particular style of Mi'kmaw dress has emerged as "traditional" in the present. This style of dress, which in its design is demonstrative of contact and the fusion of Mi'kmaw elements with European, is often worn by Women's Traditional dancers and stands out as distinct from other regalia styles.

Particular styles of dancing and dress have become associated with powwow. Indeed, regalia styles, singing styles, dance styles, languages, and the powwow patter of the emcee all may serve to "[stabilize] . . . local historical continuities," (Straw 1991,

373) while challenging the same in a complex negotiation between pastness and modernity (Clyde Ellis 2003). Traditional, nation-specific practices and expressive forms exist alongside and are fused with other borrowed traditions. The diversity extends beyond these observable expressive modes to the heterogeneous population participating in powwow in various ways; participants of all types come from many different locales and ethnic backgrounds. Through powwow, they

realize their common musical taste, collectively distinguishing themselves from others by using music and cultural signs often appropriated from other places, but recombined and developed in ways that come to represent the local scene. (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 8)

Certainly, there is a consciousness of innovation and development of powwow within other parts of Mi'kma'ki and elsewhere in North America that fosters this recombination and development. As drum groups, dancers, emcees, and other participants travel to and participate in other powwows, they are exposed to new styles and repertoire and transmit them to other areas. In this way, dances such as the Duck n' Dive, which is relatively new, become popular and appear at more and more powwows. Thus, while the notion of powwow as community practice makes it difficult to address the diversity and heterogeneity at the heart of the genre (both in terms of style and those who participate), it is productive to rethink powwow as a scene – a space that values connectivity over collectivity, that emphasizes fluidity rather than boundedness.

**Chapter Six**  
**Creating an Urban Community:**  
**Learning, Sharing, and Expressing Culture off the Rez**

In Newfoundland, it is estimated that anywhere from 85.6 – 96.2%<sup>1</sup> of the Mi'kmaw population (primarily those who are non-status) lives outside of Miawpukek. While there are Mi'kmaw communities on the west coast and in central Newfoundland, there are also Mi'kmaq living in Newfoundland's largest urban centre – St. John's, the capital city of the province and the oldest city in North America. In 2006, the metropolitan area had a population of 181,113, and according to the 2006 census, 1.1% of the population in St. John's claimed Aboriginal identity. Of these, 770 identified as North American Indian, 550 as Métis, 280 as Inuit, and 415 had either multiple responses or responses not covered by these categories. Only 570 of those identifying as Aboriginal were registered status Indians under the *Indian Act* (Statistics Canada [n.d]). As such, St. John's greatly contrasts with Miawpukek as a site of Aboriginal music-making in Newfoundland, the study of which highlights some of the issues surrounding the 'revival' of Mi'kmaw and First Nations traditions among non-status Mi'kmaq.

---

<sup>1</sup> This number changes depending on the numbers used to determine the population of Mi'kmaq on the island. The number of Mi'kmaq in Miawpukek combined with those who are members of the Federation of Newfoundland Indians is approximately 5255, and does not account for Mi'kmaq who are not members of any organization or are members of the Ktaqmkuk Mi'kmaq Alliance. Thus, this number would be quite conservative and likely incorrect. Hanrahan (2003) has estimated there are 20,000 people of Mi'kmaw descent in the province (222). Census results do not illuminate this situation, as they provide statistics for the number of Native American Indians, Métis, and Inuit, or registered and un-registered aboriginals. Thus, the numbers do not reflect a Mi'kmaq-only population and may include Cree, Anishnabe, Mohawk, or descendants of other First Nations who are living in Newfoundland. When I made an inquiry to the Newfoundland Statistics Agency regarding Mi'kmaq-specific statistics, I was informed that such information has not been collected and analysed.



In the capital city, the only organization at which First Nations cultural programming occurs regularly is the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. While the Centre has been located in several buildings throughout St. John's since its establishment in 1983, its current site in a house converted to accommodate administrative offices, public access spaces, and a shelter, is in the downtown area of the city at the west end of Water Street.<sup>2</sup> The Centre was created with the goal of assisting Aboriginal people who were relocating to the urban centre (often temporarily for medical treatment); it established support structures that addressed issues relating to language, housing, employment, transportation, alcohol and substance abuse, and law (St. John's Native Friendship Centre and Shelter 2003, 6). While providing services and facilities to achieve this mandate, the Friendship Centre also established a space in which urban Natives could meet others in the community and network with them. The National Association of Friendship Centres has increasingly taken on a cultural role in urban centres along with its other mandates and it is guided by a code of ethics that embraces diversity and "[supports] unity amongst all Aboriginal people without regard to legal distinctions that may be drawn between Status and Non-Status individuals or amongst Métis, Indian or Inuit people" (*ibid.*, 9). Further, Friendship Centres encourage "respect and honour for all Aboriginal beliefs and customs" (*ibid.*).

---

<sup>2</sup> Inuit in the city also have access to the local office of Labrador Inuit Association (LIA), an organization that was established in 1973 to represent Labrador Inuit politically. However, it does not provide cultural programming. Similarly, resource centres at Memorial University of Newfoundland, such as the Native and Northern Student Centre, have provided access to resources, but have not implemented cultural programming.

This chapter will describe how different modes of localization occur in St. John's, in part because of the types of cultural programming and in part because of the heterogeneity of the participants in Aboriginal music-making. After tracing the history of the Friendship Centre Drum Group since its establishment in 2002, I will provide personal experience narratives of the members of this drum group. Such an approach is necessary to tease out the diversity of the identities of those involved in this group and situate each member in terms of issues of status, hidden heritages, and what draws each to the powwow drum. In particular, the experiences of two members will nuance what Muise (2003) has said about the disconnect between legal identification as Mi'kmaw and traditional identification of Mi'kmaw:

Inside our communities, the need to formalize legal definitions about who we are – whether we come under the *Indian Act* or under a “unique” relationship – creates even bigger problems. In order to prove we are legally Mi'kmaq in the eyes of the Canadian government, we are forced to certify our pedigree to comply with mainstream systems of identification. This process, which has nothing to do with how we traditionally view ourselves, can be very expensive because it often involves hiring genealogists to trace ancestry, which was recorded by outsiders often in times when bounties were still placed on our heads. (Muise 2003, 29)

While non-status members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group have pursued genealogical research at various points in their lives, at the time of my research, it had become less important than establishing meaningful relationships and building community with other Mi'kmaq in the province.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> It should be noted that the need to “prove” Mi'kmaw heritage reemerged in the fall of 2007 with an agreement in principle between the Federation of Newfoundland Indians and the federal government to establish a landless band and register the non-status Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland.

With two members who are non-status Mi'kmaw (and other heritages), one member who is a status Anishnabe, and two members who are non-Native, "finding a voice" as a drum group is a particularly complex process of negotiation. Given the varied and distinct backgrounds of members of this drum group, as well as the goals and objectives of the Friendship Centre at which the group is based, it is not surprising that there are multiple viewpoints on any given issue that arises. Therefore, having established the personal experiences of members of the drum group, I will turn to the challenges the group faces and issues that emerge in terms of naming, representation, and autonomy. "Finding a voice" through the acquisition of musical skills, a study of this group's repertoire, and the influence of media will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

#### *6.1 The St. John's Native Friendship Centre*

At the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, funding and other programming resources are provided to implement social and cultural programs established by a standing Activities Committee dedicated to this task. Programming is accessed by a wide variety of people, including Aboriginals and non-Aboriginals, Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, people from elsewhere in Canada, new Canadians, and even war refugees. Sixty to eighty percent of the youth are classified as 'at risk' and are dealing with addictions, housing issues, single-parent low-income families, and bullying at school. Many experience a lack of spiritual guidance and do not have strong adult role models in their lives (Purcell, personal communication, July 21, 2007). The Youth Centre at the St.



John's Native Friendship Centre gives these youth a safe place to go where they can get the support they need. Youth often become engaged in the cultural programming at the Centre, and Aboriginal cultural values guide their presence and behaviours while there.

While the Friendship Centre provides the most basic of language lessons to its Inuit members, in the past several years there has been no one available to provide instruction in Mi'kmaq.<sup>4</sup> Cultural activities, then, are more focussed on arts and crafts, music, and dance, though there are current efforts to expand into the areas of Aboriginal foodways and outdoors skills. The schedule for youth programming is as follows:

Monday	Arts and Crafts
Tuesday	Tutoring
Wednesday	Drumming and Dancing
Thursday	Spiritual (medicine walks, talking circle)
Friday	Entertainment (movies, hikes, parties)

Of these activities, Robin Purcell,<sup>5</sup> youth worker at the Centre for the past three years, singled out drumming and dancing as one of the most important activities at the Centre.

---

<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the Mi'kmaw language course through the Linguistics Department of Memorial University of Newfoundland has been inactive for many years, as there is no qualified instructor available in the city.

<sup>5</sup> Robin Purcell is also drum keeper for the Friendship Centre Drum Group. As the drum is housed at the Friendship Centre from week to week, Robin is entrusted with storing the drum, keeping and protecting the drum, and also preparing it for the weekly practice on Wednesday nights. In the summer, this may involve placing the drum out in the sun for a few hours prior to practice to tighten the drum heads or, in the winter, placing it by a heater to achieve the same end. This greatly impacts the timbre of the drum on a given night. While Robin says he fell into this position as a worker at the Centre, he takes the role seriously: "It's an honour to me" (Purcell, personal communication, July 21, 2007).

The drum has been a central teaching, one that sets the tone for all other interactions within the Centre. He explained:

The drum is very, very important because anybody that comes into the place, respects the drum. And that's where the foundation of respect for the Youth Centre is actually, because there is absolutely no negativity around the drum. That's something that I'm very strong at making known to anybody, even if it's a visitor or somebody just coming in off the street, that they know that the drum is there, and what the drum represents, and how important the drum is to Aboriginal people and to the Centre. [. . .] And if the youth do not respect it, then they're not welcome around the Youth Centre. But I haven't really had a problem in regards to that. It's definitely the foundation of respect in the Youth Centre. (Purcell, personal communication, July 21, 2007)

Youth periodically attend the Wednesday night sessions and sometimes sit at the drum to learn from the group. As such there is a very fluid membership that exists around the core of four male drummers/singers and one female singer.

As the schedule of activities indicates, however, there is a great deal of variety in the activities that are organized, some that focus on culture, but all with a focus on providing support and a feeling of community to those youth who frequent the Centre. The most common of Aboriginal crafts seen at the Centre is the dream catcher, which also serves as a minor revenue source for the Youth Centre when sold at local events or the local flea market. Other projects have included making medicine wheels, painting flower pots and rocks, sometimes with Aboriginal imagery (such as the medicine wheel) and sometimes with other imagery meaningful to the youth who has painted the item. One of the more impressive collaborative works, which hangs on the wall of the Youth Centre next to where the drum group practices each week, was made at a culture camp

under the guidance of artist Jerry Evans.<sup>6</sup> A large base of dark grey papier-mâché over chicken wire which resembles rock, the work features a wide variety of symbols and images, including a hand print, a medicine wheel, and a Beothuk pendant, contributed by those present at the culture camp. Under the guidance of youth coordinator Robin Purcell, some youth members in 2006 worked on a paper lantern for the Friends of Victoria Park Lantern Festival<sup>7</sup> held annually in St. John's. Their lantern was in the shape of an Inuksuk. Such large-scale collaborative projects occur infrequently at the Centre, in favour of smaller, individual activities that can be completed largely in one sitting.

The St. John's Native Friendship Centre has been home to two different drum groups since 2002. The longest running group, still based at the Centre and the focus of this research, is currently called the Friendship Centre Drum Group.<sup>8</sup> The newer group, which less than a year after its formation became an independent not-for-profit

---

<sup>6</sup> I refer to Jerry as an "artist" and not a "Mi'kmaw artist" because of a comment he made in an interview. Since the discovery and acknowledgement of his heritage, he has incorporated Mi'kmaw imagery into his work. As a result, people began seeing Jerry as a Mi'kmaw artist. He explained, "[People see] me as an Aboriginal artist, as a Native artist, a Mi'kmaw artist [ . . . ] but I'm an artist first and foremost. I am part Mi'kmaq. What part, who knows? But, it's a part of who I am" (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> The Lantern Festival usually occurs in the end of July in St. John's and features workshops which teach how to make paper lanterns, music, dance, juggling, acrobatic fire shows, and a procession of lanterns. More information is available at <http://www.fovp.org/lanternFestival.html> (accessed May 17, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> This group has gone by several different names since its inception, including St. John's Native Friendship Centre Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group, Aboriginal Drummers and Dancers, Four Winds, Young Thunderbirds, and Red Ochre Singers. Issues of naming are discussed below.



organization, is an Inuit drum group. With additional funding from The Rooms,<sup>9</sup> this group held a drum-making workshop in which all members made their own drum, and then learned Inuit songs, dances, and throat-singing.<sup>10</sup> They performed as part of *Celebrate Nunatsiavut*, a living heritage celebration at The Rooms held April 19-23, 2006 that marked the establishment of self-government.<sup>11</sup> These two drum groups exist as separate entities, perform at different events, and largely consist of different members.<sup>12</sup> As there are no Mi'kmaq in the Inuit group, nor do they perform repertoire associated with Mi'kmaw or First Nations culture, this group has not been part of my research. Instead, I focus on the Friendship Centre Drum Group (which I will also refer to as the First Nations group for clarity's sake), as this group has members of Mi'kmaw descent and sings some Mi'kmaw songs, as well as songs now adopted into Mi'kmaw repertoire.

## 6.2 *The Friendship Centre Drum Group*

In February 2002, the Four Winds Youth Centre at the St. John's Native

---

<sup>9</sup> Opened on June 29, 2005, The Rooms is a new state-of-the-art facility that houses the Provincial Museum, Provincial Art Gallery, and Provincial Archives. The St. John's Native Friendship Centre Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group performed as part of the opening ceremonies, singing an Honour Song.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Piercey, a doctoral candidate at Memorial University of Newfoundland, helped to teach repertoire to this group in its early stages, having taught Inuit music in a school in Arviat, Nunavut. Members later took over this role as they became more confident in their abilities.

<sup>11</sup> Nunatsiavut established self-government on December 1, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Only one person, Stan Nochasak, was a long-term member of both groups; however, at least one female member of the Inuit drum group attended practices of the First Nations drum group infrequently (perhaps twice a year).

Friendship Centre established the St. John's Native Friendship Centre Drumming and Dancing Group under the guidance of Victor Muise Jr. Playing a powwow drum made in Nova Scotia,<sup>13</sup> its eleven members learned Mi'kmaw songs and dances, and began sharing their music with the community, appearing at a variety of functions, including sunrise ceremonies for National Aboriginal Day and the opening of the Native and Northern Aboriginal Student Centre at Memorial University of Newfoundland (St. John's Native Friendship Association 2005). At this time, the membership of the group was atypical of powwow drum groups, with only two men who sat at and played the powwow drum, five women who sang while playing hand-drums, and five female dancers (*ibid.*). The female members, both singers and dancers, largely wore Fancy Shawl regalia, while the men wore ribbon pants and shirts with buckskin vests.

In 2004, Jason Morrisseau of Couchiching, Ontario, who is of Anishnabe and Cree heritage, took over the role of lead singer and mentor for the group. Jason has been singing in drum groups<sup>14</sup> since childhood, has travelled the powwow circuit in Canada and the United States, and is a fluent speaker of his language (Oji-Cree). Jerry Evans saw this shift in leadership as an excellent opportunity to learn from an accomplished and experienced singer, and soon began attending practices on Wednesday nights (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). Steve George, who visited the Friendship

---

<sup>13</sup> It was requested that the drum-maker, now deceased, remain anonymous.

<sup>14</sup> Morrisseau has participated in a variety of groups to varying degrees, including Whitefish Junior Singers, Whitefish Bay Singers, Northern Wind Singers, Lake of the Wood Singers, and Eastern Eagle Singers.

Centre upon returning to St. John's and offered his services as a volunteer, was introduced to Jason and soon began attending practices as well. At this time, Stan Nochasak was already a member of the drum group.<sup>15</sup> I attended my first practice in September of 2004, on the invitation of Steve George, whom I had met through the Folklore Department at Memorial University of Newfoundland. Later that year, on the invitation of Jerry Evans, Pat Donnelly attended his first practice and soon became a regular around the drum.<sup>16</sup>

The Newfoundland-born members of this group relate to each other, and their life experiences and histories intersect, in many different ways. For example, Steve George, Jerry Evans, and I have all lived in Corner Brook, Newfoundland, at different times, though none of us knew each other until recently in St. John's. Steve and I even attended the same high school and were instructed by some of the same teachers and Christian Brothers, seven years apart. All four of us were educated in a Newfoundland curriculum that taught that the Beothuk were the only people indigenous to the island. Steve, Jerry, and Pat in interviews all indicated that they remembered being introduced to the

---

<sup>15</sup> Stan Nochasak is an Inuk from Nunatsiavut (Nain), Labrador. An artist, he primarily works in the medium of acrylic paint and his paintings often feature culture-specific imagery, such as the Inuksuk. Stan has been a member of the First Nations drum group at the Friendship Centre periodically since its formation in 2001. He also became involved in the Inuit drum group that was established in 2006 and has performed at many local events. I invited him to participate in this research through an interview; however, he declined because he is not Mi'kmaq. While I said that his membership in the group meant that he should be included in my study of the First Nations drum group, it remained his preference not to participate in an interview.

<sup>16</sup> Other men have participated in this drum group somewhat sporadically. For many, while it is not part of their weekly routine, they may participate once or twice a year. These nights are anomalies to the regular week-to-week practice of the core drummers. As such, they have not been featured in this study.



Mercenary Myth in school. While Steve and Jerry recalled being taught the erroneous account of the Mi'kmaq being brought by the French to exterminate the Beothuk, Pat indicated that while he was not "taught" this as part of the curriculum, "it was mentioned by the teachers" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 14, 2006). Having progressed through the Newfoundland school system several years after these men, this erroneous historical account had been disproved by the time that I reached grade five, the year in which social studies curriculum focussed on the Indigenous people of Newfoundland. Thus, my first introduction to the story was during fieldwork for my Master's thesis, when Paul Pike explained how it formed the basis for his song "Hurtful Stories."<sup>17</sup>

Both Steve and Jerry tell similar personal experience narratives about the "discovery" of their Mi'kmaw heritage, their quests for more knowledge, and the role of music in this realization. While there are points of convergence in their narratives and comparisons can be made, they remain unique to each person and will be presented separately here. Also presented is Pat Donnelly's introduction to Aboriginal culture and how he became involved in the drum group at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre. Jason Morrisseau's personal experiences as a status Indian and having lived on a reserve are presented and provide a point of contrast with Steve and Jerry's experiences in Newfoundland. Further, the way in which Jason's experiences led to a restructuring of

---

<sup>17</sup> "Hurtful Stories" appears on the CD *Tomegan Gospem* by Medicine Dream (2002). For discussion of this song, see Tulk (2003, 84-6).

the St. John's group are discussed. Finally, I present my own story as a member of this group in an effort to provide as complete a picture as possible to the reader. Once these personal experiences and histories have been recounted, I will engage with issues of representation, organization, and administration, as well as other points of negotiation and contestation, which arise as this diverse group makes music together.

#### 6.2.1 "We know who we are" – Jerry Evans

Jerry Evans was born in Windsor, Newfoundland, lived in Corner Brook and Mount Pearl, Newfoundland, as a youth, and was educated at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design before returning to St. John's, where he found employment and completed an education degree at Memorial University. He currently lives on Craigmiller Avenue, which he jokingly refers to as Craigmiller First Nation (discussed further in Chapter Seven). While continuing his work as a visual artist, he has also added film to his repertoire, both as an actor and producer.<sup>18</sup> Jerry described his ancestry for me in an interview: "Welsh, Mi'kmaq, a few drops of Spanish in there as well, and God knows what else, 'cause [ . . . ] my ancestry has not really been talked about other than the English side of it growing up" (Evans, personal interview, June 28, 2006). As a youth, the Welsh aspect of his ancestry was present in the home and the Spanish ancestry was

---

<sup>18</sup> Jerry made his acting debut as the chief of the Beothuk in the docudrama *Stealing Mary: Last of the Red Indians* (2006, directed by Tim Wolochatiuk). He then produced the documentary *Romancing the Labrador* (2006, directed by Christine Poker) and is currently working on a documentary with Steve George titled *Ktagmkukwa Mi'kmaq* about the Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland.

used to explain family members' physical features, such as darker skin and hair. The Mi'kmaw aspect of his heritage remained unspoken: "Mind you, the Mi'kmaw side of my father, it's something we all know of, but nobody spoke about it." (*ibid.*). Jerry elaborated on this, saying

Some of my cousins have straighter hair, darker skin, and some of us would tease those kids growing up and that's how it really came about, that's how I found out, you know? Being called these names and asking my father, my grandfather, why we were called these names. And at one point, my grandfather said because you're this, you're dark, it's because you have Spanish blood. At one point, I thought it was all his way of hiding again, something he was ashamed of, you know, being Mi'kmaq, being Indian. But I was later to find out that in fact that was true; there is Spanish there further back. But he still didn't talk about the Indian side of our family. And it was in fact his brother, my great uncle, who came home from Ontario, he spent all of his adult life in Ontario, and he came home and he got a ride with my father and me. We were going moose hunting, were heading to central Newfoundland. We got to talking. I don't know how it came up, but it did, and he told my father and I, he told us our great grandmother was in fact Mi'kmaq. (*ibid.*)

This confirmation of Mi'kmaw heritage came in Jerry's early 20s, while he was still in art school and gave him "the license to learn more, to do more" (*ibid.*).

Jerry embarked upon his own study of Mi'kmaw history and culture, doing his own research on the subject and talking to amenable family members to learn more. Here he encountered both openness and resistance, some relatives possessing knowledge they were willing to pass on and others not. In this quest for knowledge, he travelled to Miawpukek and met family and friends from that community, and what he learned gradually found expression in his artwork:

Through the focus of trying to learn more, it slowly, the stuff, the



knowledge, I guess, the curiosity, the romance of it all, becoming more in-the-know, the aspects of it started to creep into my artwork. And my artwork has always been about who I am and where I'm from, whether it's landscape or anything like that. I think if you're an artist, your work definitely has basis in who you are and where you're from. It's a self portrait, it's a voice, your voice. [ . . . ] It took over my artwork to a certain extent and [ . . . ] the fact that I was doing this in my artwork was another way for me to learn, as well as to share with others what I had learned. (*ibid.*)

Expressions of Jerry's Mi'kmaw heritage and identity continue to find prominence in his work. Interestingly, while the knowledge and confirmation of his Mi'kmaw identity has been an important process, documenting his ancestry in more formal means has not been as central. Years ago, there were unsuccessful attempts to document his family's Mi'kmaw lineage on paper, though Jerry acknowledges that perhaps his family should try again. However, in his opinion, not having a document stating where he and his family come from is immaterial: "On paper we don't have anything saying who we are, where we come from. But that's of no concern, really. We know who we are, who we come from, and as far as I'm concerned, that's all that really matters" (*ibid.*).

Jerry later reiterated that more formal means of documentation and recognition of his Mi'kmaw heritage were not significant driving forces behind his pursuit of knowledge. He explained his reaction to having his Mi'kmaw heritage confirmed and his uncle's motivation for sharing it with him:

That was good enough, you know? I mean, there was no reason for him to lie. It was not about getting something, or hurting somebody, or making someone happy. It was fact. It was just fact, you know? So this whole thing about status and getting this, and getting that, and getting benefits. I mean, I don't care. I don't need that. I mean, I got what I need. (*ibid.*)

This journey of self-discovery and acknowledgement of ancestry for Jerry, then, is a personal pursuit rather than being externally motivated.

Music formed part of this pursuit, both in live and mediated forms. Jerry began travelling to Miawpukek, meeting people, talking to them, and asking questions. In particular, he was interested in language and wrote down the words he learned phonetically. At the same time, he began searching for books and papers – anything he could read to learn more about Mi'kmaw culture and history. Up until this point, the only Aboriginal music he had heard was that performed by Inuit throat singers and Cree songwriter Buffy St. Marie: “I didn't know about Blacklodge, or Red Bull, or Eastern Eagle, or anybody else for that matter. It wasn't around me, I didn't grow up with that” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). Nor was there a drum group in Miawpukek at this time. However, members of Jerry's extended family had copies of cassette tapes, such as *Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door* (n.d) by Jimmy and Donna Augustine. Of this tape, Jerry said, “That was a really good education tape for me at one point, you know, them being Mi'kmaq and everything” (*ibid.*). This tape included songs, as well as spoken word recordings about the sweatlodge and elements of the medicine wheel.

Jerry's exposure to live First Nations music came during the first annual powwow in Miawpukek, which coincided with a health conference in 1996 (discussed in Chapter Three). Being involved in ceremonies and experiencing the spiritual aspects of the music and culture for Jerry was “powerful”; however, for many years it was limited to the annual event in Miawpukek. Jerry recalled an emotional response to music in particular:

“I’d hear intertribal stuff, you know, the really high vocals, and that stuff made me cry. Literally made me cry. If I was by myself I would cry, break down into tears and bawl. I knew nothing about the tradition of that music” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). With such a powerful and emotional response to intertribal powwow repertoire, it is not surprising that Evans developed an interest in the music as part of his self-directed cultural education. He learned Mi’kmaw songs while visiting Miawpukek, including the Round Dance, the Honour Song, and Ko’jua (Grand Entry): “I even sat around the drum, I even played the drum, I dunno, at the second or third powwow with Sipu’ji’j” (*ibid.*). Evans also began recording drum groups at the powwow. However, in St. John’s, the opportunity for continued interaction with a drum group and to learn from someone in an unmediated form was not available to him for many years.

In 2004, having been introduced to Jason Morrisseau and impressed by the knowledge and experience he held, Jerry started attending the drumming sessions at the St. John’s Native Friendship Centre, to “[pick] the guy’s brain” (interview). Jerry described his motivation:

I started singing. I went to the powwows in Conne River and Eskasoni and everything, and I’d hang around the arbour. You know, I had a camera, a video camera, and I’d videotape the guys singing and that. And I’d play it over and over again, but still, without getting some sort of formal explanation of how things are done and why and how, it didn’t really have much meaning. And with this guy Jason Morrisseau down [at the Native Friendship Centre], I thought this was a great opportunity for me to learn something about [music], you know? So, I’m still a sponge. I was really a sponge [soaking it all up]. (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006)



Very quickly, Jerry learned about the drum, how to beat the drum, how to sing on the offbeat, and challenged himself to hit the high notes of northern style singing. Still, he notes that “old man songs” (see Chapter Seven) remain his favourite.

#### 6.2.2 “The idea of Mi’kmaq is so much bigger” – Steve George

Steve George is originally from Corner Brook and lived in both Corner Brook and St. John’s during his school-age years. After graduating from the Catholic school system, he attended Memorial University, pursuing Folklore and Education degrees. Having taught for several years in Labrador and Quebec (particularly the Mohawk community of Kahnawake), Steve returned to St. John’s to pursue a master’s degree in Folklore, and began working on a film about the Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland with Jerry Evans. When asked about his family heritage, Steve replied, “I’m a mixed-blood, meaning I have both European ancestry and Native ancestry – Mi’kmaq and Montagnais or Innu – from the island and of course from southern Labrador, and mainly Irish from the European extraction” (George, personal interview, June 14, 2006).

While others shy away from the term mixed-blood,<sup>19</sup> Steve uses it purposefully to represent his experience and heritage, saying, “I call myself a mixed-blood, because I’m a product of both peoples” (*ibid.*). His usage points out the complexity of embodying both the colonized and the colonizer at the same time. Steve elaborated on this point:

---

<sup>19</sup> For example, there are some people on the west coast, who having uncovered and/or acknowledged their heritage, now refer to themselves solely as Mi’kmaq, even after years of identifying as something else.

Why should I now deny my Irish-ness, now that I've found my Native-ness? [. . .] I'm not going to do that, 'cause I'm both things and the only way to realize who and what I am is to realize both things. [. . .] I won't limit myself whether it's Irish ancestry or Native ancestry. [. . .] One of the good things about growing up and not having a Native identity for a long time was some of the stuff that came with it, some of the expectations in some of the people that I've met. I don't feel entitled to a damn thing except to breathe this air, to be a part of what I do everyday, and to be fully engaged by it. [. . .] I don't feel colonized. I mean, we're all a process, I mean settler people – they were just as much pawns in that whole game as anybody else and they're part of my ancestry. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

Thus the journey to acceptance of a Native or specifically Mi'kmaw identity, does not necessarily involve the denial of other identities. Rather, it involves coming to terms with both sides and finding the balance between them as they coexist. As Krouse (1999) explains, "the term *mixed blood* is used by both Indians and non-Indians, referring to people whose physical appearance and cultural traditions place them between the two societies, part of each and of neither" (75).

Steve, however, was not always able to speak so eloquently about his identity as a mixed-blood. Similar to Jerry, Steve was not consciously aware of his Native ancestry as a child, but came to the realization as a young man. Steve was told stories about Matty Mitchell<sup>20</sup> and other Mi'kmaw people; however, as he heard such stories, he did not process the connection:

---

<sup>20</sup> Matty Mitchell is recognized as an important Mi'kmaw and Newfoundlander, who worked as a guide on the Northern Peninsula of the island, was integral in the first attempts to map this area, and discovered mineral deposits significant to the mining industry. For more detailed information about his life, see *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador* (c.v. "Mitchell, Matthew"). For artist Jerry Evans' rendering of this important historical figure, see "Matty Mitchell" (<http://www.fni.nf.ca/main%20page/newpage1.htm>, accessed November 15, 2007).

On my dad's side we are Native and we have a long lineage of being Native, both from Labrador and from the west coast of the island. And this was only talked about in these narratives, where, I guess, in these stories the Indian was hidden. Or you had to understand the language, you know, the localized language of the people they were talking about by name. It wouldn't mean anything, it would just be Matty Mitchell, who is he? Well here's a story about him. Or, my granddad out picking blueberries with Jack Claire. [. . .] I forget exactly what the exchange was, but it was kind of like, "I can make that bee sting ya." There's bees buzzing around of course the blueberry patch and Jack Claire, a lifelong friend of my granddad, said, "You silly Indian," or something like that. "Don't be foolish." And my granddad said, "Bee, go over and sting Jack Claire," and a couple of minutes passed and you heard Jack shouting out, "Oh, goddammit, the bee stung me."

So, yeah, it was kind of hidden like that. It wasn't like, "Oh, granddad's an Indian," you know, "Stop the story." That didn't happen. But after all these stories I got, and not even in folklore, I wasn't even conscious [of my Native heritage] as an undergrad. It just, it was *verboden* or something. I just refused it. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

Realization, consciousness, and acceptance of his Native heritage would not come until several years later.

Steve did indicate an important personal experience of an emotional response to music that he did not understand at the time of his undergraduate studies. He was in Neil Rosenberg's folksong class, a course that focussed on many different musics from around the world. In the seminar room of the Folklore Department in the Education Building of Memorial University, Rosenberg introduced students to Native American music. Steve described this experience:

He started to play some powwow music. And it was in the seminar room in the Education Building, the same one they use now with the big map of Newfoundland and so on. And I heard. [. . .] And here I am in the seminar room, shoulder to shoulder with people. It's two o'clock in the



day. We're all really tired, most of us are half asleep, but we're trying to listen intently, 'cause Neil Rosenberg is pretty interesting to listen to. But he was just playing this music and tears started to roll down my cheeks. And I wanted to get out of there as fast as I could. Well, I couldn't. And no one seemed to notice me. [. . .] At some point, I guess I left, but that was a coming into my own about things that was quite beyond, I would even say, a conscious understanding. It was deeply spiritual hearing that music and hearing that drum, and for years I never understood what that was about. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

This emotional response to music was not the only one Steve experienced while becoming conscious of his heritage. In the summer of 1999, he attended his first powwow in Kahnawake and had almost the exact same experience, this time to live music. Moved to tears by a Veterans' Song, he instantly remembered his experience in Rosenberg's class some eight years earlier. Steve began to ask questions about this reaction he was having to the music and members of the Kahnawake community shared their thoughts as to what might be going on. This second emotional response to music, then, sent Steve on a journey of discovery.

In Kahnawake, Steve infrequently went to the Longhouse and participated in social dances. He indicates that these experiences "brought me home. It brought me home 'cause I realized this could be here, this is here. We just have to do it" (*ibid.*). When Steve says that "this could be here," he means that the sense of community and acceptance that he felt while attending ceremonies and social events at the Longhouse in Kahnawake could exist at home in Newfoundland, if his heritage were embraced. When leaving Kahnawake, a member of that community suggested that Steve visit the Native Friendship Centre when he went returned home. Steve heeded this advice and became

active at the Centre, both as a volunteer and as a member of the drum group. Steve explained, "I came to this consciousness of being native. I had to go through this whole other process, where I could make community here at home. And I feel part of that now, that there is an Aboriginal community here. It's fragmented, it's disconnected in many ways from other respected communities, but yet it's here and that's something" (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006).

