

**Searching for the Spirit of Place**

by

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For my family.

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\*\* photographs by Barry Bernard



## Definitions

Micmac or Mi'kmaq - both refer to the same group of people, however the latter is the currently preferred spelling.

Mi'kmaw - is the adjective form of Mi'kmaq

There are many spelling variations of 'Mi'kmaq' which depend on the specific context in which the reference is being used. This is explained further in Chapter 5 with the verbal construction of the Mi'kmaw language and better detailed in written form by Sable (1993).

RCAP - *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*

The following definitions are intended to provide a general understanding of the responsibilities of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND). The list focuses on some of the important aspects of the relationship between DIAND and First Nations according to the relevance in this paper. This information is taken directly from a DIAND internet press release.

Aboriginal peoples:

- The descendants of the original inhabitants of North America. The Canadian Constitution recognizes three groups of Aboriginal people -- Indians, Métis people and Inuit. These are three separate peoples with unique heritages, languages, cultural practices and spiritual beliefs.

Aboriginal rights:

- Rights that some Aboriginal peoples of Canada hold as a result of their ancestors' long-standing use and occupancy of the land. The rights of certain Aboriginal peoples to hunt, trap and fish on ancestral lands are examples of Aboriginal rights. Aboriginal

rights will vary from group to group depending on the customs, practices and traditions that have formed part of their distinctive cultures.

Aboriginal self-government: .

- Governments designed, established and administered by Aboriginal peoples.

Aboriginal title:

- A legal term that recognizes Aboriginal interest in the land. It is based on their long-standing use and occupancy of the land as descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada.

Band:

- A group of First Nation people for whom lands have been set apart and money is held by the Crown. Each band has its own governing band council, usually consisting of one or more chiefs and several councillors. Community members choose the chief and councillors by election, or sometimes through traditional custom. The members of a band generally share common values, traditions and practices rooted in their ancestral heritage. One band may have more than one reserve under its jurisdiction. The clustering of smaller reserves under one jurisdiction is to cut administrative costs. Today, many bands prefer to be known as First Nations.

Bill C-31:

- The pre-legislation name of the 1985 Act to Amend the Indian Act. This act eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act, including the section that resulted in Indian women losing their Indian status when they married non-Indian men. Bill C-31 enabled people affected by the discriminatory provisions of the old Indian Act to

apply to have their Indian status restored. Since 1985, about 105,000 individuals have successfully regained their status.

**Custom:**

- A traditional Aboriginal practice. For example, First Nations peoples sometimes marry or adopt children according to custom, rather than under Canadian family law. Band councils chosen "by custom" are elected or selected by traditional means, rather than by the election rules contained in the Indian Act.

**First Nation:**

- A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian," which many people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian people in Canada, both Status and Non-Status. Many Indian people have also adopted the term "First Nation" to replace the word "band" in the name of their community.

**Indian:**

- A term that describes all the Aboriginal people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. Indian peoples are one of three groups of people recognized as Aboriginal in the Constitution Act, 1982. The act specifies that Aboriginal people in Canada consist of Indians, Inuit and Métis people. In addition, there are three legal definitions that apply to Indians in Canada: Status Indians, Non-Status Indians and Treaty Indians.

**Indian Act:**

- This is the Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, that sets out certain federal government obligations, and regulates the management of Indian reserve

lands. The act has been amended several times, most recently in 1985. Among its many provisions, the act requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage certain moneys belonging to First Nations and Indian lands, and to approve or disallow First Nations by-laws.

**Indian status:**

- An individual's legal status as an Indian, as defined by the Indian Act.

**Land claims:**

- In 1973, the federal government recognized two broad classes of claims -- comprehensive and specific. Comprehensive claims are based on the recognition that there are continuing Aboriginal rights to lands and natural resources. These kinds of claims come up in those parts of Canada where Aboriginal title has not previously been dealt with by treaty and other legal means. The claims are called "comprehensive" because of their wide scope. They include such things as land title, fishing and trapping rights and financial compensation. Specific claims deal with specific grievances that First Nations may have regarding the fulfilment of treaties. Specific claims also cover grievances relating to the administration of First Nations lands and assets under the Indian Act.

**Native:**

- Another term to replace 'Indian,' which some found offensive. This is now the generally accepted term used by non-Native people. 'Indian' is still acceptably used by those who consider themselves to be one.

**Off-reserve:**

- A term used to describe people, services or objects that are not part of a reserve, but relate to First Nations.

**Oral history:**

- Evidence taken from the spoken words of people who have knowledge of past events and traditions. This oral history is often recorded on tape and then put in writing. It is used in history books and to document claims.

**Reserve:**

- Land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian group or band.

**Tribal Council:**

- A regional group of First Nations members that delivers common services to a group of First Nations.

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## Abstract

The First Nation community of Eskasoni, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia is used for this study. Initially, a practical line of research was proposed - the potential for community infrastructure to reflect cultural context. As the research continued, the focus changed as larger issues of planning and its role in cultural continuity became apparent. Many theories of planning for First Nations have been discussed at length. Many of the latest theories call for Native culture and community participation. Yet, the research reveals that *this does not occur in actual practice.*

Photography was used as an active tool to gather information and generate discussion. This culminated in a joint showing between the author and a local Eskasoni photographer. The information gathered through this process provides the basis for a reconsideration of our perceptions of planning practice.

## **Chapter 1:**

### **Introduction**

There has been a growing trend during the last few decades towards the ideas of cultural diversity and place identity generating principles of architecture and planning. As physically based planners and architects, we often look to the monumental or vernacular architecture, along with its elements, to inform us about a community's culture. We look to scale, materials, forms, public places, private spaces, native vegetation or the lack thereof, all that which is of a physical nature. We document these things and label them as significant. We apply these same criteria regardless of place, with an assumption of objectivity, and an assumption that the process allows for the richness of cultural diversity and individuality to be expressed.

But what happens when we look to the community's existing physical environment and find only a prevalence of North American mono-culture in place? It is not sufficient to look at the purposes of planning as merely a focus of land development, policy documents, and legal boundaries. The physically obvious is not necessarily reflective of the community's view of what is actually important. It becomes critical to re-think our techniques and processes to find an appropriate way to look past the surface and allow the community its voice in creating a vision for the future. It should be its choice to reveal that which has been physically disguised in this postmodern era where emphasis on specificity of design and cultural context is now taken for granted.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Current cultural design theory would suggest that specific context is, or should be, a 'given' in the basis of every project. See Lozano (1990); Young (1989); Robinson (1987).



## 1.1 Native context

Problems on Native reserves are widely covered in the media and have become a part of common public knowledge as well as a common focal point for resentment from mainstream society.<sup>2</sup> Many reserves have high unemployment, numerous cases of welfare, high percentages of alcoholism, abundant numbers of high school dropouts, extensive political corruption, mazes of kickbacks, low standards of living...etc., which combines with frustration, anger, dissatisfaction, and resignation. Usually, only the negative stories about such communities make the news and, unfortunately as in all communities, many rumors of political corruption are difficult to prove. It is difficult to consider these places in a 'real way.' Too often, the discussion results in feelings of 'out of sight, out of mind,' 'it is not my problem,' or 'aren't they getting too much money for nothing anyway.' Too often, it is almost impossible to relate to so many issues, given there are not many (or any) communities in Canada outside of reserves, that are so inundated with social problems.<sup>3</sup>

Using Eskasoni, Cape Breton as a specific case study, this thesis originally began with a pragmatic focus on cultural context, the built environment and the ensuing potentials for municipal infrastructure (i.e. looking for a form of natural sewage treatment as respecting Native world view, see Appendix A - initial thesis proposal). This research assumed that the built environment is already accepted as a valid form of cultural expression in society in general (as referenced above, also as claimed in *The Atlantic Planner's Pen*, editorial by J. Heseltine fall 1994). This thesis sought to continue on from a previous TUNS planning

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<sup>2</sup> Documented in several interviews by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996; as well as current media attention to land claim disputes, logging rights, and road blockades.

<sup>3</sup> RCAP interview with Blair Paul, Eskasoni, 92-05-06 57 "It is estimated that more than one-third of all Indian and Inuit deaths from accidents and violence are associated with alcohol abuse...the suicide rate for Indian people under the age of 25 is the highest of any racial group in the world...in some native communities, it is 15 times the Canadian average. (Health and Welfare Canada)

thesis which addressed planning issues theoretically in the broader Native context.<sup>4</sup> However, initial observations in the Eskasoni study reveal the current disjunction between the notion of cultural expression and built environment. DIAND's 1981 study *Physical Planning Guidelines for the Native community*, notes that "...special consideration must be given to cultural, social and traditional characteristics which differentiate the community requirements from those of non-Indians," and that the planner must "...identify the nature and extent of physical, environmental, economic, social, and cultural constraints and assets in developing solutions." (p. 55 Simon et al.) It becomes immediately obvious that the above assumption about cultural expression being part of an existing design process was found to be premature and that DIAND's 1981 recommendation is either under-utilized or disregarded. On this reserve, the current built environment is not expressive of Native culture. The explanation of why culture is not expressed in the environment leads into many layers of confusion. Finding the reasons for this became the central line of inquiry and opened up an increasingly complex set of issues.

There are important issues in this community regarding basic needs like clean water and shelter. The purpose of opening a discussion including wider cultural issues is not intended to deny this or divert attention from these basic community needs. In the course of doing the research it became increasingly impossible to separate or isolate issues. They were all inter-connected.

To dismiss political issues is to deny a vital role in the creation of the identity of Native culture today (as well as to be completely unrealistic.) To accept them wholly is to risk

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<sup>4</sup> See Needham, K. (1993) *Planning with First Nations: Catalyst for Greater Self-Determination or Continued Paternalism*.

drowning in a web of complexity.<sup>5</sup> How does one weed through the confusion to enable the potentials to grow? The question lay not simply in searching for the appropriate building form for these needs for a distinct cultural group, but also how could such possibilities begin to be accomplished? During the research, the other questions began to take precedence over something so fundamental as to search for appropriate ways to treat water. Politics often seems to be an over riding issue and an even more complex bureaucratic process than most other communities must face.

## 1.2 Re-evaluating focus, re-considering planning

...built environments and the values they symbolize and communicate can shape the behavior of people who inhabit them and [built environments] filled with symbolic content can be a most powerful educational technique for influencing and changing behavior.<sup>6</sup>

As planners, we are educated to take a systematic approach to designing a community, whether that be actual physical design or the design of processes. There is a predominance and concentration on land-use planning to facilitate the implementation of infrastructure in as efficient and economical a manner as possible. Somewhere, the opportunity to philosophize and question the reason why such decisions are made disappears as time constraints and bureaucratic policies appear in professional practice.<sup>7</sup>

On the surface, it seems relatively simple to determine if a community requires housing. Are there enough houses for families, yes or no? Does a community have clean water, or

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<sup>5</sup> It has always been beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss generalities of the political climate. Refer to Brown, Larson and Paul for more specific, detailed discussion.

<sup>6</sup> Nemeth (1992)

<sup>7</sup> In addition to the confusion, planning has a tendency to use terminology exclusive to the planning profession. This is to be discussed further in Chapter 5.

require sewage treatment, yes or no? The fact that such basic needs are lacking makes the question of what form they take appear inconsequential by comparison.

Native communities share many basic issues with any small community, how they differ becomes more evident in the exploration of fundamental beliefs. There is an abundance of available studies which identify the immediate problems. They are often repetitious in concept, but restate the problems in different terminology. All these issues become contentious in the political structure in which all reserves exist. This it to be discussed further in Chapter 2.

The reviewed literature recommends a community involved process with an ideally holistic approach to planning. Decisions are to be made by the community in which they assess the economic, cultural, spiritual, environmental, and other benefits of any proposal. This sounds simpler than it is in actual practice. The literature mentions that this mutually involved approach to planning is particularly appropriate for small communities,<sup>8</sup> which reserves generally are. However, the notion of reaching consensus is difficult to achieve, or perhaps even an impossibility. Inherently, individual value principles influence choice. It is a complex situation to hear everyone's opinion, if they are to be heard at all because decision-making is not simply a matter of scale, numbers or even of process.

### **1.3 Intersecting the Native context and planning**

It was necessary to become aware of the current circumstances and their meaning before identifying culturally appropriate means. Even the basic process of gathering information must adapt to the circumstances. As mundane and overworked as the position may

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<sup>8</sup> This is under the presumption that consensus would be easier to achieve with fewer numbers involved, thus simply becoming an issue of population and agreement.

seem, the underlying question actually is *how does one plan for a Native community?* As the work continues on, the 'plan for' becomes 'plan with' as we realize that commitment and listening are important and necessary in the relationship between the planner and the community. This commitment must inherently come from within the community as well as from the planner who chooses to be involved. It is the resolve from within the community which will determine the ultimate continuation or success of any possibilities. At this point in time, the greater implications may be not what the planner can bring to the community, but what the experience can teach the planner.

#### **1.4 Methodology - experience**

Initial research began with an interest in water/ sewage treatment using natural, alternative systems. Written material and existing examples, local and otherwise, were investigated. This led to an intersection with an actual context, Eskasoni, a Mi'kmaq community and its need to treat water.

The research continued as though Eskasoni were any other rural community that required basic needs to be addressed. A collection of typical background material began. This included environmental data (soil quality, geographical composition, water quality, land usage, land resources), and human statistical data (population, population trends, available services, employment). Interviews with Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) planners discussed similarities between Eskasoni's rapid growth and desire for alternative servicing, and rural communities within HRM which were facing similar issues.

Further research into Canadian Native history, especially Mi'kmaq history, began to reveal the complex political issues. It was a deliberate choice for the first visit to Eskasoni to be under positive conditions. In hindsight, it was particularly appropriate to attend a

powwow to experience the first impressions of the place. The powwow had been revived in the last few years and had become popular throughout the region as a place to gather, celebrate and share culture, discuss specific community or regional issues, and practically demonstrate some of the values (communal sharing, importance of family, tradition) still embodied today.

The opportunity to speak to local people in such an occasion helped explain some of the written history. This first visit was simply to absorb. It demanded a new respect and perspective as to how research should proceed. It demonstrated the lack of existing planning processes and research to encompass true cultural diversity. 'Native context' was more complex than initially thought.

As more was revealed about the political context, questions arose beyond identifying current reserve problems and how to address each one. It is a more difficult task to identify a holistic, forward-thinking strategy that contains the values of a culture and the means to implement that strategy in an effective way. By this time, researching alternative forms of sewage treatment seemed ridiculous given the systemic problems at hand.