As with Jerry, the process of documenting ancestry and being formally recognized as Native through band membership or registration under the *Indian Act* is not at the forefront of Steve's pursuits. While talking about wearing a ribbon shirt on Mi'kmaw Treaty Day in a school in which he was teaching, Steve made an important commentary on the issues of status:

The fact that I don't have a card written on it saying I'm not treaty Indian has nothing to do with celebrating something I see as a collective. And I don't see Mi'kmaw people as people with cards, I see them as family, right down to the eastern seaboard, right where we are right down to the old Boston states, and so on. The idea of Mi'kmaq is so much bigger. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

Status, then, is not the end goal; rather, it is the making of community and sharing that becomes the focus of Steve's journey to acknowledgement of his own heritage. He explained,

From this place, the 'land over the waves,' we all belong here, so we better get our heads around that before too long. Because all these other divisions are going to take us somewhere else, somewhere I don't want to go as a Mi'kmaw person. I don't need to go there with all that complicated stuff that means nothing to me, that someone else has enforced – *Indian Act*, Band Councils. I just want to sit and have a meal with someone, sit

and share and have a cup of tea. And give each other the time of day and they give me the time of day, and you know if it comes to it, I'm looking after their kids, they're looking after mine, and we're looking out for each other. Very small thing, but that's what's important to me. Whether I have a right to chop down a tree or shoot a moose because I'm Native, well, whatever. But I already know who I am, so that's of far less importance to me. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

It is this sense of community and belonging, regardless of status or membership, that is fostered by organizations such as the Native Friendship Centre.

#### 6.2.3 *"Your whole being changes" – Pat Donnelly*

Pat Donnelly was born and raised in St. John's, was educated in a Catholic school system, and graduated from Brother Rice High School. His family's heritage is a combination of English and Irish, which was evident in the home as a child. When I asked Pat if he recalled particular aspects of this heritage being present in the home, he pointed to music: "'My Wild Irish Rose,' 'Danny Boy,' my father singing all of the old Irish songs. He was a great singer. I mean, he could sing for hours. He wasn't professional or stage quality, but he was a very, very good singer" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006). Despite this connection to music, Pat did not learn to play any instruments, nor did he sing, until much later in life.

Pat's engagement with his heritage from a young age, then, is unlike that of Jerry and Steve. With the dominant English-Irish heritage in the province, Pat's family did not have any reason to conceal their heritage. This heritage would not, in the second half of the twentieth century, be cause for prejudice or racism in St. John's, Newfoundland. The



Mi'kmaw case was far more delicate – it has been asserted that in Corner Brook, the paper mill company would not employ Mi'kmaq; thus, Mi'kmaw families hid their identities in order to obtain work (see Bartels and Bartels 2005, 265; see also Anger 1997, 7). Further, given the prominence of English-Irish culture on the Avalon Peninsula, one could argue that Pat was constantly surrounded by elements of his heritage. He need only turn on the radio to hear music that he could potentially claim as 'his' or as expressing his family's identity.

Outside of the education system, Pat's first introduction to Native culture was around 1963 or 1964, when he visited the Provincial Museum and saw a mummified youth in the fetal position on display there. He also recalled seeing a full skeleton of what was supposedly a Beothuk man. By 1980, when Pat took a job at the museum, these skeletons were no longer on display; however, he had 'behind the scenes' access to many of the artifacts when helping to move items for displays. Pat was not inspired to learn more about Aboriginal culture until 1995, when he was asked to help prepare the remains of more than 100 Inuit for repatriation to Rose Island in Saglek Bay, Labrador.<sup>21</sup> An experienced hunter, Pat was asked to travel with the team as they re-interred the remains and associated artifacts. During the trip, he sampled traditional foods, learned Inuit techniques for killing and preparing animals, was present for the re-interment, and interacted with Elders. Of the experience, Pat commented, "It was [an amazing experience] and I think it was a real eye opener. That was probably my big introduction

---

<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the reinterment of Thule Inuit, see McAleese (1998).

to Native life and Native spirituality” (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006).

Pat became increasingly interested in intertribal arts and crafts, such as dream-catchers and items featuring medicine wheel imagery. While dream-catchers<sup>22</sup> are not traditional to the Mi’kmaq, they are now incorporated as part of their expressive culture. Dream-catchers are made by members of the St. John’s Native Friendship Centre and sold to raise funds for various programming events. The method for making dream-catchers is also taught at workshops during cultural events, such as the Traditional Mi’kmaq Celebration Day in Stephenville in 2004. For Pat, his interest in dream-catchers initially began as a means of regaining mobility in his arm post-surgery. He picked up a dream-catcher kit from a local leather store that was closing out, and made it in an effort to regain fine-motor skills. As he made more, he got better at making them, and continued it as a hobby. He makes them as small as an inch in diameter and has made one as large as 3.5 feet across (with a hula-hoop as base). Pat also began using Medicine Cards,<sup>23</sup> a type of divination cards that feature Native American imagery and were created by Jamie Sams (Iroquois and Cherokee descent) and David Carson (Choctaw descent). He conducts readings for Natives and non-Natives alike. Pat’s interest in Native music came later, in 2000, when he was given a CD of a powwow held in Saskatchewan.

---

<sup>22</sup> For discussion of the commodification of the dream-catcher and its role as a symbol of Native American identity, see Oberholtzer (1995).

<sup>23</sup> For discussion of ‘Native American’ tarot and divination cards, see Tulk (2005).

In particular, the drum beat was appealing to him and he began building a library of Native music. His favourite, however, is a compilation CD made by Jerry Evans called Craigmillar First Nation (see Chapter Seven) that features a collection of favourite songs and some of my field recordings of our drum group.

Through his work at the Provincial Museum, now under the umbrella of The Rooms, Pat was introduced to artist Jerry Evans. Jerry was on the Art Procurement Committee and Pat asked him if there was drumming going on at the Native Friendship Centre. After the group performed for the opening of The Rooms in June 2005, Jerry invited Pat to attend a Wednesday night practice and he did, not with the intention of learning to play the drum and sing the songs, but to listen and enjoy the music. That night he was invited to sit at the drum and given a drumstick, and after several weeks of attending Wednesday night practices, he became a regular member of the group. Pat continues because of the sense of community he feels there and the enjoyment and energy he feels through making music with this group:

That's a break in the middle of the week that I wholly look forward to. It's pleasure, it's an outlet, it's a boost. God, it's like somebody shooting adrenaline right into your veins. You can walk in there dragging your feet and right after that first drum beat, you're ready to go, doesn't matter what you were feeling like five minutes ago. You're whole being changes. (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006)

Pat never attempts to present himself as having Native ancestry and is cognizant of the issues surrounding non-Native participation in Native culture. Indeed, he jokingly refers to himself as "the token white man beating at the drum," but he expresses appreciation



for being accepted into the group, regardless of cultural background or ancestry (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006).

#### 6.2.4 *"The important thing is keeping the cultures alive" – Jason Morrisseau*

Jason Morrisseau, lead drummer of this group since his arrival in Newfoundland in 2004, is the only member of the group who was not born and raised in Newfoundland and Labrador. Originally from Couchiching, Ontario, he lived in Thunder Bay for a handful of years in his childhood before returning to Couchiching as a teenager. His family heritage is Anishnabe, Cree, and Irish, and he is the only member of the group who has lived on a reserve and has status under the *Indian Act*. As such, Jason has not engaged in the same sort of discovery process as Jerry and Steve, nor has he focussed energy on the documentation of his heritage.

While Jason was raised on a reserve for many of his school-age years, he did not attend a First Nations school – even while living in Couchiching, students attended Fort Francis High School (located off the reserve). He recalled that little was taught in schools in terms of Aboriginal culture and what was taught (around grade four) was rather vague and general historical information on First Nations peoples of Canada. However, during his years on the reserve as a child and later as a teenager, he was immersed in Anishnabe culture and language through participation in the community. In the intervening years while in Thunder Bay, he was baptised as a Catholic and exposed to what he described as a more "Irish Catholic" lifestyle (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007).

Jason, then, was immersed in both the Native and European aspects of his ancestry in his formative years.

Jason was involved with drumming and singing during his years on the reserve, as young as the age of six or seven. In his teenage years, his grandfather was a strong influence who brought Anishnabe culture and music back into his life. He described this re-awakening:

At first it was kind of weird, you know, for the first little while, that period of adjustment. Just that honesty that I was confronted with, the culture, the friendliness, that kind of stuff was... It was kinda weird to me at first, especially from having that Catholic teaching, you know. [ . . . ] I didn't know what was going on. And then eventually after I started getting back into it and establishing a relationship with it again, then. It actually became the only time in my life that everything was clear for me. (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007).

Jason felt that he had picked up a lot of bad habits while living in the city, and that with the guidance of his grandfather, he broke them, although, he admitted, "it was a bumpy journey" (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007).

As a young man, Jason began travelling east and found himself in Newfoundland in spring 2004. Upon hearing about the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, he decided to visit it, and when he discovered the Centre had a drum group, he wanted to check it out because he had been singing his entire life. He recalls being surprised by what he found: "I got to the Friendship Centre and nobody was singing. They would just listen to tape recorders and drum along to that, which I thought was a little strange. And then I just started drumming, singing there, and helping out around there" (Morrisseau, personal

communication, June 8, 2007). Jason further explained his reaction to the use of recordings in this way:

The very fact that they used a stereo to sing overtop of, you know, it's kind of, to me, it seems like it's a conflict. Like it's almost like a cultural contradiction, where they're trying to sing traditional songs with the drum, but they're using a stereo to sing them, which seems like there's a tension that exists between that. (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007)

Jason, himself, had learned only through oral means, in what he describes as being the traditional way and the 'right' way:

There were people that left our drum group in the beginning, but over this period of time that we've been together, we have certainly grown and expanded and been a lot more well-recognized around St. John's as a traditional drumming and dancing group. Learning the songs right and doing it right as opposed to doing it wrong, whereas before the other guy used to use a tape player to teach the people. That's also a sign that's against First Nations culture, Aboriginal culture. Because we believe strongly in oral tradition, whether that's a song, dance, stories, teachings. So when I started working with them, our drum reduced down to about three people and then, over a period of time, now we have a good amount of members once again and they certainly have blossomed into something good. (Morrisseau, personal communication, April 28, 2005)

Since our first interview, however, Jason has acknowledged that groups must do the best they can with the resources they have. While he still values and has a preference for oral tradition, he can understand why the use of media may be necessary.

Jason had not planned on staying in St. John's, but he was offered a job as a youth worker at the Centre and he settled here. Jason joked that he probably got the job because "[I'm] a real Indian, I suppose" (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). As part of this job, he took over the drum group and made many changes. He admitted, "I



was pretty conservative in regards to how things are supposed to be done” (*ibid.*). He described the group he first encountered as having a structure that was “completely backwards”: the men at the drum were drumming to a CD but not singing, the girls behind them were singing and leading the songs (*ibid.*). This was “backwards,” he said, because the men were not taking an active leadership role in the drum group by singing and leading the songs.

The first change he implemented was to have the men sing and not rely on recordings. The response to these changes, which alienated some of the members (both male and female), he noted, was a “large dropout rate” (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). However, Jason defended this position, pointing out that it is a “strict discipline to be a singer,” describing it as a way of life (*ibid.*). Indeed, he had to assert some control in order to make a new start with this group. He introduced smudging,<sup>24</sup> refined the dancing style, and reoriented the relationship between male and female members in terms of musical and organizational structure. On reflection, three years later, he noted how strict he was and that he has since relaxed his position somewhat, saying he is “more liberal about culture” – “Times are changing,” so it’s necessary to “make some sort of compromise” (*ibid.*). In the end, he reflected, “the important thing is keeping the cultures alive” (*ibid.*).

---

<sup>24</sup> As Jason Morrisseau, Steve George, and Paul Pike have instructed me at various times, smudging is a means of purification and cleansing that prepares a person spiritually for singing and/or dancing (makes them of “good mind” by removing negativity), can serve a healing function, and is also a means of offering prayers and/or thanks to the Creator. The practice of smudging involves burning “medicines” such as sweetgrass or sage. Steve George, in particular, also incorporates birch bark because of its prevalence in Mi’kmaw culture. He also referred to sage as a woman’s medicine.

6.2.5 “Now, I’m not Native. So is it still okay if I participate?” – Janice Esther Tulk

I was born and raised in Corner Brook, Newfoundland and, like Steve and Pat, was educated in a Catholic school system. My heritage is a combination of English, Irish, and, if family legend is to be trusted, Dutch. While various family members have made efforts to trace the Tulk family over the years and make sense of a last name that is Old Norse for ‘interpreter,’ we have largely been unable to trace farther than 200 years. Taken with this Old Norse name and interested in the Vikings who inhabited the island briefly more than a thousand years ago, but realizing there is no connection between the two, I sometimes jokingly refer to myself as Janice the Red on account of my red hair.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike other members of this group, I have been actively involved in formalized music-making my entire life, from piano lessons to voice lessons to saxophone in the school band. The repertoire I focussed on was largely classical and, as a mezzo soprano, I was particularly taken with opera (though, my love for musical theatre and folk songs took over once the annual Rotary Music Festival season came to a close). Initially contemplating a career as a music educator, following high school I moved to St. John’s to pursue a Bachelor of Music. Taken with music history and ethnomusicology, my focus shifted from performance and I moved to Edmonton, Alberta to further my studies via a Master of Arts in Music with an emphasis on ethnomusicology. It was during my research on Medicine Dream, a contemporary Native music group based in Anchorage, Alaska, that Mi’kmaw Paul Pike began telling me about the situation of Mi’kmaq in

---

<sup>25</sup> The story of Eric the Red is recounted in a Norse *Saga of Eric the Red*.

Newfoundland. Indeed, it was he who first told me about the Mercenary Myth, about what Wetzel has called the "Hidden Term of Union," about the rarely-discussed discrimination in Corner Brook,<sup>26</sup> and about Mi'kmaw family names (to identify only a fraction of Paul's teachings over the six weeks I spent with him in Alaska). At this time, I suggested to Paul that I would like to pursue doctoral studies on Mi'kmaw music in Newfoundland and he was very supportive.

Returning to St. John's, I was quite focussed on Miawpukek and the west coast of the island in terms of the potential for a study of revitalization efforts and Mi'kmaw musical culture. Following a year of research focussing on cultural events in these areas, a new academic year started in September 2004 and I met Steve George in the Department of Folklore. While waiting for class to start one afternoon, he popped in and invited me to join the drum group at the Native Friendship Centre, giving me the phone number of the lead drummer and a youth worker there. I recall phoning to get more information about the drum group and the possibilities for participation. I quite bluntly stated, "Now, I'm not Native. So is it still okay if I participate?" I was assured that the Friendship Centre was open to everyone, regardless of heritage, and made plans to attend the following Wednesday. While I self-identified at the time as a Folklore student who was interested in learning, I did not realize then that I would become the only female member of the group or that my research focus would shift to this drum group and its significance in the urban context. A year and a half later, at one of our regular

---

<sup>26</sup> See Anger (1997); Bartels and Bartels (2005).



Wednesday practices, we were joined by then director of the Centre, Myrtle Banfield, and youth coordinator Lori LeDrew to discuss my revised research proposal focussing in part on the drum group at the Friendship Centre. With the consent of members, the Friendship Centre became one of the sites of the present multi-sited ethnography.

The story of how I came to be part of the drum group, however, has variants that may be performed for outsiders. Speaking to Dr. Tom Gordon, the director of the School of Music at Memorial University after the grand opening of the Research Centre for Music, Media and Place, Jason Morrisseau explained, "I don't know how it happened. She just started hanging around and somehow ended up a part of the group" (January 23, 2008). His story may be read to suggest that I was initially uninvited and, without any negotiation or work, I became a member. In some ways it emphasizes the unexpected nature of my participation, that perhaps even he has not fully come to terms with. However, as will be demonstrated in Chapter Seven, my initiation into this group was a slow process, largely controlled by Jason, who chose which knowledge to share with me at time intervals that he deemed appropriate.

6.3 *What's in a name? That which we call the "St. John's Native Friendship Centre Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group" by any other name would sound as sweet.*

The drum group at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre has been called many different names since its formation in 2002, including the St. John's Native Friendship Centre Aboriginal Drummers and Dancers and the St. John's Aboriginal Drumming and

Dancing Group. For a brief time, in early 2004 it was called Four Winds after the Four Winds Youth Centre housed within the Friendship Centre. However, when Jason Morrisseau took over the group that year, he insisted that the group be renamed, as there were already other powwow groups in existence that went by the name Four Winds. Discussion over the new name ensued post-practice on 15 September 2004, with a variety of suggestions, including Unama'ki<sup>27</sup> Singers by Jerry Evans. Jason's own preference was for Young Thunderbirds, because the Thunderbird is a powerful, mythical creature (Morrisseau, personal communication, April 28, 2005). The group was renamed by its members and an MSN group for Young Thunderbird Singers was created. However, when performing in the community, the drum was still referred to as the St. John's Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group.

During Jason's one-year hiatus from the group (2005-2006), discussion of the group's name once again cropped up. Dissatisfaction with its current name stemmed from the awkwardness of the title, its lack of local referent, and the fact that it was too general to be meaningful. When asked about the challenges facing the group, Steve indicated that just the name of the group poses a problem, saying "I don't want to nitpick, but that awkward title – St. John's Native Friendship Centre Drum" (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006). He recognized that it pays respect and gives credit to the administration of the Friendship Centre, which sponsors the group, but also felt that the

---

<sup>27</sup> *Unama'ki* is Mi'kmaq for "land of fog," a particularly appropriate name for a group based in St. John's, Newfoundland.

label of “Aboriginal” was problematic:

This use of Aboriginal is generic and bland. People [ . . . ] don’t distinguish between First Nations and Inuit in the way that it becomes important for things like workshops. Like, you can have something of a collective, where Métis and Inuit and First Nations people are all there and are all sharing, but when it comes to learning songs and work-shopping and building community in a particular way through song, [ . . . ] then we need that rootedness of something that is First Nations, that is Mi’kmaw. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

Initially surprised to hear Steve’s views on this label, given that he had never mentioned it to me before, I was compelled to pose a follow-up question: “When you say it’s a First Nations drum, I’m assuming you’re referring to the style of music. But given that there’s a member who is Inuit, do you see it as a problem just calling it First Nations?” Steve reasserted that the First Nations label would be more appropriate for the group:

I don’t. [ . . . ] What I’m saying is that it’s First Nations in style, in ethos, in spirit. I mean, what do we do every Wednesday the last couple of years at the drum? Learn songs that are Ojibwa, Blackfoot, Cree, Mi’kmaw, ah, – Southern – I don’t know which Nation, but you know what I mean. Those are all First Nation songs, styles. (*Ibid.*)

It appears then that the label of First Nations for Steve refers primarily to the repertoire and singing style employed by the group as being distinct from the repertoire and singing style of other Aboriginal musical groups.

As I write this, the question of name for the drum group continues to stimulate debate. While a new name – Red Ochre Singers – was proposed in early 2007 and largely consented to by all members, and for some time was being used to refer to the group in e-mails by one member, it was not forwarded to administration to become ‘official.’ As a



name for the group, it would redress several of the problems with the current one. To begin with, Red Ochre Singers slides off the tongue much more readily than any of the variants of the name St. John's Aboriginal Drumming and Dancing Group. Secondly, it points specifically to what the drum does – sing. Many performances by this group do not feature dancers; thus, calling it a drumming and dancing group makes little sense. In terms of invoking a local referent, Red Ochre Singers refers to the red pigment used by the Beothuk and Maritime Archaic Indians in Newfoundland and thus references the island. Finally, while Red Ochre Singers provides a more specific label for the group and implicitly references 'Indians' or First Nations people, it is not a label that explicitly excludes other Aboriginal ancestry (as the term 'First Nations' would). At a group meeting on 17 July 2007, however, it was decided that as long as the group remains under the auspices of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, it should be referred to as Friendship Centre Drum Group.

This debate about the name of the drum group is not insignificant. It is demonstrative of a desire to assert a local and culturally-meaningful name for the group. It points to notions of identity and the fact that labels such as "Native" and "Aboriginal" are too general to acknowledge the First Nations identity and musical style of this drum group (or specifically the Mi'kmaw identity of some members). Further, these terms, along with "St. John's," have no culturally-meaningful local referent. Thus, other possible namings have attempted to employ Mi'kmaw language (as in Unama'ki) or a reference that is specific to Newfoundland, though not necessarily a single First Nation

(such as “Red Ochre”). There is clearly a desire by half of the group to have either a Nation-specific or geographical reference that is based in culture and states “who we are,” to localize the identity of this powwow drum group regardless of the diverse heritages of its members.

6.4 *Representation and Performance Venues: “Music is a way to let people know, yes, there are Aboriginal people here in Newfoundland”*

For a period of time during 2004-2005, the drum group at the Friendship Centre received numerous invitations to perform throughout the city. Given that each member has work and family commitments, and some are still in university, choosing which performances could be attended by a majority of members, and therefore which requests to accept and which to decline, was a matter of constant negotiation, especially when honoraria were involved. While members of the group had a say in which performances to do, the administrator of the Friendship Centre took care of performance requests and bookings. Jerry noted the importance of being present and visible at community events, explaining that it is about sharing: “It’s opening the eyes and the doors for somebody else, you know, who are in the same situation as me, who have not just Mi’kmaw but Aboriginal ancestry that grew up in Newfoundland, and that ancestry was blanketed in shame” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006).

Given the ever-increasing Aboriginal population in St. John’s, their seeming invisibility in relation to the dominant population, and the only recent awakening from a

generation of shame and secrecy, having an Aboriginal presence at events and representing culture is important to the community. Jerry explains:

I grew up in St. John's and there are Aboriginal people here, you know? We're getting more all the time, coming down from up in Labrador. Unfortunately, most people come here 'cause they've got to see a doctor of some sort, get some medical procedure done, and have to stay here. Or people coming 'cause their family members are here, or coming here to learn, to go to school. And hopefully they can see that there's other people here similar to them, like them – Innu, Inuit, Mi'kmaq, Métis people around who are proud of who they are and what they come from. And I think, like my artwork, the music is a way to let people know, yes, there are Aboriginal people here in Newfoundland. There have always been. And by showing pride, if it's through my artwork or even singing a song, that's a way of showing pride in who we are and who we come from. Who I am, who they are. (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006)

Musical performances, then, are opportunities to share with others, while also acknowledging culture and making a political statement on the presence of Aboriginal culture within Newfoundland and Labrador.

While the desire to share culture is a strong one, the venues and events at which such sharing occurs may become contested. There were times when the Friendship Centre booked the drum group to perform at events that seemingly had little relation to the purpose of the drum. Steve was most vocal in this regard when he pointed out that the group would often be booked for performances, only to arrive and wonder why a First Nations drum group had been invited:

We'd go to some of these gigs and go ourselves after getting short notice and kind of look at one another and say, "What are we doing here? What is this we're doing?" And other gigs are wonderful and people are always friendly and I'm happy for this time, but it's time we made our own decisions. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)



Other times, a performance request would be rejected entirely. One notable example was a request to play the drum on a float in the Santa Claus parade. While in theory it may seem like a good idea to have an Aboriginal presence at such an event, Steve noted how inappropriate it would be: "That's not what that drum's about. [ . . . ] What does [the drum] have to do with being on a Santa Claus float? Singing an Honour song?" (*ibid.*).<sup>28</sup> It is here that concerns about the autonomy of the group may be raised. As Robin Purcell has noted, those who function largely as the decision-makers for the group (often the board or director of the Friendship Centre) are not part of the group and therefore may not realize or fully understand the meaning the drum has for members, or what the members see as appropriate venues for sharing (Purcell, personal communication, July 21, 2007). Such decision-making concerns, however, also extend to other areas of performance.

When this group performs in the community, there is a desire by administrators at the Friendship Centre that the group own a set of regalia to wear when singing in public, presumably when the drum represents the Friendship Centre as an organization. When the group first emerged in 2002, male drummers wore ribbon shirts and matching pants, while female members dressed primarily in Fancy Shawl<sup>29</sup> regalia. Given that most (if not all) of the female members were expected to also dance, it is not surprising that they

---

<sup>28</sup> And yet, it should be noted that there is a great deal of powwow repertoire which is composed as specials for children, such as powwow songs referencing *Brother Bear*, *SpongeBob SquarePants*, *Mighty Mouse*, and *The Flintstones*. Further, there are Christmas songs in the Mi'kmaw language.

<sup>29</sup> This particular style of dress is that worn for Fancy Shawl dancing.

would wear dance regalia. However, with the change in leadership in 2004, came renewed discussion of what the group should wear. Like the name of the group, suggestions for dress have been made several times over the past few years, with no final decision being made.

In fall 2004, Jason Morrisseau suggested that drum groups these days tend to wear t-shirts or hoodies,<sup>30</sup> rather than ribbon shirts while singing at powwows. It was his opinion that this dress, embroidered with names of members, would be most appropriate. The director of the Friendship Centre at the time preferred to see the group in regalia, though there was no longer a collection of regalia that could be worn by members. As this debate was never resolved, in performances members wore what they felt was appropriate. For male members, this usually meant personal ribbon shirts for Steve and Jerry, a Friendship Centre ribbon shirt for Stan, a t-shirt or hoodie for Jason, and a jacket embroidered with images from Medicine Cards for Pat. As for me, the sole female singer in the group, I regularly opted to wear a long skirt, a knitted shawl, and my eagle feather earrings made by Native artist Don LaVonne in Anchorage, Alaska. Later, Pat made a necklace for me with a thunderbird pendant. This means of acquiring elements of dress<sup>31</sup> over a long period of time bears some similarity to the processes outlined in the discussion of regalia in Miawpukek (Chapter Five).

---

<sup>30</sup> Hoodie is slang for hooded-sweatshirt.

<sup>31</sup> I am not suggesting that what I wear could or should be considered regalia (cultural dress) of any kind; rather, that the many sources of elements of dress and processes of gifting bear some similarity to that described by Paul Pike in Chapter Five.



Figure 6.1. Friendship Centre Drum Group at the Multicultural Fair Celebration of Diversity held at The Rooms on Sunday, December 11, 2005. Photo courtesy Pat Donnelly.

Given the diverse heritages present in this group, members have been reluctant to commission matching outfits. Rather, it has been desired that each person choose to wear something that speaks to their own heritage or personal experience.<sup>32</sup> For example, while there is nothing explicitly Mi'kmaw about Steve's ribbon shirt (no Mi'kmaw eight-point star, no double-curve motif), it has special meaning for him. A shirt that displays a "generic southwest motif," it was made by the aunt of one of his friends in Kahnawake and thus has particular significance for him (George, personal communication, June 14,

---

<sup>32</sup> A similar decision was made regarding dress for the intertribal pop-rock group Medicine Dream. See Tulk (2003, 74-78).



2006). Likewise, Pat's jacket is embroidered with his totems – animals that are specifically meaningful to him and his experiences. Thus, members of this group are not as concerned with deploying and emphasizing symbols of identity, so much as they are concerned with the processes of assembling dress and creating meaning.

Of course, it is interesting to pursue how a female, non-Native member of this group experiences issues of dress. As the only female member of the group, I can only speak from my own experience. When the question of regalia came up a few years ago, it was suggested by Friendship Centre administrators that I would wear Fancy Shawl regalia. I expressed my discomfort with such an idea, but was told my concerns were unwarranted because most of the dancers at the Friendship Centre at the time were not Native and because I had been accepted fully by the group and should, therefore, dress the same as the group. Having me dress in regalia has not been discussed since; nor have I ever worn anything resembling regalia or Native dress. Indeed, my dress at any given performance has largely been a non-issue. Steve made an important observation in this regard. Having gone off on a tangent in the interview and discussing the possibility of me having German or northern European ancestry, Steve joked, "You will have to wear a Valkerie outfit next time we perform. Yeah, the Madonna bra, the horns with the helmet. We expect that now" (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006).<sup>33</sup> On reflection, he noted the nature of expectations and elaborated on the issue of wearing your heritage

---

<sup>33</sup> While some readers may feel compelled to read a sexist meaning into Steve's comment, it was definitely not his intent, nor do I read it in this way.

on your sleeve, so to speak:

I joked just a minute ago about you dressing like a Viking or some Norse woman who lives in Valhalla. That's kind of fun and kitsch to us in a way, because of the popularization of it, like through Wagner's *Ring Cycles* and all that, but it really, at least in part, has some root in European culture. [. . .] If the expectation is you're not going to, when you get up to sing with us as a person of European extraction, you're not going to get up and dress like that (not that there is anything wrong with it), but you're not going to do that, then why are we expected to dress in regalia and not just t-shirts and ball caps, which a lot of powwow groups do. (*Ibid.*)

Steve makes a valid point. There is no expectation that I should wear my heritage on my sleeve or display such an overt marker of my identity. And, yet, such expectations persist in relation to First Nations people.

Work in cultural tourism may elucidate why such expectations persist. When the drum group performs at public events, it is read by audiences as a form of display. And while this display is not explicitly constructed for consumption by tourists, notions of "gazing" on cultural difference are nevertheless present. Urry (2002) has noted that the "tourist gaze," an objectified view of a place or a people, is constructed through media, only to be "endlessly reproduced and recaptured" (3). This objectified view is based in signs which are then interpreted in relation to an expectation (or "anticipation") for a particular place or culture previously constructed through media (*ibid.*). These visual signs are significant. As McIntosh's (2004, 8) study of Maori tourism has revealed, many who travel to experience culture prefer that their experience be "visual," a preference that may be interpreted to be a superficial or "easy" level of engagement with culture. Of this gazing on the exotic, Ryan (2002, 965) notes that "tourists seek what has been

photographed in order to photograph it.” This certainly is common at powwows; I have often observed tourists in Miawpukek posing with “Indians” in vacation photos. Media through time has constructed an expectation for the dress of indigenous peoples, one that cultural tourists actively seek out and reproduce, in a cyclic fashion. Those observing displays have expectations for the visual aspect of indigenous culture, expectations that are intimately tied to othering and exoticism, and these expectations are often so strongly constructed that cultural change and modernity is perceived as “inauthentic.”

6.5     *“Our Strength is Ourselves”: Continuing Struggles and the Strength of Diversity*

While the Friendship Centre Drum Group has made significant progress over the past three years, there are still challenges and struggles to overcome. Jerry, for example, was quick to note that the learning process is continuous and that there is still much for him to attempt and to master. In particular, he noted one of the challenges currently facing the drum group: the group does not have anyone “who can teach us our songs, Mi’kmaw songs, and what they mean, and how to sing the words properly” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). Steve echoed these sentiments when he stated succinctly, “We have to learn Mi’kmaw songs” (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006). In particular, he pointed to the need for the Friendship Centre to recognize the differences between Inuit and First Nations culture and provide separate programming for both. In terms of song repertoire and singing style, drumming style and the type of drum employed, and workshops in these areas, First Nations and Inuit culture are quite distinct



and cannot be combined (*ibid.*).

In terms of personal skill, members of the group still see room for improvement in their singing and drumming abilities (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven). Jerry noted that the group still has much to learn in terms of taking leads during a song or chant, and in leading the group through gesture.<sup>34</sup> When one is unfamiliar with songs, even keeping track of how many push-ups have been sung, and by whom they were led, can be particularly challenging (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). There is much room for improved confidence in skills while singing, in addition to the expansion of repertoire to encompass Mi'kmaq-specific songs.

Other challenges still faced by the group include the need for improved access to funding and resources. As Jason explained, with additional cultural organizations and improved infrastructure to support cultural initiatives, the Aboriginal community in St. John's and Newfoundland as a whole would register as a presence in the community and province. Further, such initiatives would not only be beneficial to members of the Aboriginal community, but would also enrich the provincial cultural fabric as a whole (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). Related to this, I would suggest, is the need for better organization within the group itself, so that it could have more control

---

<sup>34</sup> The hand signals used in the performance of powwow songs have been described by Powers (1987, 43-44). He notes the significance of eye contact, chin gestures, and the raising and pointing of the drumstick as means of communicating who will begin the next push-up and of accepting or declining that request. Interestingly, while Morrisseau used eye contact and chin gestures, he did not point with the drumstick. Instead, he used discreet finger movements to pass the lead. His free hand would be low, near the drum, he would make eye contact, then point to the person. The person then either nodded or pointed at himself to accept the lead or shook his head and/or hand side-to-side to refuse the request.

over its performance engagements, decision-making, the disbursement of honoraria, the implementation of cultural workshops, its own name, and membership in the group.

While members of the drum group did not voice these concerns in interviews (largely conducted in summer 2006), they were the focus of a meeting on 17 July 2007. At this time, many of these issues, largely of an organizational nature, were discussed and consensus achieved as to how the group should proceed. This discussion culminated in the creation of a document to be presented to the Friendship Centre outlining the group's relationship with the Centre and organizational principles the group hopes to employ (see Chapter Seven).