It was decided that more personal research in the community was needed to try to learn about the Mi'kmaq world view and how it could inform an appropriate process of planning. A second visit was conducted in which the physical community was documented in an analytical manner to try to reveal local cultural expression, a process outlined in the opening paragraph of this paper. The starkness was glaring. The images alone revealed nothing of the previous visit's richness.

Interviews were necessary to explain the content of the images. Expecting rhetoric from the official community representatives who have helped shape the community's current existence, it was a deliberate choice to speak to people whose knowledge has not always been voiced or heard in recent times. Many of the interviews took place very informally with local elders, active community members (yet who were not officially political), traditional revivalists, cultural educators, students and 'sympathizers.'<sup>9</sup>

Photographs which had already been taken were shown to the viewers. The ensuing discussion was a result of something the image had prompted in the viewer.

Alternatively, if a discussion took place about a particular site, a photograph was then taken to record it.

Through these informal discussions and tours, it became apparent that it would be appropriate that this deeper cultural content be jointly shown alongside the more anonymous, technical imagery. Barry Bernard, a local Mi'kmaq photographer from Eskasoni, actively records Mi'kmaq life, people and customs. As a community member, he is able to record local people and events from the perspective of personal understanding, comfortability, and mutually accepted respect. This perspective is not readily available to an outsider. Both works were shown in a joint exhibition in October 1997. The works demonstrated the current discrepancy between culture and built environment. This is elaborated in the later chapters and Appendix D. The exhibition was a key factor in changing the focus of this paper from an investigation of a specific planning problem to that of planning within a Mi'kmaq community and thus, an inquiry into cultural continuity and planning process.

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<sup>9</sup> For lack of a better term, many of these people were not Mi'kmaq, Native nor even local residents. They were somehow involved in specific projects with local individuals.

There is no presumption in this thesis to neatly and simply condense the entirety of Mi'kmaq culture, nor is there any pretense of easy solutions - to do either would be a misrepresentation. The intention of this work is to pull out fragments which may help non-Natives understand and question the relationship between culture and the potentials of planning.

This thesis will not detail specifically the issue of racism. It is discussed generally as a part of non-Native political relationships and the ensuing influences on planning (e.g. assimilative tactics such as centralization, relocation, decision-making structures). Racism has been systemic in the Native and non-Native relationship since first contact over 500 years ago. The topic is an entire thesis unto itself. See Chapter 2 for a general discussion of institutional racism. For more specific focus on racism and the Mi'kmaq community, see Paul, 1993.

## **1.5 Summary**

This chapter has introduced the following issues which will be discussed further:

- Based on the evidence, attention to cultural context has not been automatically considered with respect to built environment, or planning in the broadest respects, in the Native context. What results has current planning practice produced for Mi'kmaq communities?
- On reserves, the supply of basic needs is surrounded by complexities beyond those of conventional non-Native communities. What are the lines of communication and political organizations which are in place to facilitate decision-making at a community level? Do they facilitate effective planning?



- The potential exists for planners to learn much from Native communities which may additionally inform planning processes for non-Native communities. What has this research revealed about the discipline of planning?
- This paper shifts from a thesis which tried to isolate and address a specific basic need (clean water) to an inquiry into wider cultural issues affecting planning on reserves. Where do we look for the values and guidelines in creating an appropriate, effective planning process for communities like Eskasoni?

## Chapter 2: Political relationships influencing planning on reserves

“Always keep one eye on the past and the other on the future.”<sup>10</sup>



Figure 2.1 Child, Powwow at Eskasoni, NS

A resident commented that people often come to Eskasoni to learn about Mi'kmaq culture as they scrutinize, observe, and examine. In figure 2.1, we are chastised for putting Native groups under a microscope. They still “know more about [non-Native] society than [non-Native] society knows about them.” An interviewee suggested that Native Canadians are the most studied group in the world.<sup>11</sup>

Since first European contact, outside forces have influenced Native culture. A series of acts of Canadian Parliament referred to as the Indian Acts<sup>12</sup> have unilaterally defined

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<sup>10</sup> Quote from interview with Eskasoni resident, March 1997 and reiterated in Research Agenda for RCAP 1996.

<sup>11</sup> Interview with St. Mary's University anthropology professor.

<sup>12</sup> See Lapointe and Needham for synopsis within an architectural and planning context. Numerous other references detail the Indian Act, the Royal Commission being extensive.

those Native political institutions which have official government recognition and are channels for funding.<sup>13</sup> In reaction, numerous groups have been created as a response to the existence of the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. Some of these have political sway for a specific focus, while others act as resources to aid Natives in the transition between Native and non-Native society. The Mi'kmaq Grand Council is the only political body (in relation to Mi'kmaq issues) recognized by the United Nations, however, it has no formal recognition from any governmental level within Canada and receives no government operational budget. The Grand Council represents all Mi'kmaq bands and has historical continuity in that the organization and leadership positions have never changed. Today, the Mi'kmaq Grand Council acts as spiritual leaders and has no geographical boundaries.<sup>14</sup>

To illustrate some of the complexity, within Nova Scotia, other organizations include:

Aboriginal Affairs Nova Scotia

Assembly of First Nations Secretariat

Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nation Chiefs Secretariat

Eskasoni Economic Development Corporation

Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife

Eskasoni School Board

Kjipuktuk Aboriginal College

Mi'kmaq Child Development Centre

Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services of Nova Scotia

Mi'kmaq Fish and Wildlife Commission

Mi'kmaq Justice Institute

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<sup>13</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>14</sup> Leavitt (1995) p.111.

Mi'kmaw Employment and Training Secretariat

Mi'kmaw Kina'masuti (Education)

Micmac Association of Cultural Studies

Micmac Heritage Gallery

Micmac Native Friendship Centre

Micmac-Maliseet Nations News

Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Counseling Association of Nova Scotia

Native Council of Nova Scotia

Native Education Counseling Unit (at Dalhousie University)

The Confederacy of Mainland Micmacs

Transition Year Program (at Dalhousie University)

Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Centre of Nova Scotia

Ulooweg Development Group Inc.

Unama'ki Training and Education Centre

Union of Nova Scotia Indians

This chapter introduces the general concepts of institutional racism and discusses the very basic, historical political roles which help shape planning in the Native context from both a traditional and Indian Affairs perspective. Political structures are an inseparable issue. They help define a complex culture. For example, politics has redefined how decision making occurs, how society is physically organized (where houses, businesses, services are located) which influences societal behaviors, self-image, and public image in mainstream society.

## 2.1 Institutional racism

Sociology cannot of itself declare one value standpoint to be morally preferable to another. All it can do and what it certainly should do is make its value standpoint or the state of affairs which it is taking as desirable, clear and explicit.<sup>15</sup>

Subtle constructs, under the heaviest scrutiny, have been labeled as “polite racism, new racism, and systemic racism” and play important roles in the issues surrounding legislation, segregation, urban villages, urban renewal, gentrification, housing discrimination and relocation, etc.

The ‘new racism’ is implicit in action and thought. It is disguised in a sophisticated manner that often appeals to higher senses of fair play, equality and justice. The public talk of superiority has been virtually abandoned, although antipathy towards other groups may be perpetuated by those who claim to be prejudice-free and without malice towards visible minorities. ‘New racism’ reflects a conflict of interest between opposing values in our society. It exemplifies the rhetoric in our society as on the one hand being our nation’s commitment to abstract equality and justice (egalitarianism), but on the other is an equal but often conflicting endorsement of meritocracy and universalism (individualism)<sup>16</sup>. The ambivalence towards minorities is not manifested as overt hostility or explicit hatred, however, there is a pervasive and lingering sense of unease and discomfort by those who normally regard themselves as non-prejudicial over the growing presence and assertiveness of minorities. Despite widespread receptivity to principles of multiculturalism and racial tolerance, in actual practice, their implementation is perceived as

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<sup>15</sup>One of the fundamental principles by Swedish social scientist Gunnar Myrdal when he was invited to make a definitive study of race relations in the United States and address policy-oriented research.

<sup>16</sup>Egalitarian values emphasize collective rights, special treatment if necessary, equality of outcomes and fair play in terms of humanistic justice. In contrast, individualism endorses personal freedom, equal treatment and universalism, self interest, equality of opportunity, open competition based on principles of marketplace. The equality of individualism being threatened by the special treatment in egalitarianism.

a threat to prevailing social patterns and cultural values held by Canadians. "Although support for racial equality is apparent, little evidence of support exists for policies or structures that could correct racial injustice" (Elliott 1992)

The attitude of the 'new racism' carries many implications. Racial attitudes are neither wholly negative nor totally positive. As such, the degree of ambivalence suggests that racism is more deeply embedded in Canada than recent opinion polls have indicated.<sup>17</sup> It is likely to be more pervasive than overt racism because even those genuinely in favor of racial equality are largely oblivious to the true nature of racial ambivalence. Its subtlety and indirectness renders it more difficult to recognize, let alone to confront and eradicate. While conventional techniques have been effective in changing previous attitudes to overt racism, they are not as effective when many people already believe themselves to be egalitarian in outlook. Because new racism sees racism as someone else's problem, efforts at controlling/challenging this attitude through education are not likely to succeed even though education is one of the few tools that exist to combat discrimination (Elliott 1992). Confronting implicit beliefs is the first step in constructing a bridge between the rhetoric and reality. It is important to understand how core cultural values can generate ambiguous responses towards visible minorities. On the strength of historical, cultural, structural forces that rationalize and normalize racism, the challenge of constructing a prejudice-free society is only just beginning.

In the larger picture, new racism is seen to take form in the institutional setting as 'systemic racism'. It consists of the adverse impact of an apparently neutral law or program upon

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<sup>17</sup>Driedger (1987) indicates that in studies British Columbians were the most likely to recognize discrimination as a problem, but that over half of the Atlantic provinces population denies that discrimination has ever been a problem.

those minorities whose cultural values and social circumstances are at a variance with the mainstream. Systemic racism often goes undetected and disguised by universal standards and rhetoric to the contrary because the standards and/or requirements are often taken for granted. Standards and expectations within organizations may be universal and color blind, but universal criteria may often be unrealistic as it is the majority who sets the standards and so-called norms. Examples of this kind are most often pointed out in the education system, where the institutions' agendas and values are diametrically opposed to those in the home or community.

Planning has a long way to go within today's social constructs with regard to expressing or carrying out the ideal principles of equality in a non-discriminatory society. With the surge of today's political correctness one might argue that discrimination is disappearing. However, in the professional world, one could argue that it is simply more subversive. While it is not expected for planning to solve society's problems of the day, it does provide an important framework by which people's quality of life may be affected and society's constructs are influenced.

## **2.2 Historic Mi'kmaq Government**

There is some confusion as to the accuracy of the written material available. Personal interviews have referenced a matriarchal society. However, the role of women in Mi'kmaq organizational structure has not been detailed in any of the reviewed literature. Written discrepancies are to be expected because the historical form of recording information is through oral traditions. It is only recently that some Elders have agreed on the necessity for information to be recorded by more conventional, mainstream ways, so that it will be saved for future generations. For one detailed written description of Mi'kmaq political structure, see Paul 1993.

The following historical information and figures 2.2 and 2.3 are taken mostly from *Mi'kmaq Past and Present: a resource guide*.

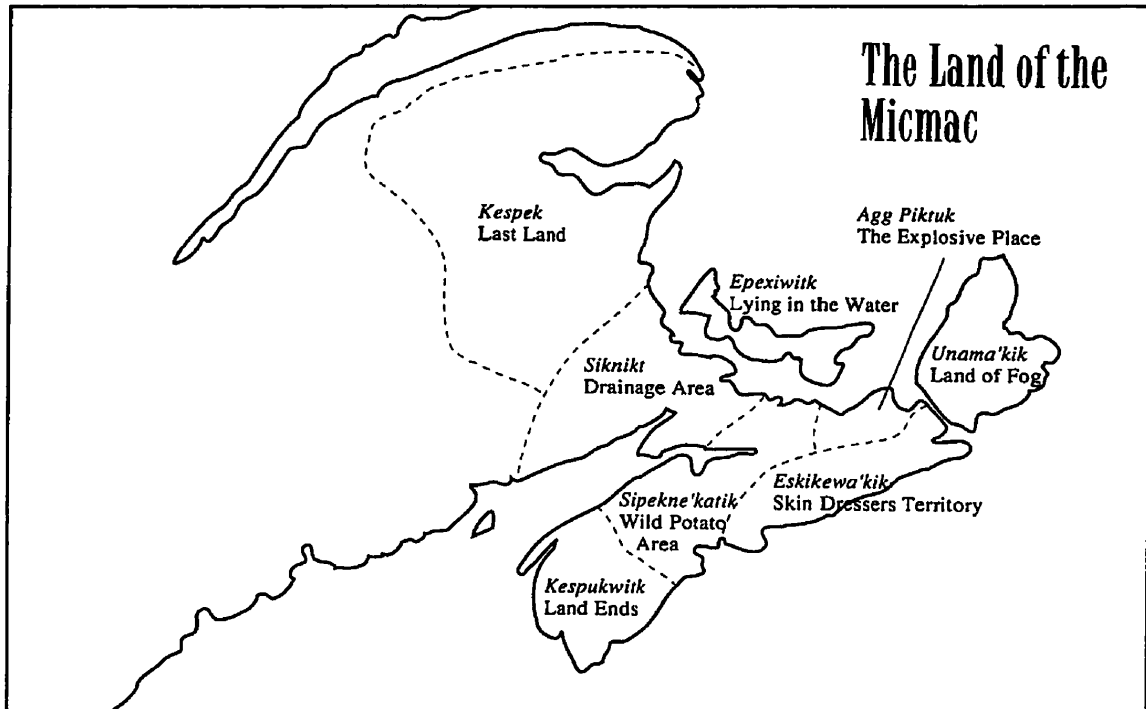


Figure 2.2 Historic Mi'kmaq districts in the Maritime region

The Mi'kmaq Nation was divided up into seven districts. Because of the hunting and gathering way of life, these districts were territorially assigned mainly so that resources would not be depleted in any one area. People were not limited to these areas, but did generally respect the territories as needs saw fit. No one group had ownership of any land, it being a part of Native world view that the land and its resources were meant to be shared with all others.



*The Grand Chief:* position was usually hereditary if the man was of exceptional character. If he was not, the position was filled by another male from the same family group. He presided over the Grand Council - the meeting of the seven chiefs of the above districts. Today, his primary role is that of spiritual leader.