While there is always room for the improved presence of Mi'kmaw and Aboriginal culture within the mainstream and the province, the group has been able to raise awareness of diversity in a small way, through select performances at Memorial University of Newfoundland and The Rooms, among others. With each performance, the group increases the visibility of the Aboriginal population in St. John's and Newfoundland (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). An important role of this group is that of sharing traditions with others. When the group performs in the community, individuals who have denied their culture (or had their culture denied by others) are affirmed. Jerry explained how performance, like his art, can have a very important impact on individuals: "It's opening the eyes and the doors for somebody else who is in the same situation as me, who has not just Mi'kmaq but Aboriginal ancestry, grew up in Newfoundland, and that ancestry was blanketed in shame" (Evans, personal

communication, June 28, 2006).

While this sharing with others is an important role for the group, Jason identified the ability to compromise as an important strength of the group. He noted that the group has an ability to “compromise and overcome those cultural differences” that may be present because of the mixture of ideologies that each member brings to the drum (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). This compromise is fostered by friendship, a willingness to learn, and commitment to the group. Further, he noted that members display an impressive perseverance and great courage in their efforts to learn about a culture they did not grow up with. Still, while these are strengths, they are also weaknesses. Jason notes that the mixture of ideologies will continue to lead to challenges that will have to be negotiated by the group; ideas about “how it’s supposed to be done traditionally” (how a drum group acts, learns songs, and so on) will continue to be difficult for members to understand, having not grown up in the culture (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). Jason feels that these things become second nature when one is exposed to them from a young age.

Many members identified the group’s diversity and membership as the primary strength of the group. Jerry noted the attitude of members who sit around the drum on a regular basis, saying, “The passion is there” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). With this passion comes the ability to learn more and continue to work towards improving the group. Steve indicated the importance of the camaraderie of the drum group:



Our respect for one another, our camaraderie that comes from that, 'cause it's not an all boy band. Not anymore, 'cause you're with us, and you have been with us for a while now, and you bring something else to it. And I'm not just praising you to get it on tape, 'cause it's true. You're a non-Native person and I never think of you that way. I think of you as being a sister around that drum. [. . .] When we're around that drum together, we're tight and I don't think about it any other way. And I like the fact that we're all this mix of an Inuk, and a Pi'tawagk-Mi'kmaq with Jerry Evans, and myself coming from an ancestry in Labrador and Mi'kmaw ancestry here, and yourself which is rich Irish and I don't know what other ancestry. Anyways, we're all there and we all come to this good mind about things and we sing our hearts out. (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)

He continued, "Our strength is ourselves, our diversity that we all bring and we're all respectful of that, and we all kind of joke about it in different ways. [. . .] We all bring something different to it and that makes us strong, you know?" (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006). Similarly, Pat indicated that the primary strength of the group was, "The individuals and the way they work together. [. . .] It's the group saying [what we're going to do] and agreeing" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006).

Robin Purcell has also noted the fellowship around the drum, while pointing to "the relationship of having an open drum" as the primary strength of the group (personal communication, July 21, 2007). That all are welcome around the drum and sharing takes place amidst diversity, is something to be celebrated. Given the group's willingness to accept and work through diversity, Robin is hopeful about the potential for society at large to one day mimic the ethos of this group (*ibid.*). At the same time, one might think of the drum group as already being a microcosm. The Friendship Centre is a place of

extreme diversity and Robin says it is a “special place” for this reason alone (*ibid.*). The diversity in the drum group, then, reflects the diversity of the Friendship Centre as it manifests in the St. John’s context.

While members interpret this diversity as strength, it may prove to be the group’s greatest challenge. Finding a space for performance in a First Nations context, such as a powwow, by an intertribal First Nations drum group that also has non-Native members will likely prove problematic. In an interview, Jason spoke candidly about the nature of racism between people of Aboriginal ancestry and others. He explained that while there is racism that exists among some people of non-Native ancestry against Natives, there is also racism among some Natives against people of non-Native ancestry. That is, racism works both ways as a product of contact and historical relations. Further, racism exists between and within communities. As such, Jason foresees problems in terms of the reception of our group should we attempt to perform outside of the urban context. While noting that the situation may not be problematic in Miawpukek and on the west coast of Newfoundland, given that there is such a high percentage of mixed-bloods, the situation would be far more serious elsewhere. At powwows on the mainland, he reflected, the group likely would not be permitted to sing (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). Such speculation is based on Jason’s own personal experiences, teachings, and understandings after many years on the powwow circuit. It remains to be seen how people will react to this intertribal group in contexts outside of metropolitan St. John’s, for the group’s cultural and ancestral diversity manifests in equally diverse repertoire and

a mixture of eastern and northern singing styles, to be discussed in Chapter Seven.

#### 6.6 *Localization Strategies of an Urban-based Drum Group*

This chapter has highlighted a particular local history of the erasure of Mi'kmaw identity in the province; the personal stories of hidden heritage described by two members of this drum group resonate with the stories of many who live primarily on the west coast of the province. The process of hiding First Nations heritage was not overt; that is, Steve and Jerry were not told specifically to hide their heritage. Nevertheless, an erasure did take place or at least a realization did not occur until later in life. Physical features, such as dark hair and eyes, were explained by emphasizing other heritages that were perhaps more acceptable. This issue of hidden heritages is not unique to Newfoundland and has been experienced in many different First Nations communities. For example, Goertzen (2005) notes that, "Many North Carolina Indians now in their fifties or older were told as children to keep their Indian identity a secret" (281). In fact, he notes that children would be told they had Native heritage, but not to mention it. Physical traits such as skin colour were explained away with the suggestion of other ethnicities, such as Cuban or Mexican, Samoan, Hawaiian, or even "Lebanese or something" (Goertzen 2005, 281). As such, many First Nations people "remained 'hidden in plain sight,' as many Indians phrase it. Their eventual public reemergence as Indians came with their first powwows" (*ibid.*).

As Krouse (1999) has noted, "Most mixed bloods must make a decision about



their identity. If their physical appearance does not readily identify them as such, they may be able to 'pass' in the dominant society, which can be useful" (79). However, in many cases in Newfoundland, it was the decision of parents to emphasize one heritage over another. Thus, once such a "hidden heritage" is discovered, a mixed blood may then have the option of "choosing to be Indian," sometimes as "a chance to right a historical wrong" (Krouse 1999, 79). Problematic, however, is the notion that such people choose one identity over another, or progress from "the easy path of 'passing' [. . .] into Indian communities" (ibid., 80). To begin with, as Krouse points out, acceptance in a community often depends on kinship. Thus, entry into a community can be difficult. But beyond that, as the present case study has demonstrated, the identification process may not be as simple as "ethnic switching" (Nagel 1995).<sup>35</sup> Rather, it might be better understood as a process of "ethnic-amending" in which one "[explores] a new side of one's family tree and [includes] that nationality or ethnicity among one's working ethnic identities" (Nagel 1995, 948). What I am suggesting is that, as has been shown through the experiences of Jerry Evans and Steve George, identity is a process of negotiating ethnic (and other) simultaneities.<sup>36</sup>

It is perhaps because of this ethnic simultaneity, combined with the diversity of the group, that members were never able to come to a decision regarding dress. The

---

<sup>35</sup> Nagel (1995) refers to "ethnic switching" specifically in reference to a study of census results in which people changed their race from non-Native in one census to Native in a later one.

<sup>36</sup> The notion of ethnic simultaneity is not new. Identity studies have been concerned with multiple identities and hybrid identities, particularly in relation to First Nations and indigenous music (see, for example, Bigenho 2002; Samuels 2004; and Diamond 2007, among others).

simultaneous ethnicities experienced by some members would mean that choosing to dress in one style of ethnic dress would exclude the other part of one's identity. However, dressing everyone in matching outfits would also ignore the diversity of members, whose heritages include Mi'kmaq, Innu, Anishnabe, Cree, Irish, Welsh, and English. While the drum group asserted two options – that everyone dress as they pleased (referencing their heritage if they wanted) or that they get matching t-shirts and hoodies – the director and board of the Friendship Centre preferred to see the male members in ribbon shirts and the female members in Fancy Shawl dress. As one who has participated in drum groups at powwows on the mainland, Jason felt that matching ribbon shirts was not what drum groups would normally wear (although, it may be that there is a difference between what is worn by traditional groups and for contest singers). For those who are not of First Nations heritage, ribbon shirts or regalia felt uncomfortable – like one was “dressing up” and “trying to pass” as Native. However, it may be that for the director and the board of the Friendship Centre, there was an expectation for what a First Nations drum group looks like. Further, it may have been a political move to have the drum group look Native in performances at which it represented the Native Friendship Centre.

As Bigenho (2002) has noted in her research on Bolivian performance ensembles, “the theme of the culturally authentic performance as visually imagined through costumes that accompany specific musical expressions” emerged in discussion of performances (38). She recalls how on one occasion the group, which attempted to match costumes to the musical style presented, was “criticized for not looking Bolivian

enough. In spite of Música de Maestros's efforts to present a diverse repertoire, within French folklore festivals 'Bolivia' meant 'indigenous,' and more specifically 'highland indigenous'" (2002, 61). Thus, competing notions of authenticity may coexist, including those held by the performers themselves, by the organizers of performances, and by the audience viewing the performances. For the drum group, we were trying to negotiate between having dress that reflected the diversity of our heritages and between the expectation that there be a visual connection with the genre of music we perform. I believe that the director and board had an expectation that an "authentic" performance of this music required what is perceived as the requisite "indigenous" visual component of regalia.

In the final analysis, for members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, cultural dress in performance was a personal pursuit (since matching t-shirts or hoodies were never ordered). Thus, like the processes of localization and individualization described in the discussion of regalia in the previous case study (Chapter Five), cultural dress in this context could be read as having meaning that is known perhaps to only the wearer. The value for a process of assembly over a long period of time may also be observed. However, the comparison between the cultural dress of drummers and that of dancers at a powwow is a problematic one. While there are established conventions for the dress of dancers in a powwow according to the particular style of dance they practice, a template within which processes of localization and personalization function, the same cannot be said of the dress of drummers. Indeed, it is quite common for drummers to wear jeans and



t-shirts that do not index First Nations culture at all. Certainly, in this case study, there was no template selected as a basis for the dress of drum group members. Thus, while localization and personalization may be observed in the dress of this drum group, these processes are not constrained by conventions.

While there is an openness surrounding diversity in membership and dress, an important tension remains surrounding the repertoire sung by this drum group. While the music shared by Jason Morrisseau is First Nations music that all members of the group enjoy, and on some levels it validates a more general understanding of one's identity as an indigenous person in Canada, there remains a desire to learn Nation-specific music. Members are aware of the borrowed nature of the powwow tradition and accept such sharing, noting that when so much has been lost, the only way to proceed may be through sharing. Further, the experience and talent of the lead drummer is appreciated and respected (and indeed the reason that Jerry Evans joined the group in the first place). However, both Jerry and Steve want to also learn Mi'kmaw songs, an initiative that both Pat and I support fully.<sup>37</sup> Steve and Jerry speak of Mi'kmaw music in terms of "*our* music" – language that recalls the rhetoric of emcee Mike Doucette at the Miawpukek powwow in relation to Ko'jua dances (see Chapter Five). Learning Mi'kmaw songs is an extension of their desire to learn more about their culture and heritage, to be able to use

---

<sup>37</sup> Pat Donnelly and I are largely not consulted regarding the repertoire performed by our group. Rather, of the music that is presented to us, we express opinions on what we like (which may or may not be acknowledged). Nevertheless, we both agree that the group should learn more Mi'kmaw songs and lend our voices to those of Jerry and Steve when this issue comes up from time to time.

the language, if only through singing. The use of indigenous language, even if one is not fluent in the language or if the language is incomprehensible to the audience (and even members), is perceived to be an important marker of cultural identity. These are personal pursuits that form part of the journey that follows the discovery of heritage after it has been hidden.

However, it is also a means of negotiating entry into a Mi'kmaw community when individuals with Mi'kmaw heritage do not have status or other formal means for recognizing their identities. As Krouse (1999) notes,

Knowledge of and proficiency in the culture is also an identifying factor of Indian people. Mastery of tribal language, participation in ritual activities, and adherence to traditional values all strengthen community membership. In urban areas, cultural competence is often more difficult to demonstrate, particularly when cultural practices are linked to the presence of a tribal reservation community. Urban Indians who wish to maintain ties to their nations may find themselves cultural commuters, returning to home communities for ceremonies and socials. (Krouse 1999, 78)

While members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group are not returning to their home communities to participate in such events, such as powwow, they do travel to other areas of the province (particularly the Miawpukek reserve) to engage with them. In this context, the ability to speak Mi'kmaq or to sing Mi'kmaw songs would help to secure one's relationship with that community (even if one is not a member of that community). In short, cultural competence is a marker of identity where other markers, such as physical features, kinship, status, or residence on a reserve do not exist.

While the interpretive lens of "scene" could be employed here to account for the

diversity of the ethnic backgrounds of the participants who gather around the genre of powwow and the fact that this musical expression does not occur within the context of a larger Mi'kmaw community, it is also problematic. The notion of scene certainly gets around homogenizing notions of community, of historical continuities of a local place. However, it isn't how members of this group understand their actions. They see their own group as a self-contained community in which they are members. But, they also see themselves as participants in a larger Mi'kmaw community – a term that some members use to describe what they are longing for. When Steve George talks about what he is trying to get out of cultural participation, he is working towards community, family, people who share meals and care for each others' children. And while the broader community he feels he belongs to is fragmented and disconnected, his assertion and understanding of a Mi'kmaw community Newfoundland – and not other formulations of scenes, pathways, or networks – is purposeful and meaningful.<sup>38</sup> It is indicative of a particular type of engagement that he seeks as a Mi'kmaw person in Newfoundland: to be accepted and acknowledged as Mi'kmaw by other Mi'kmaq in the province and to be welcomed into their cultural events regardless of status or documentary proof of heritage.

---

<sup>38</sup> Given Steve George's background in folklore (he holds an MA in Folklore from Memorial University), he is aware of alternate notions such as scenes, pathways, and networks, and would be capable of employing them if they expressed the concept he was attempting to put forward.



**Chapter Seven**  
Making Powwow Local:  
Sounding Diversity through a Friendship Centre Drum Group

As Chapter Six has demonstrated, the Friendship Centre Drum Group is ethnically diverse, with members who are non-status Mi'kmaw, status Oji-Cree, and non-Native, though all have far more diverse heritages than such labels would imply. The different experiences of the status and non-status members in this group particularly come into conflict in terms of two issues: "traditional" ways of learning repertoire and "traditional" gender roles surrounding the participation of women in powwow drum groups. While the experience of non-status members led them to a make-do, practical attitude that embraced the use of recordings during practices (further discussed below), Jason asserted that only learning through oral means was "traditional" and "right." Thus, the reliance on technology was perceived as a "cultural contradiction" and the wrong path for a drum group (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2006). At the same time, after four years working with this group in the Newfoundland context, Jason conceded that sometimes one has to do whatever is necessary to ensure the culture survives.

His position on the role of women around the drum was not relaxed over the past four years. When Jason first came to the St. John's Native Friendship Centre in 2004, he found that so-called "traditional" gender roles around the powwow drum were simultaneously followed and subverted. Females did not play the powwow drum, nor did

they sit at it; rather, they stood in a circle around the drummers, as would be expected. However, they also simultaneously embodied the unexpected by singing and even leading the songs (while playing hand drums). One of Jason's first actions when taking over the leadership of this drum group was to reorient gender roles so that they reflected those that he deemed to be traditional, a move that alienated many and caused a drop in membership. Over the past four years, he has largely maintained this structure. While I have moved from standing outside the circle to either sitting or standing in the circle, I still do not play the powwow drum (though, in practices, I may be called upon to lead a push-up). How these gender roles were played out on a regular basis is discussed in this chapter, along with the localization of repertoire, singing style, and the role of recording technology.

In this chapter, I begin with a general overview of the weekly practices, as well as the methods employed in learning repertoire and non-verbal means of communication, and how this changed through the three periods outlined above. I begin with our first experiences under the guidance of Jason Morrisseau, focussing on both song acquisition and vocal production with a view to comparing the uses of media in the Miawpukek case study. I then describe a time period during which the group became more reliant on recordings for new repertoire, began learning Mi'kmaw songs (such as the Snake Dance and Gathering Song), and made structural changes to the way in which they ran practices. A synthesis of the two ways of being a drum group forms the third phase of this study, which is marked by a great deal of negotiation, in song repertoire, each person's place in

the group, and the establishment of guidelines to carry the group into the future and assert some autonomy. During this time, the diversity of membership on occasion led to moments of unexpected sonic pairings, such as the combination of powwow drum and Inuit frame drum, which would not normally be heard together. The reaction to such an occurrence in the fall of 2006 demonstrates the ethos of the group, as well as a shift in leadership style upon Jason's return to the group.

Following this overview of the group, I then turn to discussion of the group's repertoire, identifying sources where possible, along with stylistic features. I will compare several key songs that have been staples of the group's repertoire since 2004 with a sample of the Mi'kmaw songs that were later introduced by Jerry Evans. As in the Miawpukek study, the diversity of style is notable. This comparison will demonstrate differences between Mi'kmaw songs, northern songs, and the one southern song that is part of the group's repertoire, as well as the way in which singing style is localized in this context. The sources for this repertoire range widely, with origins sometimes known (or traceable) and sometimes not. The role of media in relation to this group, both as a source for repertoire and as a means of fostering the group's development, is discussed. Finally, I will reflect on gender issues, drawing upon personal experiences as the sole female in the Friendship Centre Drum Group.

Over the past three years, the structure and membership of this First Nations drum



group at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre has been in a state of flux.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, this chapter presents a sometimes complicated and confusing story of an urban intertribal drum group and the way it changed over a three-year period. The group's story could be divided into three roughly one-year periods: year one (September 2004 – October 2005), a period under lead drummer Jason Morrisseau; year two (October 2005 – August 2006), a period with no lead drummer; and year three (September 2006 – July 2007), a period in which the dynamic of relationships shifted after Jason's return to the group. However, while this is one way of addressing shifts in composition, structure, and repertoire that occurred during the time I was a member of the group, it must be noted that the ever-changing nature of this group is much more fluid than such dates suggest.

Given the ever-changing nature of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, it has been necessary to define the point at which my research ends while the group itself continues. I have chosen 17 July 2007 to be that point, not arbitrarily. On the evening of July 17<sup>th</sup>, the current core members of the drum group (introduced in Chapter Six) met at the home of Jason Morrisseau to discuss issues of membership, outreach, disbursement of honoraria, and the relationship of the drum to the Centre). Following that meeting, at the request of the lead drummer, I drafted a letter intended to guide the drum group into the future. The letter was submitted to the St. John's Native Friendship Centre the following

---

<sup>1</sup> I have chosen to focus primarily on the core members of this group. While there were other transient members, my work does not focus on them largely because they were not present at the drum long enough for a research relationship (or any other kind of relationship) to develop.

evening in my absence. As it was hoped that this letter would be a turning point for the group, the start of a new chapter in its story, it also made an appropriate point to demarcate where my case study ends, though not the story of the group itself, nor my personal story as a continuing member of the group.

### *7.1 Learning to Sing, Learning to Sound: The Weekly Practice Sessions*

Since the drum group's beginnings many years ago, Wednesday night has been reserved by the Four Winds Youth Centre at the St. John's Native Friendship Centre as "Drumming and Dancing" night. At the time that I joined the group in September 2004, Jason Morrisseau, Steve George, Jerry Evans, and Stan Nochasak were members regularly attending practices, along with a few others who left the group a few months after Jason started as lead drummer. As has been discussed in Chapter Six, when Jason took over the drum group, he had what he now describes as very conservative ideas about the nature of the powwow tradition and how a drum group acts. In particular, he emphasized oral modes of learning repertoire and singing style, introduced guidelines for behaviour around the drum, such as not passing items over it, and ensured that things were done in what he perceived to be the right way (for example, that the smudge bowl was passed in a clockwise fashion around the drummers first, and then around the standing singers, followed by anyone else present). He reasserted a set of gender roles that are commonly seen in powwow, with the men drumming and leading the singing, and the women standing around them, singing as back-up. Some members' ideologies

came into conflict with his own and there were several people who left the drum (although, infrequently over the past three years they have attended practices). In addition to these teachings, Jason brought structure to the practice time by opening and closing practices in the same way each night.

Drum practice was scheduled at 6 pm on Wednesday nights for 2 hours in the fall of 2004; however, some nights when everyone was enjoying the practice and the singing was feeling good, it lasted longer than that. Other nights, it ended earlier. Once everyone was gathered around the drum, the men seated and any women present standing behind them in a circle, the practice would begin with smudging. Sage, sweetgrass, and/or tobacco would be placed in a shell and lit, and passed clockwise around the drum, then around the outer circle of singers and any dancers who were present. Jason would then choose a song and lead it, and drumming for the night would begin. At this time, Jason was largely responsible for choosing which songs would be sung and in what order, and there did not appear to be any specific pattern or criteria for the order. Instead, he might be in the mood for a 'good song,' which could indicate a fast song appropriate to Fancy Shawl dancing, or he might be in the mood for a 'pretty song,' which could indicate a Traditional<sup>2</sup> song (a wordless song, sometimes called a Straight song) or a Round Dance (or 49er). Sometimes Jason would ask the group for suggestions on what to sing and members responded often not with the name of a particular song, but by singing part of a

---

<sup>2</sup> As Burton (1993) has noted, traditional is not necessarily used "in the sense of 'ancient'" (43). Rather, it is indicative of the fact that multiple versions of the songs, and the stories of their origins, exist.



song – usually a phrase of the second half of a powwow song, rather than the lead, because members at this time often could not remember how songs started. After about an hour of singing, the group would then sing a 49er before taking a short break, and then resume singing for another hour. As the practice came to a close, again 49ers would be sung, challenging the drummers with their strong-weak uneven drumming pattern (↓ ↗ ↓ ↗) and eliciting laughter at the sometimes irreverent English lyrics. Often the group would smudge again to close the practice and, before leaving, sing the Prayer Song from Eastern Eagle's CD *Good Medicine* (2004).

It was rare to sing any song more than once each night and usually only four push-ups were sung of each song, regardless of how many men were seated around the drum on a given night.<sup>3</sup> This use of four push-ups per song is an influence of contest or competition powwow dancing, in which four push-ups is the standard. Sometimes Jason would invite others to lead a push-up; however, usually only two or three members were willing to do so, the others being shy or insecure about their singing. While responsibility for leading songs was largely Jason's, other members of the group had their own roles to play, not the least of which was singing as part of the group. For example, when the drum sticks began to show signs of wear, Jerry Evans made new ones.<sup>4</sup> The base for these drum

---

<sup>3</sup> This contrasts with the number of push-ups sung by drummers at the school in Miawpukek, who often sing one push-up for each person present. This is an instructional aid to ensure that everyone learns to sing the lead of each song. See Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup> While drum sticks are available for purchase online and the group had funds available with which to purchase them, this option was never discussed. Rather, Jerry took the initiative to make these on his own.

sticks, which had rawhide beaters and handles, and were decorated with coloured electrical tape, was a bicycle 'whip' – a strong and rigid (though slightly flexible) plastic rod often mounted on children's bikes with a flag attached to it.<sup>5</sup> Through trial and error, Jerry discovered the length that worked best. When Pat Donnelly joined the group, he was responsible for constructing a stand for the drum, which was painted in the colours of the four directions (white, yellow, red, and black). Prior to having this stand, the drummers balanced the drum on their feet to improve resonance. Thus, while not everyone sang the lead of songs, they contributed in many ways to the drum group, both through making items necessary for performance and vocally by singing as part of the group.

During the time that Jason was lead drummer for this group, songs were only learned aurally. He was adamant that this was the appropriate way to learn songs, even though it was a struggle for most of the group to remember the songs, and pronounce their texts correctly in Mi'kmaq, Cree, or other languages.<sup>6</sup> Jason continued this method of instruction – singing songs and waiting for members to pick them up by ear and join in – and, gradually, the group became more accustomed to this way of learning. His teaching style was not overt; he did not explain the hand signals used while we were singing, and he rarely broke songs down into smaller parts so that the group could learn

---

<sup>5</sup> This is sometimes used as a safety feature because the flag (often red) extends up to be visible to traffic.

<sup>6</sup> For songs using only vocables, this was less of a concern. However, sometimes it was difficult for some to achieve the appropriate sound and accents for vocables.

them more easily. Rather, through repeated observation of Jason's movements, the group learned his mode of communication, which non-verbally tells the group who will sing the next push-up, when to change the drumming intensity, when someone other than the lead will play the accented 'honour beats,' and when to end the song. Powers (1990) classifies these non-verbal signals as "gestural-visual codes" which communicate information for vocal and instrumental production in a performance context (47). They are an important language for all members of a drum group to master, for effective communication will ensure the 'tightness' of the group when singing together, staying 'on beat,' and ending the song in unison.

Two of these signals used by this group are worth noting, particularly because they relate to the tessitura at which a song is sung. Often when singing northern songs, Jason would bring the pitch up "a notch" on the final push-up (usually the equivalent of one tone). He enjoyed doing this, largely, I believe, because it posed a challenge to members of the group who already thought they were singing high. However, it is also common practice to do this when singing at powwows, as one way of increasing the intensity of a song. Jason, with a smile on his face, would indicate that he planned to do this on the next push-up by positioning his thumb and first finger an inch or so apart, as if he were showing 'just a little bit higher' (or taller). In response to this 'bring it up a notch' gesture by Jason, Jerry would pretend to take out an inhaler, shake it, and inhale deeply to open his lungs so that he could get the air to hit the high notes, a mime gesture that regularly elicited chuckles and laughter. After singing a high song, Jerry often would



break open his can of Fresca<sup>7</sup> (which I was certain didn't exist past my childhood in the 1980s) and attempt to recover, noting that the high songs "kill [his] throat." This, as well, was the subject of ribbing on many nights, as we questioned where he was getting his Fresca (as if it were some illegal substance). For Jerry and others in the group, the tessitura of northern style songs made them challenging to sing.

In much the same way that Jason did not explicitly teach the group how to use hand signals, he did not instruct the group on vocal production. Members of the group attempted to imitate his vocal style, sometimes trying manually to manipulate the larynx as he did occasionally, even though they might not have understood how or when to do this, or what such manipulation achieved. Occasionally during some songs, Jason would grasp his larynx between his thumb and middle finger, applying gentle pressure in a downward motion. The result of depressing the larynx in this manner is a louder, forced sound that helps to achieve the desired vocal timbre of powwow singing style. Larynx manipulation is also key in achieving the somewhat harsh 'bursts' of sound often heard in powwow singing, which provide emphasis or accent in the course of singing a song. However, the members of the drum group for whom powwow was a new style of music and vocal production (which is to say everyone but Jason) did not have an understanding that such manipulation was used only periodically for emphasis. Consequently, there were several nights where I observed one young man pressing in directly (rather than downward) on his larynx, trying to imitate Jason. By the end of each practice, his voice

---

<sup>7</sup> Fresca is a citrus-based (grapefruit), carbonated beverage made by Coca-Cola.

was hoarse and he could barely speak.

As a singer, a mezzo-soprano who has experienced vocal distress and (non-permanent) damage and one who was trained in a western method at the undergraduate level, I had concerns over what I was observing. Periodically when my advice was requested, I made suggestions appropriate to and emanating from my own training as a singer, fully acknowledging that I employed a very different singing style and method than Jason was teaching. At one point, I was even asked to create a handout on vocal health, as one of the youth workers became concerned about the young boys damaging their young voices. I obliged, but emphasized that they had a decidedly western ideology behind them, and I am of the belief that the definition of vocal hygiene and health is culture-specific.<sup>8</sup> Whether this handout was ever copied and distributed, I am uncertain; however, I never saw it at the Centre after submitting it to the youth worker who had requested it.

One of the challenges for vocal production in this group was the fact that, while Jason was an accomplished and impressive singer, he could not explain how he was producing the sounds that he did. On several occasions when he produced particularly interesting 'bursts' during a song, I would ask him how he made that sound – partly because I wanted to learn to reproduce it myself, but partly because I suspected that others could use some instruction as well, but were too shy to ask the question. As an outsider to the culture, a white woman who, from the very beginning, identified herself as

---

<sup>8</sup> A brief discussion on this topic by soprano Dr. Jane Leibel is found in Diamond (2008, 30).

having an academic interest in First Nations music, I believe I had more freedom to pose questions of our lead drummer. Jason often responded by demonstrating how he created a particular sound, but was unable to verbalize the technique. Often he would say that you just keep trying it until one day you will get it and be able to do it. He also explained that he has been singing this style of music since he was a young child and so it has become second nature to him. For example, on one particular occasion (6 September 2006), I asked Jason how he produces the heavy vocal pulsation he uses to ornament held notes. Jason refers to this pulsation as “twirling” and it sounds very much like a Baroque *trillo*<sup>9</sup> without the acceleration. While I expect that he was employing glottal stops to produce the breaks in sound, he could not verbalize how he did it.

Of course, in some Western schools of thought on vocal production, it is believed that excessive, prolonged pressure on the larynx through a depressed larynx (which can be achieved through muscle control and need not be done manually) will be detrimental and damage the vocal folds. And, indeed, my early efforts at singing powwow style found me in an ear, nose, and throat specialist’s office requiring a videolaryngostroboscopy to investigate the hoarseness I myself was experiencing. Perhaps it was caused by singing as loud as possible for two hours – with so few people singing full voice, I often felt the need to give 200% while singing, but also I felt I had to sing loudly to be heard over the powwow drum and men’s voices as the only female

---

<sup>9</sup> While a trill now often refers to a movement between two notes a semi-tone apart, the Baroque *trillo* was a particular type of ornamentation in which the singer reiterated the main note, often in an accelerated fashion.



remaining in the group. While one voice instructor recommended that I stop singing with the group altogether because I must be damaging my voice, I accepted the hoarseness as a hazard of the fieldwork I had decided to pursue, and continued on. Two years later, the hoarseness has disappeared and two hours of singing with the group has little effect on my voice. This demonstrates, perhaps, that vocal health is a matter of conditioning.

In learning to sing with this group, I found vocal production to be particularly difficult, as I was often the only female present and did not have a mentor who modelled the vocal sound I should be producing. For the first few months, standing outside the circle of seated drummers and usually positioned so that I could observe Jason's vocal production, I chose to sing songs mostly at pitch with the men, jumping up the octave only at the end of phrases when the pitches were too low and out of my range. On songs where this was obvious, Jason often commented that he liked the way it sounded and after about five months, he attempted to instruct me on appropriate female vocal production for powwow songs. He wanted to have a more prominent female sound in the group. While he was unable to model the sound for me, he suggested a more nasal sound, the removal of vibrato, and singing "an octave or two" above the men. However, he did not limit this to only the second half of the song as is normally the case in northern style (see Browner 2002, 73). Jason also recommended that I listen to recordings in which women sing with the men and attempt to imitate their sound. I have had varying degrees

of success in this, depending on the song and where it sits in relation to my *passagio*.<sup>10</sup> Where songs sit at a tessitura that exploits my *passagio*, I am better able to achieve the desired vocal timbre.<sup>11</sup>

With Jason as our lead drummer, this group was particularly prolific in terms of live performances. We were invited to a wide variety of events, including the 2005 Folk Festival and the opening of The Rooms. These were two very prestigious events to which the group was honoured to be invited; however, there were also a variety of events of less visibility at which we performed. During this time period, not unlike the Sipu'ji'j Drummers in Miawpukek, we were able to choose the events at which we performed. After a year of singing together, talk began of travelling with the drum to the powwow in Miawpukek, learning new repertoire, and doing more with the group. However, by the fall of 2005, Jason had left the group (permanently, it was believed at the time) and the remaining members continued in his absence.

## 7.2 *"There shouldn't be a leader. We should share this thing." – Restructuring the Drum Group*

The weeks following Jason's hiatus from the drum group were challenging ones. The core group had been reduced to four members: Jerry Evans, Steve George, Stan Nochasak, and myself. Pat Donnelly became a regularly-attending member a few months

---

<sup>10</sup> The *passagio* or 'break' is a transition area between vocal registers (for example, between chest voice and head voice).

<sup>11</sup> I perceive some irony here, given that I spent many years of training trying to bridge this break.

later. Having never had the responsibility for remembering and starting songs, members of the group would sit for extended periods of time trying to think of something to sing. When suggestions, such as the Thunderbird Song or White Wolf were made, initially there was questioning: "How's that one go, again?" Then someone in the group (usually me), would sing the second half of the song in an effort to remember the start of the push-up. Having remembered the tune, the group would begin and sing through the song.<sup>12</sup>

There was also a reliance on recordings in Jason's absence, both to remember previously learned repertoire and to learn new songs. On several occasions during the first year that I was with the drum group, Jason asked me to bring my mini disc recorder and microphone to practice and record the group. I would then burn a CD of the songs, copies would be made, and they were distributed to the group. In part, they were to track the progress of the group. They also allowed Jason to listen to the group objectively and identify which songs were sounding good and which needed more work. However, they also served as practice CDs – CDs of our group singing our repertoire to which members could sing along outside of practices and become more familiar with the songs. After Jason's departure, these recordings proved significant for the continuation of the drum group. Where memory failed, members of the group could play a CD to remind them of how a particular song went, as well as the placement of honour beats. A push-up or two would be played and drummers might lightly tap the edge of the drum in time with the

---

<sup>12</sup> I recall on one night with particularly poor attendance that after remembering how to start a song, the men present could not remember the placement of the honour beats. On that night, I "played" the drum pattern by slapping my thigh, nearly giving myself bruises as I emphasized the honour beats.



recording, quietly singing along to get the song in their heads. Then, they would turn off the recording and the group would sing through the entire song on its own.