*The District Chief:* position was usually the eldest male of a powerful family group. He presided over the council of local chiefs within his district. This council met to consider issues that might cause conflict among districts or between nations.

*The Local Chief:* position was usually hereditary by eldest sons. As with the Grand Chief, to earn the position he was to possess exemplary behavior in all respects. He presided over the council of Elders of his village or camp. This council met to discuss and decide the affairs of the band. The chief was responsible for implementing these decisions.

Throughout all levels of decision-making was a particular principle of consensus which provides another clue into Mi'kmaq traditional culture. When issues were discussed, each chief or elder was given all the time s/he required to state his or her opinion. This attitude suggests a respect for individual input and thorough concern for communal issues. It is debatable whether this process is successful today, since the definition and act of consensus today differs slightly in concept. In Native culture, consensus involved everyone in the community not only agreeing, but also believing that the decision arrived at was the appropriate one. Band membership was unofficial, but to be a part of the group, individuals were expected to participate in community activities, contribute to the running of the camp, thus helping to implement decisions. It was not simply a matter of getting everyone to say yes or no. This is discussed further in Chapter 5.

Since the creation of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, the current governing administrative system on reserves has been imposed by outside bodies. The current band chief's positions is now one which is run for and voted upon biannually. The council is also either voted in or appointed.

The political system is a complex structure of layers which was not established with Native input, but is one in which they must still function. As in many small communities, rumors are extensively spread of political corruption and hidden agendas. It becomes difficult to differentiate between truth and fiction. While it is beyond the scope of this paper to further develop that particular topic, it is suggested that the issue of corrupt political structures should be investigated thoroughly to find measures of accountability for any political administration to be successful.

### 2.3 Indian Affairs

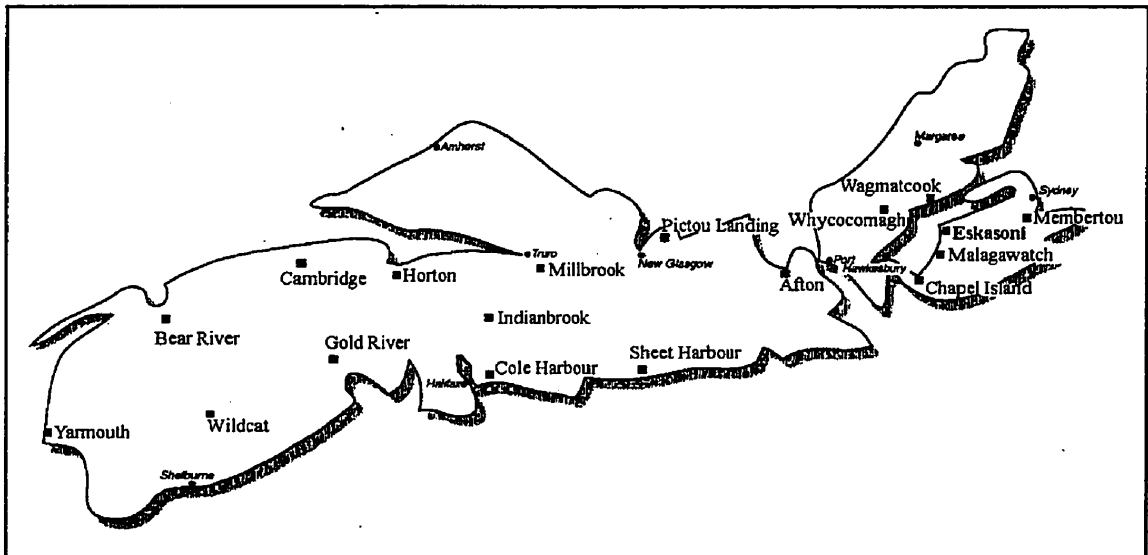


Figure 2.3 Current reserves in Nova Scotia

### A Brief History of Indian Affairs Administration in Canada:<sup>18</sup>

- 1755 the British Crown establishes the Indian Department, a branch of the military, to foster good relations and cultivate military alliances with First Nations.
- 1867 on Confederation, the new federal government is given legislative authority over "Indians and lands reserved for Indians" through the Constitution Act, 1867.
- 1867-1966 Indian and northern affairs administration is handled by various departments throughout the years, including the Office of the Secretary of State, Citizenship and Immigration, Mines and Resources, and Northern Affairs and National Resources.
- 1966 the present-day Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is created by an Act of Parliament.

The control of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs over reserves is well documented and the repercussions obviously visible in the state of the reserves.<sup>19</sup> A visual comparison of figures 2.2 and 2.3 suggests the necessity of a radical adjustment in community organization in the shift from a nomadic society to a stationary one. Included in this would be the confusion surrounding shifts in power and resources in the transformation from an egalitarian, communal society to a political structure which is hierarchically top-down and adversarial.<sup>20</sup> Intertwined with this is the juxtaposition of Mi'kmaq spirituality and the arrival of Christianity and the authority of the Church (See figure 2.4).

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<sup>18</sup> From internet press release - The DIAND.

<sup>19</sup> See Brown and Paul for further elaboration on centralization, land confiscation; Bartlett, R.H. 1990. *Indian Reserves and Aboriginal Lands in Canada*. for the legal issues regarding definition, treaty interpretation and land claims; and Knockwood, I. 1992. *Out of the depths: the experience of Mi'kmaq children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*, Grant. A. 1996. *No end of grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada*.

<sup>20</sup> Also emphasized by Ross (1996) p. 54-55



Figure 2.4 Church, Eskasoni, NS

*"The church goers are dying off...after 500 years of oppression, people are re-embracing their elders and traditional beliefs." (quote by Eskasoni resident)*

*"Forget the government and church. They are not expedient in the process to gain independence. They do not provide solutions - their existence relies on the dependence of the reserve." (quote by Eskasoni resident)*

*"You see one of these on every reserve." (observation by passer-by)*

Recently, the federal government has been devolving more responsibilities to the individual reserves leading to eventual self-government. The action has been received with some suspicion as the reserve would be reduced to having powers similar to that of a municipality and would thus be subject to provincial laws. Many of the reserves have not been prepared for the responsibility of a questionable structure, nor have they been able to find their own acceptable versions. Natives exist in a dualistic position. Traditional culture is in a state of revival, yet it has to exist within the constraints of another society. The difficulty has been in the process of combining both into a comfortable and mutually acceptable future as the definition of culture constantly redefines itself in an ever-changing context.

The discussion is not necessarily focused on the right of self-government, but on the implementation of those rights. The media does not discuss the depth that political influences permeate every aspect of reserves or the potential consequences for a community's everyday life. Already, how housing is decided, job positions are filled, who is voted into power are inherently political actions.<sup>21</sup> Many Mi'kmaq communities are arranged according to clan. This is physically evident in that historically, housing groupings commonly occurred along matrilineal lines. As a result, many areas on reserve have assumed a territorial attitude.<sup>22</sup> Because of competition for limited funds and resources among individual family groups, as well as between reserves, people choose sides. Many of the decisions which are family based may appear to be inexplicable to those on the outside. Because of limited area and close proximity, every decision is a political one.

## 2.4 Reactions

Hundreds of demonstrations, symbolic gestures and cultural celebrations are held across Canada by First Nations to make their collective voices heard. Over 15 years have passed since the Queen's signing of the Constitution which was to have guaranteed Native rights. It has been almost two years since the release of the 4000 page *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (and its more palatable 149 page summary *People to People, Nation to Nation, highlights from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples*.) There has been much discussion based upon the suggestions, but little evidence of any form of implementation. This is not surprising as the government has not kept any significant promises to First Nations made in the now (in)famous Red Book. Many of the

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<sup>21</sup> Residents suggest that the reason for this is that political alliances often correspond with clan groupings, resulting in favoritism or biased perspective.

<sup>22</sup> This is not suggested to be positive or negative.

recommendations call for some fairly radical changes in the relationship between First Nations and the rest of Canada.<sup>23</sup> Most of the Mi'kmaq people queried about the Royal Commission appreciated many of its recommendations, however, few believed that any would be acted upon.<sup>24</sup>

The following statement cannot be overly stressed. A common point of frustration expressed by many interviewees (both Mi'kmaq and non-Mi'kmaq) is that the current problems are clearly well known. They do not require further study. What is consistently delayed is the method or means to address the visions that all the studies profess.

Five hundred years of Euro-Canadian contact cannot possibly be dismissed as not having been influential. The planning issues are not to recreate the romanticized Native lifestyle. That is not possible, nor is it necessarily desired. Ultimately, it is important to include local people in planning issues if only because they are the ones who live there after whatever outside consultant is no longer involved. As Wolfe (1989) indicates,

There is currently an inbuilt assumption that planning (and management) as it is conceived by bureaucrats, planning professions and academics, has only to be adjusted, improved upon or fine tuned, to meet the needs of native Canadians. No serious consideration has been given to the issue of the compatibility between conceptions, and therefore, the practice of planning and development held by the dominant culture and the conceptions of native Canadians. (p. 219)

While rumors are to be viewed with skepticism, excerpts from a political survey of Eskasoni by Brown (1991) record bitter opinions about favoritism, kickbacks and general

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<sup>23</sup> See Aird, Feschuk, Gibson, Howard, Lett, Parkinson, Platiel, Sheppard, and Smith.

<sup>24</sup> An informal survey conducted while encountering various community members while documenting the area. It was interesting to discover that some respected members of the Eskasoni Band did not know that the Royal Commission even existed until recently questioned for their opinions on the matter. Others that were currently informed about national concerns were extremely pessimistic that anything would come from the recommendations.

corruption within the Band Administration. Whether or not the accusations are true does not seem to matter. It has become a part of public knowledge and a source of anger. As such, any proposals should be prepared to prove their own merit in some way.

Ross (1996) quotes from a Deni Justice Project, “[m]any of the practices from the past cannot address current problems. However, if the values attached to those practices could be reclaimed, and new practices built on them, then it could work,” (p. 262). This sentiment is not exclusive to the judicial system. One interviewee indicated in the opening quote to this chapter, it is important to show the past in how it has shaped the present. We are to learn from this history and be reminded so that the mistakes of the past do not occur again, but the successes can be carried forward.

## **2.5 Summary**

- Planning on reserves has always been influenced by the political structures in existence, whether traditional Native or non-Native. Systemic racism plays an integral role in this process.
- People are insisting on the need for active response to Native problems as opposed to the continual reiteration of the problems.
- A major component to breaking the cycle of dependence on non-Native organizational structures is the move towards self-government.
- The profession of planning cannot heal the injustices of the past 500 years, nor can it heal the social ills which currently exist. However, it can play a major role in shaping Native culture for the future.
- Native world values and traditions are important, informative sources for mainstream society to understand its own role in creating guidelines or visions.

### Chapter 3:

#### **How does one plan for a Native community - how does one plan *with* a Native community?**

...the term 'Mi'kmaq' ...describes a society where the well-being of others is placed above individual wants and desires in the material world.... 'Mi'makik', the term for the national territory of the Mi'kmaq, is translated as the land of friendship. The emphasis is not on the land, but again on the tribal bond and conduct expected within Mi'kmaq territory. (Johnson, p. 28)

Traditional planning education teaches us to analyze communities in a simple didactic way. Divisions of settlement, people, and land are quantified and used as a basis for discussing a community's potential growth.<sup>25</sup> Somehow, cultural meaning fades into the background as raw data and passing observations take precedence when it comes to implementation time, possibly due to a lack of critical framework in which to evaluate information. Assumptions are made often with little or no deeper understanding of why patterns have occurred as they have, the ideology behind the choices people have made, world view attitudes and their place in the environment. Empirical analysis does not always allow for discoveries of the positive aspects of a community and the methods that will help these communities thrive.<sup>26</sup> In this context, technique purports itself to be neutral, its biases left implicit. Thus, it becomes necessary for the analyst to be aware of his/her personal value system in the evaluative process.

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<sup>25</sup> Kevin Lynch outlines 'how-to' steps in studying a community in *The Image of the City*. He describes the process in terms of path, node, landmark, edges, and district.

<sup>26</sup> In Eskasoni, the most positive aspects are not necessarily physical, nor physically visible from the highway.



### 3.1 Recent planning theory for Native communities

'Planning' is a difficult word. To different people, it refers to different things and its meaning changes meaning depending on the context. In general society, the major emphasis is on land use, land use policies and bylaws as a means of guiding a community's future growth.<sup>27</sup> There is still a predominance of zoning as a major planning tool to separate land uses into categories such as industrial, commercial, residential uses. It is important to note that in any context, the mere existence of suggestions and guidelines written in an official plan do not necessarily dictate that such events will actually occur. Below, three common planning theories attempted on reserves are outlined.

Table 3.1 Summary of three theories outlined by Boothroyd and Wolfe.

<b>type</b>	<b>community input</b>	<b>goal</b>	<b>plan by whom</b>
project specific or incremental planning	nominal if any sought	each problem is solved individually	usually outside consultants
comprehensive (master) planning	nominal if any sought	often future land-use based	usually outside consultants
integrated planning	active and necessary	holistic, considering cultural, economic, social, physical	partnership - often outside facilitator with community members

*Project-Specific Incremental Planning* is executed in a piecemeal strategy. Occasionally, this planning typology is referred to as "wish-list". This form tries to address particular

<sup>27</sup> Goldberg and Horwood. n.d., *The Zoning Debate*, p. 23-29.

problems and autonomously find a solution for each problem. Overlapping or related factors are not necessarily considered. Generally, Project-Specific Planning does not necessarily request community input as the issues addressed derive from the obvious - e.g. hypothetically, the current water treatment process does not sufficiently handle the amount of sewage for a community of "x" size, leading to raw sewage overflowing into the fresh water supply.

*Comprehensive (Master) Planning* is often done by experts unfamiliar with the community. In turn, community consultation has been on an optional basis. The plan supposedly is inclusive in its outlook, considering the future growth over a certain number of years of economic, physical, and social resources. Community involvement in the development of the plan may or may not be shown in the final report.

*Integrated Community Planning* is the latest of these versions. ICP is intended to have active community participation which addresses economic, cultural, social, and physical factors within the overall cultural context. Its success relies heavily on zealous community participation and input. In this context, the planner plays the role of a facilitator, often with a local Native planner trainee. This sounds easier and more idyllic than in actual practice. Although Integrated Planning involves a holistic strategy, the specifics of its implementation are complex and much of the literature is vague in this regard. Planning places a great responsibility on the community and does not really acknowledge an even broader concept of "holistic" - that while each reserve may be relatively small in population, there are issues which include all the reserves together. Integrated planning sounds like an ideal process in theory, yet it has not become a part of general practice. Arguably, the characteristics are similar to many concepts floating around planning

today,<sup>28</sup> but may be discussed under a different label. This type of planning is difficult to generalize. Its achievements rely on the working relationship between outside consultants and the specific community.

It is troublesome and unnatural to neatly categorize so many factors. "It is difficult to distinguish economic development from community development, and indeed it appears that the preference in the Indian community is to avoid making such artificial distinctions" (Wien, p. 127). The literature suggests that this type of integrated planning is easier for smaller communities because of ease of reaching consensus decision-making, yet may strain the fewer resources. The political structure constraining Native reserves is daunting and constantly changing. In response, planning assumes an inherently important relationship between the facilitator and the community in the hope of maintaining some continuity.

Simon et al. (1984) describe a hybrid referred to as "responsive" planning. They outline two fundamental characteristics. First, responsive planning springs from grassroots initiatives (a local client group), not by an outside agency. Second, the goal of responsive planning is to produce minimal incremental plans, not comprehensive or master plans. This theory proposes a reconsideration of existing strategies, but could be pushed forward even more.

Small incremental gestures are easier to hope for and achieve,<sup>29</sup> but should not be thought of in isolation. Constant disappointments in the lack of success in achieving

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<sup>28</sup> Exemplified by the Halifax Regional Municipality planners in the form of public meetings, public surveys/committees, extensive public input and approval, for updated methods of rural planning for Nova Scotia as detailed in interviews with HRM planners 1996-7.

<sup>29</sup> As evidenced in an interview with an educator on reserve, March 1997.

bigger dreams can reinforce negativity. The potential exists for small victories to encourage steps toward a greater goal or overall vision.

### 3.2 Identifying needs

Identifying a community's most pressing concerns is expected of any planning assessment regardless of cultural context. There are a variety of methods with which to help identify a community's wants. One example is discussed in Table 3.2 below. What is not so often discussed is the planner's needs, one of which falls under the heading of personal bias. Planners, as well as most of mainstream society, fundamentally *need* to label and categorize everything. As a part of the natural evolution of language, words are constantly being created while meanings shift.<sup>30</sup> The structure of language reveals different belief systems. This topic is discussed further in the section of Language, but it is noteworthy here that "it is difficult to distinguish economic development from community development, and indeed it appears that the preference in the Indian community is to avoid making such artificial distinctions" (Wien, p. 127).

Boothroyd in Wolfe (1989) gives the following example to clarify comparisons and improve decision-making.

Table 3.2 Criteria to Assess Development Proposals

productivity:	will it produce wealth?
efficiency:	will it make efficient use of human resources?
self-reliance:	will it contribute either by making the band less dependent on imports or by increasing its export base?
flexibility:	does it contribute to an ability to adapt to changing conditions?

<sup>30</sup> Sable (1996) goes into lengthy detail on the topic of language and its cultural development.

equity:	will it produce a reasonably equitable distribution of benefits and costs within the community?
quality of life:	will it contribute to better conditions in terms of health, safety, satisfaction and personal development
environmental:	does it contribute to sustainable, healthy and enjoyable natural environment?
integration:	does it fit well with development plans for other areas of community life?
control:	does it contribute to the community gaining greater control over its future and does it reduce dependency on outside corporate and government agencies and decision-makers?

At what point does all this questioning of 'what is the appropriate method' become a hindrance rather than a point from which to progress?

In theory, a community-developed criteria list with which to consistently judge proposals is useful. It seems that it would be common sense to carefully weigh the merit of any proposal. However, perhaps the planning issue at stake is how to stick firmly to the criteria list, if it should exist at all, to provide a basis for a consistent comparison of projects. What the criteria list exemplified above does not mention are the external influences over which most community members have no control. It would seem that some redesign of an acceptable, decision-making process must be agreed upon by community members before changes can be effective.

Eskasoni has a variety of needs. The greatest successes are not necessarily obvious and are being met in the way of education. The community eagerly awaits the opening of a local high school, a resource which is preferable to sending children to the high school in Sydney. While the actual physical existence of a local school is applauded, the

relevance to physical requirements is potentially more clearly viewed through the curriculum and possible partnerships. (Example suggested in Appendix D.)

Consultants are usually called in to analyze the 'problem' and then present what they determine is the 'best' solution. When the background of these consultants is mildly scrutinized, some bias is usually discovered. The consultants will generally endorse the product or process which they happen to specialize in or in which they have a vested interest. The method recommended is not necessarily the most beneficial or the most agreeable. The Royal Commission and the reactions to it demonstrate such a predicament on a large scale (as mentioned earlier), while a smaller, reserve scale is described below.

A notable example is the new sewage treatment facility in Eskasoni. Qualified 'experts' were found off the reserve. The consultants chosen recommended purchasing a special truck<sup>31</sup> which would spray the treated sewage on the trees. While the general public would suggest that perhaps a second opinion should be sought, the consultant (given the benefit of the doubt) thought this was an appropriate solution despite the fact that the Nova Scotia provincial health standards does not permit this process.<sup>32</sup> Surprisingly, the project was scrapped only after a community member demanded an Environmental Assessment and the facility depicted in figure 3.1 was chosen. Upon inquiry for a second opinion, one consultant remarked on another consultant's work process, "yeah, they'll do water tests for a year and discover that [this community's biological waste] is pretty much the same as everyone else's'."

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<sup>31</sup> The truck did not actually treat the sewage. A new facility would still be required since treatment still must occur prior to the spray stage.

<sup>32</sup> From Nova Scotia Environment interview June 1996.



Figure 3.1 Sewage treatment facility under construction, Eskasoni, NS

*Cost: \$2.6 million. "I believe that all it is, is a concrete bunker to hide a big aerator. I don't think that it actually treats the sewage any better." (speculation from NS Department of Environment consultant)*

What the above example demonstrates is the unquestioned bias that the consultants had to endorse a product which they were commercially involved with and would thus receive a definite financial benefit. They possessed a vested interest which was not openly declared and acted as though they were a neutral research source. It further demonstrates the lack of processes to hold such parties accountable, or to insist upon the investigation of further options. The objective here is not to oversimplify the implementation of accountability checks, but to mention how easy it appears for questionable projects to proceed without them.

### **3.3 Goal and response**

For the last two decades, attempts have been made to reconcile the development of Native within non-Native culture. The following is an excerpt from a study by Jan Loubser for the National Indian Brotherhood in 1976:<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> As cited in Wien (1984).

The central thrust of The Strategy is that Indian society should be strengthened through the development of Indian economies within Indian cultural frameworks under the control of Indian political institutions anchored in and drawing their legitimacy from local Indian communities. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of all aspects of social reality and insists that the holistic principle - that politics, economics, culture and other sectors not be treated as disconnected things but as parts of a whole, should guide all further development of the Indian people, as well as the reform of existing government agencies and programs relating to them. It should also be enshrined in the design and permeate the functioning of the new institutions that are created in the implementation of The Strategy.

The above passage is an excerpt from a study conducted in 1976. Much of the current literature supports the suggestions contained therein. What has happened since then?

Much of the complaint about planning practice is that it has been ineffective because it has been politically naive about Native issues, is motivated by strategies and agendas based on finance, and lacks an overall long-term ethic and suggestion on how to coordinate.

Wolfe (1988) does mention some success stories in planning with Native communities. The common theme to these successes is the necessity of partnerships. She emphasizes how "few planners, native or non-native, have the requisite combination of technical planning, experience of working in a mutual learning mode, developmental process skills, and knowledge and empathetic understanding of native Canadian culture and custom," (p. 219). She accounts that one of the keys to success is also a reason for its slowness, i.e. personal involvement, an extremely time-consuming process. Interpersonal skills become even more important as trust and communication must be built



and appropriate strategies attempted<sup>34</sup>. There really is no way to speed up this process and it is doubtful whether one should try.

### **3.4 One example of planning with Native cultural input**

*West Coast Spirit, five Native schools*,<sup>35</sup> details a positive example of Native culture beginning to be included in the planning/ architectural process. In 1985, an architect working for the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, Marie-Odile Marceau, initiated a new approach to providing schools to British Columbian Native reserves. She shifted the federal government's role of administration to facilitation by putting decision-making power into the hands of the Native communities. With Marceau's guidance, the communities were able to choose their own architect and manage the design and construction processes, while DINA allocated the funding for each project.

The bands played active roles in the design and construction processes. They contributed ideas from their own specific cultures. Again, with guidance from Marceau, the bands hired construction managers who utilized local laborers and artisans rather than outside workers. This created local employment opportunities in addition to the teaching/learning of practical construction skills. In turn, these new skills enabled the local band members to be responsible for the upkeep of the schools upon completion.

"The participation of the bands in the design process resulted in buildings that were more tailored to the needs of the community than were schools in the past. Most importantly

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<sup>34</sup> There are some generally common beliefs in Native culture, but differences will exist between specific groups. Appropriate planning strategies will not necessarily include a blanket of surveys or statistical information.

<sup>35</sup> Unpublished report by Charles Fawkes, June 1996.

perhaps, the [personal] involvement of the bands engendered a sense of ownership and pride in the new schools" (Fawkes, p. 2).

Unfortunately, this program was canceled after the Seabird Island School was successfully completed in 1991. "Many believe that the publicity surrounding Seabird eventually created opposition within the Ministry of Education and Indian Affairs towards the 'expensive' new native schools." The program cancellation is suggested to have been motivated by racist public pressure, which "added fire to the general feeling of 'we are giving the natives too much.'"

### **3.5 Commonalties between Native and non-Native planning**

Planning has typically focused on maximizing resources in terms of physical land-use. However, many of these plans fall short at the implementation stage. Planners may postulate as much as they want, but the dream remains only a dream when no one knows how to achieve it. While community based planning sounds the most promising, something seems to be missing. In an ideal situation, there is strong community input and consultation in the envisioning of that community's future planning. However, it is important to research a greater base of options and alternatives to aid them in their decision-making process - a catalyst from which to accept, reject, or inspire new ideas for their community.

Planning in this context aspires to put action to words, but does not stress enough the level of personal commitment, from both planner and community, which it requires. Often the most important role for the planner is to learn how to listen. Ross (1992) offers that Natives know more about non-Native society than non-Native society knows about them. Because of the differences in language and meaning, learning how to listen and

understand becomes all the more significant. Numerous attempted plans already show that proposals from the outside in which community members have had little say are not successful.<sup>36</sup>

Harlan and Hayden (1995) suggest a more openly contextual approach to planning issues. They suggest that we must define history, define whose history it is, define its purpose, and define the tools used for telling it. They encourage questions about ownership, history, celebration and exploitation. Hayden's urban projects involve a diverse group of people with different skills to contribute. The teams consist of a cross section of architects, planners, historians, artists, anthropologists, sociologists, community activists. The communal approach in generating ideas and actions is inherent. The intention here is to acknowledge what is significant by provoking us to search for and recognize what is significant. However, there are no guarantees.

Planning is the only profession that constantly questions its existence and role in the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> In theory, this suggests that the profession is trying to adapt to the ever changing conditions in which we live. However, this questioning has not extended itself to explain the emphasis in planning education on teaching planning tools or techniques rather than questioning the philosophy behind the choices made<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup> In addition to the lack of visible evidence on reserves, discussed in works by Wolfe.

<sup>37</sup> Peter Dickson, planner for HRM, speaking at CAPS conference 1997.

<sup>38</sup> The planning tools are offered with an impression of neutrality. This indirectly or directly denies the bias everyone has. In simple terms, what is the body of thought from which choices are derived - e.g. socialist, fascist, liberal, totalitarian, communist, capitalist, racist, democratic, etc.

### **3.5 Summary**

- Although the desire for improved planning methods on reserves has existed for the last two to three decades, actual implementation with positive results remains slow. The lengthy time consumption is not necessarily a factor which is avoidable, nor should financial constraints restrict creativity and action.
- Upon review of the above theories, planning strategies cannot occur without personal involvement and commitment between both the external 'planner' and the local residents.
- It is an observation that the disparity between idea and action is not a problem solely of Native communities.
- An effective comprehensive planning theory appropriate to this culture, in general terms, and Eskasoni, in specific terms, has yet to be developed or to emerge.
- It is important to begin the process of generating one which has cultural continuity and can be articulated.

## Chapter 4:

### Eskasoni, NS. - learning from the physical domain

This chapter focuses on issues most closely encompassing physical qualities of a reserve which have not always been addressed as planning issues by conventional planners. It is important to note that there is a great deal of overlap among issues discussed.

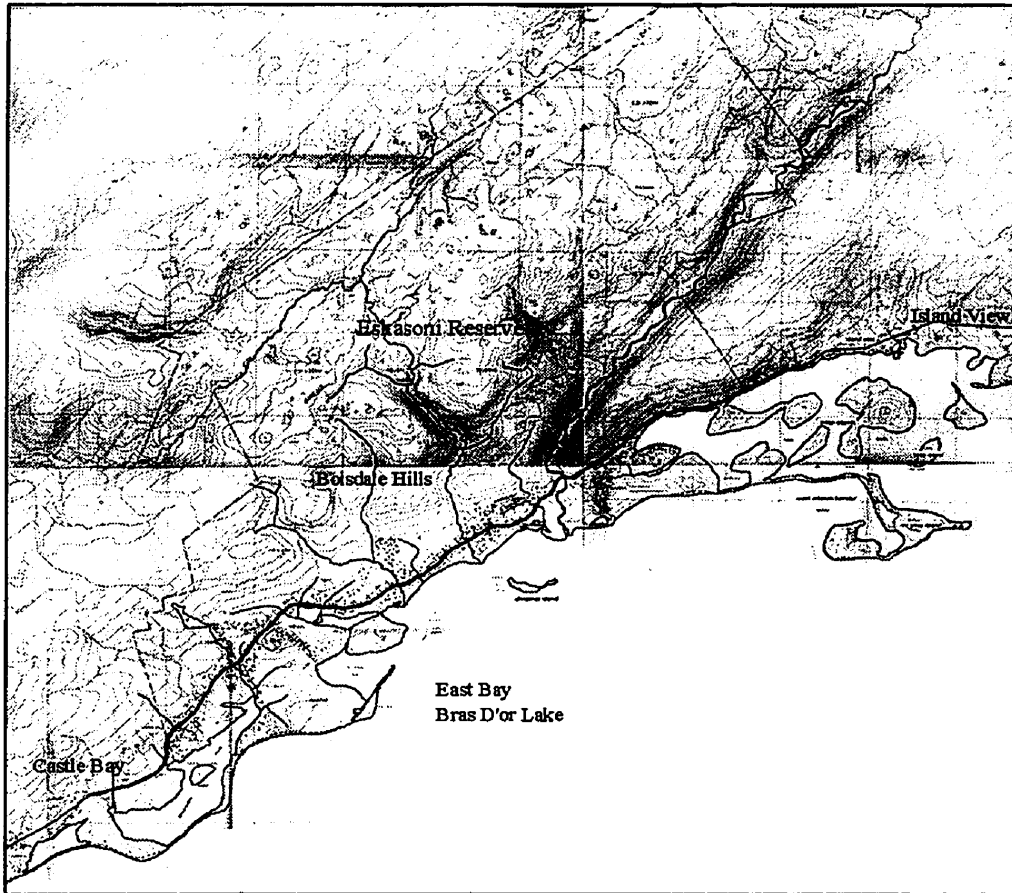


Figure 4.1 Overall map of Eskasoni<sup>39</sup>

<sup>39</sup> From the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Resources



Figures 4.2 and 4.3 Aerial views of Eskasoni\*\*

#### **4.1 Background information - basic facts<sup>40</sup>**

Eskasoni First Nation was established between 1832 and 1842. It is located in Cape Breton County, Nova Scotia, 40 km. south west of the city of Sydney on the Eskasoni side of the East Bay, Bras d'or Lakes.