The group's first performances after Jason left were equally challenging. Members worried about remembering the words for songs such as the Mi'kmaw Gathering Song, and in one instance, had copies of the lyrics in 10-point font on tiny pieces of paper just in case they were needed. At another performance, the Multicultural Fair: Celebration of Diversity held on 11 December 2005 at The Rooms, we felt the pressure and inexperience of singing without a lead drummer, though it is unlikely that anyone in attendance who heard and saw the performance realized what had happened. Jerry led the first song – a Men's Chicken Dance. However, when the group picked it up and began singing, a few members were singing a southern song instead of the Chicken Dance, and the group continued with a southern style song until the end. Subsequent songs in this performance were sung without any difficulty or problem. Nevertheless, this experience was an embarrassing one for members and made them more wary of performing. However, the group also realized that there was no one in attendance who even would have recognized the error, and it soon became an inside joke – a source of laughter as the group continued to improve and learn new songs.

During this time period, commercial CDs provided access to new repertoire. One of the first songs the group learned 'on its own,' was the Men's Chicken Dance cited above (on *Chicken Dance Songs* [2003]). While getting the drum beat and melody down was relatively easy, it took longer to get the right vocables. After a trip to Ontario, Jerry

returned with a CD by Black Lodge Singers – *More Kids' Pow-Wow Songs* (2005). Very quickly, the group learned “Sponge Bob Square Pants,” a song that makes use of a familiar military cadence in call-and-response form and combines vocables and English text. This call-and-response form actually makes the song similar in structure to many traditional Mi'kmaw songs. We also learned the song “Brother Bear” from this recording, which has a more typical powwow song structure. The group learned these children's songs in anticipation of singing at the mini-powwow in Miawpukek in May 2006 after having been invited in January. However, this gig later fell through, much to the disappointment of members.

During this period of restructuring the group, there was a general consensus that each member of the group needed to take responsibility for learning all of the songs, how to lead them, and how to play the honour beats, so that they would not be reliant on one individual. Jerry in particular felt very strongly about this, saying, “There shouldn't be a leader. We should share in this” (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). Jerry chose to see the upheaval of not having a strong singer on which one could rely as an opportunity for improvement and development: “The good thing about not having [a lead drummer] is we had to learn to rely on ourselves to take the lead, literally take the lead, and learn to drum ourselves” (*ibid.*).

At this time, the group asserted that it did not have a lead drummer – no one was given that title. Rather, there was an effort to maintain an egalitarian drum in which responsibility was shared, including the care of the drum. However, whether intended or

not, Jerry slowly emerged as the leader of the group, often leading the songs and signalling when they would end. Our reluctant leader, he passed the lead to those seated around the drum, so that everyone had an opportunity to sing the lead if they so desired. When Jerry felt it was time to end a song, usually after four push-ups, he would often look to other members for confirmation before giving the signal. Pat, who joined the group shortly before Jason left but did not become a regular member until early 2006, commented on the openness of the group under Jerry's leadership: "Jerry tends to pass the leads out more. [. . .] Jerry gets everybody involved around the drum" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006). Pat went on to note that when he was given the opportunity to sing leads and had a mental block and could not remember how to begin the push-up, Jerry would begin it and then let Pat take over. There were also cases where the lead was sung as a duet so that members could become more comfortable with singing, without being put on the spot to sing solo.

For Jerry, the actual performance of a song became the easy part of drumming with this group, as the group became more confident in their abilities. Over time, he became more comfortable keeping track of how many push-ups the group had sung, passing the lead around the circle, and indicating when to end. But he also admits that pressure is still present and can affect performances: "Some [songs are] similar, too. And then you get pressured to do [one song] and, you know, you want to do one song and you end up doing another 'cause the leads are so similar. That's happened a couple times" (Evans, personal communication, June 28, 2006). Jerry also had concerns about the



group's general lack of knowledge regarding the songs that they sing and their meanings. He wanted the group to be able to answer questions on songs, should they ever be asked after a performance. This, for him, was a greater challenge than actually singing the songs.

The physical layout of members during practice also shifted during this time period. Where I once stood outside the circle of drummers, I began sitting within the circle (though still not playing the drum) during practices.<sup>13</sup> This was a slow process. I began sitting in a chair that was slightly out of line with the rest of the drummers, but slowly over time space was made between the other chairs for my chair to be in line with the men's. While practices became more informal in this way, some elements of the structure of prior practices remained, such as beginning with a smudge. However, the group no longer ended each practice with the Prayer Song. The ritual of the practice, the structure of fixed and unfixed components that together make up 'the practice' and delineate it from other daily activities, changed as the membership of the group and its structure changed.

The practice of smudging itself in this context demonstrates the type of negotiation that may occur in the process of cultural (re)vitalization. Medicine, whether sage or sweetgrass, is not provided for the drum group by the Friendship Centre's administration, even though during Jason's time there he insisted that they needed to make it available for practices, as well as other events. Jason's preference was for a

---

<sup>13</sup> In performances, I stood, often facing Jerry so that we could communicate.

particular type of sage found in Ontario and Saskatchewan, but this was hard to come by unless someone we knew was visiting there and could bring some back with them.

During our first year, when there was no medicine left, Jerry and Steve began bringing their own bundles and offering them for use among the group. In the spring, I mentioned the situation to Paul Pike and he suggested that he bring some white sage with him when he visited from Alaska. He brought the sage to me and I thanked him with tobacco, then gave the sage to the Centre. Jason commented that it was very fragrant and potent. When this supply ran out, we again turned to medicine provided by individuals.

Once Pat began frequenting practices, the group had a steady supply of sweetgrass. He would regularly bring small braids to practice with him and give them to singers and dancers, as well as staff and youth who were present at the Centre. He grows sweetgrass in a pot in his garden, having received special permission to import the plant. Sources for sage require ingenuity as well. White sage is not available in St. John's, so Steve makes use of garden-variety sage. While we were at Bennington Gate one day in April 2006, a book store that also sells a wide variety of items related to new age spirituality, we began discussing sage after seeing a bundle in one of the displays. Steve explained that before he got a plant and was growing his own sage, he would purchase fresh sage at the grocery store and dry it. He felt that if it was good enough to eat, it should be good enough to use as medicine. Jason often teased Steve about this source for sage because it was not what he considered to be 'the traditional way.' However, for Steve, and others like him, it was a matter of making do with what is available in a

particular place and time when one cannot access other sources.

The direction in which smudging occurred during this time period was also changeable. Jason always passed the smudge clock-wise around the drummers; however, Steve on occasion chose to pass it counter-clockwise, saying, "Tonight, we'll do it Iroquois style." On another occasion, Stan passed the smudge outside the circle to me first and then it went around the drum. This does not indicate any disrespect for the tradition; rather, it indicates an openness to other ways of doing and interacting. Community began to be defined differently from Miawpukek. There intertribal traditions were localized and maintained as Mi'kmaq. Here, respect for diverse membership led to rotating inter-local practices.

During the group's year without a lead singer, we sang infrequently at events around St. John's. In April the group itself organized an impromptu gathering at Harbourside Park in solidarity with Six Nations as the land dispute in Caledonia<sup>14</sup> was heating up. On Friday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, Jerry and Steve contacted me to let me know that we would gather on Sunday morning to sing a few songs. They sent an announcement to friends and family via email, inviting them to join us. After meeting at 10am at the Centre to get the drum and sing through a few warm-ups, we proceeded to Harbourside Park. The rain stopped just as we began smudging with a small group of five people gathered around us. Steve said a few words – that we were sending our thoughts and

---

<sup>14</sup> In early 2006, some members of Six Nations occupied a construction site on their lands to protest a housing development. See: <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/caledonia-landclaim/>, accessed 13 March 2008.



prayers to Six Nations for a peaceful resolution. Then we sang White Wolf, a Cree intertribal, the Thunderbird Song, and a Men's Chicken Dance (Steve's favourite 'good-feeling' song).

One of the few performance engagements requested by an outside organization during this time of re-adjustment was for an HIV/AIDS forum held at the medical school. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, Jerry, Steve, and I gathered at the entrance to the medical school and carried in the drum, stand, and sticks. We met Stan, Pat, and Mike (a student who attended practices infrequently during the spring of 2006), inside and prepared to sing. Initially it was suggested that we sing the Flag Song as a way to open the event, but then we decided against it because we too rarely sing it (and discussion ensued that we should remedy that situation). So, we agreed on an old standard and after an introduction by one of the organizers of the forum, we began singing. It seems, however, that we were meant to sing the Flag Song that day and that we had no reason to doubt our abilities. When Jerry began singing the lead, it was that of the Flag Song and we all joined in, singing it with great intensity, particularly on the second half of the last push-up when it is sung *a cappella*.

The organizers then thanked us for opening their forum, saying that it was an inspiration and that it was important to have something in which they could see beauty and success, rather than negativity. Jerry on our behalf thanked them for the invitation to sing for them, saying it was a great honour. He wished them luck in what they were doing throughout the weekend conference. Then, from one of the tables, a young man said he

knew it was not part of Native culture to clap as appreciation, so he would like to verbalize it instead. As a group, however, we see clapping as a perfectly acceptable expression of appreciation and Jerry said it was perfectly alright to do so. The setting was incredibly relaxed and informal, so Jerry asked if they wanted to hear one more song. With a positive response, we sang again and were invited to stay and participate in the sessions if we wanted. However, we wanted to make the most of a Saturday morning together and went to a coffee shop to enjoy each others' company away from the drum.

During this phase of the group's existence, then, the structure<sup>15</sup> of practices that had been established by Jason was put aside, though practices normally did begin with a smudge. I expect that this structure changed for one practical reason: the group was struggling so much to recall songs that singing any song at any time was a great accomplishment. Also, particular segments of the repertoire, such as the Prayer Song and some 49ers, were more difficult to recall than some of the other traditional and contemporary songs. The physical layout of the group changed as well, with me moving to a place among the circle of drummers (though I did not drum). In this second phase, all of the male members took turns singing the leads of songs, in contrast to the first phase when leads were almost always sung by Jason. The means of learning new repertoire (and remembering old repertoire) shifted from primarily oral, to an oral method that incorporated recordings as a didactic tool. Finally, the group performed at far fewer

---

<sup>15</sup> Opening smudge - traditional and contemporary songs - 49ers - break - traditional and contemporary songs - 49ers - closing smudge - Prayer Song to close.

events in this phase than previously.

### 7.3 *Autumn in St. John's: A Time of Renewal and The Return of the Lead Drummer*

Perhaps the fact that several members of this group, myself included, were students at the time of my research contributes to the feeling that September appears to be a more appropriate time for new beginnings than, say, January or the spring. Or maybe it is because the Friendship Centre serves many youth, who will return to school in September after summer holidays. Whatever the reason, early fall has been a time of renewal for this group – a time most common for new members to join and when current members renew their commitments to the group. The fall of 2006 was no different. In September, Jerry advised us that Jason planned to return to the Friendship Centre Drum Group and, after a meeting to discuss our future attended by the core members and Jason, we embarked upon the third phase of our life as a drum group.

After a year of growing on our own, we were able to introduce new songs, such as the Men's Chicken Dance, to Jason. Having realized that we made it on our own for a year in his absence, Jason approached his role as lead drummer in a new way. While he still sang a combination of old and new repertoire, he was now more cognizant of passing the lead to others who gave it their best shot. On the night of 20 September 2006, when teaching us a new Round Dance, Jason broke the song down into segments to teach us the language. He also explained to us that this particular Round Dance could be sung



straight<sup>16</sup> or with words. Jason was also more open to the suggestions of members. For example, on this night, at the end of practice, Jason wanted to end with a new song. Steve, however, asked if we could sing something he knew, because he finds it difficult to pick up new songs. The group agreed that we would sing *White Wolf*, and Jason invited Steve to lead the song. On no other night did Steve sing as strongly or passionately as he did that night, and Jason let him take the lead on every push-up. Afterwards, Jason said, "You brought it. That's why I let you go," as he tapped his chest to indicate that Steve's singing was coming from the heart. Steve's progress as a singer was highlighted that night, given the opportunity, the right song, and the right feeling.

This story is nuanced by another comment Jason made to me following a performance on 23 January 2008 for the grand opening of the Research Centre for Music, Media and Place at Memorial University. Sitting in my car after the performance, he said, "You were singing hard tonight. It was good. You sounded good." This tells much about the set of aesthetics that are appreciated by Jason. There is a value for "singing hard" or 'from the heart' that is placed above the actual sound that is produced.<sup>17</sup> Sounding good is not necessarily about technical accuracy or ability to emulate a particular singing style; rather, it is about the energy and effort that one puts in while singing. Interestingly enough, this is perhaps the one aspect of powwow singing that cannot be taught and

---

<sup>16</sup> Here singing "straight" means singing with vocables rather than text.

<sup>17</sup> Scales (2007, 17-18) has similarly noted the aesthetic preference for power when singing northern style songs, as well as "high" and "clear" singing.

when it happens, it means much more than being able to hit a high note or getting the words right.

During this third phase, the group performed in public less frequently than before and did not receive performance requests as often as it had in its first year. Regardless of the fact that we had not been invited to participate in the official ceremonies to mark Remembrance Day (November 11<sup>th</sup>) at the war memorial in downtown St. John's, Jason felt that it was an important thing for us to do. He preferred to do this in a visible way and wondered if the group could somehow become a last minute addition to the ceremonies. Given that this event is planned long in advance, we pointed out to Jason that if we wanted to mark the day in a special way, we would have to do it ourselves. The group agreed to meet at Harbourside Park, across from the war memorial, at 1 pm when the official ceremony would be over. We would bring the drum and sing a few songs on our own.

I arrived at the park on time and waited about a half hour until Jerry, Steve, and Jason arrived with the drum. There had been a delay at the Centre because the drum had been locked away in an office and Jerry had to call someone to come to the Centre and unlock the door. At this time, a worker at the Centre informed him that we were not permitted to go to Harbourside Park because we would be breaking a city by-law by doing so – he was told a permit is required to 'hold an event' there. Jerry was concerned when he arrived and we discussed it. Given that we were not representing anyone other than ourselves (not officially there as the St. John's Native Friendship Centre) and we

had not announced it as an event or advertised it in any way, we decided that we were well within our rights to set up the drum and sing a few songs in a city park. We also figured it was highly unlikely that someone would oppose our honouring of veterans on Remembrance Day.

Jerry, Steve, Stan, and Jason set up the drum and some chairs and we began by smudging. Then we sang five songs, including a Veterans' Song and White Wolf. While it was a solemn occasion, we also sang a 49er because it is a song that "feels good." A few people who were passing by or still remaining at the war memorial did notice us and a small group of perhaps ten people gathered around and listened to our singing before strolling away again. However, for the most part, it was a quiet and low-key gathering that allowed us to honour veterans in a culturally-appropriate way. At the end, after talking and laughing, we all went our separate ways.

At this event, though we had a small audience, we never introduced or made comments about the musical selections performed, nor did we engage in that sort of presentation style at any other events at which we performed. Consequently, members did not engage in stage talk of any kind. Thus, this presentation style is quite unlike that fostered by Brenda Jeddore in Se't A'newey School, where each song is introduced in cultural presentations, and parallels cannot be drawn between the two case studies.

The year progressed with few singing engagements until the summer, when the group was asked to sing at a Parks Canada event in Bannerman Park. A plaque telling the story of the last known Beothuk, Shanawdithit, was unveiled on the afternoon of July



12<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Our group was asked to sing for 15 minutes before the ceremony began and to also sing one song between the speeches. Also present for this event was the Mi'kmaw choir from Miawpukek under the direction of Brenda Jeddore. They opened the ceremony with O Canada and the Mi'kmaw Honour Song, and later sang before the ceremony concluded. We sang a variety of northern powwow songs as a prelude to the event. We had wanted to learn a Women's Traditional song to honour Shanawdithit during the ceremony, but we did not feel confident enough to sing it because of its newness. Until Jason sang the lead, we had no idea what his selection would be to honour Shanawdithit. He chose the Prayer Song, which all agreed was the most appropriate song he could have chosen, given that this memorial should be a time of remembrance and of healing, as noted by Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe in his speech.

It was the disbursement of the honorarium for this event that led to a group meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> of July, when the drum reinvented itself yet again. The group has always struggled with how best to distribute honoraria. For several years, singers and dancers present at an event would be given an honorarium of \$10-25 dollars where possible and the remainder of the money was put in a special account for the drummers to use to purchase regalia or a new drum, or to hold workshops. Some members felt this was appropriate, while others would have preferred to have the money distributed to each member (which Jason said was the traditional way that drum groups work on the powwow circuit). When there was a change of director at the Centre, the group was asked to distribute its money or spend it, to tie up any loose ends for accounting purposes. As a

group, the compromise was to purchase hand drums for each member. When this fell through, however, the debate was reignited and the money was divided as deemed appropriate. This was a difficult task, since there were no records kept as to who had participated at particular events for which honoraria were received. Through a combination of memory, negotiation, and good will, a means of distributing the past honoraria was determined.

At this meeting, the group also discussed various related topics, such as future disbursement of honoraria, the group's name, rules for participation and membership, and performance guidelines. The details for a document were compiled and I was entrusted with the task of creating it, as mentioned at the outset of the chapter. The following excerpt identifies some of the key issues described at that meeting:

*Disbursement of Future Funds* - All future honoraria received by the Friendship Centre Drum Group will be divided equally among members present at the engagement for which the honoraria were earned and disbursed by the Friendship Centre to these members within 2 weeks of the performance date.

*Eligibility to Participate in Performances and Receive Honoraria* - To be eligible to participate in performances contracted by organizations other than the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, a member must demonstrate commitment to the group through consistent attendance at Wednesday night practices and additional pre-performance rehearsals as may be necessary. Members must be actively engaged in singing and drumming and have knowledge of the songs to be performed.

*Participation in Wednesday Night Jam Sessions* - Wednesday night jam sessions remain open to all Aboriginal people and the general public. To increase participation, we request that the St. John's Native Friendship Centre issue an invitation to join the group via their newsletter or other appropriate mailing to the Centre's membership.

*Performances at Events Organized by the St. John's Native Friendship Centre -* At events organized by the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, such as National Aboriginal Day, the Drum Group will perform and waive any honoraria that would normally be paid for such engagements. It will be understood by the St. John's Native Friendship Centre and the Drum Group that honoraria for such events will be waived in acknowledgement of the support of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre (for example, providing space for Wednesday night practices).

*Performances Contracted by Organizations Other than the St. John's Native Friendship Centre -* For performances contracted by organizations other than the St. John's Native Friendship Centre, the Drum Group will be notified of a performance request as soon as the information is available and not less than two weeks prior to the event. Members are to be contacted with the details via email or in paper copy and a decision as to whether to accept the contract for performance will be made within one week. Honoraria will be disbursed equally among members present for the engagement and disbursed by the Friendship Centre to these members within 2 weeks of the performance date. See above.

*Participation of Dancers -* As the dancers have not performed with the Drum Group at engagements contracted by organizations other than the St. John's Native Friendship Centre in the past two years and are not in regular attendance at Wednesday night practices, we propose that they act as a separate entity from the Drum Group, complete with their own account, honoraria, and means of disbursement.

*Name of Drum Group -* Pursuant to the above, the Drum Group in all future references in literature about the Friendship Centre, performances, correspondence, et cetera will be identified as the Friendship Centre Drum Group.

In the meeting at which Jason presented this document, it was accepted and set forth the path for the future of the Friendship Centre Drum Group.

#### 7.4 *Dealing with Sonic Diversity: "Just don't mess with our beat."*

In the fall of 2006, the St. John's Native Friendship Centre in collaboration with The Rooms provided funding for the establishment of an Inuit drum group. Specialists



were brought in from Labrador to conduct workshops and teach drum-making.

Consequently, on the night of 22 November 2006, when the First Nations drum group met for its regular practice time, Stan Nochasak and one of his Inuit friends joining us for practice that week were also quite preoccupied with their new Inuit drums, which they were still learning to play. After singing several songs seated at the powwow drum, a visitor arrived and Stan and his friend demonstrated their new drums on one side of the room while the First Nations group sang a Flag Song on the other side. Once the visitor had left, they returned to the powwow drum and practice continued as usual, with one minor exception: Stan's friend decided at one point to leave the big drum and play along on his frame drum.

Initially, there was little reaction to this decision. He was beating a straight rhythm in time with the powwow drum and, while the timbre was quite unlike that of the powwow drum, it was not disruptive. Then, as he got more comfortable with the frame drum, he began moving it back and forth, hitting alternating sides of the frame still in time. However, when Jason decided to lead a Round Dance and this man decided he would play along on the frame drum, Jason's disbelief was apparent: "You're gonna play that?" The man responded, "Yeah." After a moment of thought, Jason told him, "Ok. Just don't mess with our beat." As we sang the Round Dance, the man struggled to flip the drum fast enough to play a dotted rhythm, finally deciding to just beat the rhythm on one section of the frame. Afterwards, he returned to his seat at the big drum.

This example of sonic diversity within a drum group practice is an extreme one

and, indeed, the only one of this magnitude. However, it demonstrates a diversity that is nurtured within this drum group. Further, the fact that this spontaneous 'collaboration' occurred at all is indicative of the ethos of the group to bring their diverse backgrounds to the drum and share them through music-making. Most importantly, this incident demonstrates Jason's shift to a more liberal understanding of the drum in the context of a Friendship Centre, particularly in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. The conservative lead drummer I met in September 2004 had very definite ideas about what First Nations' powwow music should be, how traditional songs should be sung, and what sounded good in relation to those musical styles. I do not think I am incorrect in suggesting that Jason would not have been as tolerant of such musical experimentation during a practice in 2004. However, having lived in the Newfoundland context for a few years and having come to understand the struggles faced by Mi'kmaq in the effort to regain their culture,<sup>18</sup> Jason's conservative views shifted to more liberal ones:

A lot of people felt that I was too conservative in the way that I approached [leading the drum group], which I was, at that point in my life. [. . .] I'm more liberal [now] about culture. The best way that I can explain it is it's analogous to traditional Catholics and liberal Catholics. You know, how traditional Catholics are very firm and very stoic in their position on religion, whereas more liberal Catholics are [. . .] more liberal in regards to letting things pass that wouldn't have passed before. You know, like handing out the Eucharist back in the old mass had to be done

---

<sup>18</sup> In January 2006, I sent Jason a draft of an article about the drum group that I would be publishing in a special issue on music in *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*. Shortly thereafter, Jason posted the following note to the Young Thunderbirds group on MSN: "I would like to congratulate you janice for your paper on the challenges of first nations music in newfoundland, you wrote the paper with finesse and honesty! I thought that it was excellent so congrats to you, Bless all the drummers and singers you guys have made me very proud [. . .] the spirit of community resides in you all and i am very proud of you all!!" (28 January 2006).

by the priest because the priest's hands were blessed. Right? Whereas now, anybody can do it. And that's what I mean. Like there's some people, even back home, especially the older generation, which I was taught by my grandfather and he has a very conservative outlook on tradition, whereas I think that because time's a-changing, you kind of [. . .] got to make some sort of compromise. You know, because it's not like we're living back on the Prairies and moving tipis. You know, it's not like the Windigos are in the forest, you know – I've never seen one. But the important thing is keeping the culture alive. But I don't think that it has to be so rigid as it was before. (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007)

Jason elaborated by saying that he was more open to the presence of female drum groups on the powwow circuit and of children around the drum (since before, he felt only those old enough to understand the teachings should be present). He explained, "There is a seriousness to that culture, but it shouldn't all be serious. You know, it should kinda be fun too and it should be for everybody. So that's kinda how I've changed" (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007). He has no less respect for his culture; rather, he understands that compromise may be necessary to share it with people who have not had the opportunity to experience it elsewhere in life. Further, by virtue of being a Friendship Centre Drum, Jason recognizes that the group must uphold the values of the Centre and be open to all those who come to it and embrace this diversity (Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007).

While Steve George has observed that the strength of the St. John's group is its diversity, he has also noted that this diversity means that the group must, by definition, be different from other drum groups:

We're different as a drum group because we're urbans, because Jerry and I



are mixed-bloods and Stan is an Inuk. We don't belong to a mono-culture, or understand the group to belong to a single culture, not that any group can accurately claim to be a culture in itself without external influences. (E-mail to the author, January 11, 2006)

Steve thinks the group may decide in the future to pursue other styles of music or add other instrumentation, such as hand drums or rattles. The group's repertoire may change and expand based on recordings, and, as he eloquently stated, a change in repertoire may be based on "our own interests, likes, dislikes, and how we each grow as people who understand what we can from the wider cultures around us and beyond us" (*ibid.*). While this drum group has diverse repertoire and membership, and is open to new experiences and musics, its place in Mi'kmaw cultural revitalization is an important one as it provides a space where Mi'kmaq in the St. John's area can actively engage in cultural pursuits.

#### 7.5 *Craig Miller First Nation: Repertoire, Recording Technology, and 'Compact Disc Culture'*

With the introduction of a lead drummer of Anishnabe and Cree heritage in 2004, it is not surprising that the group's repertoire shifted away from predominantly Mi'kmaw songs taught by Victor Muise towards a more varied selection that might be termed intertribal powwow repertoire. Drawing on his own traditions and experiences singing at powwows in central Canada, Jason taught the group a Flag Song (Black Lodge), a Veterans' Song (of unknown origins), a healing song known as White Wolf (Anishnabe), and a Cree intertribal, among others. He also taught a few northern style Mi'kmaw songs that are sung by Eastern Eagle Singers and are featured on their CD *Sacred Flight* (2002),

such as their contemporary Honour Song and the song Dry Run, which Jason referred to as a sobriety song. He also taught the group a Thunderbird Song because he had initially named the group Young Thunderbird Singers (see discussion in Chapter Six).<sup>19</sup> He referred to this song as our drum song, which is sung to honour the drum alone. It should be sung before a powwow as a warm-up, but it can also be sung during the powwow as well (Morrisseau, interview, April 28, 2005).

When talking about these songs, both during practices and in interviews, Jason often framed his “story-telling” with the phrase, “Long time ago, my people . . .” in a stereotyped “Native” accent.<sup>20</sup> This was a means of eliciting laughter that served to indicate a “story-telling” frame as separate from the “regular” discussion around the drum. This style of joking, however, may also be read to highlight Jason’s shifting role between a young man who enjoys powwow and someone who, in this context, is consulted as an expert who can pass on teachings. In discussing linguistic play among the

---

<sup>19</sup> When I was at the Miawpukek powwow in 2006, I heard a song by Neshnabé Ojibwe that used an almost identical melody, but employed the Anishnaabe word *makwa* (meaning bear) where we would normally sing *binesi* (meaning thunderbird). I assumed that the minor differences between how they sing that melody and how our group sings that melody were a product of oral transmission. When I asked a member of this group about the song, I was dismissed and told, “I didn’t sing no Thunderbird Song.” However, several months later when I asked Jason Morrisseau about this during one of our practices, he told me that they are in fact the “same song,” but that the words can be substituted to make it either a Thunderbird Song or a Bear Song. This points to a challenge faced when trying to identify particular songs: different texts may be used with the same (or very similar) melodies and there may be multiple versions of a melody that are referred to with the same name. Since it is inappropriate to transcribe these songs without the permission of the maker, and musical transcriptions themselves are not used by those who practice this style of music, I have chosen to annotate songs by identifying their sources (largely the CDs from which they were learned or on which they can be found). Where this is not possible or applicable, I have attempted to indicate the Nation of origin.

<sup>20</sup> Jason often used this in interviews as well, for example when he told the story of the Thunderbird to me (personal communication, April 28, 2005).

Western Apache, who sometimes imitate "the Whiteman," Basso explains that they "temporarily transform themselves into mock exemplars of the class of persons whose rightful members their behavior is modeled upon" (1979, 13). It may be that the reverse is happening here, that Jason is temporarily transforming himself into a stereotyped understanding of "traditional Elder."

As I have mentioned before, periodically at the request of members of the drum group I brought my mini disc recorder and microphone to Wednesday night practices to record the group. I had only been a member for about three weeks when the first request was made and recorded the practice on 29 September 2004. I recorded the group again on 10 November 2004, when we had all become more familiar with the songs. During an interview with Jason in April 2005, Jason sang a push up of several new songs, one after another, that he later taught to the group. Then almost a year passed before I was again asked to bring my recording equipment. We heard a day or two in advance of the 21 February 2006 practice that Jason, who was on hiatus from the group at this point, would be at the Centre along with Nathan Sack of Eastern Eagle Singers. Members of the group asked that I record the sessions, and after obtaining Jason's permission, I recorded what became known as the 'push up' CD, because Jason quickly went through several new songs to help us add to our repertoire and we recorded a push up of each.<sup>21</sup> Upon Jason's return to the group in the fall of 2006, I made yet another recording on 8 November 2006.

---

<sup>21</sup> In the end I did not record Nathan Sack, as he was in a meeting at the Friendship Centre and did not arrive at the practice until after I had already left.



Repertoire was also learned via commercial CDs in the private collections of members. As Scales has noted, "Travel and sound recording technology are deeply embedded aspects of modern day powwow practices" (2002a, 7). There are several record labels devoted to the recording and dissemination of First Nations music, including Canyon, Arbor, Sunshine, and Indian House, and the recordings they produce are one means of First Nations people "[forging] intertribal links on an unprecedented scale" (Scales 2002a, 7). While many of these groups travel the powwow circuit, most members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group have not had the opportunity to observe them live. Instead, they engage with their music via recordings of groups like Eastern Eagle Singers, Free Spirit, Black Lodge Singers, Northern Wind, Eyabay, and Whitefish Jrs. Interestingly, our group did not learn any songs by Northern Cree, even though they are arguably the most prolific drum group in North America at this time, because Jason felt they were rivals of Whitefish Jrs on the powwow trail. Round Dances by Randy Wood were the butt of many jokes by Jason, who disliked his use of vibrato and his mellow, warm vocal timbre (which I quite enjoy). This, I believe, tells much about Jason's preference for northern style singing, for its high tessitura and strident singing style.

Periodically, members would query each other about recent purchases and their music collections, and then swap CDs to share music.<sup>22</sup> When a member discovered a

---

<sup>22</sup> Members also regularly recommended listening to each other, often via recordings available on YouTube. For example, Jason on one occasion suggested we search for Midnight Express on that site.

song that he particularly enjoyed, he would often suggest the group learn it. For example, Steve really enjoyed a Men's Chicken Dance he heard on the CD *Chicken Dance Songs* (2003) and so the recording was brought to practice and we learned the song. While I often suggested that we learn one of Medicine Dream's traditional style songs, we never did. Indeed, unlike Brenda Jeddore in the Miawpukek case study, I had no influence over repertoire learned or performed by our group.

In an effort to improve familiarity with songs and memory retention, Jerry created two practice CDs. The first was a compilation of our current repertoire and some new material we wanted to learn (like the Chicken Dance). While some tracks towards the end of the CD were sung by our group, such as track 17 "White Wolf" and track 19 "Thunderbird Song," about the first two-thirds of the CD were recordings by other groups, which included "Good Medicine" (Eastern Eagle Singers), an Intertribal (Whitefish Jrs), "All Nations Special (Chicken)" (unknown performer), and the Gathering Song (by Sons of Membertou), to name only a few.

Table 7.1. Practice CD #1 (Untitled)

Track	Song	Performer	Source
1	Flag Song	Lightening Boy	<i>Hinkley Pow Wow 2000</i> [2001]
2	Intertribal	Whitefish Jrs	<i>Life Giver</i> [1996]
3	Prayer Song	Eastern Eagle	<i>Good Medicine</i> [2004]
4	Good Medicine	Eastern Eagle	<i>Good Medicine</i> [2004]

5	Grass Dance	King Bird	<i>Hinkley Pow Wow 2000</i> [2001]
6	Chicken (All Nation's Special)	unknown <sup>23</sup>	<i>Chicken Dance Songs</i> [2003] – track 6
7	Chicken (Men's Chicken Dance)	unknown	<i>Chicken Dance Songs</i> [2003] – track 12
8	Mawio'Mi (Gathering Song)	Sons of Membertou	<i>Wapna'kik: "The People of the Dawn"</i> [n.d]
9	Kwanote	Sons of Membertou	<i>Wapna'kik: "The People of the Dawn"</i> [n.d]
10	Kwanote (Round Dance)	Sons of Membertou	<i>Wapna'kik: "The People of the Dawn"</i> [n.d]
11	Eagle Staff Song	Stoney Park	<i>Live at Schemizun '94</i> [1994]
12	Honour Song	unknown	unknown <sup>24</sup>
13	Sneak Up	Whitefish Jrs	<i>Live At Schemitzun</i> [2003]
14	Flag Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
15	Victory Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
16	Honour Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording (learned from Eastern Eagle Singers' <i>Sacred Flight</i> [2002])

---

<sup>23</sup> In a highly unusual move, Arbor Records has not listed the performers of the various tracks on the CD *Chicken Dance Songs* (2003). No explanation is given. As such, I have provided track numbers should readers wish to consult the recording. This album is part of Arbor Records' Native American Heritage series, which also includes CDs devoted to the dance styles of Jingle, Men's Fancy, Men's Grass, Men's Traditional, Women's Buckskin, and Women's Fancy Dance, as well as 49ers, Round Dance songs, and stick game songs.