Highway and roads encompass 3504.6 hectares of land.

Regional topography is quite steep, reaching a general elevation of 150 meters at the top of the Boisdale Hills. Essentially all development has centered on the base of the hills along the shores of the Bras d'Or Lakes. Two freshwater brooks, Indian Brook to the far eastern part of the reserve, and Christmas Brook located in the Center of the reserve drain the area. (Department of Indian and Northern Affairs)

The population is estimated at 3089 people. Approximately 60% of the population is under the age of 20 and new families are growing rapidly. Over 90% of those on reserve

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<sup>40</sup> Taken from UTEC web page.

receive welfare.<sup>41</sup> Organizations which respond to social problems provide the greatest source of employment on reserve. Most people speak English, but Mi'kmaw is regaining popularity as the first language.

...and the list continues. However, it is important to add another layer (cultural/ social) to these facts to help describe what makes 'community' and why people stay. "The [interpretation and] experience of space is neither innocent nor primal, but inescapably social and cultural" (Thomas 1990 in Atkin and Krinsky, p. 237).

## 4.2 Inventory of Resources

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us...Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing, and every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap that courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.<sup>42</sup>

Native beliefs place value on interpersonal relationships rather than on physical (or built) materiality. Guillemin (1975) notes that relationships among themselves are more important than the setting in which they take place. For example, the reservation was preferred over the city to raise children for interpersonal reasons rather than the physical setting. Ross (1996) also discusses the focus away from static "things" to the relationships that flow between.

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<sup>41</sup> It is important to note that welfare has a different connotation in the Native context. Many view welfare as compensation from the government as payment for taking their land. Wolfe, Ross, and Boothroyd discuss this in detail.

<sup>42</sup> Excerpt from a letter Chief Seattle responding to President Pierce, 1854, in Paul 1993, p. 49.

Despite unresolved land claims, actual ownership to land titles is not at the heart of the general debate. This topic is detailed quite extensively in the 1996 Royal Commission.<sup>43</sup> Eskasoni is in the process of creating an inventory of resources which dismisses artificial boundaries.<sup>44</sup> This inventory is to map where local medicinal plants exist; count how many fish pass through the streams and record what kind; or note soil content and quality, and more. Historically in the Mi'kmaq Nation, boundaries served only to ensure that particular areas were not over hunted or over fished. As mentioned previously, resources were shared, not owned by any one group of people. The province of Nova Scotia does not divide its environmental resources according to electoral boundaries, thus it would seem reasonable that political boundaries should not impede a Mi'kmaq mapping either.

### **4.3 Design**

To an outside observer driving through Eskasoni, one would think that there is no 'design' or 'planning.' Most things look like they are placed haphazardly, and most things are. The physically obvious does not necessarily relate the same interpretation for an outsider as for a community member. Native reserves share many characteristics with non-Native, rural communities. New housing stock is currently following a stereo-typical suburban process in both housing design and context. In general, it appears that all natural vegetation is bull-dozed down while new streets are an extension from the existing infrastructure. Although many would try to deny that this is a form of planning, it is evidence of conscious choice. It is a fairly typical attitude for any administrative agencies in which the greatest concern is dictated by financial reasons.

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<sup>43</sup> See especially Volume 2, part 2, p. 421-735

<sup>44</sup> See Marshall, M (1997) or RCAP for discussions of nature and resources with respect to spirituality and Native world view.



Interviewees indicated that they could always tell when they were driving through a Native reserve. They did not specify, but one speculation is because of the physical condition of houses rather than the style of houses themselves.

#### **4.3.1 Background, non-Native interests on physical community design<sup>45</sup>**

In the 1940's, the government conceived the idea to consolidate all the reserves in Nova Scotia into two: the reserve at Eskasoni for Cape Breton and Shubenacadie for the main land. The Mi'kmaq were promised houses, indoor plumbing and sanitation, jobs, and general improvements to the quality of life. Many people were coerced to move from smaller communities where many had been self-sufficient, owning their own small farms. People later tried to move back to their old reserves when the conditions at the centralized locations were found to be grossly lacking. However, they found that their land had been taken over by someone else or the reserve no longer existed (see Guillemin, Larson, Leavitt, Wein).

The population was designated to new neighborhoods which were created in an artificial linear pattern. Residents were not able to choose their neighbors and the close proximity led some to extreme distress. An example of this evidence is still visible in figure 4.4.

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<sup>45</sup> The history of non-Native influences on Native settlement is extensively recorded in sources such as Henderson (1995); Guillemin (1975); Isaac-Julien and Smyth; Larsen (1983); Leavitt (1995); Paul (1993); and RCAP (1996). Information was also collected through personal interviews with residents and local academics.



Figure 4.4 74th Street facing church, Eskasoni, NS

*'74' refers to a particular cheap wine that the parish priest assumed all the residents in this neighborhood would be drinking. It is one of the first developments from centralization where people were unable to choose their neighbors, but were allocated a space. The close proximity of the houses infringes on personal space, which results in "unhappiness," which then becomes described as a social problem. One local resident described the area as "place to go get shot or stabbed."*

Although everyone in the area was Mi'kmaq (and probably all distantly related), people from other reserves were still resented and considered outsiders . This was one excuse for the ensuing increase in crime. This also marks a notable change in attitude from the historical view of relationships when band membership was informal, to one of rivalry where each member became associated with some material worth. Some of the Mi'kmaq maintain a communal, sharing relationship with the land and generally one another. Given the history with non-Native contact, this viewpoint is no longer held by all reserve residents. The disparity is significant enough that outside planners can no longer make blanket assumptions that all individuals desire the same physical circumstances or tolerate spaces for insufficient reasons.

A rising issue is the ownership of individual parcels of land on reserve. Historically, bands have held only collective rights to reserve land. Individuals have ownership of the houses, but not the land that they sit on. People are seeing the need to have a greater security or more formal recognition that his/her home and location will be passed on to family members. It is no longer taken for granted that the more traditional attitudes of respected territory will continue to be recognized. These divisions add further complexity to the overall land claim issues.<sup>46</sup>

#### **4.3.2 Information collection at Eskasoni**

A number of visits were conducted to the Eskasoni reserve. In these visits, 'tours' were given by two local people. Informal interviews took place during these tours and with casual passersby, but questions were kept minimal as one local resident commented about the increasing number of people visiting the area to 'study them and their culture.' Many explanations occurred during the few personal visits over meals and tea. The reasoning of this methodology is discussed in Chapter 5 in the section on Trust and further described in Appendix D.

In this process, the planner learns from the community and has to adapt his or her way of thinking about the working relationship. This further suggests that it may be more appropriate for the planner to assume a role of facilitation, rather than one of control. This is discussed further in the following section of Trust.

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<sup>46</sup> See DIAND references to Certificates of Possession.

### 4.3.3 Community design and architectural style

The following illustrations and accompanying italicized text are only selected excerpts taken from an exhibition detailed in Appendix D. The following figures 4.5 to 4.10 indicate placements of businesses, services, and housing clusters.

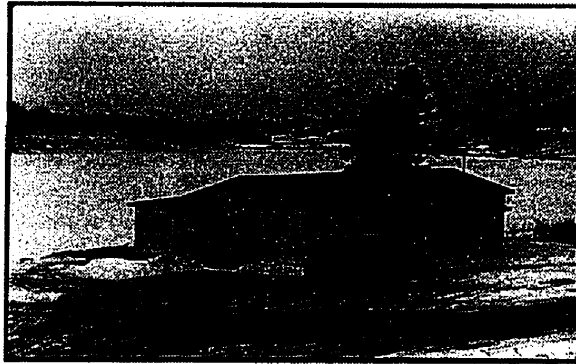


Figure 4.5 Mi'kma'ki Aboriginal Fisheries Service, Eskasoni, NS

*A public announcement on the internet declares, "MAFS is a Native initiative, created to meet the needs of Native fishers and communities."*

*The Eskasoni fish farms are not actually located on reserve. They have the problem of someone slashing their nets.*



Figure 4.6 Commercial Center, Eskasoni, NS

*From what I remember, there are 2 convenience stores, 1 gas station, 1 barbershop, the fire station. Private external businesses do not invest in the area because they cannot own the land. Local people do not have many businesses because they cannot use the land as collateral with the bank. While these are located in fairly close proximity to each other, they are also interspersed with housing. There does not appear to be any 'zoning.'*



Figure 4.7 Bridge toll, Eskasoni, NS

*Eskasoni is a strip community like many rural towns, arranged along one main road. These girls in the image were fundraising so that their hockey team could go to Halifax for a tournament. Anyone driving through the community has to pass through here.*

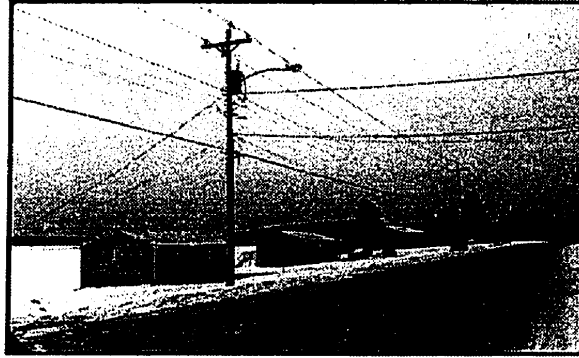


Figure 4.8 Line of housing along highway, Eskasoni, NS

*Not everyone wants to be different from everybody else. Sometimes they just want their own house on their own spot of land. One adjustment that has been made is that new houses are spaced slightly farther apart than their predecessors from the centralization days. Who gets a house and where it is located is controlled by the \_\_\_\_ family.*



Figure 4.9 Cluster of housing - view from chief's driveway, Eskasoni, NS

*Houses clustered together often connotes a family. People build their houses close together by choice - usually a daughter wanting to be close to her mother. In this context, personal space is encompassed and shared among family.*



Figure 4.10 Cluster of housing, Eskasoni, NS

*People want to be able to locate their houses anywhere they want. They don't care about flood plains. Property lines are bound only by respect as the land is owned communally. Some houses do not have driveways because the neighbors declined access across their 'own space' when requested.*

It is evident that not everything is as it appears. The area is not so physically unlike many other Cape Breton communities, such as Judique, Inverness, or Port Hood. However, the reasons or stories behind the images indicate the difference in political attitude or underlying messages. Upon further questioning, we find that the reasoning does not necessarily make sense to the situation or most people.

What can be derived from these examples is the necessity for personal choice. In accordance with traditional Mi'kmaq beliefs of non-interference, no one wants to be told what they can or cannot do. Where choice is not completely an option, allowances must be made for traditional views of comfortable space. The change in housing groupings from clusters to linear form reflects a timely, cultural change in attitude regarding land ownership in an increasingly formal, more possessive way.

The following figures 4.11 to 4.17 exemplify some of the architectural design of public buildings and houses.

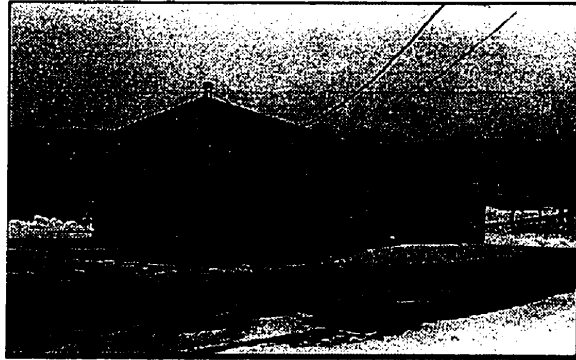


Figure 4.11 Community hall, Eskasoni, NS

*The building is a former army barracks shipped in from Sydney. It was to become obsolete as community functions were to occur in the new school addition...until a respected teacher had a heart attack and died at the grand opening in the new gym of the school. The gym is now under-utilized because of the negative association. The hall is still actively used for community purposes.*



Figure 4.12 Band office, Eskasoni, NS

*Some people like [the building] because the plan is in the shape of the eagle totem. In comparison to the rest of the community, it at least tries to embody some cultural influence.*



*However, one resident commented that despite the architectural/ cultural expression, "this does not represent me."*

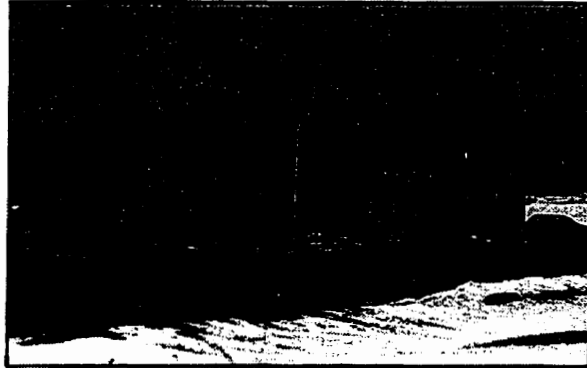


Figure 4.13 Unama'ki Training and Educational Center, Eskasoni, NS

*"The best thing that has happened to this community...has succeeded despite itself." It provides educational services for adults returning to school and has been made necessary as a transition year before anyone continues on to university at UCCB. It currently lacks enough space to accommodate the many programs.*