<sup>24</sup> One consequence of the sharing of recordings is that sometimes the data associated with the track is misplaced or lost. As such, I am unable to determine a source for this recording.



17	White Wolf	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
18	Intertribal	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
19	Thunderbird Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	recorded by Jason Morrisseau
20	Dry Run Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	recorded by Jason Morrisseau (learned from Eastern Eagle Singers' <i>Sacred Flight</i> [2002])

A second practice CD was made a few months later with the title *Craigmillers<sup>25</sup> First Nations*. It included much of the same repertoire as the first practice CD, but also a few new selections that were soon added to our repertoire.

Table 7.2. Practice CD #2 *Craigmillers First Nations*

Track	Song	Performer	Source
1	Whitewolf	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
2	Flag Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording
3	Victory Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording

---

<sup>25</sup> Craigmillers refers to Craigmillers Avenue, the street on which Jerry Evans lives. The significance of this reference is discussed below.

4	Honour Song	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording (learned from Eastern Eagle Singers' <i>Sacred Flight</i> [2002])
5	Thunderbird	Friendship Centre Drum Group	recorded by Jason Morrisseau
6	Dry Run	Friendship Centre Drum Group	recorded by Jason Morrisseau (learned from Eastern Eagle Singers' <i>Sacred Flight</i> [2002])
7	Round Dance #1 ("There's nothing in this world ...")	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording (learned from Eyabay)
8	Round Dance #2 ("Oh my sweetheart ...")	Friendship Centre Drum Group	field recording (learned from Whitefish Jrs)
9	Sponge Bob Square Pants	Black Lodge Singers	<i>More Kids' Pow-Wow Songs</i> [2005]
10	Brother Bear	Black Lodge Singers	<i>More Kids' Pow-Wow Songs</i> [2005]
11	Vietnam-Desert Storm (Veteran Song)	Black Lodge Singers	<i>Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live at Fort Duchesne</i> [2003]
12	Blackfeet Flag Song	Black Lodge Singers	<i>Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live at Fort Duchesne</i> [2003]
13	Jason's Push Ups [Four Direction Song; Bear Song; Pipe Song (Anishnabe); Veteran Song (by Northern Wind); Creator Song (Jason Morrisseau); untitled (vocables)]	Jason Morrisseau	field recording
14	Camp Fire Song	Northern Wind	<i>Whispering Winds</i> [2004]

15	All Nations Special (Chicken Dance)	unknown	<i>Chicken Dance Songs</i> [2003] – track 6
16	Men's Chicken Dance	unknown	<i>Chicken Dance Songs</i> [2003] – track 12
17	Eagle Staff Song	Stoney Park	<i>Live at Schemizun '94</i> [1994]
18	Kepmite Tnagn (Honour Song)	The Denny Family (Kitpu)	<i>Mi'kmaq Chants</i> [1995]

Striking is the large quantity of repertoire from Anishnabe, Cree, Blackfoot, and other nations, particularly in comparison to the Sipu'ji'j Drummers in Miawpukek who only sang Mi'kmaw songs. Also of note is the fact that while these CDs include eight Mi'kmaw songs, we have only practised and performed four: Prayer Song (Eastern Eagle Singers), the Gathering Song (made by George Paul), contemporary Honour Song (Eastern Eagle Singers), and Dry Run (Eastern Eagle Singers). The prominence of songs by Eastern Eagle Singers reflects both the fact that of all Mi'kmaw drum groups, they have the most recordings and have competed in northern style drum competitions on the powwow circuit. Thus, they are considered *the* northern style Mi'kmaw drum group. However, Jason also had the opportunity to sit and sing with Eastern Eagle Singers during the 2004 powwow and was introduced to their songs in this way. The Gathering Song, as has been discussed, was introduced by Jerry Evans in an effort to increase the Mi'kmaw repertoire of the group.

The compilation CD may in some ways be seen as an updated version of the mix-



tape. Relatively little critical work has been done on mix-tapes.<sup>26</sup> As Melanie Lovatt has demonstrated, mix-tapes often are used to influence musical tastes of friends or peers (2005, 33) and to document or record an individual's experiences (2005, 35).<sup>27</sup> While few have pointed to mix-tapes as a means of learning repertoire, her interview with Neil Rosenberg does demonstrate this function. Rosenberg had a collection of self-made bluegrass anthologies – “he would make and listen to them in an attempt to learn specific songs” (2005, 30). Thus, such compilations may be used to inspire and educate musicians (Lovatt on Allen Ginsberg 2005, 30).

Practice CDs such as *Craig Miller First Nations* serve a didactic purpose; they are supplementary materials for the acquisition of new repertoire and enable a continued and sustained relationship with the drum group and its music during the intervening time between practices. While for some, this means having something to listen to as a refresher between Wednesday practices, it also means that members who for various reasons must be away from the drum for extended periods of time can still be connected to the music and the members. And, indeed, this is partially what *Craig Miller First Nations* is all about. The usefulness of repeated private listening (and sing-along) sessions was noted by Pat Donnelly, when I asked him whether he had a favourite First

---

<sup>26</sup> Thurston Moore (2004), for example, provides a compilation of cover art, track lists, and personal experience narratives around mix-tapes, but does not engage in analysis of the same.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that studies of mix-tapes have emphasized the creation of cover artwork as an important part of this process (T. Moore 2004; Lovatt 2005). However, though Jerry Evans is a professional artist and could have created cover art for this compilation CD, he instead only included a list of songs (often without performers or sources).

Nations recording. He replied, "Yeah, and it's *Craigmillier First Nation*. I have it, it's out in the van and I'll put that on and I'll listen to it. And I don't need to have the song list to know what's coming up. I'd say after the first two beats, I know what it is, right? And through pure repetition I'm getting the words" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006).

Peter Manuel (1993), in discussing cassette culture, noted,

The low expense of cassette consumption renders the medium accessible to rural and lower-income groups. At the same time, the lower costs of production enable small-scale producers to emerge around the world, recording and marketing music aimed at specialized, local, grassroots audiences rather than at a homogeneous mass market. (Manuel 1993, xiv)

He noted that such recordings serve multiple functions: they "may be used to accompany and guide group or family singing, in which case they may expand repertoire and raise performance standards" (Manuel 1993, 18). So, while cassettes may be seen to supplant the traditional methods of learning songs, the recordings themselves may take on an important role in the transmission of music. Manuel himself has noted that this book, focussed on cassettes, is woefully out of date; however, he is "not planning a new book 'VCD Culture'" (SEM Listserv, July 2, 2007). Nevertheless, though technology has changed, much of what he describes is still relevant. And much can be learned about repertoire, music canons, and style when we study how and why people make and use recordings.

*Craigmillier First Nations*, however, is more than a means of song acquisition.

Steve explained:

Well, it's like *Craigmillier First Nations*, you know. That's like a term of empowerment that our buddy Jerry has for joking about his house on Craigmillier Avenue, you know, because of realities coming out now. When you're on different parts of this island, it seems like there's a band council on every block and corner. And why wouldn't Jerry and I have our own, you know? (George, personal communication, June 14, 2006)<sup>28</sup>

Here Steve is referencing a larger issue of status in the province and the creation of ad hoc bands on the west coast in anticipation of the creation of a landless band. *Craigmillier First Nations* expresses the fact that Jerry has First Nations heritage, whether he has membership in a Newfoundland band or not. It uses humour to make a politically-charged statement about identity and belonging.

#### 7.6 Leadership and Singing Style

As has been demonstrated by the above description of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, the position of lead drummer has a wide-reaching influence on a group. The lead drummer may make decisions regarding repertoire, be responsible for teaching the group new songs as a keeper of knowledge, and also provide a vocal model. However, while a lead drummer may teach songs to the group via oral transmission, he himself may not have learned the songs in this manner. Jason often learned songs by

---

<sup>28</sup> When I first heard the reference to *Craigmillier First Nations*, I didn't know what it meant, nor did I inquire. I was hearing "Craig Miller First Nations," and wondered silently to myself who Craig Miller was, at this time not yet having a copy of the CD. It was not until I was planning to interview Jerry at his home in summer 2005 that I realized what it meant. We arranged the interview over MSN and Jerry gave me his address before signing off. I put pencil to paper to make note of where I had to go and as I wrote, I suddenly understood commentary from the past few months and Steve's interview. Jerry, Steve, and I later laughed a great deal about this.



listening to CDs, such as *Sacred Flight* (Morrisseau, personal communication, April 28, 2005).<sup>29</sup> With his experience in powwow music, however, he was able to pick up the song and its words much more quickly with fewer hearings than would other members of the group. In the absence of a lead drummer, recordings can become essential for a drum group, whether these are recordings of other groups or of the drum group itself. For female members of a drum group with limited or no previous exposure to powwow singing or a female mentor, recordings can provide a model vocal style towards which the singer can strive. Finally, in a community where there are few with the ability to take on the role of lead drummer, a movement towards more egalitarian structures where responsibilities are shared among many members of a drum group may occur. As discussed in Chapter Four, a similar strategy was employed by the Sipu'ji'j Drummers in Miawpukek.

These methods of learning to sing First Nations music have particularly interesting consequences for the sound production and vocal timbre of a group. Drum groups are usually categorized as employing either northern or southern singing style. Northern style singing normally features a high tessitura with vibrato or pulsation. In contrast, southern style tends to sit in a much lower tessitura. As Browner (2002, 224-26) has demonstrated, however, songs can be analysed based on both range and formal structure to reveal hybrid styles, and increasingly there is a proliferation of local or

---

<sup>29</sup> It should also be noted that Morrisseau sat and sang with the Eastern Eagle Singers at the 2004 powwow in Miawpukek, and was introduced to some of their songs in that context.

regional singing styles that can be classified as neither.

Under Jason's guidance, the Friendship Centre Drum Group sang in a northern style, with the exception of one southern style song,<sup>30</sup> which partially served as a joke among members, because one singer liked to sing songs at a lower pitch, which was better suited to his vocal range. Prior to singing this song, all of the male members would readjust their posture in their chairs so that they sat lower and leaned back, legs extended (as if sitting lower might help them hit lower notes in the extreme of their range). Interestingly, as the analysis in Table 7.3 demonstrates (below), this southern song was sung in the same range as many of the group's northern songs.<sup>31</sup> The difference, that was perceived as one of pitch, was in fact one of vocal production, with significantly less vocal tension, a very slow and gentle pulsation, and an open (rather than tight) sound.<sup>32</sup>

In Jason's absence, the singing style of the group changed, particularly in tessitura. The same northern songs were sung, but at a slightly lower, more comfortable pitch. As Pat noted in an interview, "the songs we're singing are not as high-pitched, are not as northern [. . .] so it's not as far North as it was [. . .] and I find it a lot easier to sing" (Donnelly, personal communication, August 15, 2006). The tessitura now sits

---

<sup>30</sup> Jason Morrisseau taught the group this song and only ever referred to it as "The Southern Song." Its title and source are unknown.

<sup>31</sup> It should be noted that when this song is compared to some of the higher-pitched northern songs (like "Oh my sweetheart" or "White Wolf" in Table 7.3), there remains a difference of a major third or major second respectively. In the extremes of one's range, even a major second can be a big difference.

<sup>32</sup> This southern style song also employs a different set of vocables than is normally heard in the group's northern style songs. Vowels are usually more forward in northern style than southern, and in southern style, there is greater emphasis on aspirated sounds. Thus the choice of vocable/vowel may contribute to a change in vocal production; however, more work needs to be done in this area.

somewhere between northern and southern styles in a moderate range. For example, in the group's most recent performance, the two songs sung displayed slightly more moderate ranges: C3-A4 and D♭3 - A♭4. Following this performance, in a discussion with Dr. Tom Gordon, director of the School of Music at Memorial University, Jason Morrisseau explained, "And that wasn't even singing high!" (January 23, 2008). It is this more moderate style of vocal production that Jerry Evans often refers to as "old man singing," primarily in contrast to the high-pitched, heavily pulsating style of the young men in northern powwow groups. Further, the vibrato employed by the group (which I suspect comes naturally and without conscious effort) is a much gentler pulsation than the strident northern style singing. Evans feels that he has found his "own voice" (personal communication, June 28, 2006) and indeed it appears that the group has found its own sound.<sup>33</sup> The current sound produced by this group is one that is simultaneously a unified sound (rhythmically and timbrally) and one in which individual voices and vocal qualities emerge periodically. This foregrounding of individual voices is heard primarily on leads (the timbre of Jason and Jerry's voices is very different when they sing on their own), but also on the second half of the push-up (when my voice is heard an octave over the men's). As such, the diversity of membership in this drum group, in addition to being visually inscribed in performance, is sonically performed.

---

<sup>33</sup> Jason Morrisseau often spoke of the process of finding one's voice. For example, on 10 May 2005 he said to a new member, "It can take time to find your own voice. Every voice is different." Then, to reinforce what he had said, he told a funny story about how he sounded when he was first starting out as a young boy and the way others would joke about his sound.



Similar observations regarding tessitura and vocal production can be drawn in relation to the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, both in the "traditional" repertoire they sing and their newly composed Community Song (discussed in Chapter Four). As has been noted, the distinction suggested by the northern-southern singing style dichotomy is misleading given the proliferation of regional and local styles of vocal production: "[C]hoice of singing style can vary greatly and depend on a number of factors, including personal style preferences and the presence of influential singers not native to the region in which they live" (Browner 2002, 66). I would suggest that the lack of influential singers in a region, native or otherwise, will also influence local style. If singers are not required to match the high pitch of a lead singer of northern style music, they will select a starting pitch that is comfortable for their vocal ranges rather than pushing for the higher notes. Like Browner, Hoefnagels notes that the boundaries between northern and southern are becoming "more fluid" (2004, 12) and the "repertoire is dynamic and changing" (23). Singing styles are becoming increasingly difficult to "neatly" classify and they demonstrate the influence that the local has on the singing style and repertoire of a drum group (see Hoefnagels 2001).

As Table 7.3 (below) demonstrates, the Friendship Centre Drum Group's repertoire employs a variety of vocal ranges, with northern style songs that exploit the top of the range and sit at a high tessitura, a southern style song that sits in a similar range but employs a more relaxed style of vocal production, and Mi'kmaw songs that sit in a lower range and employ a relaxed vocal style (rather than the more strident qualities

of northern style singing). While the northern and southern songs employ incomplete repetition form exclusively, the Mi'kmaw songs feature a different song structure that often is based on antiphonal or call-and-response singing. These songs are often based on a particular phrase (or set of phrases) that are then treated to variation as the song progresses. While the repertoire primarily makes use of vocables, Cree, Anishnabe, Mi'kmaw, and English languages may be heard. In all cases, regardless of repertoire, this group performs only on a powwow drum (no rattles or hand drums).

Table 7.3. Comparison of five songs in the repertoire of the Friendship Centre Drum Group.

	White Wolf	Honour Song	"Oh my sweetheart..."	Southern Style Song	Mte'skmuey
Sung by	Friendship Centre Drum Group	Friendship Centre Drum Group	Friendship Centre Drum Group	Friendship Centre Drum Group	Friendship Centre Drum Group with Susan Hill
Category	Healing Song	Honour Song	Round Dance/ 49er	Intertribal	Snake Dance
Form of one verse	A A <sup>1</sup> B C †	A A <sup>1</sup> B C †	A A <sup>1</sup> B C †	A A <sup>1</sup> B C †	A A <sup>1</sup> A <sup>2</sup> B A <sup>3</sup> A <sup>4</sup>
# of repetitions	4	4	4	4	2
range	C3 – A4	E3 – A4	D3 – B4	D3 – G4	A3 – C5 (female range)
instrumentation	powwow drum	powwow drum	powwow drum	powwow drum	powwow drum
tempo	144 bpm	~60 bpm	72 bpm	138 bpm	122-148 bpm
Tail or coda?	no	no	no	no	no
Honour beats?	no	yes	no	yes	no
Closing pattern?	no	tremolo	no	. . .   .	no
Language	Vocables	Mi'kmaq + vocables	vocables + English on push-up 2 & 4	vocables	vocables
Origins	Anishnabe*	Mi'kmaq; Eastern Eagle	unknown	unknown	Mi'kmaq; Joel Denny

Note: "Mte'skmuey" appears as part of the educational resource *Traditional Dances of Newfoundland & Labrador* (2007) compiled by Eric West and Jane Rutherford.

\* While the recording I analysed included only vocables, there are Anishnabe words that may be sung that reference *Waubishmaa'ingan* (White Wolf).



7.7 *The Girl in the Boys' Club: Reflections on My Role in and Experiences with the Drum Group*

When I first joined the group there were three other young women who participated on a regular basis. However, after a few months passed, I was the 'last woman standing.' As was discussed in Chapter Six, Jason reconfigured gender roles when he took over the drum and this was the cause of some dissent among members. However, because I had not experienced the prior configuration of the drum (before September 2004), I had not learned any other way of being in a drum group and I was eager to learn from Jason. I took the male joking around the drum in stride, as good natured fun, and quickly adjusted to the situation. I became 'one of the guys' in many ways, realizing that to be a member of this group was to interact in their way – joking and giving ribbing as good as I got. Where I accepted the role and location of women in a powwow group unproblematically as a traditional way, standing around the drummers as "back-up," it was clear that others were not happy with the situation. Other personal elements further contributed to the departure of female members.

Able to pick up most songs quickly and remember them, there have been jokes about me being a jukebox, that I can scroll through the songs in my head and play them at will. Nevertheless, I am largely passed over for leads during practice except on rare occasions and never sing leads in a performance setting. On evenings when I was invited to sing leads, it generally occurred in one of two contexts: either Jason threw me a lead as some sort of initiation to see if I could do it or Jerry was unable to remember how a song

started and after I sang the lead to remind him, he simply picked up and carried on with the song. Jason often tested my memory of songs during a practice. He would turn to me, perhaps lightly tap me on my knee with his drum stick, and say, "Do you remember that one that goes like this . . ." and begin singing a song. I responded by joining in singing to demonstrate knowledge, rather than answering with a yes or no. My recall of songs became useful in his absence in a different way, as we chose which song we would sing next. I have never sung a lead in a performance setting; it was never made clear to me during practices whether women lead songs in a powwow context, though they in fact normally do not.<sup>34</sup> Several times I tried to indicate my willingness to take on a more substantial musical role by saying, "Sure, we'll *all* give the leads a try." However, for the most part that has not happened.<sup>35</sup>

Post-practice and performance, all of the men around the drum would shake hands. I often would extend mine, but initially was overlooked. In fact, several months after joining the group, Jason commented on several occasions, often laughing, that, "No one ever shakes Jan's hand." This might suggest that they did not see me as "one of the guys"; however, I did not perceive this as anything other than an oversight. In fact, on reflection, I think it was a matter of proxemics. My location in the space as a singer

---

<sup>34</sup> In fact, a woman leading a song would be an anomaly. It does not normally occur, unless the drum group itself is all-female (Anna Hoefnagels, personal communication, February 3, 2008; Morrisseau, personal communication, June 8, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Jason often suggested at practices that in drum groups, if you refuse to sing the lead (for whatever reason), you are unlikely to be asked again. He said that even when you don't know the lead, you should sing anything just to show you're trying. However, I don't think this was the reason for me not being offered a lead, as I don't recall refusing previous opportunities.

standing outside the circle of drummers put me outside the realm of interaction in some ways – easily forgotten. This changed, however, as the group did and the closer I moved into the circle, the more a part of the group I became. After a year or so of being with the group and strengthening my friendships with members, I did feel that my way of interacting with the group changed. One event stands out in this regard – our performance at the multicultural event at The Rooms (11 December 2005).<sup>36</sup> This day, after singing Steve’s favourite Chicken Dance and having it really come together with a great vibe and dancers around us, all of the men shook hands. When I extended mine to shake Jerry’s hand, he instead kissed it and has continued to do so ever since. In this moment, I felt that I was acknowledged as the female member of the group. It was around this time also that Steve began referring to me as “Janice ‘Ma’ Tulk,” in his unique brand of humour, when we had an upcoming performance engagement. Presumably he was referencing singer Ma Rainey or Mama Cass.

Later that year in April, at a practice during which there was more talking, contemplating, and joking than there was singing, a funny event occurred that reinforced this feeling that I was a part of the group and, indeed, that strong friendships were forming. Jerry was in a particularly silly mood and I recall us all watching in seeming slow motion as Jerry raised his drum stick and proceeded to whack my left knee with it. I was absolutely stunned by what had happened, by this unprovoked ‘assault,’ and we all

---

<sup>36</sup> Pat, who was not yet singing with us on a regular basis, approached our group before our second song and gave me a necklace he had made with a thunderbird pendant on it. With this gesture, I felt that he recognized me as a member of the drum group and I was very grateful for the gift.



immediately broke into fits of laughter. It continues as an inside joke and Jerry often raises his drum stick and pretends he is about to hit my knee with it. In a strange way, this was an indication that a particular rapport had been established between members and that we were all comfortable joking with each other.

At the same time that I was beginning to feel like a full-fledged member of this group, other events were occurring that made me question the same. These largely came from outside the group, yet sometimes from within the Friendship Centre. Largely innocuous gestures, such as only supplying enough bottles of water for the male drummers, occurred frequently enough to make me wonder what was going on. On occasion, we would arrive to perform and it was clear that the organizer did not connect me with the drum group, even though I arrived with them and was standing with them. For example, when the group was recorded for an educational DVD, all of the men were given release forms to fill out, while I had to chase after the producer and request one because he did not realize I was an active member of the group. At one performance for and arranged by the Friendship Centre, it was clear that I was considered part of the group because I was asked to 'round up' the men so that we could perform. However, at the same event, after Jerry was presented with the honorarium on our behalf, each member of the First Nations drum group and the Inuit drum group were given small tokens of appreciation – a MUN notebook and pen. Everyone received one except for me. While I do not believe for a moment that there was any malice intended or that it was a slight against me, it did make clear the fact that for some reason I still am not seen as part

of the group by some of the administrators of the Friendship Centre. Steve suggested in an MSN conversation, “maybe we need to be emphatic about yr [sic] being IN the group and not just an adjunct professor type along for the ride” (personal communication, August 4, 2006). However, he also wondered whether this was more of a gender-related issue, than one of ethnicity. Or perhaps one compounds the other?

One more recent event drove home the fact that my difference from other members of the group, whether based on ethnicity, gender, or a combination of the two, confounded observers and disrupted their expectations for our group. During our performance at the Parks Canada plaque unveiling in July 2007, there were numerous news reporters present videotaping the proceedings. Whenever our group sang, they would move in close to capture the drumming and singing. That night, when I watched the footage on both CBC and NTV, the two channels in Newfoundland and Labrador that feature local news broadcasts, I found extended excerpts of our drum group in which I was not present. All other members were visible on screen to a greater or lesser degree, but the only indication that I had been present at all was the disembodied sound of a female voice one octave above the men. Initially I explained this away based on the fact that I was standing while the men were sitting; to get a good close up shot, one would need to be on their level and I would, therefore, not be seen. However, having two different stations film and edit our performance in this way gives one pause for thought. It would seem that those recording and preparing clips for the news programs did not know how to make sense of the physical diversity within our group, nor did an obviously

white, red-haired female fit with their expectation for coverage of a performance by a First Nations drum group. Thus, I have come to view myself as a sometimes invisible member of this group.

While always fully acknowledging that I am an outsider, in many ways this playing field was levelled. As an outsider coming to the drum to learn about Native culture and musical expression, I am in much the same position as other members of our group – everyone except Jason, to be exact. I was not raised in this tradition, but neither were other members of the drum group who are there for similar reasons. For them, however, it has become part of the journey to discovering who they are as Native people in a Newfoundland context. Nevertheless, the questions I have are similar to those that other members of the group have, about songs, their origins, their stories, their uses, and their associated protocols.

As a member of this group, I have always tried to play a nurturing role – not because I felt it was expected of me, but because I perceived a need for it, both to balance one member's brand of (sometimes deprecating) humour, and to raise the confidence level of members, who had grown a great deal as singers, but did not yet realize just how far they had progressed in a three-year period. I made an effort to compliment members when they sang particularly well or tried their best with a song, believing that such encouragement would foster a good environment for learning and singing songs. Admittedly, this is my own personal view of how best to encourage music-making, and I believe it made an impact.



As someone who is detail-oriented and organized, it was not surprising that certain tasks fell to me, such as typing the document outlining our recommendations for the future of the drum group or liaising with key persons in Miawpukek. I accepted these tasks with pleasure. I felt it was a way that I could contribute to the group having been invited into the circle and given permission to conduct research. However, I also engaged in these activities because I believe in the abilities and value of this group and would love to see members get the recognition they deserve. I often thought that the group needed a booking agent, for many opportunities were lost due to inefficiency or miscommunication. I also was the “techie with toys,” as outlined above in the discussion of field recordings.

#### 7.8 *Localization Strategies in Powwow Repertoire and Singing Styles*

My role in this drum group demonstrates the way in which the performance of gender can speak in many directions at once, sometimes upholding expected gender roles and sometimes subverting the same. As a female member of this drum group, I was not permitted to play the drum, for many “traditional” teachings of the big drum restrict female participation in this way (see Hoefnagels 2007b). And yet, while I was never permitted to lead a song in public, it was permitted during practices as a means of testing and displaying my competence in this musical tradition. Indeed, it might be seen as an initiation rite. On some nights, I took a leadership role by reminding members of leads and even “playing” honour beats on my leg while sitting around the drum. Thus, while I

upheld several expectations for female participation in a drum group, primarily by never picking up a drum stick, there were also moments during which I moved outside of these gender norms.

In some ways, I felt as though I was an invisible member of the group, never certain if my erasure from the group by media or lack of acknowledgement as a member by administration was a result of gender, ethnicity, or my role as a researcher. Indeed, it is likely all three had a role to play in my experiences. While I attempted to become 'one of the guys' through various means, including displays of competence in the genre, I was at best a "marginal male" (Shelemay 1991, 41). During the first several months in the drum group, not only did I distance myself from the other females by staying with the men and singing while the young women danced, but I also vocally erased my gender by singing at pitch with the men instead of in my own vocal range. Even after cultivating the female sound in the group that Jason was looking for, a sound that is both high and nasal (an element of the sound that I still struggle with), I returned to singing at pitch with the men when first learning each new song. While sonically vacillating between the two genders, my behaviour around the drum and my perception of my role in the group also shifted regularly. On some nights, I perceived a rapport with members of the group that I interpreted as being 'one of the guys,' while on others I clearly shifted to more typical gender roles, outside the circle and asserting a more feminine role of nurturer as I encouraged the male members in their efforts to sing. In short, my role and performance in this group was simultaneously many things at once. As Sugarman (1989) has noted,

performance may be determined by and reflect gender roles in a particular cultural tradition, but it may also have the power to temporarily subvert such expectations or hint at ways they might be reshaped in the future.

For the male members in this drum group, there has been a shift to a more egalitarian structure, one that is also reflected in the structure of both the Sipu'ji'j Drummers (Chapter Four) and the grade five drummers at Se't A'newey School (Chapter Three). This structure entrusts responsibility for learning songs and singing leads to all male members of the group, rather than just a lead drummer. The grade five drummers and our drum group on occasion even went so far as to sing enough push-ups for each male member to have the opportunity to sing the lead on a push-up before ending the song, rather than singing the somewhat standardized four push-ups that has come to be expected as a result of contest powwows. Male members may also have a role to play in the development of the "gestural-visual codes" (Powers 1990, 47) employed by a particular drum group to communicate while singing. While some gestural cues are used by many drum groups as a sort of common language for this genre, groups develop their own systems that are localized or specific to a single group. Finally, while not everyone necessarily will take on a leadership role in singing, there are other equally important roles that exist around the drum, including group singing, care and transportation of the drum, creation of practice recordings, supply of medicine for use in smudging, upkeep of drum sticks, and the construction and upkeep of a drum stand.

Through performance, the diversity in the membership of this drum group may be



observed, both in repertoire and singing style. The group's repertoire reflects a wide variety of origins and related singing styles, including northern style Anishnabe and Cree repertoire, as well as Mi'kmaw repertoire in a more moderate tessitura. Even northern style repertoire on any given night (and in any given performance) may occur at a more moderate tessitura as the singers select an opening pitch that works for their own voices. Repertoire is also drawn from First Nations not represented in the group, such as Blackfoot. This openness to the songs from other Nations extends to an openness to the traditions of other Nations, best exemplified by Steve George when he suggested we smudge in "Iroquois style" on one particular night. Thus, there is an understanding that there are many "right" ways of doing things that, though they may be specific to other Nations, are equally valid.

As Samuels (2004) has noted, "Identity is no longer tied exclusively to practices that are objectifiable as traditions, important as they are" (Samuels 2004, 244). That which we might objectify as Mi'kmaw tradition, important though it is to Jerry Evans and Steve George (as discussed in Chapter Six), is not the only music tied to their Mi'kmaw identities. Rather, the contemporary practices of northern style powwow singing also express this identity. While it may at first appear contradictory that the traditions, the songs and dances, of other Nations could serve to express a Mi'kmaw identity, they afford the opportunity to learn, practice, and gain proficiency in First Nations cultural practices. That is, they foster the acquisition and display of "cultural competence" (Krouse 1999, 78) through participation in a group established around a musical genre.

This is particularly necessary where kinship relationships have failed due to the hidden nature of Mi'kmaw heritage in Newfoundland. Participation in such cultural practices, as well as "adherence to traditional values all strengthen community membership" (*ibid.*). The Friendship Centre Drum Group, though diverse in membership and the origins of the teachings shared within its structure, provides a sense of community for its members. It should be duly noted that the notion of a Mi'kmaw (or even First Nations) community in Newfoundland is an imagined one, given that it extends throughout the province and is of a size that does not permit face-to-face interaction between all members (B. Anderson 1991, 6). As Benedict Anderson notes, however, it is questionable whether this is even the case in small, bounded communities such as Miawpukek. As has already been demonstrated, the population in this community is far more heterogenous than is often asserted or assumed.

Nevertheless associated with the concept of community, especially status communities, is a notion that in such spaces, one grows up "in the culture." Jason Morrisseau asserts practising this culture is different when you grow up in it and 'just know' how to do something, whether it is how to create a pulsation with your voice, the rules for appropriate behaviour around the drum, or the gender roles observed in powwow. Participation in such oral traditions over an extended period of time can make it seem as if this musical style comes naturally, even though it too was learned. This recalls Bourdieu's (1977) notion of "habitus," a set of dispositions or internalized behaviours, tastes, and thoughts that become "second nature" through "a long process of

inculcation, beginning in early childhood” (R. Johnson 1993, 5). However, this type of indoctrination may lead to notions of a particular “right” way of doing things if there is no reason to question or problematize the teachings. Those who are not raised in a particular tradition – indeed, have had it hidden for many years – may be more open to the idea of simultaneously existing right ways of doing things.

The means of learning traditions for those who do not grow up in a status community may also be different. For members of this group, technology played an important role in the acquisition of repertoire. Such ‘compact disc culture’ brings the music of other (often distant) First Nations communities to drum group members, allows them to engage with the genre, and choose their musical direction. Recordings, whether made by a member of the group, purchased, or obtained through various forms of sharing, may serve as didactic tools. However, they may also serve another, more political function, by making a statement about First Nations identity and status, as with *Craigmillier First Nations*. They may be a means of empowering non-status individuals by asserting their existence regardless of membership in a band or registration under the *Indian Act*.