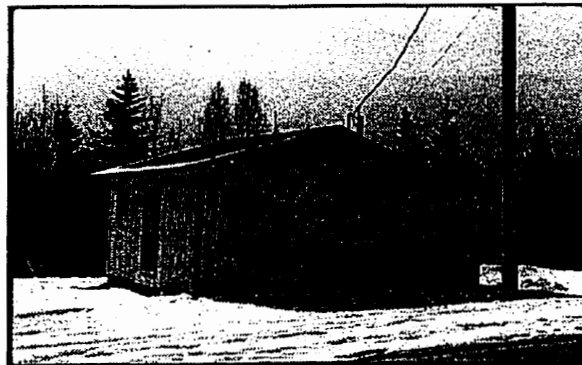


Figure 4.14 House, Eskasoni, NS

*At first it looked abandoned, but then curtains can be seen in the window.. it must be someone's home.*

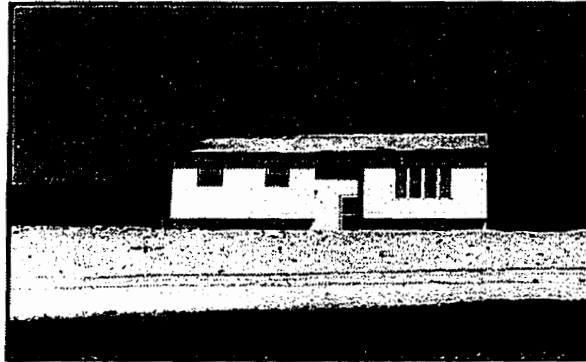


Figure 4.15 House, Eskasoni, NS

*This style seems to be the most popular housing choice among new-build home owners.  
Sheila's house in Port Hood is the same.*



Figure 4.16 Chief's house, Eskasoni, NS

*Only paved driveway in town.*

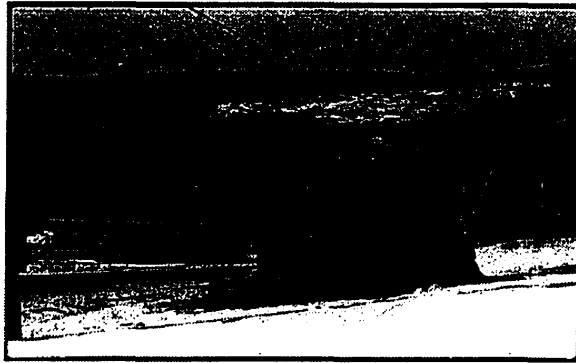


Figure 4.17 Hut, Eskasoni, NS

*This is an example of traditional bent timber construction by John Henry. The sweat lodge is built in the same manner, but is hidden off the main road and is not photographed because it is a sacred place.*

There are many more examples, the above are only a sampling. The architectural design of the buildings could be called eclectic. Aside from the band office, the above hut, or the sweat lodge, buildings are not significantly different from anywhere else. One could claim that much of the design is actually not design at all because standard, generic patterns are followed. However, it is argued here that this is still a distinct design choice. It simply demonstrates a design process based on the easiest, most available and economical options.

The display does not necessarily reveal the content. The disparity between the visually obvious in built environment is contrasted in the following images (figures 4.18 and 4.19) by Barry Bernard, which stress a greater importance on the human aspect.



Figure 4.18\*\*



Figure 4.19\*\*

#### 4.4 Summary

- The visual examples demonstrate that reserves share many points with rural communities and are remarkably different not in physical design, but perhaps only condition.
- Planning in some form has always existed on reserve, whether by Native traditional ideology that is not obviously recognized as planning or by non-Native denial that planning decisions have been made.
- The process suggests that conventional planning methods are not necessarily equipped to obtain or apply qualitative information.
- Comments by residents reiterate previous statements that more significance is placed on beliefs and relationships than on physical structures. However, at the same time, people are conscious of the influence of the physical environment on their self-image and their identity.

## **Chapter 5:**

### **Communication**

This chapter is divided into three sections. The significance of language, community input, and trust explore cultural aspects of communication and their implications for planning. Questions arise more easily than answers are found: who does one listen to; what do they represent, what is there to be gained, what do they want, is that what we want? The potential for misunderstanding exists if only because of the disparity between Native and non-Native belief systems found fundamentally in the construction of the Mi'kmaq language, being verb-based, and English, being noun-based.<sup>47</sup>

#### **5.1 Language**

Language is not only verbal and written. It continues to a range of visual and physical, musical, auditory and participatory.

##### **5.1.1 Listening and the observation of physical language**

Oral traditions form the basis of rules guiding behavior and revealing world view through tribal consciousness. After much worry and consideration, these traditions are now being recorded for lessons which can be passed on to new generations of children.<sup>48</sup>

However, learning does not occur with verbal knowledge but through observation throughout one's lifetime. Exposure to certain situations monitors certain behaviors and

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<sup>47</sup> The construction alone implies an analogy of action and stasis.

<sup>48</sup> Although Mi'kmaq usage is increasing and has been more sustained in the homes on Cape Breton, it has fallen into greater disuse on mainland Nova Scotia.

the behaviors of others (Marshall 1997). This learning by experience and demonstration is discussed further in the section on Trust.

Oratorical skills play a critical role in Mi'kmaq history. In addition to the passing down of oral traditions and teaching through stories, speech-making was also an integral characteristic in Mi'kmaq politics. Mi'kmaq leaders followed the will of the people and did not have the power to impose any decisions that were not agreed upon. The leader had to rely on speech as the only power of persuasion regarding any new initiatives. As such, language developed important subtleties and significance (Paul 1993). Even today, language reveals important concepts of time. When Mi'kmaq write in English, they often write in the present tense. It is as if they are bringing the past into the present consciousness, as if the event were happening at this very moment. Sable (1996) explains this further and goes into extensive detail on the topic of Mi'kmaq language and culture in general.

An example of the importance of listening and observation is described in an interview below regarding decision-making:

I went with a Native-speaking friend to a community meeting. When we walked into the hall, it was full of people. The room was set up like any meeting room - a long table in front with rows of chairs facing it. Everyone was just casually speaking in a combination of English and Mi'kmaw. No one actually called the meeting to order, but after a while, I noticed a shift. People were speaking only in Mi'kmaw and gradually people seemed to be listening to others speak. By watching people's faces and body language, it seemed that gradually, only one person spoke and people spoke in turn. Gradually, everyone began to talk to their neighbors again, shifting back into the English-Mi'kmaw combination and the meeting was over. There was no official beginning and there was no official end, but issues had been discussed, decisions had been made, and everyone got to have his say.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with St. Mary's University anthropology professor.

The details of how this particular meeting was initiated are unnecessary. It is the details which demonstrate important points to learn. The political structure in place at the time was insufficient to accommodate community decision-making. Unorthodox measures were taken to ensure a process of decision-making with which the community was able to function. Ross relates a similar experience and further notices that the better his listening skills grew, the more people had to say to him. Sable (1996) also discusses that the oral traditions are not just about speech. They are also about silence. They include listening, reflecting, the need to be receptive because the stories contain multiple layers of meaning.

### 5.1.2 Words

The Mi'kmaw language is structurally different from English in that it is verb based whereas English is noun based. This fundamental difference has powerful ramifications in the study of Mi'kmaq culture and traditions, especially when the complexities of 'planning-speak' are added. The planning world is difficult enough for those whose primary language is English, much less for those whose primary language is vastly different.

Language poses several problems when meaning changes with every context.<sup>50</sup> As Sable (1996) remarks about her research into Mi'kmaw education, "certain words have been put in quotation marks to indicate the inaccuracy or inadequacy of the English language to properly express the meanings of Mi'kmaq concepts. She offers examples such as "civilization, spirit, spirituality, nature, natural, living and life." As well, she comments on how the Mi'kmaw language expresses world view. Sable recommends that subject is important to study. "Language is the reflection and expression of how cultures

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<sup>50</sup> Ross (1992) discusses this topic in detail. He suggests that misunderstandings are a core influence in the problems between Natives and the non-Native judicial system.

structure, give meaning to and interact with the world...language is the grammatical organizing of a culture's perception and experience of reality that best serves that culture's needs...[it] has its own cadence and rhythm, a sound unique to the culture" (p.73).

Johnson (1992) examines ethnic identity, philosophy, attitudes, interviews, and social conditions of the Mi'kmaq. The abstract included in her research is the only text written in English. Her thesis is written in Mi'kmaq - to further emphasize the importance of concepts and ideas which cannot be translated with the same weight or meaning into English. She urges those interested in learning about Mi'kmaq culture to learn to speak the language in order to fully understand the conceptual and perceptual framework.<sup>51</sup>

The differences in language are important to note as "most non-Native people do not realize that even when a Mi'kmaw is speaking English, s/he is not necessarily ascribing the same meaning to the words, or sharing fundamental concepts assumed by a non-Native English speaker" (Sable 1996, p. 74). Ross (1992, 1996) further elaborates on the importance of time and context in the creation of many linguistic misunderstandings.

In a field such as planning in the mainstream society, there are a number of different terms floating around with ambiguous meanings. The field of planning has a tendency to get carried away with buzz words and confusing terminology. For example, current terminology is the rediscovery of natural processes with respect to the environment. During translation, the planner discovers that 'permaculture,' 'biomimicry,' 'self-sustainability', and more, that these ideas of responsible practice with nature are similar, if

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<sup>51</sup> For an in-depth look into the specifics of Mi'kmaq culture, see Isaac-Julien, Johnson, and Sable.



not the same, as traditional Native ways of existing with the environment.<sup>52</sup> A comparison of holistic Native beliefs as outlined by Marshall; Isaac-Julien and Smyth; Johnson; Leavitt; Ross; and RCAP with discussions of 'innovative' processes by Todd, Benyus, and Ferraro will reveal a distinct similarity in concept and content if not the exact terminology. The concepts already exist and have been used in practice with success. New terminology simply reiterates practical value.

Forster (1989) indicates discussion and argument in planning is important. "A rigorous analysis that no one can understand can be worse than useless - it can be counterproductive and damaging, just as it might also at other times serve deliberately to obfuscate important issues" (p.5). In planning for a non-English community, words used in this manner give select people an unfair advantage over others. It is important for the planner to be particular aware of the language s/he uses. The resulting exclusion may not necessarily be intentional, but that does not excuse the potential damage which may follow.

Applying 'planning-speak' benefits those few who can decipher it and limits the participation of those, the majority population (both non-Native and Native), who cannot.<sup>53</sup> Under these circumstances "...it remains critical to begin the process of trying to explain ourselves to each other in terms that the other can understand." (Ross 1992, p.

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<sup>52</sup> Native beliefs with respect to the interconnectedness of the Creator, Mother Earth, the Plant World, the Animal World and Humans. The trends refer to environmental concern over the damaging impact human civilization is having on the Earth e.g. pollutions, the reduction of infrastructure (waste/ water management) impacting on the landscape. Review video tapes of CAPS conference at Daltech February 1997 for variations in ecological terminology.

<sup>53</sup> One example by Campsie (1998) of a convoluted statement: "We envision a public participation process that is context-specific, consensus-based, synergistic and proactive, bringing together all stake-holders to exchange information and develop a common understanding of the issues within a framework of sustainable strategy development and shared learning," which she interpreted as "We will hold several public meetings to discuss the issues." p. 30.

15) Both parties have to find a way of communication that is acceptable. It may be more critical to look at the agenda behind the words in addition to the words themselves. Ross further relates how objectivity is an illusion because everything is a personal reaction. There is an egoism in objective language which suggests having reached a superior wisdom in presuming one can talk about anything other than oneself. Care is taken not to label things, people or events in terms of views which would imply superior judgment rather than a personal reaction.

One interviewee recommended so far as to not use the words "plan" nor "planning" anywhere near a reserve. It appears to inspire a great deal of suspicion and discomfort.<sup>54</sup>

The goal here is to formally acknowledge some of difficulties which may be the root to misunderstandings between Native and non-Native groups. Often, everyone is well aware of the pressing problems, but they are not necessarily sure how to begin working with them.<sup>55</sup> It is easier to call for study after study where words can go on forever. Language cannot continue to be a barrier in the planning process and cannot be an excuse in the delay of progress. Planning practice could actually be of practical benefit since the time is overdue for someone to actually listen and put the information into some kind of useful application. Many Mi'kmaq interviewees cautioned the significance and ownership placed on the written word, but non-Native society relies on the ability to reference material and cite precedence.<sup>56</sup> As previously mentioned by Wolfe, the emphasis has traditionally been on what planners or experts can do for Native

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with St. Mary's University anthropology professor, March 1998.

<sup>55</sup> This issue of concern was raised repeatedly in background interviews for the writing of the RCAP.

<sup>56</sup> Most obviously evidenced in the functioning of the current legal system.

communities rather than respecting that Native Canadians might have their own ideas about how their communities should grow.

Maillard wrote in 1755, “I even take care of observing measure and cadence in my words and to make choice of those expressions that properest to strike their attention, and to hinder what I say from falling to the ground.” The significance is subtle. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, behavioral cues exercise the appropriate and expected responses. It is useful for anyone to be aware of physical behaviors when working with a different culture as it indicates that listening incorporates observation as well. It would be especially helpful for planners to note this example since planning should not occur in a vacuum.

### **5.1.3 Visual language**

With all the emphasis on words, little attention has been paid to visual language.<sup>57</sup> Sable has revealed that the major forms of transmitting knowledge and values in traditional Mi'kmaw culture are not only through the telling of legends, but also by the observation and participation of dance, songs and chants (see figure 5.1). As well, many stories are passed down through a visual mapping in which particular events or circumstances are associated with specific landmarks.<sup>58</sup> These forms are not typically familiar to the world of planning as conventional planning tends to rely on empirical data. However, those visuals (videos, photographs, paintings) that have escaped into mainstream society help form the core of our perceptions and stereotypes of Aboriginal life.

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<sup>57</sup> In this particular reference, the meaning of visual is literal. Conceptually, planning has often been likened to having a ‘vision’ for the future.

<sup>58</sup> The story telling is generally triggered by a visual prompt.



Figure 5.1 Eskasoni Mawiomi (Powwow)<sup>59</sup> \*\*

As discussed in Chapter 4, it is these impressions that influence our thinking in planning with Native communities. These visuals demonstrate that there is a reasoning behind the physical description which may break down certain misconceptions. If the visuals are not explicit, they do often generate a story. Whether the stereotypes are positive or negative is really not the issue. The issue is to be aware that these stereotypes may lead to assumptions which are not necessarily appropriate.