Overriding all of these considerations and conventions, however, is an intangible element of music-making that appears throughout this chapter – the feeling that is present when singing as a group. The people who engage in this powwow drum group do not see it only as an outlet for cultural expression or a means of gaining and displaying cultural competence. Nor is it solely a means of engaging with a First Nations community, though



all of these are important functions of their participation. Regardless of status, membership in a band, or individual heritages, members of this drum group continue to participate in it because of the feeling that is present during practices and performances. Good feeling songs often are energetic ones, like the Men's Chicken Dance, which has a melody and rhythm that appeals to members. Even solemn or serious occasions, such as Remembrance Day or a gathering in solidarity with Caledonia, may include "good feeling" songs, such as a Round Dance or 49er because of the positive energy that is created while singing. This description of a song as "good feeling" is an indication of the energy that is created through the performance of these songs on occasions when everything falls into place – when all members are present, when they are singing songs they know well, when they enjoy singing together, and when they "sing hard" or from the heart. When this energy is present, practices may extend well past the usual two hours (and, conversely, when it is not present, practice may end unusually early). Thus, as much as participation in this drum group is an expression of cultural identity, it is also a space where friends meet, enjoy making music together, and create "good feeling" energy through performance. As noted in Chapter Six, the way in which Steve George talks about community emphasizes connectivity over collectivity.<sup>37</sup> This group's sense of connection is based in "good feeling," rather than an ethnically marked notion of

---

<sup>37</sup> While connectivity and collectivity need not be exclusive, collective action does not necessarily emerge from connectivity. Put another way, connectivity does not guarantee social cohesion. As has been demonstrated through social network theory, "while connectivity may be a prerequisite for collectivity, the reverse does not apply. Connectivity may happen at a widespread level, without any aggregation or group phenomenon manifesting itself" (Thacker 2004, online).

community membership.

## **Chapter Eight: Conclusion**

### **Localizing the “Pan-Indian” Powwow on and off the Rez**

The preceding case studies have highlighted various strategies for the localization of a musical style and related culture commonly, but reductively, referred to as “pan-Indian.” How powwow is made local in these case studies tells much about issues of status, identity, and notions of community in both rural (reserve) and urban (non-reserve) Newfoundland contexts. Musically, these two contexts display several differences, particularly in terms of repertoire and singing style. Related extra-musical elements of dress or regalia, for example, also display distinct approaches to participation in powwow as a representation of identity. However, in both case studies, similarities emerge in the use of recording technology as a didactic tool, the egalitarian structure of the drum, and the subversion (at times) of gender roles assumed and asserted as part of the powwow tradition. In this chapter, I will compare the data emerging from the two case studies with the goal of demonstrating the ways in which different localization strategies are employed in relation to repertoire and singing style, structure of the drum group, modes of transmission, regalia styles, language, discursive practices, and gender. I will then suggest ways in which these different modes of localization nuance larger issues of status and identity in the province.

#### *8.1 Repertoire and Singing Style*

Repertoire and singing style are closely related; often repertoire determines the



singing style to be employed, as is demonstrated by the repertoire and singing style of students at Se't A'newey School and the Sipu'ji'j Drummers. While the curriculum taught by Brenda Jeddore in the school is diverse, with Catholic hymns, contemporary choral works, Newfoundland folk songs, and what are termed "traditional" Mi'kmaw songs, among other styles, the repertoire that is mobilized for cultural display purposes is more narrowly defined. In the events described in Chapter Three, the majority of songs presented are considered to be Mi'kmaw or have Mi'kmaw origins. These songs have forms that are different from that commonly observed in powwow repertoire (incomplete repetition form), often employ antiphonal structures and variations of short motifs, are sung at a moderate tessitura, and have a narrow range that is normally less than an octave. Many of these songs form the core repertoire of the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, who only sang what they termed "traditional" songs. That is, they only performed Mi'kmaw repertoire, often learned through the recordings of Kitpu (the Denny family), Free Spirit, and other Mi'kmaw drum groups. The Community Song made by Sipu'ji'j Drummers shares several similarities with other Mi'kmaw repertoire, specifically in form, tessitura, and range. Thus, though both the students and the Sipu'ji'j Drummers play a powwow drum, it is used to perform First Nation-specific repertoire, sometimes with additional sonorities that may be local (rattles like the *ji'kmaq*n) or found more widely (Native American flute or even Brazilian rainstick).

While both of these groups clearly perform local repertoire in a local style, with such musical gestures as a glissando at the end of the lead on the Honour Song or by

ending songs with the Mi'kmaw exclamation *Ta'O!*, for example, great diversity in repertoire and singing style is observed at Mi'kmaw powwows. These powwows feature a mixture of repertoire from a variety of different nations, including Mi'kmaw, Cree, and Anishnabe, and equally diverse singing styles may be employed. Hence, while Miawpukek performers usually learn and display "Mi'kmaw" repertoire, they hear a wider variety of styles, which may inflect the performance of local repertoire. The genre of powwow may be localized through the performance of a "traditional" Mi'kmaw song in a northern style; however, the resulting hybrid includes elements of both styles. When "I'ko" was transposed for performance in northern style, the tempo increased, honour beats were added, and the relationship between the drum and the voice was altered; however, the preference for antiphonal structures was maintained and it did not conform to incomplete repetition form. Other localizations include the performance of Ko'jua, a traditional Mi'kmaw dance that is inscribed with local meaning through the stage talk of the emcee (discussed below); the performance of northern style songs that have Mi'kmaw text (such as those by Eastern Eagle Singers); and songs using Mi'kmaw vocables, which emphasize different sounds from those commonly heard in northern repertoire. Further localization takes place at the "kitchen party" held the night before the powwow, which features Irish-Newfoundland music, contemporary Native music by local artists, and music known trans-nationally. As has been observed in other Native American communities, the lyric substitution observed within the genres of Newfoundland and trans-national music is one strategy for making music locally

meaningful (see Samuels 2004, 140). Further, in this study focussed on the rural reserve, then, there is a definite emphasis on local or nation-specific repertoire and singing styles within the context of powwow; and other strategies for localization are employed, such as the naming of social night as a “kitchen party.”

In the urban case study, however, a different, yet equally diverse repertoire is highlighted. The repertoire of the drum group primarily consists of that borrowed from other nations, including Cree, Anishnabe, and Blackfoot. Indeed, the Friendship Centre Drum Group has only two “traditional” (or traditional-style) Mi’kmaw songs in its repertoire: the Snake Dance and the Gathering Song. The other two Mi’kmaw songs are contemporary ones in a northern style made by the Nova Scotian Mi’kmaw drum Eastern Eagle Singers. The tessitura of the traditional-style Mi’kmaw songs is lower than those of the northern style songs performed by this group, and their ranges are narrower. While the one southern style song in this group’s repertoire displays a similar tessitura and range to their northern style songs, it is vocal production that makes the difference – less vocal tension and gentler pulsation, which is similar to that used in Mi’kmaw songs. Although this collection of repertoire includes few items of local or Mi’kmaw origin, members of this drum group localize repertoire borrowed from other nations through singing style, selecting lower tessituras and adjusting timbre to be less strident than expected for northern style.

This emphasis on repertoire drawn from many other First Nations can be accounted for in many ways, including the presence of a lead drummer who is Oji-Cree,



the location of the drum group in a Friendship Centre that is open to participants from all nations (Native or otherwise), and members who enjoy northern style powwow singing. Thus, the diversity of membership in this group results in repertoire that displays great variety in sources and styles. Further, where the groups in Miawpukek had face-to-face encounters with other Mi'kmaw groups and thus access to resources for Mi'kmaw repertoire (for example, through the Cultural Days program and the local powwow), the St. John's drum group has not had the same access to Mi'kmaw drum groups and song carriers. Indeed, this group may be more reliant on recordings to learn nation-specific repertoire.

The data from these case studies parallels that of other recent studies of powwow repertoire and singing style, which have focussed on diversification and localization. As the two categories of powwow singing style display increasing fluidity, the binary of northern and southern style singing is being challenged with more locally- or regionally-based singing styles (Goertzen 2005, 290; Hoefnagels 2004, 12). Indeed, as has been demonstrated by both case studies, many factors influence singing style and vocal production, such as access to singers from other nations and preference for a particular singing style (Browner 2002, 66). Further, the repertoire observed in both case studies demonstrates a process of exchange and change in a "simultaneously isolated *and* connected [. . .] environment" (Hayward 2002).

## 8.2 *Structure of the Drum Group*

In both case studies, egalitarian structures for powwow drum groups were observed. In Se't A'newey School, teacher Brenda Jeddore ensures that all drummers learn the leads to every song, no one student is singled out as lead drummer of the group, each has the opportunity to sing a lead in performance, and all participate in the care of the drum. This valuing of shared responsibility was also evident among the Sipu'ji'j Drummers. While this drum group had a lead drummer, the responsibility for learning new songs and caring for the drum were shared by everyone. Indeed, the group devised its own means for learning repertoire in which each drummer would select a song to learn from a recording and then teach it orally to the group.

In the urban case study, the drum group as it was reconfigured in 2004 displayed a definite hierarchy with a lead drummer who was largely responsible for singing the leads of songs. However, over time, this structure shifted to a more egalitarian one in which everyone has an opportunity to lead songs, as well as suggest repertoire. Further, all members of the drum group have important roles that extend beyond singing. These include making drum sticks, caring for the drum, making a drum stand, organizing performances, and recording practice sessions for future uses. Thus, there are similar values underpinning the structure of the drum groups in both the urban and rural case studies.

### 8.3 *Oral Modes of Transmission and Technology*

In the St. John's case study, several modes of transmission were highlighted, often associated with different phases in the group's life. When Jason Morrisseau first began as the lead drummer, he asserted that oral transmission was the only "right" way, a mode of transmission that he refers to as "traditional." Indeed, he went so far as to suggest that singing along with recordings was a "cultural contradiction" (personal communication, June 8, 2007). Over time, however, he has come to see "compact disc culture" as a necessary means of keeping culture alive in some contexts. For the Friendship Centre Drum Group, self-made "anthologies" of repertoire served a didactic purpose, as mix-tapes sometimes do (see Lovatt 2005, 30) and facilitated the continuance of the drum group under difficult circumstances. Members developed their own ways of using recordings to achieve this end (as described in Chapter Six).

Such recordings have political import, nuancing the understanding of status and membership issues in the province. *Craigmillier First Nations*, a self-made mix-CD, is a political commentary on the division of Newfoundland Mi'kmaq along the lines of status, as well as the creation of ad hoc bands on the west coast in anticipation of a landless band deal with the federal government (see introduction). Here powwow music and CD technology are the vessels of local meaning-making and history, a process that is enabled by access to technology that allows for production on a small scale (see Manuel 1993, xiv).

Recordings in Miawpukek may be used in different ways to achieve local goals.



For example, Brenda Jeddore, who regularly draws upon recordings for new repertoire, often has these songs of diverse origins translated into Mi'kmaq for performance by her students. This localization through language is one that does not occur in the St. John's context. While Brenda embraces recording technology, both as a source of repertoire and as accompaniment to performances, she teaches songs to her students by rote and employs textual transcriptions of Mi'kmaq songs. Similarly, with a preference for oral transmission, the Sipi'ji'j Drummers developed a means of using recordings as sources for repertoire while maintaining the culturally valued process of oral tradition (described above). In both the urban and rural contexts, then, there is a preference for oral tradition; however, recording technology may be purposefully used in locally-specific ways to achieve goals.

#### 8.4 *Cultural Dress or Regalia*

In the urban context, while the administration of the St. John's Native Friendship Centre clearly wanted the drum group to wear (matching) regalia of some sort, the group itself was opposed to the idea. The administrators perceived the need for a visual marker of indigeneity during performances by the group, a visual marker that would assert some "authenticity." Members of the group, however, wore items of personal significance, such as a ribbon shirt made by the aunt of a friend, or a jacket embroidered with totems. In the dress of all members, there were no overt symbols that marked a member as being from a particular nation or of a particular heritage. Further, it was the lead drummer's

assertion that the most common dress for members of drum groups on the powwow circuit was t-shirts and hoodies. This preference for personalization rather than localization makes sense given the diversity of membership in the group. However, one might also argue that “authenticity” was determined in relation to individuals rather than the group in this context.

The way in which one obtains such dress and the personal meaning it holds is, nevertheless, significant. As is common with the “piecing together” of regalia over a lifetime (described in Chapter Five), St. John’s drummers valued processes of gifting and the history of items, as well as the effort that goes into the creation of cultural dress, which may be added to and revised many times throughout one’s life. For example, Steve George’s ribbon shirt has personal meaning relating to his experiences and relationships forged in the Mohawk community of Kahnawake. This style of cultural dress or “regalia”, then, is primarily based on the personal rather than the local or nation-specific.

More nation-specific or localized expressions are often found on the regalia observed in Miawpukek and at Mi’kmaw powwows more generally, though not always. For example, when drumming in Miquelon as part of the Acadie 400 celebrations, the members of Sipu’ji’j Drummers wore either ribbon shirts or shirts with fringe, seemingly without local or Nation-specific reference. While drumming under the arbour at the Miawpukek powwow in 2004, some members wore ribbon shirts, while others wore t-shirts. Some of the drummers in Se’t A’newey school, however, wore vests with a nation-specific referent: the beadwork displayed the pervasive Mi’kmaw double-curve motif.

The regalia of dancers at a Mi'kmaw powwow, however, is more likely to demonstrate processes of localization. While regalia follows a template specific to the style of dance one practices, motifs and materials used in embellishment of this basic template may be expressive of Mi'kmaw identity. For example, dancers may embellish regalia with the Mi'kmaw decorative motif known as a double-curve, as was observed on Men's Traditional and Women's Traditional regalia at Mi'kmaw powwows in Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick. In addition to the localization of regalia through the use of a Mi'kmaw decorative motif, dancers also localized their regalia through the method of embellishment, such as painting. One consultant referred to this style as "traditional" Mi'kmaw. However, a Mi'kmaw regalia style that fuses European dress of the late eighteenth century with Mi'kmaw geometric designs and peaked caps covered in beadwork may be preferred by some. This style could, in fact, be analyzed and interpreted as an early localization of dress. These local expressions of identity coexist with conventional regalia styles that may assert personal identity rather than a nation-specific one.

Dress can be an important visual accompaniment to musical performances and often can be a factor used in the interpretation of that performance as "culturally authentic" (Bigenho 2002, 38). While audiences may expect a type of dress appropriate to a specific musical style, there are usually competing notions of authenticity within the performance group. In the Miawpukek case study, a Mi'kmaw or "indigenous" style of dress was certainly more prominent than in the St. John's case study. Performance



ensembles from the Se't A'newey School dressed in full regalia during cultural displays, as did the Sipu'ji'j Drummers. In the context of the Miawpukek powwow, I observed regalia appropriate to dance styles that is both personalized and localized. In contrast, in the St. John's case study, the drum group did not necessarily wear what administrators might have deemed "authentic" to the genre of music it performed. Rather, members preferred dress that would reflect the diversity of their group, their ethnic simultaneities. Thus, authenticity in the rural case study is based on observable markers of indigeneity that may be localized through motifs specific to the Mi'kmaq Nation, while authentic dress in the non-status case study, according to members of the group, was not based on nation or a more general indigenous identity, nor on the genre of musical expression, but instead on the visual expression of personal identity that may or may not include a marker of indigeneity. The process by which regalia was acquired and selected, on the other hand, was consistent with First Nations practices in many parts of North America.

### 8.5 *Language*

Language is a powerful strategy for the localization of powwow. Goertzen (2005) notes that drum groups are increasingly writing word songs which incorporate both vocables and semantically meaningful text. These word songs may function as markers of a nation-specific identity and serve to localize the powwow genre (Goertzen 2005, 290). In the Miawpukek context, the ability to sing in Mi'kmaq is an important marker of identity, one that is observed in school presentations, the singing of the Sipu'ji'j

Drummers, and Mi'kmaw drum groups at the Miawpukek powwow. Where fluency in the language has not been achieved, even basic phrases serve as a marker of Mi'kmaw identity, as was shown through the cultural presentations by students from Se't A'newey School.

Those living on the reserve have access to language instruction that is not available in the urban context (though it must be noted that the language instruction on reserve is not designed to produce fluent speakers of the language at this time). Among the St. John's drum group, there is a desire by several members (myself included) to learn Mi'kmaq and be able to sing Mi'kmaw songs (such as the Honour Song) with the correct pronunciation. For some members of this drum group, facility in language is seen as a means of displaying "cultural competence" (Krouse 1999, 78), as well as Mi'kmaw identity, to other (status) Mi'kmaq in the province. In a group with diverse heritages and songs borrowed from a variety of nations, however, language cannot emerge as a marker of more than a generalized indigenous identity. And yet, it remains striking that this group can probably sing Cree and Anishnabe texts better than they can sing Mi'kmaw ones. Further, the use of vocables, common in northern style powwow songs, is advantageous in a heterogeneous group as a common language among members.

It is not surprising, then, that only basic expressions in Mi'kmaq occur in the context of the St. John's drum group practice, such as *Kwe* (hello) or *Wela'lin* (thank you). In Miawpukek, especially during a powwow, Mi'kmaq is more commonly heard, often interspersed with English. While the Mi'kmaw language is an important marker of

identity in this context as well, one which serves to localize the powwow, the degree to which Mi'kmaq is used is an issue of both fluency and comprehensibility.

Berger has suggested that traditional languages spoken by marginalized peoples may serve a symbolic function in addition to being a salient assertion of identity for both performers and audience members (2003, xiv). Certainly this is true for the Miawpukek case study, where Mi'kmaw songs are sung. As Szego (2003) has suggested in a Hawaiian context, the sound and use of a traditional indigenous language (in this case, Mi'kmaq) is meaningful, even if those singing or listening do not comprehend its semantic meaning. Songs that have no text, but are composed of Mi'kmaw (or eastern) vocables similarly are meaningful for singers and listeners, even though they hold no denotative meaning (see Szego 2003, 316). Performances of these songs, considered to be traditionally Mi'kmaw, are in fact performances of Mi'kmaw identity, and therefore serve to localize the genre of powwow in the Miawpukek context.

#### 8.6 *Discursive Practices*

The language of tradition or of a "Mi'kmaw way" is used as one means of localizing the powwow tradition in Miawpukek. In cultural presentations by students who attend Se't A'newey School, powwow may be unproblematically represented as their tradition even though it was introduced only in the 1980s. In some readings, "tradition" might be equated with "ancient"; that is, discursive practices that surround particular songs may suggest an interpretive lens that connects them to "a perceived past" (Bealle



1993, 64). However, as I have suggested, what is not said through stage talk, such as the name of the person who made a particular song, may prove just as relevant. Based on the omission of information that would suggest otherwise, audiences may be led to interpret song and dance as “tradition.” As the particular history of certain songs are erased and conflated, they play a role in the recasting of history (Sarkissian 2000, 101-2).

Consequently, there may be a discourse of “ancient” songs that are actually quite new.

Tradition may be further asserted within the context of a powwow through the emcee’s stage talk. Ko’jua, for example, is referred to as “our dance” – something uniquely Mi’kmaw in the context of an intertribal powwow. The discourse of “our music” that emerges in interview with Jerry Evans and Steve George in the St. John’s case study echoes such stage talk. Jerry and Steve perceive a need to learn this Mi’kmaw music, as it is intricately linked to their nation-specific identities as non-status Mi’kmaq in the province. However, other widely held cultural values, such as the prohibition on alcohol and drugs, may also be asserted as part of the “traditional way,” an interpretive lens that localizes customs and practices as part of Mi’kmaw tradition.

Joking is also an essential part of powwow culture, and First Nations culture more broadly, though it appears in locally-specific ways in each case study. Jason Morrisseau’s joking and humour within the context of the Friendship Centre Drum Group is specific to the context, used to foster a particular sense of community, to initiate new members, and provide alternative stories of how particular members became part of the group. His storytelling is formulaic – he often begins explanations of songs and traditions with a

stereotypic style of “Native” storytelling, starting with “Long time ago, my people . . .” However, after eliciting laughter from other members of the group, he does not maintain this style of speech throughout the story. As Basso (1979) has demonstrated in a Western Apache context, “joking is one means for ‘stretching’ [. . .] social relationships, a playful device for testing and reaffirming solidarity by ostensibly denying it” (69). In the Miawpukek case study, joking and humour are employed by the emcee, as he provides the background to dances, invites more dancers to the circle, or comments on the absence of a particular drum group. His is a formulaic form of speech that is meant to entertain and engage participants at a powwow.

These styles of speech-making have been termed “stage talk” by Bealle (1993) and “powwow patter” by Gelo (1999). Such discursive practices serve a variety of functions and inscribe historic and traditional practices with cultural meaning and value. However, such discourse also creates or suggests meaning for practices that do not have a long history in a particular community, by drawing comparisons between local and borrowed dance styles or by referring to local people, issues, or places.

Speech-making may in some cases be read as a performance of colonial encounter. In the Miawpukek case study (and at other Mi’kmaw powwows), the prayer or invocation at the start of each day of powwow is striking. Such speech acts perform a specific local history of contact and the conversion to Christianity following the baptism of Chief Membertou in 1610. Particularly significant is the structure of these invocations, which bear resemblance to general intercessions within a Catholic mass – their structure

recalls that of a petition. Thus, a speech act that does not necessarily resonate in the same way that “Mi’kmaw way” does, may still be a performance of a local history within the context of a powwow. As Valentine (2003, 142) has noted, “the social context [extends] far beyond the performance venue, well beyond the performer and audience,” encompassing extended histories of community and Nation. This particular style of speech, however, does not occur during practices or performances of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, even though many members also have some history of involvement in the Catholic church or Catholic school system.

#### 8.7 *Gender*

The discursive practices about and within powwow are often marked by gender. As Hoefnagels (2007b) has noted, “tradition” may be invoked or used to explain gender restrictions on women playing the powwow drum. Indeed, this teaching has been adopted in Miawpukek, where Brenda Jeddore teaches her students that, “The Mi’kmaw drum is not for women” (personal communication, May 18, 2006). And yet, in seeming contradiction to this statement, women may serve as the tradition-bearers of this musical genre, in music classes and workshops held as part of the Cultural Days program. For Brenda, it may be that in her role of educator she is able to move across boundaries that would normally be more rigidly enforced (see Moisala and Diamond 2000, 8). Indeed, an educator might be interpreted as a mediator of culture in this context, which aligns well with historic practices of intercultural communication in Mi’kmaw communities;



historically, in First Nations along the Atlantic seaboard, women often played the role of cultural mediators (see Diamond 2008).

While I cannot speak to gender relations around the Sipu'ji'j drum, this group was entirely composed of male members. The “inherently” masculine nature of drumming was asserted through the stage talk of one emcee in direct reference to the Sipu'ji'j Drummers, who no longer drum. The role of emcee, as well as that of drum group, within the context of a powwow is one of display – they are always in the “front region” (Goffman 1959, 107) during the performance of powwow. Within the context of the Miawpukek powwow, women often serve in planning and organizational roles, doing the ‘behind the scenes’ work that is essential to the running of a powwow. Their contribution to the event is often veiled. And yet, in this local context, women also move to the front as emcees who introduce local dancers by name during Grand Entry, as one means of localizing powwow, and as speech-makers who offer invocations. Thus, the role of women in the cultural performance of powwow in the Miawpukek context may be seen to simultaneously uphold and subvert commonly held notions of gendered participation.

In the St. John's case study, “traditional” gender roles are observed around the drum. While these may be subverted during practice sessions as a means of initiation by the lead drummer or for practical reasons based on who knows and remembers repertoire, they are strictly guarded in public performances. At no point have I ever sung a lead or sat at the drum in performance contexts. Further, my presence in performances, though within “traditional” expectations for powwow, often confounded observers (particularly

media, but also administrators) and often led to my erasure from representations of the group (as discussed in Chapter Seven). Those unfamiliar with protocols of First Nations culture might suggest that the ability to sometimes subvert “traditional” gender roles is a function of being white (as Brenda Jeddore and I both are), that it does not matter whether the rules apply to us because we are white. Nothing could be further from the truth. Paul Pike has advised me that “breaking a rule” when you are not aware it exists is one thing – no one would fault a person for a transgression based in such ignorance; however, disregarding protocols when you have been made aware of them is another matter entirely. The observance of protocols by outsiders is a demonstration of respect for the values held by a particular culture. Where the women in this study have subverted “traditional” gender roles, it has occurred because cultural insiders have provided a space in which this could happen.

These sorts of simultaneous roles with mixed messages for women in Mi’kmaw powwow may be indicators of a localized approach to powwow. As has been noted, women do not normally take on these leadership roles such as emcee in powwow (my own observations, as well as those of Anna Hoefnagels, personal communication, February 3, 2008; Christopher Scales, personal communication, March 2, 2008), though they do often take on roles as educators and mediators, outside the arena of public display. Thus, in both of these case studies we find that performance reveals gender to take multiple forms simultaneously, as Sugarman (1989) has suggested. As much as performance may be delimited by and re-articulate expectations for gender roles,

performance may also have the power to refashion such expectations (Sugarman 1989, 206).

#### 8.8 *Two Ways of Knowing, Two Ways of Being: Status, Community, and Identity*

The present study began with the assumption that one's First Nations status or lack thereof as defined by the *Indian Act* would have a meaningful impact on how one created and maintained a sense of a Mi'kmaw identity and community through the localization of powwow culture. To investigate this assumption, I considered cultural production and expression in two case studies within the same province that were initially defined based on their status under the *Indian Act*. As Bonita Lawrence has explained, First Nations identity may be reinforced in a reserve situation through a variety of means, including use of traditional language, worldview, status under the *Indian Act*, membership on a band list, and being part of the majority of the on-reserve population. In contrast, First Nations identity off-reserve is primarily maintained by "cultural orientation" (Lawrence 2004, 231). This study encompassing both on-reserve rural and off-reserve urban musical expressions has illuminated the impact that status, resources, and notions of ethnic simultaneity have on the localization of powwow as part of cultural revitalization in the province.

Three primary means of localization emerge in this study: 1) incorporating pre-existing Mi'kmaw or local songs (such as l'ko) and dance genres (such as Ko'jua) into the structure of the powwow, sometimes transposing them for different instrumentation



(powwow drum) or singing style (northern), and sometimes not; 2) inscribing borrowed powwow traditions with local or nation-specific meaning through the embellishment of regalia, the use of local singing style or language, and discourse that emphasizes tradition or “the Mi’kmaw way”; and 3) explicitly referencing or implicitly performing local histories (such as that of contact or conversion to Christianity). While there are similarities in some of the strategies employed to localize powwow observed in both case studies, the localization process is quite complex and largely occurs in different ways in each context. This is not particularly surprising, given that members of the urban drum group who are mostly non-status (or non-Native) participate in cultural revitalization initiatives in very different ways from those who are status, and, as a result, perform their identities in equally different ways. Like the double-curve motif, then, a doubleness has been observed throughout this study in the two ways of knowing and two ways of being Mi’kmaw in Newfoundland. These two simultaneous realities, one marked by status and life on the reserve, the other by non-status and life in an urban context, connect and intersect like the two parts of the double-curve motif.

In both case studies, powwow has become an expression and marker of identity, though it is localized to varying degrees and in different ways. However, which identities powwow is capable of expressing and marking requires consideration. Powwow is sometimes deployed or thought of as a sign of First Nations ethnic identity, and in some ways this is how it is being used. However, powwow as an ethnic expression is complicated in these case studies by the fact that not everyone who engages powwow is

of the same (First Nations) ethnicity. Indeed, powwow may be mobilized by individuals to express other, personal identities, such as researcher, activist, friend, enthusiast, and so on.

Where aboriginal identity differs from ethnic identity, according to Levin (1993, 4), is in the assertion that aboriginals are the “original occupants of a place.” For Levin, aboriginal identity is an ethnic identity that is nuanced by both historical experience and locale. It may be that powwow in its localized forms, with reference to particular places and histories of encounter, could be thought of as an expression of aboriginal identity. However, this too can be seen as problematic, for the aboriginal identity of Mi’kmaq in Newfoundland is a contested notion. As outlined in the introduction, it has been asserted that the Mi’kmaq were not indigenous to Newfoundland; rather, that they came here from other parts of Mi’kma’ki. And yet, there are oral histories that assert Newfoundland as the place of origin of the Mi’kmaw people.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly the idea of powwow as either ethnic or aboriginal identity allows us to account for some of the diversity observed around the cultural expression of powwow, including the intertribal heritage of members of the St. John’s Drum Group and the heterogeneous population of Miawpukek. How powwow becomes expressive of a

---

<sup>1</sup> Steve George has told me that one of the Kluskap stories in oral circulation asserts that the creation of the Mi’kmaw people occurred in Newfoundland, and that they then moved west to inhabit the areas encompassed by the term Mi’kma’ki (personal communication, April 11, 2008). While this version of the story seems to be largely absent from collections of Mi’kmaw legends, a version does appear in Hill (1963). Hill suggests that the stories in her collection (written for children) are based in the legends collected by Rand (1894) and Leland (1884); however, I have been unable to locate a recorded oral history that places creation in Newfoundland.

particular First Nation, a group of people who share culture traits, are linked by local or regional histories, and have occupied (year-round or seasonally) particular places and landscapes, however, is intricately related to the modes of localization that are mobilized by participants. That is, powwow becomes expressive of a Nation-specific identity when Nation-specific or local repertoires and styles are employed, processes of local meaning-making are engaged, and local histories are performed.

Conceiving of collectivity in terms of the nation, however, often ignores the diversity that is present, both in urban contexts and on reserves. While this study has demonstrated the multiple, sometimes contradictory identities of non-status Mi'kmaq, the identities of status Mi'kmaq in the province living in Miawpukek are also more heterogeneous than might be expected or even asserted by the community. As discussed in Chapter Two, the population in Miawpukek includes individuals and families of Mi'kmaq, Montagnais/Innu, Mohawk, Shawnee, and European descent. Thus, the notion of community itself is problematic, for it carries assumptions of stability, continuity, and collective experience and action. In short, it implies homogeneity, even if these associations are *only* assumptions. There have been many strategies to move beyond such geographically-bounded notions of group, including studies of the flow of media, technology, ideologies, and people across cultural boundaries (Appadurai 1996). Relation-based approaches such as network theory, pathways, and scenes (Finnegan [1989] 2007; Noyes 2003; Peterson and Bennett 2004; Straw 1991) emphasize connectivity over collectivity, thereby permitting the investigation of powwow as



separate from its imagined ethnic group or nation-specific associations, without resorting to the reductionist concept of “pan-Indianism.”

In particular, this study endeavoured to test the notion of “scene” in relation to powwow, questioning whether the Miawpukek case-study might be best understood as a community and the St. John’s case-study as a scene. In the community of Miawpukek, as has been noted, regalia styles, singing styles, dance styles, languages, and the powwow patter of the emcee may all serve to reinforce shared local histories and experiences through processes of localization. Yet, at the same time, they destabilize these continuities through the intricate process of negotiating pastness and modernity (Clyde Ellis 2003). Borrowed traditions, nation-specific traditions, and a myriad of other expressive forms coexist and are synthesized in the context of a Mi’kmaw powwow. Participants at a Mi’kmaw powwow come from many different locales and ethnic backgrounds, and therefore cannot be understood through notions of collectivity such as “community.” Through powwow, members of this heterogeneous population interact or socialize around a particular shared musical genre, reconfiguring and resignifying cultural symbols taken from other locales and spaces to express the “local scene” (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 8). Consciousness of innovation in other areas is valued and encourages change and growth within the scene. For example, the popularity of contest powwows throughout North America likely influenced the decision to hold a contest powwow in Elsipogtog as part of the twentieth-anniversary celebrations. Thus, the lens of scene is one way of accounting for the diversity and heterogeneity that is observed at

many powwows throughout the world. Afterall, in the twenty-first century, powwows are also organized and/or attended by new agers, a practice that is sometimes contentious (Aldred 2005), as well as German populations in Europe (Watchman 2005). Powwow has even become a commodity mobilized in the cruise industry, primarily attracting non-native participants (Aldred 2005, 266-68). This would lead one to interpret powwow as a translocal scene (Peterson and Bennett 2004, 8) as one means of accounting for the connected nature of all those who participate in powwow in some way, without suggesting that such connectedness necessarily translates into collective action or a shared vision (see Thacker 2004).

For the St. John's case study, however, the notion of scene which initially appeared to be a useful lens for understanding the interaction and musical expression of members with diverse heritages, was challenged by the way in which members of the group spoke about their experiences. The notion of scene certainly provides one solution to the homogenizing notion of community, one that is not bounded by the historical continuities of a specific locale. However, as has been demonstrated, members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group do not conceive of their participation in the drum group in this way. Rather, they see their own group and, by extension, the larger Mi'kmaw and First Nations population, as a community in which they are members. Indeed, "community" is the word that some members employ to describe that which they seek as drummers. By participating in First Nations culture, Steve George is attempting to build community, a community that he understands as family. He is the first to acknowledge

that this community in the Newfoundland context and beyond is divided and disjointed, both politically and culturally. However, he still chooses to strive towards community, a term that, for him, suggests a particular mode of interaction that he seeks as a Mi'kmaw person. He is one constituent in the local history of the Mi'kmaq on this island and wants to be acknowledged as such by other Mi'kmaq in the province. Thus, while scene can be a useful means of acknowledging diversity, it is not necessarily how the participants themselves see their participation in powwow. The concept of "scene," then, works better for the Miawpukek powwow, and perhaps the phenomenon of powwow more generally, while the concept of "community" represents the ethos of the St. John's group more accurately.