... 'cognitive tourists'... come into the communities doing their fieldwork with preconceived notions or professional methodologies about the so-called Indians. These perceptions are based on western thought. They expect to meet either a noble race or dependent savages. Instead, they find a method of survival and an intact tribal consciousness, which threatens their individualistic myths and values (Johnson 1991, p. 26).

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<sup>59</sup> The powwows provide the opportunity for gathering, celebration, information sharing, and the discussion of current community issues.

It is important not to underestimate the power of visual imagery. "From the first days of still photography, anthropologists and artists found us a subject of endless fascination. When the pictures began to move, and then talk, they liked us even more...the movies gave us international fame. Without them, [we] would be an obscure chapter in history books. With them, we live forever" (Chaat Smith 1995).

## **5.2 Community input**

"There is no 'I' in Mi'kmaq, there is only 'we'"<sup>60</sup>.

As mentioned in the section of Language, the power of persuasion is an important tool in decision-making. No one can force his or her opinions on anyone else. Traditionally, sagamores or chiefs decided territorial issues which benefited the entire Mi'kmaq Nation, not individuals nor individual tribes. Today, emphasis is still placed on sharing and the greater needs of the whole community over that of the individual. When issues arise, advice from the Elders is sought and every person's opinion is supposed to be valued and heard, and a consensus reached (Paul 1993). To reach consensus in decision-making, everyone must believe that the choice made is the appropriate one no matter how long the process takes. It is not an objective of merely getting everyone to say "yes".

This explanation of consensus suggests each has a personal stake in the decision. The personal stake allows for individuals to continue working for something without requiring all persons to work at the same time - s/he has a personal commitment that the decision is the correct one. Ross (1996) also describes a process of planning. "...the concept means 'to do things in the right way' or 'go in the right way' by identifying practical means

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Native elder, March 1997.

to conform future conduct and values. The entire process is called 'talking things out,' and it guides the parties to a non-coercive and consensual conclusion to restore them to harmony in an ongoing relationship with a community," (p. 247).

On a broader scale, it should not be surprising that the movement towards self-government reflects a general feeling - people are tired of being told by someone else what they can and cannot do.<sup>61</sup> Ross (1992) also suggests that "the push for self-governance may reflect more of a desire to be left alone than to substitute Native laws and authority figures for non-Native ones" (p. 110). The Aboriginal right to self-government is in the Canadian Constitution and was decided over 200 years ago. This right is only now being recognized and progress leading towards self-government is unclear.

The core issues related include: a Mi'kmaq constitution, another level of government within the existing Canadian political structure, agreements between the Mi'kmaq Nation and current governments regarding services, sharing of royalties gained from resources, and the development of businesses on reserves - all issues which fall under the realm of planning. How this is achieved is a delicate situation. Two of the fears regarding the implementation of self-government are the loss of funds and loss of power. Reserves may lose their special status and be reduced to the rank of any municipality. Coincidentally, this was one source of outrage caused by the 1969 White Paper and its steps towards the eventual elimination of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. See Dorey (1993), Paul (1993), Isaac-Julien and Smyth for further discussion.

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<sup>61</sup> Battiste, Marshall and Ross discuss the basic rule of non-interference. No one has the right to tell someone else what to do. It is important not to infringe on the right to individual choice.

Within this political upheaval, community input is a difficult balance. It should embody the values of historical decision-making, in which every member has an opportunity to have a voice, but must be practically manageable at the same time. This is not an easy task, nor is it suggested that there is an easy way to encompass such input.

### **5.3 Trust**

Education or learning is one of the most visible positive areas of growth at Eskasoni. The growth of Mi'kmaw education marks an important acknowledgment of culture and value for differing ways of learning. The intention of the Indian residential schools to assimilate and eradicate Native culture represents one more blemish on a long list of grievances in the relationship between the First Nations and the Canadian government. In the general sense, trust becomes an important issue as the government offers promises which are not honored and Native rights are selectively recognized.<sup>62</sup> With examples of broken promise and breaches of faith, one can recognize how trust towards non-Native society is considered with caution. As Ross identifies, ironically, one of the most unifying aspects to the survival of Native culture is the resistance to assimilation into the rest of Canadian society.

It is not always possible to identify the intention with which proposals are made. Ideally, they are formed with the benefit of the community in mind. Intentions are not good for anyone if they are made in ignorance or under the guise of ignorance.<sup>63</sup> Amid the plethora of opinions and consultants' reports, to whom is one supposed to listen? It becomes

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<sup>62</sup> A recent example reported by the media is the over-ruling of a court decision which allowed Native rights to forestry on New Brunswick Crown lands.

<sup>63</sup> See Ross, p. 105 for an example of this in Ontario.

necessary for someone to take the responsibility to ask “how” and “why” while probing for the level of sincerity offered.

What planners can take away from the above is the lesson of patience, the importance of respect and the necessity to listen. These concepts are not new nor exclusive to planning practice, however, it is recommended that they be recognized as important ingredients toward a work ethic.

Sable (1996) discusses Mi'kmaw principles of learning in traditional culture. She details four themes, that learning was personal and communal; contextual and holistic; multi-sensory; and reflective (p.149). Many of these themes are being reintroduced into the Mi'kmaq school system by the Mi'kmaq Education Authority.<sup>64</sup> In this respect, the teachings of Elders can be taught in the classroom setting. Those involved in Mi'kmaq education record what has historically been passed on in the oral tradition and trust in the wisdom of the Elders to allow this to occur.

Where these two cultures intersect is the point of huge potential for both parties involved. Ross suggests that “every community is faced with having to design its new approaches. For this reason, every community becomes its own experiment.” Although the specifics of each community or reserve are unique, the door remains open to develop relationships between Native members and outside consultants. It is these working relationships that create a shared learning environment for all those involved. It is necessary for there to be community support and acceptance to the need for occasional outside aid. The definition of consultation must become a two-way concept - a little

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<sup>64</sup> Now Mi'kmaw Kina'masuti.



listening required from both sides. Once understood, the differences in learning methods can inspire new ideas.<sup>65</sup>

In the United States, numerous public art projects are trying to redefine community identity and encourage a greater understanding of how communities may positively grow. These projects bring public attention to the issues of concern. Hayden's projects in *The Power of Place* describe how the histories behind communities' development - the founding contributors- have been buried and gone unconsidered. The work uncovers previously little known women's, Black, Latin, Chinese, and Japanese contributions to the growth of Los Angeles. History is reinterpreted to learn from an alternative perspective. Historical photographs play an integral role in the research and in the construction of public art and information expressions. The projects bring together collaborative teams of historians, artists, architects, planners to find ways to rebuild public memory (Hayden 1995).

It is with this example in mind that much of the background information of Eskasoni was collected. A different form of information gathering and cultural learning was sought and tested. The photographs used in this text are part of a joint exhibition of the author and local Mi'kmaq artist. (See Appendix E) The intention of this exercise was to demonstrate a relationship in which both works provided a complement to each other that did not exist in each alone. Two perspectives were given. One perspective was to show the perceptions of the outsider. The other was to provide a balance of cultural depth that the outsider does not often see. An important task was to attempt to make the viewer

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<sup>65</sup> Several references, especially the more current, mention the value of 'kitchen table' discussions (informal interviews) and brainstorming.

question the very impressions that society indifferently accepts. What was achieved is an interesting exchange of ideas and the privilege of a unique learning experience.

#### **5.4 Summary**

- The disjunction between Native and non-Native belief systems found in the construction of the Mi'kmaq language and the English language helps to explain the importance and difficulty in understanding the need for alternative planning methods and information sharing.
- The methods of learning (story-telling, visual cues, experience, participation) within Mi'kmaq culture have not been common information sources for planning, but they provide nuances which help explain empirical data.
- As a consequence of these differences in communication, a restructuring of practice may be beneficial to a broader audience than the profession of planning.

## Chapter 6:

### Analysis and Conclusions

There is much pain and happiness, there is success and there is failure, there is despair and there is hope for the future. Still I would live no place else because this is my home, this is where my people have come. I also know that this place, like other places, is the reality that we Indians live; this is it. This isn't feathers, the beads of many colors, or the mystical, spiritual glory that people who are culturally hungry want.<sup>66</sup>

It is unrealistic to attempt a purist return to a traditional way of life, or even assume that a return is a desired end. What is of unlimited value is the philosophy behind traditional ways. These form an important base to incorporate the past with the present to provide a direction for the future. Native communities are not alone in trying to find a comfortable niche in which to live in a pluralistic country.

#### 6.1 Observations

Planning in some form has always existed on reserves, whether by Native traditional ideology that is not obviously recognized as planning or by non-Native denial that planning decisions have been made. Based on the evidence, attention to cultural context has not been considered with respect to built environment, or planning in the broadest respects, in this Mi'kmaq community. An effective comprehensive planning theory appropriate to this culture, in general terms, and Eskasoni, in specific terms, has yet to be developed or to emerge.

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<sup>66</sup> Aperture, p. 26

As discussed in the previously mentioned example of Native input in the planning process (section 3.4), planning in the Native context exists in a series of complex political issues. While the 1985 DINA program was successful in providing buildings and skills to a few Native communities, its cancellation indicates how planning on reserves has always been influenced by the political structures (and general public opinion) in existence, whether traditional Native or non-Native.

On reserves, the supply of basic needs is surrounded by complexities beyond those of conventional non-Native communities. People are insisting on the need for active response to Native problems as opposed to the continual reiteration of the problems. A major component to breaking the cycle of dependence on non-Native organizational structures is the move towards self-government. Although the desire for improved planning methods on reserves has existed for the last two to three decades, actual implementation with positive results remains slow. The lengthy time consumption is not necessarily a factor which is avoidable, nor should financial constraints restrict creativity and action.

Current planning is limited in its abilities to accommodate non-mainstream cultures. The disjunction between Native and non-Native belief systems found in the construction of the Mi'kmaq language and the English language helps to explain the importance and difficulty in understanding the need for alternative planning methods and information sharing. As a consequence of these differences in communication, a restructuring of practice is necessary and may be beneficial to an audience beyond the profession of planning.

Planning strategies cannot occur without personal involvement and commitment between both the external 'planner' and the local residents. The research process suggests that

conventional planning methods are not necessarily equipped to obtain or apply qualitative information.

Planning has generally focused on practical, physical issues, however, an effective comprehensive planning theory appropriate to this culture, in general terms, and Eskasoni, in specific terms, has yet to be developed or to emerge. It is important to begin the process of generating one which has cultural continuity and can be articulated. Comments by residents reiterate previous statements that more significance is placed on beliefs and relationships than on physical structures. However, at the same time, people are conscious of the influence of the physical environment on their self-image and somewhat on their identity.

This paper shifts from a thesis which tried to isolate and address a specific basic need (clean water) to an inquiry into wider cultural issues affecting planning and planning methodologies on reserves. Native resources have not been fully utilized to aid planning. Native world values and traditions are important, informative sources for mainstream society to understand its own role in creating guidelines or visions. The methods of learning (story-telling, visual cues, experience) within Mi'kmaq culture have not been common information sources for planning, but they provide nuances which help explain empirical data. Planning will need to draw upon those values, traditions, and processes which reserves have generated over time. It will offer an important way forward for Mi'kmaq communities and by extension, to other communities in this region. The profession of planning cannot heal the injustices of the past 500 years, nor can it heal the social ills which already exist. No one profession has the ability to solve an entire community's problems.

As further emphasis, Ross (1993) supports the following points regarding communication:

1. [we] must communicate North American culture better to Natives through mainstream educational opportunities. This is so that people can then make informed choices about what they wish to adopt, to adapt, or to reject.
2. Mainstream society has to provide increased opportunities for communities to communicate regularly with each other so that they can benefit from each other's experiences, both successes and failures, so that they do not have to remain in isolation from each other.
3. Mainstream society must support their communication with us, through what medium does not matter. If society can learn and understand the choices Native communities make, assistance measures offered can address their definition of need and not someone else's.

The observations made are not exclusive to any one field of study. Many of the issues pointed out in the thesis discussion demonstrate the multiplicity of ideas and some of the implications towards planning with First Nation communities. The current trend of ethnic identity and significance of cultural context plays a leading role in the ever-changing conception of the planning profession and the understanding of society today. Planning reflects this trend as practice is becoming an even greater extrapolation of many different fields.

Planning on reserves requires an involved approach. It is difficult to remain objective and it is inhuman to presume that constant neutrality is possible. Whether it is openly admitted or not, everyone has a bias or values which focus his/her outlook on life. It is easy for an outsider to pass through the community and suggest "why don't you just do 'x'" and the problem is solved. However, once one becomes involved, things take on a personal perspective very quickly. In order to build upon a relationship of trust, one that is necessary if there is to be any success with community participation, one has to live on the reserve and be an active member of the community. Planning then exists as a form of

partnership to coincide with the community's desire for change. These methods take time. In today's society, time is often equated with money. The financial situation strongly influences the degree of action. In addition, any decisions made will have no merit if they are not supported, if not initiated, by community members. Many reasons for the failure of projects fall under bureaucratic complications for both Natives and non-Natives. The political climate is undeniable and frustrating, yet must be acknowledged if any proposal is to succeed.

Recognize that a vision for the future is necessary to provide hope. It is difficult and unrealistic to live under a cloud of anger, the ear grows accustomed not to hear. Positive approaches must be thought of to keep that hope for improvement alive. However, visions and dreams are not enough. People have to see accomplishments of whatever scale to know that their work is leading to some tangible benefit. Cooperation and coordination as discussed in the previous historical discourse has to redefine a place to maximize resources in areas in which reserve boundaries serve only to segment small groups.

## **6.2 Final thoughts**

The research also reveals limitations of the discipline of planning. One of the most important lessons to be learned about how to work with any community, or person, is not exclusive to planning education nor planning practice in general. It is not about technique or theory, nothing so formulaic. Ultimately, it comes down to an issue about respect - for another's viewpoints, ideology, way of life. It is not sufficient just to hear one another make noise, but to have a generosity of spirit - to actually listen and try to understand and accommodate within a previously rigid structure. This has been emphasized repeatedly,

but at the same time cannot be emphasized enough. One does not have to accept those differences as one's own, but must allow the differences to be heard and to exist.

"Don't cry over the past or be ashamed of history. Give appreciation for the present and vision for the future, not just to survive in the community, but to live."<sup>67</sup> Figure 6.1 gives one example.