Nevertheless, while bounded notions of community (linked to place) do little to help us understand the intricacy of the situation in Newfoundland, Levin's notion that identity is nuanced by historical experience and locale remains significant. The key to understanding powwow as an expression of Mi'kmaw identity in Newfoundland is through processes of localization. By making elements of powwow locally meaningful and injecting locally significant elements (like Ko'jua) into the structure of powwow, powwow emerges as one expression of Mi'kmaw and Aboriginal identity in Newfoundland, for status, non-status, and mixed-bloods alike.

It has been suggested that some mixed-bloods have the luxury of choice, that, depending on their physical appearance, they may be able to blend into the majority population in urban centres (Krouse 1999, 79). In contrast, a recent study of mixed



identity in Newfoundland has suggested that mixed-bloods may “claim, cultivate, and defend” the Aboriginal aspect of their identity because it is “under siege” (King 2007, 78) However, as this study has demonstrated, rather than select one identity, many engage in a process of “ethnic-amending” in which they engage with several different heritages at once and incorporate aspects from each in a collection of “working ethnic identities” (Nagel 1995, 948). Thus, as has been demonstrated through the experiences of some members of the Friendship Centre Drum Group, identity is less about a singular ethnic choice and more about the experience of ethnic (and other) simultaneities.

That First Nations identity is no longer inextricably linked to practices commonly identified and imagined as “traditions” (Samuels 2004, 244) is significant to this study. Through processes of localization, practices of a variety of types from diverse sources may come to reflect a local or nation-specific identity. However, identity is also ambiguous and, at times, contradictory, as has been noted by Samuels (2004), and may not hold a specific indigenous referent. For example, the diverse assemblage of musical styles heard within the context of a Mi’kmaq powwow, both during the powwow itself and the social night that precedes it, is significant. It is demonstrative of the diverse and polyvalent musical expressions that are located in a place and have the power to create and form that same locale (Casey 1996: 19; see also Wrazen 2007). Thus, identity is, as Samuels (2004, 127-28) has noted, sustained and affirmed through myriad expressive forms that travel through and across perceived ethnic boundaries. In the Newfoundland context, this may include the flow of northern powwow, Mi’kmaq, and Anglo-Irish

Newfoundland music, among other popular genres, each of which may be activated to greater or lesser degrees depending on the context.

The seemingly contradictory and incompatible co-existence of Native and Christian practices within Mi'kmaw powwows are also indicative of the 'punning' suggested by Samuels (2004) and recall the simultaneities that appear throughout these case studies. Prayers in Mi'kmaq which invoke both God and the Creator, while praying for forgiveness and healing through a structure similar to intercessions in the Catholic mass, point in many directions at once. They are performances of both Catholic and Mi'kmaw identity at once. Indeed, without making explicit reference to encounter or the conversion of Mi'kmaq to Christianity, they implicitly perform a particular (local) history of contact and the adoption of new religious practices (see Hanrahan 2008). Such simultaneity is at the heart of identity as expressed through the musical performances described in this dissertation.

It may be tempting to label this process of assembling diverse musical styles and repertoire, as well as visual signs and symbols, into an expression of identity as *bricolage*. The *bricoleur* is one who makes do with whatever materials he has at hand or can access, reordering, recontextualizing, and resignifying them to communicate a different message (Lévi-Strauss 1966). It is suggestive of a piecemeal construction and representation of identity that is not reliant on pre-determined patterns or structures. While there may be an element of this "make do" attitude present among those reviving Mi'kmaw culture, given the discontinuity of Mi'kmaw tradition in Newfoundland, this

notion of *bricolage* veils the extensive research that many engage in when making decisions, for example, in determining how to decorate or realize their regalia. Not just *any* style or symbol will do; there is a concerted effort to select items and icons that are meaningful on a personal or local level. In particular, practitioners strive to incorporate nation-specific symbols and styles into the general structures of powwow. Finally, *bricolage* suggests a discontinuity, a disconnect between the diverse elements that are (re)combined. However, those who do this work of expressing identity often do not perceive a disconnection or discontinuity. Rather, they see continuity between the use of a double-curve motif on an eighteenth century peaked cap and the same motif on the edging of a buckskin vest; they understand the continuity that is maintained between the presence of an eight-point star on a piece of nineteenth-century quillwork and the same motif when it appears on a Men's Traditional shield. Thus, while the patchwork tactic of *bricolage* may be at play in some instances, it is the larger process of localization that demonstrates historical connections and expressive continuities.

I began this dissertation by noting, as Bigenho (2002) has, that authenticity matters. And it does. But the question is, to whom? Hoefnagels (2007a, 108) has noted that authenticity is often not a concern for practitioners of powwow culture. Emic notions of authenticity emerging in this study are largely specific to individuals. That which is perceived as authentic or expressing the truth of an individual's experience is emphasized rather than an overarching group identity or some construct established by outsiders. While critics could suggest that this style of authenticity emerges because Mi'kmaw



culture was not permitted to flourish in Newfoundland, that it is, again, a matter of cobbling together elements in response to the discontinuity of tradition, seeing this approach as a “coping” mechanism does little to acknowledge the agency of practitioners and the process of (re)vitalization.

Rather than constructing categories of types or processes of authenticity, as Allan Moore (2002) and Bigenho (2002) have, this study suggests that there is a continuum of attitudes about authenticity that exists, and that one’s position on this continuum at any given time is influenced by many factors, including whether one is an insider or outsider; is a performing member of a group, an administrator for the same, or a member of the audience; chooses to engage simultaneous ethnicities rather than selecting one over the other; or has knowledge of issues such as cultural appropriation, authenticity, and identity, for example. Authenticity as it emerges in these case studies is fluid and contingent, always open to negotiation and revision.

While there is negotiation regarding the “right” way of doing things, people at the centre of this study do not concern themselves with authenticity *per se*. The issue is not conceived of as one of authenticity; rather, it is how best to engage and represent heritage in a meaningful way. Thus, authenticity is not a useful strategy for explaining what is going on in these case studies. Rather, it is more productive to consider which strategies have been employed in revitalization initiatives and what these can tell us about the way in which powwow becomes tradition in communities.

This process of powwow becoming tradition should not, in my view, be

represented as an “invention of tradition.” Hobsbawm’s (1983) notion of “invented tradition” can refer both to traditions that are formally constructed and implemented, and traditions that emerge through more informal means, quickly taking root in community practice. Such traditions may imply or overtly assert some basis for historical continuity and through repetition can play a role in shaping and strengthening collective identity (Hobsbawm 1983, 1-2). While the concept of “invented tradition” can be seen as a powerful notion, which acknowledges the creative aspect of culture and the agency of practitioners, it may also be problematic. “Invented” may be erroneously interpreted as “made up.” As critics of the terminology, such as Briggs, have noted, “invention becomes equated with falsification” (1996, 438). Briggs further points out the problem of authority, noting that scholars attempting to verify the authenticity or invented nature of a particular aspect of culture are further colonizing Indigenous peoples and perpetuating power imbalances in the representation of culture groups (*ibid.*, 437). My interest here has not been to assess the validity of powwow as their traditional culture, but rather to explore how it is part of their lived experience in the present while incorporating music, dance, dress, and culturally meaningful symbols emerging from the past.

How the simultaneities identified in this study play out in other communities remains an important question. There is still much work to be done on gender and the role of women in other Mi’kmaw music communities, for instance. A combination of ethnographic and historical study would perhaps answer the question raised here of whether Mi’kmaw (or eastern) Nations are more open to the participation of women in

traditional culture. It may also elucidate the question of whether all gender restrictions have the same import. Of particular interest will be further consideration of a female drum group on the west coast of the province, a group that is leading the way in musical revitalization initiatives there (see Tulk 2007). Given that those on the west coast of the province are non-status Mi'kmaw living in a largely rural context, how they experience the issues outlined in this study will undoubtedly nuance the present discussion, particularly in terms of notions of community or other collectivity. More broadly, consideration of how gender may be read on regalia, as well as the social currency of regalia, may extend understandings of cultural dress. Further testing of powwow as a music scene may prove relevant. Finally, ethnography in these communities, in which many have both Mi'kmaw and French heritages, will further demonstrate strategies to acknowledge, negotiate, embody, enact, and maintain a sense of Mi'kmaw identity amid many ethnic simultaneities.

#### 8.9 *The Ethnography of Emergent Cultures: Choosing a Past, Choosing a Present*

While the introduction tells a particular local history emphasizing the erasure of Mi'kmaw identity in the province, the stories of hidden heritages, cultural revitalization, and the localization of powwow nuance this history in important ways. In the revival of culture, questions emerge surrounding the notion of "tradition," whether "tradition" is feasible or desirable in the modern context, and who or what can be a source for traditional indigenous knowledge, such as songs or protocols. To what or to whom do



you go back? What past are you choosing to revive? Or perhaps more importantly, what present are you choosing? The choice to revive culture not only ties a cultural group to its past, its history, and its ancestors, but also functions in the present as a means of fostering unity among communities, cultural groups or nations, regions, and more broadly First Nations throughout Canada and the United States.

Livingston (1999, 66) defines revivals as “social movements which strive to ‘restore’ a music system believed to be disappearing or completely relegated to the past for the benefit of contemporary society.” While one could argue that the music system of the past for Mi’kmaq consisted of birch bark percussion instruments, Newfoundland Mi’kmaq, like Mi’kmaq in the Maritimes, have chosen to restore a music system that focusses on the powwow drum and hand drum, as well as traditional Mi’kmaw and intertribal songs. This choice certainly reflects the influence of Mi’kmaq in the Maritimes, who were agents in their own music revivals in the 1980s and who now serve as a basis upon which some continuity of culture may be constructed, but it is also indicative of the proliferation of powwows in late twentieth century and early twenty-first century North America. Such powwows are localized, however, through references to local oral history during the event, the use of some nation-specific music and dance, the use of local or regional singing styles, and personalized regalia designs that reflect both the individual and the First Nation to which he or she belongs.

Perhaps, then, this revival is not about music systems, or repertoires, or even musical styles. Rather, I would suggest that what is being revived is a mode of

communication, a way of socializing through music. The decision to adopt and localize a particular shared musical style, such as that cultivated by Maritime Mi'kmaq, or aspects of the style of another region, such as powwow, is perhaps a way of encouraging Mi'kmaw communities and other First Nations to relate to one another and find a common ground in the present. Powwow, as it is currently celebrated, is a relatively new phenomenon for many First Nations in the east and Hoefnagels (2001) notes that in Southwestern Ontario this tradition has existed for no more than 45 years. In Newfoundland it is even younger, with the powwow drum first introduced in 1987 and the first powwow occurring in 1996. However, this is not to say that powwow is without ties to past traditional celebrations or that it does not have a foundation in history. Certainly there were community celebrations that were both spiritual and social at once, where music and dance were central features, and where previous generations engaged in some of the traditional songs and dances still seen today, although they have undoubtedly changed over time as all elements of culture do.

In choosing powwow, a community or cultural group is acknowledging a tie to gatherings and alliances of the past, even if that tie is tenuous or symbolic, and this in no way reduces its power or significance in terms of identity formation and assertion. With this same decision to engage in powwow as a cultural event and as a musical tradition, however, one is also choosing to engage a bond of kinship or solidarity with other First Nations in the present. In the specific case of the St. John's Friendship Centre Drum Group, such choices reflect a need to foster unity amid the diversity of a mixed urban

drum group; hence, the choice of a musical style and musical instruments that would be appropriate for sharing with many different traditions, such as powwow, helps to achieve that goal. More broadly, however, it may represent a choice of musical style that will permit cultural dialogue with other Mi'kmaq and other First Nations.

These stories of Mi'kmaw revitalization and the localization of powwow continue though my research has ended. In many ways, it feels as though this topic is still effervescing with newness, that there is still more to do and say after four years of research, that the picture is not yet complete. Members of drum groups such as the St. John's Friendship Centre Drum Group are still facing challenges in the pursuit of cultural knowledge – they continue to face challenges in their displays of cultural competence and efforts towards acceptance by a larger Mi'kmaw community. And yet, it would be naive to think that there would ever be a good time to conclude my telling of their stories. As Tedlock and Mannheim have noted, “cultures are continuously produced, reproduced, and revised in dialogues among their members” (1995, 2). It is this negotiation of culture that is demonstrated in the choice of repertoire and singing style by drum groups, as well as their choice of structural organization and division of musical and extra-musical responsibilities, and the ability of all of these factors to change over time.

Describing these forms of cultural production risks freezing them in time and, indeed, this study cannot be read as more than a snapshot of particular groups and events in a particular time period, place, and set of circumstances. During the time that passed between writing the first draft of this dissertation and its final version, many aspects of



the groups and their contexts have changed. In each case, their stories go on. Dialogues with consultants after they had read the first draft greatly shaped the final version of this study, thus highlighting the fact that ethnography, like culture, is emergent (Tedlock and Mannheim 1995, 2). I have provided a snapshot of part of the ongoing process of cultural revitalization among Newfoundland Mi'kmaq that may, indeed will, in the end look very different from another snapshot captured in another time and set of circumstances. New experiences, creative ideas, and interactions with others will ensure the continued remaking of Mi'kmaq music and culture in the future and the revitalization process, like culture itself, will endure.

## References

- Albers, Patricia C and Beatrice Medicine. 2005. Some reflections on nearly forty years on the northern Plains powwow circuit. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 26-45. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Aldred, Lisa. 2005. Dancing with Indians and wolves: New agers tripping through powwows. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 258-74. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Alger, Abby Langdon. 1897. In *Indian tents: Stories told by Penobscot, Passamaquoddy and Micmac Indians to Abby L. Alger*. Boston: Roberts.
- Alstrup, Kevin. 2004. Mi'kmaq atukwaqann and aural symbolism in the music-making of Thomas George Poulette. In *Papers of the thirty-fifth Algonquian conference*, ed. H. C. Wolfart, 1-12. Winnipeg: U Manitoba.
- Alwyn, Eleanor. 2004. Traditions in a colonized world: Two realities of a First Nation. PhD Diss. University of Toronto.
- Anderson, Benedict. 1991. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Rev. Ed. London: Verso.
- Anderson, Kim. 2000. *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto: Second Story Press.
- Anger, Dorothy. 1997. Situational ethnics: Meanings of Micmac identity in Newfoundland. Presented at the conference of the Canadian Anthropology Society, Memorial University, St. John's, NL. June 12-15.
- . 1988. *Novwa'mkisk (Where the sand blows . . .): Vignettes of Bay St. George Micmacs*. Port au Port, NL: Jesperson Printing Ltd.
- . 1983. Putting it back together: Micmac political identity in Newfoundland. Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at large: Cultural dimensions of globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk. n.d. *Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk*. <http://firstnationhelp.com/> (accessed February 27, 2007).
- Augustine, Stephen. 2005. *Mi'kmaq & Maliseet cultural ancestral material*. Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization.
- Axtmann, Ann. 2001. Performative power in Native America: Powwow dancing. *Dance research journal* 33, no 1: 7-22.
- Babiracki, Carol M. 1997. What's the difference? Reflections on gender and research in village India. In *Shadows in the field: New perspectives for fieldwork in ethnomusicology*, ed. Gregory F. Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, 121-38. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baird, Ellen M. 2002. Powwow drum singers: An exploratory study. PhD Diss., South Dakota State University.
- Bartels, Dennis. 1991. Newfoundland Micmac Claims to land and 'status'. *Native studies review* 7, no. 2: 43-51.
- . 1979. Time immemorial? A research note on Micmacs in Newfoundland. *Newfoundland Quarterly* 75, no. 3: 6-9.
- and Alice Bartels. 2005. Mi'gmaq lives: Aboriginal identity in Newfoundland. In *Walking a tightrope: Aboriginal people and their representations*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, 249-80. Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- . and Olaf Uwe Janzen. 1990. Micmac migration to western Newfoundland. *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 10, no. 1: 71-96.
- Bascom, William R. 1965. Four functions of folklore. In *The study of folklore*, ed. Alan Dundes, 279-98. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.
- Basso, Keith. 1979. *Portraits of 'the Whiteman': Linguistic play and cultural symbols among the western Apache*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Battiste, Marie. 2000. Introduction: Unfolding the lessons of colonization. In *Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision*, ed. Marie Battiste, xvi-xxx. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.



- . 1997. Mi'kmaq socialization patterns. In *The Mi'kmaq anthology*, ed. Rita Joe and Lesley Choyce, 145-61. Lawrencetown Beach: Pottersfield Press.
- . 1986. Micmac literacy and cognitive assimilation. In *Indian education in Canada: The legacy*, ed. Jean Barman, Yvonne Hebert, and Don McCaskill, 23-44. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Bauman, Richard. 1978. *Verbal art as performance*. Rowley, Mass: Newbury House Publishers.
- Bay St. George Mi'kmaq Cultural Revival Committee. 2005. The origins of powwow. *Igniting the flame: First annual Bay St. George Mi'kmaq pow wow*. <http://www.baystgeorge.mikmaqpowwow.com/powwowetiquette.htm> (accessed March 2, 2008).
- Bealle, John. 1993. Self-involvement in musical performance: Stage talk and interpretive control at a bluegrass festival. *Ethnomusicology* 37, no. 1: 63-86.
- Behar, Ruth. 1996. *The vulnerable observer: Anthropology that breaks your heart*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Benton Benai, Eddie. 2004. Interview, In *Pow Wow Trail Episode 1: The Drum*. Prod. Jeremy Torrie. Arbor Records.
- Benwah, Jasen. [n.d]. Mi'kmaq history and people: Clothing and garments. *St. George's Bay Mi'kmaq*. [http://www.jasenbenwah.ca/mikmaw\\_article17\\_clothing.html](http://www.jasenbenwah.ca/mikmaw_article17_clothing.html) (accessed February 17, 2005).
- Berger, Harris M. 2004. Horizons of melody and problems of the self. In *Identity and everyday life: Essays in the study of folklore, music, and popular culture*, ed. Harris M. Berger and Giovanna P. Del Negro, 43-88. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- . 2003. Introduction: The politics and aesthetics of language choice and dialect in popular music. In *Global pop, local language*, ed. Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll, ix-xxvi. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- Best, Kelly. 2007. Hip-hop on the east side: A multi-sited ethnography of breakdancing and rap music from St. John's and Grand Falls, Newfoundland. *Newfoundland and Labrador studies* 22, no. 1: 315-34.

- Bigenho, Michelle. 2002. *Sounding Indigenous: Authenticity in Bolivian music performance*. New York: Palgrave.
- Bochner, Arthur P. and Carolyn Ellis, eds. 2002. *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, literature and aesthetics*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brand, Johanna. 1993. *The life and death of Anna Mae Aquash*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Toronto: James Lorimer & Co.
- Briggs, Charles L. 1996. The politics of discursive authority in research on the 'invention of tradition.' *Cultural anthropology* 11, no. 4: 435-69.
- Brown, Mrs. W. Wallace. 1892. "Chief-making" among the Passamaquoddy Indians. *Journal of American folklore* 5, no. 16: 57-59.
- . 1890. Wabanaki game of ball. *Journal of American folklore* 3, no. 8. 32.
- Browner, Tara. 2002. *Heartbeat of the people: Music and dance of the northern pow-wow*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- . 2000. Making and singing pow-wow songs: Text, form, and the significance of culture-based analysis. *Ethnomusicology* 44, no. 2: 214-233.
- Burton, Bryan. 1993. *Moving within the circle: Contemporary native American music and dance*. Danbury: World Music Press.
- Butler, Judith. 2004. *Undoing gender*. Boca Raton, Fla.: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.
- Butler, Stephen. 2005. Liner notes. *Setting the record straight*, by Blackfoot Confederacy. Canyon Records.
- Casey, Edward S. 1996. How to get from space to place in a fairly short stretch of time: Phenomenological prolegomena. In *Senses of place*, ed. Steven Feld and Keith H. Basso, 13-52. Santa Fe: School of American Research Press.

- Ceepeekous, George. 1999. Dancer. *Saskatchewan Indian* 29, no. 2: 3, 6-7, 15, 17, 19, 22, and 27. <http://www.sicc.sk.ca/saskindian/a99pow03.htm> (accessed March 7, 2008).
- Chalker, James R. 2006. History lesson: Confederation wasn't such a good deal for Newfoundland. *The independent*. August 6.
- Champagne, Duane. 1998. American Indian studies is for everyone. In *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah, 181-89. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Christmas, Ben. 1980. Songs and customs. *Cape Breton magazine* 25 (June): 9-12. Transcribed and translated by Bernie Francis.
- Coates, Kenneth. 2000. *The Marshall decision and native rights*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Cohen, Sara. 1998. Sounding out the city: Music and the sensuous production of place. In *The place of music*, eds. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill, 269-290. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Coish, Calvin. 2000. *Stories of the Mi'kmaq*. Grand Falls-Winsor, NL: College of the North Atlantic.
- Colbourne, B. Wade. 1991. Mitchell, Matthew. In *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*, ed. Joseph R. Smallwood, Cyril F. Poole, and Robert H. Cuff, 591. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publications, Ltd.
- Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. 2002. Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada tripartite forum. [www.cmmns.com/pdf/tri.pdf](http://www.cmmns.com/pdf/tri.pdf) (accessed November 21, 2003).
- , and Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology. 2001. *Mikwite'Imanej Mikmaqi'k: Let us remember the old Mi'kmaq*. Halifax: Nimbus.
- Creighton, Helen. 1972. Canada's maritime provinces: An ethnomusicological survey. *Ethnomusicology* 16, no. 3: 404-14.
- . 1962. *Maritime folk songs*. Toronto: Ryerson Press.
- Cremo, Lee, interview by Gordon Smith. 1990. In *Sound of the drum*, 59-63. Brantford: Woodland Cultural Centre.



- Cronk, Michael Sam, Beverley [Cavanagh] Diamond, and Franziska von Rosen. 1988. Celebration: Native events in eastern Canada. In *Folklife annual 1987*, ed. Alan Jabbour and James Hardin, 70-85. Washington: Library of Congress.
- Cruikshank, Julie. 2005. *Do glaciers listen? Local knowledge, colonial encounters, and social imagination*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.
- Currier, Isabel. 1971. Folkways in dance by Maine's Passamaquoddies. *Down east magazine* 18, no. 1: 54-9.
- Curtis (Burlin), Natalie. 1935. *The Indians' book: An offering by the American Indians of Indian lore, musical and narrative, to form a record of the songs and legends of their race*. New York: Harper and Brothers.
- Davis, Stephen A. 1997. *Mi'kmaq*. Halifax, N.S: Nimbus.
- Deloria, Philip J. 2004. *Indians in unexpected places*. Kansas: University Press of Kansas.
- Denny, Kathy, interview by Trudy Sable. 2006. In Nativedance.ca, ed. Elaine Keillor et al. [http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Interviews/Kathy\\_Denny](http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Interviews/Kathy_Denny) (accessed February 28, 2008).
- DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music in everyday life*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Densmore, Frances. 1947. Imitative dances among the American Indians. *Journal of American folklore* 60, no. 235: 73-8.
- Department of Justice Canada. [n.d.] The constitution act, 1867. *Constitution Acts 1867-1982*. <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/Const/index.html> (accessed January 17, 2007).
- Desjarlait, Robert. 1997. The contest powwow versus the traditional powwow and the role of the Native American community. *Wicazo Sa review* 12, no. 1: 115-27.
- Diamond, Beverley. 2008. *Native American music in Eastern North America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- . 2005. Media as social action: Native American musicians in the recording studio. In *Wired for sound: Engineering and technologies in sonic cultures*, ed. Paul D. Green and Thomas Porcello, 118-37. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.

- . 2002. Native American contemporary music: The women. *The world of music* 44, no. 1: 11-39.
- . 1992. Christian hymns in Eastern Woodlands communities: Performance contexts. In *Musical repercussions of 1492: Encounters in text and performance*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.
- , Sam Cronk, and Franziska von Rosen. 1994. *Visions of sound: Musical instruments of First Nations communities in Northeastern America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dickason, Olive Patricia. 2002. *Canada's First Nations: A history of founding peoples from earliest times*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Dièreville, N. de. [1708]. 1968. *Relation of the voyage to Port Royal in Acadia or New France*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- DuBois, W. E. B. [1903]. 1986. The souls of black folk. In *Writings*, 355-547. New York: The Library of America.
- Dugmore, Arthur Radclyffe. 1930. *In the heart of the northern forests*. London: Chatto and Windus.
- Eckstorm, Fannie Hardy. 1924. *The Penobscot man*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Reprint 1931.
- Economic research and analysis*. [n.d] <http://www.economics.gov.nl.ca/> (accessed February 7, 2007).
- Ellis, Carolyn. 2004. *The ethnographic I: A methodological novel about autoethnography*. Walnut Creek: AltaMira Press.
- Ellis, Clyde. 2003. *A dancing people: Powwow culture on the Southern Plains*. Lawrence: University of Kansas Press.
- Elsipogtog community resource directory*. [n.d] [www.elsipogtog.com](http://www.elsipogtog.com) (accessed November 13, 2006).
- Erickson, Vincent O. 1978. Some recent Micmac witchcraft beliefs. In *Papers from the fourth annual congress, 1977*, ed. Richard J. Preston, 189-200. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.

- Federation of Newfoundland Indians. 2006. The agreement in principle. *Registration and Recognition for Mi'kmaq of Newfoundland*. St. Georges, NL: Federation of Newfoundland Indians. <http://www.fni.nf.ca/news/Negoations%20Newletter.pdf> (accessed January 17, 2007)
- Fewkes, Jesse Walter. 1890. A contribution to Passamaquoddy folk-lore. *Journal of American folklore* 3, no 11: 257-80.
- Fine, Gary Alan. 1979. Folklore diffusion through interactive social networks: Conduits in a preadolescent community. *New York Folklore* 5: 89-125.
- Finnegan, Ruth. [1989] 2007. *The hidden musicians: Music-making in an English town*. Middletown: Wesleyan University Press.
- Fitzgerald, John Edward, ed. 2002. *Newfoundland at the crossroads: Documents on confederation with Canada*. St. John's: Terra Nova Publishing.
- . 1992. The confederation of Newfoundland with Canada, 1946-1949. Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- Fixico, Donald L. 1998. Ethics and responsibilities in writing American Indian history. In *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah, 84-99. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Fogelson, Raymond D. 1998. Perspectives on Native American identity. In *Studying Native America: Problems and prospects*, ed. Russell Thornton, 40-59. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Fowler, Loretta. 2005. Local contexts of powwow ritual. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 68-84. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Gadsby, Jane. 1999. An ethnography of the St. John's airport: Applying social network theory through observation. *Culture & tradition* 20: 43-62.
- Gathering of Nations. [n.d] General information. *Gathering of Nations*. <http://www.gatheringofnations.com/powwow/index.htm> (accessed November 20, 2006).
- Gelo, Daniel J. 1999. Powwow patter: Indian emcee discourse on power and identity. *Journal of American folklore* 112, no. 443: 40-57.



- George Paul. [n.d] Biography. New Brunswick Arts Board.  
[www.artsnb.ca/aboriginal/pdf/georgepaul.pdf](http://www.artsnb.ca/aboriginal/pdf/georgepaul.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2007).
- Gilbert, Larry. 1996. *Entitlement to Indian status and membership codes in Canada*. Toronto: Thomson Canada Ltd.
- Goertzen, Chris. 2005. Purposes of North Carolina powwows. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 275-302. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.
- Goodall, H. Lloyd. 2000. *Writing the new ethnography*. Lanham: Altamira Press.
- Government of Canada. 1952. *British North America Acts, 1867 to 1952*. Ottawa: E. Cloutier, Queen's Printer.
- Government of Newfoundland and Labrador. 1982. *Assessment and analysis of the Micmac land claim in Newfoundland*. St. John's: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador.
- Grekin, Jacqueline and Simon Milne. 1996. Toward sustainable tourism development: The case of Pond Inlet, NWT. In *Tourism and indigenous peoples*, ed. Richard Butler and Thomas Hinch, 76-106. London: International Thomson Business Press.
- Hagar, Stansbury. 1895. Micmac customs and traditions. *American anthropologist* 8: 31-41.
- Hanrahan, Maura. 2008. Resisting colonialism in Nova Scotia: The Kesukwitk Mi'kmaq, centralization, and residential schooling. *Native studies review* 17, no 1: 25-44.
- . 2003. The lasting breach: The omission of Aboriginal people from the Terms of Union between Newfoundland and Canada and its ongoing impacts. *Collected research papers of the Royal Commission on renewing and strengthening our place in Canada*. St. John's: Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada.
- Hatton, Orin T. 1986. In the tradition: Grass dance musical style and female pow-wow singers. *Ethnomusicology* 30, no. 2: 197-222.

- Hayward, Philip. 2002. *Hearing the call: Music and social history on Lord Howe Island*. Lord Howe Island: Lord Howe Island Arts Council.
- Hewson, John and Beverley Diamond. 2007. Santu's song. *Newfoundland and Labrador studies* 22, no.1: 227-57.
- Herzog, George. 1928. Musical styles in North America. In *Proceedings of the 23rd international congress of Americanists*, 455-58.
- Hill, Kay. 1963. *Glooscap and his magic: Legends of the Wabanaki Indians*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd.
- Hiller, Harry H and Tara M. Franz. 2004. New Ties, Old Ties and Lost Ties: The Use of the Internet in Diaspora. *New Media & Society* 6, no. 6: 731-52.
- Hobsbawm, Eric. 1983. Introduction: Inventing traditions. In *The invention of tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, 1-14. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hoefnagels, Anna T. 2007a. The dynamism and transformation of "tradition": Factors affecting the development of powwows in Southwestern Ontario. *Ethnologies* 29, no. 1-2: 107-41.
- . 2007b. 'What is tradition if we keep changing it to suit our own needs?' 'Tradition' and gender politics at powwows in Southwestern Ontario. In *Folk music, traditional music, ethnomusicology: Canadian perspectives, past and present*, ed. Anna Hoefnagels and Gordon E. Smith, 187-200. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars' Publishing.
- . 2004. Northern style powwow music: Musical features and meanings. *Canadian journal for traditional music* 31: 10-23.
- . 2001. *Powwows in southwestern Ontario: Relationships, influences, and musical style*. PhD Diss., York University.
- Hoffman, Bernard. 1955. The historical ethnography of the Micmac of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. PhD Diss., University of California.
- Horan, Catherine F. 1991a. Bank Crash. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publishing.

- . 1991b. Black Monday. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publishing.
- Hornborg, Anne-Christine. 2002. St. Anne's day: A time to 'turn home' for the Canadian Mi'kmaq Indians. *International review of mission* 91, no. 361: 237-255.
- Houston North Gallery. [n.d.] *Mi'kmaq Petroglyphs from Barry Stevens*. [http://www.houston-north-gallery.ns.ca/petroglyph\\_art.htm](http://www.houston-north-gallery.ns.ca/petroglyph_art.htm) (accessed November 21, 2003).
- Howard, James H. 1983. Pan-Indianism in Native American music and dance. *Ethnomusicology* 27, no 1: 71-82.
- . 1965. The St. Anne's Day celebration of the Micmac Indians, 1962. *Museum news* (South Dakota Museum) 26, no. 3-4: 5-14.
- . 1955. Pan-Indian culture of Oklahoma. *The scientific monthly* 81, no. 5: 215-20.
- , and Victoria Lindsay Levine. 1990. *Choctaw music and dance*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Howley, James P. 1915. *The Beothucks or red Indians: The Aboriginal inhabitants of Newfoundland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <http://www.mun.ca/rels/native/beothuk/beo2gifts/texts/howley17.html> (accessed January 20, 2007).
- Hymes, Dell H. 1962. The ethnography of speaking. In *Anthropology and human behavior*, 13-53. Washington: Anthropological Society of Washington.
- . 1974. *Foundations in sociolinguistics: An ethnographic approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. 2004a. Reserve creation at Natuashish. *Indian and Northern affairs Canada website*. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/irp/irp-Pb\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/irp/irp-Pb_e.html) (accessed January 17, 2007).
- . 2004b. Talks with First Nation groups in Newfoundland take important step forward. *Indian and Northern affairs Canada website*. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2005/2-02744\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/s-d2005/2-02744_e.html) (accessed January 17, 2007).