Figure 6.1 Government wharf, Eskasoni, NS



*We sat on the wharf and looked at Goat Island, the future site for a cultural Center and tourism - a little traditional dancing, a little crafts-making, maybe some canoe building and trail hiking or hunting. "Sometimes you have to sell a bit of your soul to maximize limited resources."*<sup>68</sup>

This image and its accompanying text have generated the most discussion of all the images in this work. A common theme of depression and empathy is expressed by viewers. However, this cannot be the final thought with which we are to be left. There must always be some kind of hope and respect for the continuity that survives. Strength

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<sup>67</sup> from *We're the Boss*, a National Film Board production on the cooperative movement in PEI, said by community activist Paul Gallant

<sup>68</sup> Interview with Eskasoni resident, 1997.



and faith have kept many cultures alive under conditions of constant duress. Planning is by no means the savior to all problems, however, it cannot be dismissed as not having been influential in the creation of modern Native communities. Because it can be an effective or degenerative tool impacting future visions, it must be held more openly accountable for its potential actions and inactions.

### *Monuments*

Aye! No monuments,  
No literature,  
No scrolls or canvas-drawn pictures  
Relate the wonders of our yesterday.

How frustrated the searchings  
of the educators.

Let them find  
Land names,  
Titles of seas,  
Rivers;  
Wipe them not from memory.  
These are our monuments.

Breathtaking views -  
Waterfalls on a mountain,  
Fast flowing rivers,  
These are our sketches  
Committed to our memory.  
Scholars, you will find our art  
In names and scenery,  
Betrothed to the Indian  
Since time began.

by Rita Joe

## Appendix A

Original proposal

### **Turning Full Circle - "New" Ideas of Sustainable Development in the Native Context**

#### **Introduction**

"Don't cry over the past or be ashamed of history. Give appreciation for the present and vision for the future, not just to survive in the community, but to live."<sup>69</sup>

Clean water and shelter are basic human needs. There are many political complexities and stereotypes (as many negative as romanticized) regarding Canada's First Nations, but they should not deny the importance of nor access to these basic needs. Everyone desires the same amenities as everyone else, but the question lies in how the needs are to be achieved.

This thesis is to investigate the interdependent relationship between human and natural environments. Traditionally, the planning of a community's structure (infrastructure) has fallen piecemeal through many disciplines - engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, planning, agriculture, and biology. Since the industrial revolution, infrastructure has been applied generically or dictatorially, regardless of cultural context or sense of place. Also, it has been applied in a manner to hide, screen, or camouflage its own existence. This blanket trend has influenced the design, or lack thereof, of Native communities. Ironically, we now acknowledge that these communities historically contain

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<sup>69</sup>from *We're the Boss*, an NFB film on the cooperative movement in PEI, said by community activist Paul Gallant

the values (cycles respecting Earth and Nature) of what we today innovatively term "sustainable development." It is through this ideology that the possibilities of infrastructure should be forced to consider cultural context.

### **Objective**

In an ideal situation, there is strong community input and consultation in the envisioning of that community's future planning. However, first, they must have a greater base of knowledge of options and alternatives to aid them in their decision-making process - a catalyst from which to accept, reject, or inspire new ideas for their community. This thesis aspires to provide some of these options for the community of Eskasoni, Cape Breton.

From the perspective of planning and sustainability, this work will focus on the cycle of water as a means of order. It will discuss ways that inevitable human interventions can facilitate, rather than disrupt, natural processes. It is an opportunity to reconsider how basic functions and necessities can be provided through natural technologies and sensibilities. In turn, the manner in which the basic functions are expressed can shape community and exemplify a further means of cultural expression.

### **Methodology**

The background research will include an overview history of the Micmac culture and of planning on reserve; a sketch of human and natural resources currently existing on the Eskasoni reserve; and a description of the concepts surrounding natural water systems (of surface water collection, waste water treatment,) as well as the impact they have had in existing situations. This will be done by way of first compiling data on existing facilities.

Next is to establish a comparative analysis of these facilities based on common criteria and effectiveness (e.g. long/short term effects, level of treatment, impact on environment,

capital costs, maintenance levels, size of facility in conjunction with size of community.)

This investigation will discuss implications of the supply, use, waste, and rejuvenation of water through natural systems for a sample area within Eskasoni. Through grassroots initiatives, the following possibilities will be discussed:

- community design - physically, how do waterways influence where development (e.g. housing) should go, what forms should it take, how is it to be implemented
- economy - what are the costs vis `a vis the potential uses, amenities, businesses (e.g. job creation - both long and short term), what are the impacts on existing businesses (e.g. aquaculture)
- environment - how does it influence acts and attitudes of conservation, what are the implications for education

From this, it will then be possible to present the community with a body of ideas. It should provide a foundation for open discussion between community members and planners as to future options for the community. This work is seen as a tool for the consideration of alternative solutions, not as a finite product.

Currently, the community faces an over-capacity sewage system as well as a housing shortage due to rapid population growth. Past related work from TUNS has included theses from Francis Lapointe (M.ARCH II), *Towards a resolution of on-reserve housing*, and Kim Needham, (MURP) *Planning with First Nations*. While there are overlapping issues with each, the research seeks to take a different step from the theory of the latter by discussing a specific and practical case study in a very real situation. By example, this should lead to implications in a broader sense for other communities.

## Appendix B

### Funding for First Nations

\* The following information is taken directly from a DIAND internet press release. While it does not specifically outline the flow of funds through political channels, it does imply a complex structure.

Several years ago, employees of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND) defined what they saw as the department's mission - *Working together to make Canada a better place for First Nations and Northern peoples.*

Today, this goal remains firmly in place, with an ever-increasing emphasis on partnership relations between DIAND and the people it serves. DIAND's staff and budget are both dedicated to improving the social and economic well-being of First Nations peoples, and of the residents of the Canadian far North.

Living conditions in First Nations communities have markedly improved over the past 30 years. But there are still many ways in which the living standards of First Nations peoples fall far short of what other Canadians expect as basic. For example, in 1991 the average income for Status Indians was about \$10,000 - about half the Canadian average. Of the approximately 73,000 families living on reserves, only 35,000 have adequate housing. DIAND is committed to working with First Nations to build safe, healthy communities where living standards approximate those of other Canadians.

**DIAND funds elementary and secondary education for eligible Status Indians and Inuit. Qualified Status Indian and Inuit students may also receive funding to attend college or university.**

Social development: \$1 billion

DIAND funds provision of social assistance and other social services to eligible Status Indians and Inuit individuals and families.

Community Infrastructure: \$806 million

**DIAND funds communities to build and maintain needed facilities such as schools, roads, bridges, water and sewer services and other community facilities.**

Housing: \$176.5 million

**DIAND provides funding to assist First Nations to build and maintain adequate housing on reserves.**

Economic Development: \$56.6 million

**DIAND supports Status Indians and Inuit in developing economic opportunities and markets in fields as diverse as agriculture, the arts, tourism and manufacturing.**

## Appendix C

### Example possibility

This thesis has alluded to the potential for collaborative projects between Mi'kmaq schools and outside groups. These could be mutually beneficial as opportunities for the exchange of knowledge, experience and resources. As an approach to planning, it is important to consider these working relationships more as partnerships between local residents and the outside resource. While the work may at first seem small and relatively insignificant, incremental projects have the potential to grow within a larger goal or vision. An example is suggested below.

Recently Eskasoni was in dire need of a new sewage treatment facility. The one they had was over-capacity and the raw overflow ran into the lake. In response to a 1995 survey, *Community Drinking Water and Sewage Treatment in First Nation Communities*, which outlined health risks to the communities, the federal government allocated an additional \$98.5 million to the \$125 million allocated in 1995-96 and again in 1996-97 for water and sewer projects. As a recipient of part of this funding, Eskasoni was able to build a new treatment plant.

Unfortunately, the money was spent on a typical, chemically-enhanced process and did not explore the opportunity for a system which would be culturally contextual or at least, more environmentally friendly. There is a plethora of new research going into the re-discovery of natural water treatment systems, such as a constructed wetland and its many variations. Many engineers or 'engineer-types' regard the concept of chemical-free plants treating water (as it has always occurred in nature) with suspicion. It is not technological enough.

Regardless whether or not it is considered a technology, in theory, a naturally based system would follow along with Native beliefs. However, at this time, it is understandable if it is not enthusiastically accepted community wide. Most people have not seen this process for themselves and ultimately have no reason to believe it or any other proposal which looks good on paper.

With these considerations in mind, it is suggested that an example or prototype of a constructed wetlands could be created by students learning biology. (Similar types of projects are occurring in Alberta where an elementary school is investigating aquaculture with their own mini trout farm. They receive support from Trout Canada.) Consultation with a biology teacher indicates that the principles of constructed wetlands, contained in a greenhouse context or not, are basic and simple enough for beginning biology students - some discretion with age groups is recommended.

The [adult] Training and Education Centre in Eskasoni recently introduced the sciences to their program. Since the school already has some collaboration with the University College of Cape Breton, the opportunity exists for a small project which could be tailored to fit their needs. As one provincial employee recommended, funds tend to be easier to find for smaller things, especially when education is involved.

What this offers is a hands-on opportunity to study the water cycle in a manner which may lead to a future use. In a few years, the current sewage treatment facility will inevitably need to be replaced. When that time arrives, perhaps an already on-site example will be able to influence or recommend a part of a holistic vision for the community's development.



## Appendix D

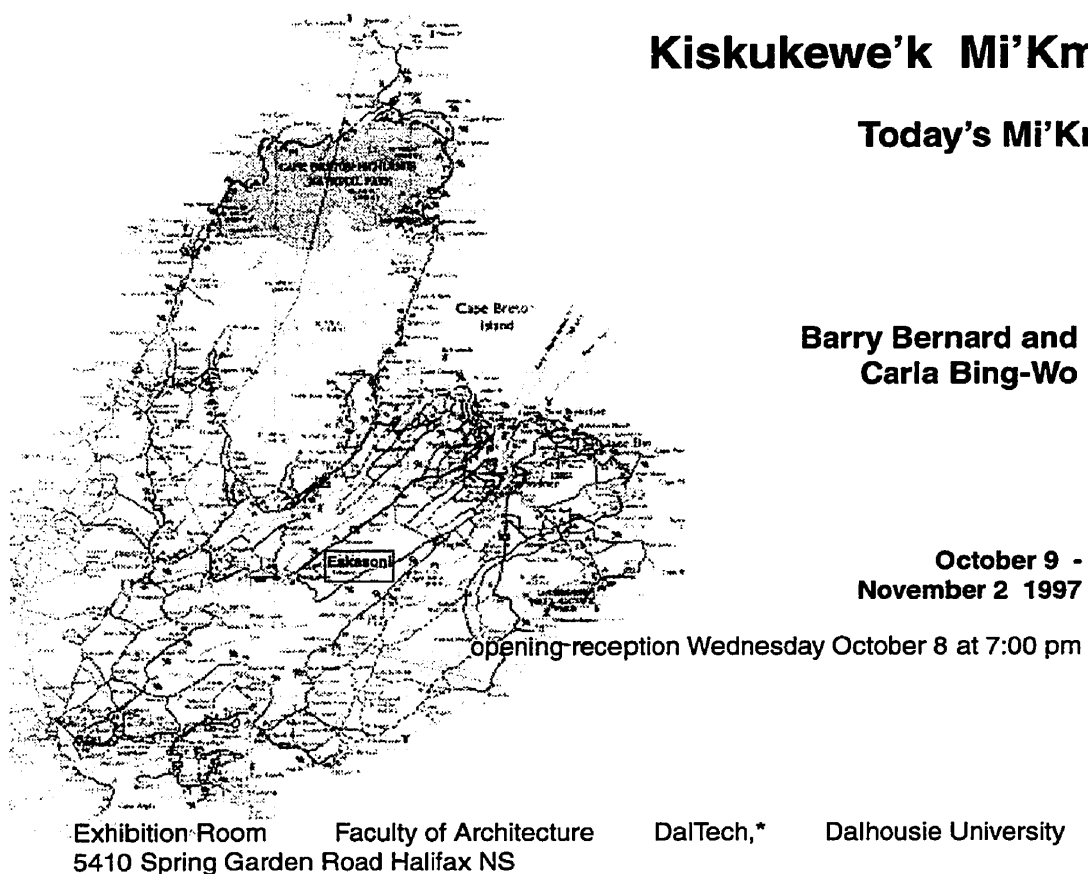


Figure D-1 Exhibition document cover

\* the school still formerly known as TUNS

Excerpt from booklet



Figure D-2 Treatment centre for rehabilitation, Eskasoni, NS

*This is located beside the nun's residence, which is located beside the church. They treat all kinds of addictions. "When I was a Christian, I was an alcoholic, I shot people, I stabbed people, I was shot at and stabbed myself."*

A series of bland postcards (e.g. figure D-2) was created as a representation from the view of a newcomer to this community. The imagery chosen attempts to reference what would typically be acknowledged as the 'sights,' landmarks or important historical monuments of any community as we have been educated to analyse. We notice how easy it is to slip into stereotypical assumptions, whether positive or negative is not the issue. The text on the postcards was inspired either from direct quotations from community residents, academics from DalTech, comments in passing from other 'outsiders,' or my own interpretations. As outsiders, it is easy to blindly accept images about a place. In skimming the surface, we do not know about the richer meanings each image may contain. The work aspires to make the viewer think just a little bit longer or reconsider the information fed to us by agenda-filled sources. The text on the postcards is simply to present enough information to diffuse a possible stereotype by questioning what is going on in the images, or to hint that there is a reasoning or story behind each one - a forum in

which some community viewpoints may begin to be heard. It is hoped that the running dialogue offers the suggestion of why we should try to understand or even care.

Juxtaposed with this, Barry Bernard's photographs present the most important component of community - a cross section of its people and the culture they define. In his images, his subjects are free to act as naturally as they desire, whether it be traditional dancing (figure D-3) or something as simple as two children playing in some water barrels (figure D-4). The photographs show a personal look into traditional events and day to day activities which many people outside the community are not aware exists. They share an intimacy with a local photographer that an outsider would not be able to capture. This personal relationship also demonstrates the comfort and trust that elders have placed in allowing him to video-record their stories. It is these activities which help us to understand much of the cultural, sacred, and everyday involvement of life. His photographs provide the viewers with insight into the community and act as an important recording of the continual growth of Mi'kmaq culture.



Figures D-3\*\* and D-4\*\*



Figure E-5\*\*

Particular views elicit meanings, stories, anecdotes about the community from its members (figure E-4) and engage them in conversation which may give more depth to the outsider's gaze. As outsiders, it is easy to blindly accept images about a place. In skimming the surface, we do not know about the richer meanings each image may contain. The work aspires to make the viewer think just a little bit longer or reconsider the information fed to us by the media.

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