- . 2002. Labrador Innu registration and band creation. *Indian and Northern affairs Canada website*. [http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/irp/irp-Pbk\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/irp/irp-Pbk_e.html) (accessed January 17, 2007).
- Invitation Project. [n.d]. Invitation: The quilt of belonging. <http://www.invitationproject.ca/cgi-win/quilt.exe?LISTING=1210> (accessed November 21, 2003).
- Isaac, Thomas. 2001. *Aboriginal treaty rights in the Maritimes: The Marshall decision and beyond*. Saskatoon: Purich Publishers.
- Jackson, Doug. 1993. *On the country: The Micmac of Newfoundland*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publishing.
- Jackson, Jason Baird and Victoria Lindsay Levine. 2002. Singing for garfish: Music and woodland communities in Oklahoma. *Ethnomusicology* 46, no. 2: 284-306.
- Janes, Diane P. 1991. Confederation. *Encyclopedia of Newfoundland and Labrador*. St. John's: Harry Cuff Publishing.
- Jeddore, Beverley, interview with Franziska von Rosen. 2007. NativeDance.ca, ed. Elaine Keillor et al. <http://natedance.ca/index.php/Interviews/Jeddore?tp=p&bg=1&ln=e> (accessed April 10, 2007).
- Jeddore, Phil. 1996a. Ktaqmkuk Mi'kmaq pow wow: A celebration of Mi'kmaq identity. *Coaster* 11 July: 6.
- . 1996b. Medicine and healing: Balance between traditional and modern. *Coaster* 4 July: 1.
- . 1996c. Miawipukek community. *Miawipukek Aknutmaq*. <http://www.geocities.com/pilip/reserve.htm>, accessed April 11, 2006.
- . 1996d. Miawipukek hosts mini-event: Community gets finer points on how to powwow. *Coaster* 15 Feb: 1-2.
- . 1996e. Powwow committee holds successful fund-raising event. *Coaster* 18 April: 13.

- Jeddore, Roderick. 2000. Investigating the restoration of the Mi'kmaq language and culture on the First Nations reserve of Miawpukek. Master's thesis, University of Saskatchewan.
- Joe, Rita. 1997. The honour song of the Micmac: An autobiography. In *The Mi'kmaq Anthology*, ed. Rita Joe and Lesley Choyce, 239-79. Lawrencetown: Pottersfield Press.
- . 1996. *Song of Rita Joe: Autobiography of a Mi'kmaq poet*. Charlottetown: Ragweed Press.
- Johnson, Allan G. 2000. Other. *The Blackwell dictionary of sociology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Johnson, Eleanor. 1991. Mi'kmaq tribal consciousness in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In *Paqtatek: Policy and consciousness in Mi'kmaq life*, compiled by Stephanie Inglis, Joy Mannette, and Stacey Sulewski, 21-31. Halifax: Garamond Press.
- Johnson, Frederick. 1943. Notes on Micmac shamanism. *Primitive man* 16, no. 3-4: 53-80.
- Johnson, Randell. 1993. Editor's introduction: Pierre Bourdieu on art, literature and culture. In *The field of cultural production: Essays on art and literature*, ed. Randell Johnson, 1-25. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Jonas, Holly Higgins, ed. 2001. *In their own words: Canadian choral conductors*. Toronto: Dundurn Group.
- Jones, Steve. 2002. Music that moves: Popular music, distribution and network technologies. *Cultural studies* 16, no.2: 213-232.
- Keillor, Elaine. 2006. *Music in Canada: Capturing landscape and diversity*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Kidwell, Clara Sue. 1992. Indian women as cultural mediators. *Ethnohistory* 30, no. 2: 97-107.
- King, Karlie. 2007. Maintaining a "mixed" identity. *Culture & tradition* 29: 66-80.
- Kirkness, Verna. [1981] 1998. Teaching Indian languages in Canada. *Aboriginal languages: A collection of talks and papers*, 62-71. Arnprior, ON: V. J. Kirkness.

- Knockwood, Isabelle. 1992. *Out of the depths: The experiences of Mi'kmaw children at the Indian residential school at Schubunacadie, Nova Scotia*. Lockeport: Roseway.
- Knockwood, Jean. 2003. Creating a community-based school. In *Strong women stories: Native vision and community survival*, ed. Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence, 191-201. Toronto: Sumach Press.
- Krouse, Susan Applegate. 1999. Kinship and identity: Mixed bloods in urban Indian communities. *American Indian culture and research journal* 23, no. 2: 73-89.
- Kruse, Holly. 1991. Subcultural identity in alternative music culture. *Popular music* 12, no.1: 33-41.
- Kruzenga, Len. 2002. Newfoundland Mi'kmaq to make case for recognition: Feds and province agree to study claim. *First Perspective* 11, no. 5: 1, 4.
- Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs. 2007. Minister congratulates Federation of Newfoundland Indians on signing of Agreement In Principle with Government of Canada." *News releases: Government of Newfoundland and Labrador*. <http://www.releases.gov.nl.ca/releases/2007/laa/1130n10.htm> (accessed November 30, 2007).
- Lacey, Laurie. 1993. *Micmac medicines: Remedies and recollections*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing.
- . 1977. *Micmac Indian medicine: A traditional way of health*. Antigonish: Formac Publishing.
- Lassiter, Luke Eric, Clyde Ellis, and Ralph Kotay. 2002. *The Jesus road: Kiowas, Christianity, and Indian hymns*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Lawrence, Bonita. 2004. "Real" Indians and others: Mixed-blood urban Native people and Indigenous nationhood. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Le Clercq, Chrestien. [1691] 1910. *New relation of Gaspesia: With the customs and religion of the Gaspesian Indians*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Lefebvre, Henri. [1961] 2002. *Critique of everyday life*. London: Verso.



- Leland, Charles Godfrey. 1884. *The Algonquin legends of New England; or myths and folk lore of the Micmac, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot tribes*. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.
- Lescarbot, Marc. [1618] 1968. *History of New France*. Translated by W. L. Grant. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, Claude. 1966. *The savage mind*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- Levin, Michael D. 1993. Introduction. In *Ethnicity and aboriginality: Case studies in ethnonationalism*, ed. Michael D. Levin, 3-8. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Livingston, Tamara E. 1999. Music revivals: Towards a general theory. *Ethnomusicology* 43, no.1: 66-85.
- Louisbourg Institute. [n.d]. Parks Canada: Fortress of Louisbourg.  
[http://fortress.uccb.ns.ca/parks/mik\\_e.html](http://fortress.uccb.ns.ca/parks/mik_e.html) (accessed November 21, 2003).
- Lovatt, Melanie. 2005. Personalizing popular culture: The uses and functions of the mix tape. Master's thesis, Memorial University of Newfoundland.
- MacCannell, Dean. 1999. Staged authenticity. In *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*, ed. Dean MacCannell, 91-107. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- MacDonald, Paul. 2000. Wilfred Prosper: A Mi'kmaq fiddler. *Fiddle magazine* [n.s] 27-30.
- Maillard, Abbé. 1758. *An account of the customs and manners of the Micmakis and Maricheets savage nations, now dependant on the government of Cape-Breton*. London: Printed for S. Hooper and A. Morely.
- Manuel, Peter. 1993. *Cassette culture: Popular music and technology in north India*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Marcus, George E. 1998. *Ethnography through thick and thin*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Marshall, Ingeborg. 1996. *A history and ethnography of the Beothuk*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.

- . 1988. Beothuck and Micmac: Re-examining relationships. *Acadiensis* 17, no.2: 52-82.
- Martijn, Charles A. 2003. Early Mi'kmaq presence in southern Newfoundland: An ethnohistorical perspective, c. 1500-1763. *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies* 19, no.1: 44-102.
- Martin, Peggy. 1979. Micmac Indians as witches in the Newfoundland tradition. In *Papers of the 10<sup>th</sup> Algonquian conference, 1978*, ed. William Cowan, 173-180. Ottawa: Carleton University.
- Matthiessen, Peter. 1991. *In the spirit of Crazy Horse*. New York: Viking.
- Mattern, Mark. 1999. The powwow as a public arena for negotiating unity and diversity in American Indian life. In *Contemporary Native American cultural issues*, ed. Duane Champagne, 129-43. London: Altamira Press.
- . 1998. *Acting in concert*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press..
- McAleese, Kevin. 1998. The reinterment of Thule Inuit burials and associated artifacts – IdCr-14 Rose Island, Saglek Bay, Labrador. *Études Inuit/Inuit studies* 22: 41-50.
- McIntosh, Alison J. 2004. Tourists' appreciation of Maori culture in New Zealand. *Tourism management* 25, no. 1: 1-15.
- McGee, Timothy. 1985. *The music of Canada*. New York: Norton.
- Means, Russell, with Marvin J. Wolf. 1995. *Where white men fear to tread: The autobiography of Russell Means*. New York, St. Martin's Press.
- Mechling, William Hubbs. 1959. The Malecite Indians, with notes on the Micmacs (concluded). *Anthropologica* 8.
- . 1958. The Malecite Indians, with notes on the Micmacs. *Anthropologica* 7.
- . 1917. The social and religious life of the Malecite and Micmacs. PhD Diss, Harvard University.
- . 1914. *Malecite tales*. Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau.

- Miawpukek First Nation. 2006. About Miawpukek. *Miawpukek First Nation*. <http://www.mfngov.ca/about.html> (accessed February 24, 2008).
- Miawpukek Mi'kamawey Mawio'Mi. 2000. *Conference handbook: International conference on understanding healing through diversity of practice*. Miawpukek, NL: Miawpukek Mi'kamawey Mawio'Mi.
- Miawpukek Mi'kmaq. 1997. *Miawpukek Mi'kmaq*. St. John's: K&D Printing.
- Mihesuah, Devon A. 1999. American Indian identities: Issues of individual choice and development. *Contemporary Native American cultural issues*, ed. Duane Champagne, 13-39. London: Altamira Press.
- . 1998. Introduction. In *Natives and academics: Researching and writing about American Indians*, ed. Devon A. Mihesuah, 1-22. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Mi'kmaq College Institute. [n.d] Mi'kmaq book of days. *Mi'kmaq resource centre*. Cape Breton University. <http://mrc.uccb.ns.ca/calendar.html> (accessed February 21, 2007).
- Mi'kmaq holdings resource guide: Regalia and remembrance. [n.d]. Nova Scotia Archives & Records Management. <http://www.gov.ns.ca/nsarm/virtual/mikmaq/ch7.asp?Search=&SearchList1=all> (accessed February 17, 2005).
- Mi'kmaq to vote on landless band deal. 2004. *CBC online*. October 12. [http://stjohns.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=nf\\_mikmaq\\_vote\\_20041012](http://stjohns.cbc.ca/regional/servlet/View?filename=nf_mikmaq_vote_20041012) (accessed 17 January 2007).
- Millais, John Guille. 1908. Micmacs in Newfoundland. *Newfoundland quarterly* 7, no. 4: 18-20.
- Mitchell, Tony. 1993. World music and the popular music industry: An Australian view. *Ethnomusicology* 37, no. 3: 309-38.
- Moisala, Pirkko and Beverley Diamond. Introduction. Music and gender: Negotiating shifting worlds. In *Music and gender*, ed. Pirkko Moisala and Beverley Diamond, 1-19. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Monson, Ingrid. 1996. *Saying something: Jazz improvisation and interaction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.



- Moore, Allan. 2002. Authenticity as authentication. *Popular music* 21, no. 2: 209-23.
- Moore, Dene. 2003. Mi'kmaq serve Ottawa, Nfld. government with class-action lawsuit. *Canoe news*. August 12. <http://cnews.canoe.ca/CNEWS/Canada/2003/07/03/pf-126215.html> (accessed September 28, 2004).
- Moore, Thurston. 2004. *Mix tape: The art of cassette culture*. New York: Universe Pub.
- Moore, Sylvia. 2003. Sylvia Moore's journal of her journey throughout Canada. 31 July. <http://southwest.ednet.ns.ca/sylvia/julyjournal.htm> (accessed November 21, 2003).
- Morrison, Ann. 1996. Christians, kyries, and *kci niwesq*: Passamaquoddy Catholic songs in historical perspective. *Native American studies* 10, no. 2: 15-21.
- Moss, Wendy. 1988. *Constitutional responsibility for the aboriginal peoples of Newfoundland*. Report prepared for Jack Harris by the Research Branch of the Library of Parliament. Ottawa: House of Commons.
- Mount Pearl Show Choir. [n.d] About the Mount Pearl show choir. *The Mount Pearl show choir*. <http://www.inet.ca/mpsc/main/about.html> (accessed February 5, 2007).
- Muise, Gertie Mai. 2003. Where the spirits live: Women rebuilding a non-status Mi'kmaq community. In *Strong women stories: Native vision and community survival*, ed. Kim Anderson and Bonita Lawrence, 25-36. Toronto: Sumach Press.
- Nagel, Joane. 1995. American Indian ethnic renewal: Politics and the resurgence of identity. *American sociological review* 60: 947-65.
- Nettl, Bruno. 1989. *Blackfoot musical thought: Comparative perspectives*. Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press.
- . 1954. North American Indian musical styles. *Journal of American folklore* 67, no. 266: 351-68.
- Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage. 1999. The 1948 referendums. *The confederation debate: 50 years and counting*. Newfoundland and Labrador Heritage Web Site Project. <http://www.heritage.nf.ca/confederation/referendums.html> (accessed January 15, 2007).

- Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency. [n.d] <http://www.stats.gov.nl.ca/> (accessed February 7, 2007).
- Nova Scotia Museum. 2007. Mi'kmaq portraits collection. <http://museum.gov.ns.ca/mikmaq/mp0001.htm> (accessed November 21, 2003).
- Nowlan, Alden. 1983. *Nine Micmac legends*. Hantsport: Lancelot Press.
- Noyes, Dorothy. 2003. Group. In *Eight words for the study of expressive culture*, ed. Burt Feintuch, 7-41. Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- Oberholtzer, Cath. 1995. The re-invention of tradition and the marketing of cultural values. *Anthropologica* 37, no. 2: 141-53.
- Overton, James. 1996. *Making a world of difference: Essays on tourism, culture and development in Newfoundland*. St. John's: ISER Books.
- Owen, Suzanne. 2005. Indigenous knowledge and its intertribal transmissions: Sources of contemporary Mi'kmaq traditional practices. Paper presented at First Nations – First Thoughts, Centre of Canadian Studies, University of Edinburgh, May 5-6. [http://www.cst.ed.ac.uk/2005conference/papers/Owen\\_paper.pdf](http://www.cst.ed.ac.uk/2005conference/papers/Owen_paper.pdf) (accessed February 21, 2007).
- Parsons, Elsie Clew. 1925. Micmac folklore. *Journal of American folklore* 38, no. 147: 55-133.
- Pastore, Ralph T. 1978a. Indian summer: Newfoundland Micmacs in the nineteenth century. In *Papers from the fourth annual congress, 1977*, ed. Richard J. Preston, 167-78. Ottawa: National Museums of Canada.
- . 1978b. *The Newfoundland Micmacs: A history of their traditional life*. St. John's: Newfoundland Historical Society.
- Paul, Daniel. 2000. *We were not the savages: A Mi'kmaq perspective on the collision between European and native American civilizations*. Halifax: Fernwood.
- Peters, Russell and Richard Haynes. 1994. *Regalia: American Indian dress and dance*. Littleton, MA: Sundance Publishers and Distributors.

- Peterson, Richard A. and Andy Bennett. 2004. Introducing music scenes. In *Music scenes: Local, translocal, and virtual*, ed. Andy Bennett and Richard A. Peterson, 1-15. Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press.
- Phillips, Mark Salber. 2004. Introduction: What is tradition when it is not "invented"? A historiographical introduction. In *Questions of Tradition*, ed. Mark Phillips and Gordon J. Schochet, 3-32. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Power, M. F. 1910. Where and whereby the Micmac dwells. *Newfoundland quarterly* 10, no. 1: 16.
- Powers, William K. 1990. *War dance: Plains Indian musical performance*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- . 1987. *Beyond the vision: Essays on American Indian culture*. Norman; London: University of Oklahoma Press.
- Prince, John Dyneley. 1921. *Passamaquoddy texts*. New York: G. E. Stechert.
- . 1898. Some Passamaquoddy documents. *Annals of the New York academy of sciences* 11: 369-77.
- Prins, Harald E. L. 1996. *The Mi'kmaq resistance, accommodation, and cultural survival*. Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Pub.
- Rand, Silas Tertius. 1894. *Legends of the Micmac*. New York: Longmans, Green.
- Reade, John. 1887. Some Wabanaki songs. *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada* 11: 1-8.
- Revill, George. 1998. Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's geography of disappointment: Hybridity, identity, and networks of musical meaning. In *The place of music*, ed. Andrew Leyshon, David Matless, and George Revill, 197-221. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Rieti, Barbara. 2008. *Making witches: Newfoundland traditions of spells and counterspells*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- . 1995. Aboriginal/Anglo relations as portrayed in the folklore of Micmac 'witching' in Newfoundland. *Canadian folklore* 17: 21-30.



- Roberts, Helen H. [1936] 1970. Musical areas in aboriginal North America. *Yale University publications in anthropology*, no. 12. New Haven: Human Relations Area Files Press.
- Robertson, Marion. 1969. *Red earth: Tales of the Micmacs with an introduction to the customs and beliefs of the Micmac Indians*. Shelburne: M. Robertson.
- Robinson, Angela. 2004. *Ta'n teli-ktlamsitasit (Ways of believing): Mi'kmaw religion in Eskasoni, Nova Scotia*. Toronto: Pearson Education Canada.
- Roche, Liz De. 2005. Powwow etiquette. In *Powwow calendar 2006: Directory of Native American gatherings in the USA & Canada*, ed. Jerry Lee Hutchens, 15-16. Summertown, Tenn.: Native Voices.
- Rowe, Frederick William. 1977. *Extinction: The Beothuck of Newfoundland*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.
- Ryan, Chris. 2002. Tourism and cultural proximity: Examples from New Zealand. *Annals of tourism research* 29, no. 4: 952-71.
- Sable, Trudy. 1997. The serpent dance: The multiple layers of meaning in a Mi'kmaw dance. *Papers of the twenty-eighth Algonquian conference*. Winnipeg: University of Manitoba. 329-40.
- . 1996. Another look in the mirror: Research into the foundations for developing an alternative science curriculum for Mi'kmaw children. Master's thesis, St. Mary's University.
- , and Julia Sable. 2007a. The Mi'kmaq of Eastern Canada: Our dances today. In *Nativedance.ca*, ed. Elaine Keillor et al. [http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Our\\_Dances\\_Today](http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Our_Dances_Today) (accessed February 24, 2008).
- . 2007b. The Mi'kmaq of Eastern Canada: Traditional dances. In *Nativedance.ca*, ed. Elaine Keillor et al. [http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Traditional\\_Dances](http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Traditional_Dances) (accessed April 10, 2007).
- . 2007c. Why We Dance. In *Nativedance.ca*, ed. Elaine Keillor et al. [http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Why\\_We\\_Dance](http://nativedance.ca/index.php/Mi%27kmaq/Why_We_Dance) (accessed April 10, 2007).

- Samuels, David William. 2004. *Putting a song on top of it: Expression and identity on the San Carlos Apache reservation*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Sarkissian, Margaret. 2000. *D'Albuquerque's children: Performing tradition in Malaysia's Portuguese settlement*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Scales, Christopher A. 2007. Powwows, intertribalism, and the value of competition. *Ethnomusicology* 51, no. 1: 1-29.
- . 2002a. Pan-Indianism revisited. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society for Ethnomusicology, Estes Park Center, Colorado, October 24-27.
- . 2002b. The politics and aesthetics of recording: A comparative Canadian case study of powwow and contemporary Native American music. *The world of music* 44, no. 1: 41-59.
- . 1999. First Nations popular music in Canada. *Canadian university music review* 19, no. 2: 94-101.
- Schechner, Richard. 1985. *Between theater and anthropology*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Schmidt, David L. and Murdena Marshall. 1995. *Mi'kmaq hieroglyphic prayers: Readings in North America's first Indigenous script*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing.
- Seeger, Anthony. [1987] 2004. *Why Suyá sing: A musical anthropology of an Amazonian people*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Sharpe, Erin. 2007. Invisible Mi'kmaq. *Culture & tradition* 29: 81- 91.
- Shea, Ann Marie and Atay Citron. 1982. The powwow of the Thunderbird American Indian dancers. *The drama review* 26, no. 2: 73-88.
- Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 1991. *A song of longing: An Ethiopian journey*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, Gordon. 1994. Lee Cremo: Narratives about a Micmac fiddler. In *Canadian music: Issues of hegemony and identity*, ed. Beverley Diamond and Robert Witmer, 541-56. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.

- ., and Kevin Alstrup. 1995. Words and music by Rita Joe: Dialogic ethnomusicology. *Canadian journal for traditional music* 23 (1995).
- Smith, Nicholas N. 1955. Wabanaki Dances. *Bulletin of the Massachusetts archaeological society* 16, no. 2: 29-37.
- Sollers, Werner. 1986. *Beyond ethnicity: Consent and descent in American culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Speck, Frank Gouldsmith. [1940] 1970. *Penobscot man: The life history of a forest tribe in Maine*. New York: Octagon Books.
- . 1922. *Beothuk and Micmac*. New York: Museum of the American Indian/Heye Foundation.
- . 1915. The eastern Algonkian Wabanaki Confederacy. *American Anthropologist* 17, no. 3: 492-508.
- . 1914. *The double-curve motive in Northeastern Algonkian art*. Ottawa: Government Printing Office.
- St. John's Native Friendship Centre and Shelter. 2003. *Policies and procedures manual*. St. John's: St. John's Native Friendship Centre and Shelter.
- St. John's Native Friendship Centre Association. 2005. Drumming and dancing. *St. John's Native friendship centre association*.  
<http://www.friendshipcentre.nf.net/youthcentre/drummingdancing.htm> (accessed April 11, 2006).
- Statistics Canada. [n.d] <http://www.statcan.ca/> (accessed February 7, 2007).
- Stillman, Amy. 1996. Hawaiian hula competitions: Event, repertoire, performance, tradition. *Journal of American folklore* 109, no. 434: 357-80.
- Stone, Helen. 1993. Living in time immemorial: Concepts of "time" and "time immemorial": Why Aboriginal rights theory is problematic in the courts and around the negotiating table. Master's thesis, Carleton University.
- Straw, Will. 1991. Systems of articulation, logics of change: Communities and scenes in popular music. *Cultural studies* 5, no. 3: 368-88.



- Sugarman, Jane C. 1989. The nightingale and the partridge: Singing and gender among Prespa Albanians. *Ethnomusicology* 33, no. 2: 191-215.
- Szego, C. K. 2003. Singing Hawaiian and the aesthetics of (in)comprehensibility. In *Global pop, local language*, ed. Harris M. Berger and Michael Thomas Carroll, 291-328. Jackson: University of Mississippi Press.
- Tang, Patricia. 2007. *Masters of the sabar: Wolof griot percussionists of Senegal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Tanner, Adrian. 1983. Introduction: Canadian Indians and the politics of dependency. In *The politics of indianness: Case studies of Native ethnopolitics in Canada*, ed. Adrian Tanner, 1-35. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research.
- . and Sakej Henderson. 1992. Aboriginal land claims in the Atlantic provinces. In *Aboriginal land claims in Canada: A regional perspective*, ed. Ken Coates, 131-65. Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, Ltd.
- Tedlock, Dennis and Bruce Mannheim. 1995. Introduction. In *The dialogic emergence of culture*, ed. Dennis Tedlock and Bruce Mannheim, 1-32. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Thacker, Eugene. 2004. Networks, swarms, multitudes, part one. *CTHEORY*. Ed. Arthur and Marilouise Kroker. <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=422> (Accessed April 8, 2008).
- Theisz, R. D. 2005. Putting things in order: The discourse of tradition. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 85-109. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Tiny turnout for Mi'kmaq referendum. 2004. *CBC online*. October 13. [http://www.cbc.ca/anada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2004/10/13/nf\\_mikmaq\\_turnout\\_2004.html](http://www.cbc.ca/anada/newfoundland-labrador/story/2004/10/13/nf_mikmaq_turnout_2004.html) (accessed February 11, 2008).
- Tompkins, Edward. 1998. The impact of confederation on the Aboriginal peoples of Newfoundland and Labrador. Research Essay for MA, Carleton University.
- . 1988. *Pencilled out: Newfoundland and Labrador's Native people and Canadian confederation, 1947-1954*. Report prepared for Hon. Jack Harris, M.P. Ottawa: House of Commons.

- Tuck, James. 1976. *Ancient people of Port au Choix: The excavation of an archaic Indian cemetery in Newfoundland*. St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University.
- Tulk, Janice Esther. 2007. Cultural revitalization and Mi'kmaq music-making: Three drum groups. *Newfoundland and Labrador studies* 22, no. 1: 259-86.
- . 2005. Commodification of Native American spirituality: 'Native American' tarot and divination cards. *Culture & tradition* 27: 37-55.
- . 2004a. Awakening to Medicine Dream: Contemporary Native music from Alaska with Newfoundland roots. *Canadian folk music bulletin* 38, no. 3: 1-10.
- . 2004b. In review: Music of the Eastern Eagle Singers. *Culture & tradition* 26: 147-49.
- . 2003. Medicine Dream: Contemporary Native music and issues of identity. Master's thesis, University of Alberta.
- Upton, Leslie. 1977. The extermination of the Beothucks. *Canadian historical review* 57, no. 2: 133-53.
- Urry, John. 2002. *The tourist gaze*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. London: Sage Publications.
- Valentine, Lisa Philips. 2003. Song of transformation: Performing Iroquoian identity through non-traditional song. *Ethnologies* 25, no. 2: 131-44.
- Vennum, Thomas. 1989. The changing role of women in Ojibway music history. In *Women in North American Indian music: Six essays*, ed. Richard Keeling, 13-21. Bloomington: Society for Ethnomusicology.
- Vetromile, Eugene. 1866. *The Abenakis and their history*. New York: James B. Kirker.
- . 1858. *Indian good book*. New York: E. Dunigan and James B. Kirker.
- Vizenor, Gerald. 1990. *Crossbloods: Bone courts, bingo, and other reports*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- von Rosen, Franziska. 1998. *Music, visual art, stories: Conversations with a community of Micmac artists*. PhD Diss. Brown University.

- . 1994. "Thunder, that's our ancestors drumming": Music as experienced by a Micmac elder. *Canadian music: Issues of hegemony and identity*. Toronto: Canadian Scholars' Press.
- . 1992. "Micmac storyteller: River of fire – The co-creation of an ethnographic video." *Canadian folk music journal* 20: 40-46.
- , and Margaret Paul. Forthcoming. Drum, songs, vibrations: Conversations with a Passamaquoddy traditional singer. *Music of the First Nations*, ed. Tara Browner. University of Illinois Press.
- Wallis, Wilson D. and Ruth Sawtell Wallis. 1955. *The Micmac Indians of eastern Canada*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Watchman, Renae. 2005. Powwow overseas: The German experience. In *Powwow*, ed. Clyde Ellis, Luke Eric Lassiter, and Gary H. Dunham, 241-57. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Wetzel, Edwina. 2006. Celebrating Mi'kmaq Women. Lecture presented for Women's Studies Speaker Series, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL. October 16.
- Wetzel, Jerry. 1999. The hidden Term of Union: Executive summary, confederation and federal abandonment of the Newfoundland Mi'kmaq. *Newfoundland quarterly* 92, no. 4: 23-28.
- . 1995. Decolonizing Ktagmkuk Mi'kmaw history. LL.M Thes. Dalhousie University.
- Whitehead, Ruth Holmes, and Nova Scotia Museum. 1988. *Six Micmac stories*. Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum.
- . 1982. *Micmac quillwork: Micmac Indian techniques of porcupine quill decoration, 1600-1950*. Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum.
- . 1980. *Elitekey: Micmac material culture from 1600 AD to the present*. Halifax: Nova Scotia Museum.
- Whitehorse, David. 1988. *Pow-wow: The contemporary pan-Indian celebration*. San Diego, Calif: Dept. of American Indian Studies, San Diego State University.



- Wicken, William C. 2002. *Mi'kmaq treaties on trial: History, land, and Donald Marshall Junior*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Wilson, J. H. 1892. The Micmac festival in Cape Breton. *New England magazine*. 12, no. 2: 177-78.
- Winick, Stephen D. 1997. Reissuing the revival: British and Irish music on topic records. *Journal of American folklore* 110: 324-341.
- Wrazen, Louise. 2007. Relocating the tataras: Place and music in Gorale identity and imagination. *Ethnomusicology* 51, no. 2: 185-204.

## Discography

- A Little More Understanding*. 1999. Morning Star. Morning Star. 02 50794.
- Ancestral Fire: Honouring Who We Are*. 2002. J. Hubert Francis, Donna Augustine, Jim Augustine. Bear Paw Music Productions BPCD1002.
- Bay D'Espoir Cancer Benefit Album*. 2005. Various artists. Steadfast Studio. [n.n]
- Chicken Dance Songs Vol. 1*. 2003. Various artists. Arbor Records AR-11712.
- Folk music from Nova Scotia*. 1956. Recorded by Helen Creighton. Washington: Smithsonian Folkways Records. FM 4006.
- Full Circle*. 2002. Newfoundland Symphony Youth Choir, Se't A'newey Mi'kmaq Choir, and Skólakór Kárness. NSYC 2002-2.
- Good Medicine*. 2004. Eastern Eagle Singers. Arbor Records AR-12202.
- Hinkley Pow Wow 2000 Northern Style*. 2000. Various artists. Arbor Records AR-11412.
- Identity*. 1998. Medicine Dream. Independent.
- Learning to Fly*. 2007. Medicine Dream. Independent.
- Life Giver*. 1996. Whitefish Jrs. Sweet Grass Records SGWF051296.
- Live at Schemizun '94*. 1994. Stoney Park. Sweet Grass Records SGSP291894.
- Mawio'Mi*. 2000. Medicine Dream. Canyon Records. CR-7039.
- Miawpukek Conne River*. 2000. Se't A'newey Mi'kmaq Choir and Sipu'ji'j Drummers. Miawpukek Mi'Kamawey Mawio'Mi 02-201353.
- MicMac (Mi'Kmaq) Songs*. 1990. Free Spirit. Sunshine Records SSCT 4093.
- Mi'kmaq Chants*. 1995. Denny Family. Kewniq Recordings Productions/Spectrum Records SRC505.
- More Kids' Pow-Wow Songs*. 2005. Canyon Records. CR-6387.

- Pow-Wow Songs Recorded Live at Fort Duchesne*. 2003. Canyon Records. CR-6209.
- Sacred Flight*. 2002. Eastern Eagle Singers. Arbor Records AR-11602.
- Setting the record straight*. 2005. Blackfoot Confederacy. Canyon Records CR-6382.
- Sipekne 'Katik*. 2006. Eastern Eagle Singers. Arbor Records AR-12672.
- Tiens ça simple*. [n.d] Les Messagers. Thunder Spirit Studio. [n.n]
- Tomegan Gospem*. 2002. Medicine Dream. Canyon Records. CR-7048.
- Traditional Micmac Chants*. 1991. Eagle Call Singers (featuring George Paul). York Point Productions. [n.n]
- Traditional Voices from the Eastern Door*. [n.d]. George Paul, James Augustine, Donna Augustine. Prod. James Augustine, Big Cove, N.B. [n.n]
- Traditionally Yours*. 1996. Eastern Eagle Singers. Arbor Records AR-11602.
- Wapan'kik: The People of the Dawn*. 1995. Sons of Membertou. Atlantica ATL 0001.
- Whispering Winds*. 2004. Northern Wind. Arbor Records. AR-12182.
- Whitefish Jrs Live at Schemitzun*. 2003. Whitefish Jrs. Sweet Grass Records SGWF082503.
- Wjit Nijaninen Wunijet – For Our Children's Children*. 2007. Se't A'newey First Nations School. SWC Productions. [n.n]
- Wli-nuelewi: Mi'kmaw Christmas Music*. 2001. Se't A'newey Choir, Bernie Francis, Membertou Elementary, Eskasoni Trio, Eskasoni Elementary, Eel Ground Elementary, Sister Dorothy Moore. Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk & Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. [n.n]



## Filmography

*Comme River*. 1995. It's About Time Series. Vision TV. Prod. Sadia Zaman.

*Micmac storyteller: River of fire / Niji-atukwet Mi'kmawwa'j: Jipuktewik sipu*. 1991.  
Michael William Francis and Franziska von Rosen. Big Cove: M.W. Francis, with  
the assistance of Instructional Media Services, Carleton University.

*Romancing the Labrador*. 2006. Prod. Jerry Evans. Muinjij Productions Inc.

*Stealing Mary: Last of the red Indians*. 2006. Dir. Tim Wolochatiuk. Windup Filmworks  
Inc.

*The spirit of Annie Mae*. 2002. Dir. Catherine Anne Martin. Prod. Kent Martin. National  
Film Board of Canada.

*Traditional Dances of Newfoundland & Labrador: A Guide for Teachers*. 2007. Eric  
West and Jane Rutherford. Vinland Music.

### Interviews Cited

Augustine, Laverna. Telephone interview with the Author. 11 October 2006.

Donnelly, Pat. Interview with the Author. 15 August 2006.

Drew, Tony. Interview with the Author. 2 July 2005.

Evans, Jerry. Interview with the Author. 28 June 2006.

George, Steve. Interview with the Author. 14 June 2006.

Jeddore, Brenda. Interview with the Author. 18 May 2006.

Jeddore, Rod. Interview with the Author. 2 July 2005.

Morrisseau, Jason. Interview with the Author. 28 April 2005.

—. Interview with the Author. 8 June 2007.

Purcell, Robin. Interview with the Author. 21 July 2007.

Wetzel, Jerry. 2004. Telephone interview with the Author. November 23.









