

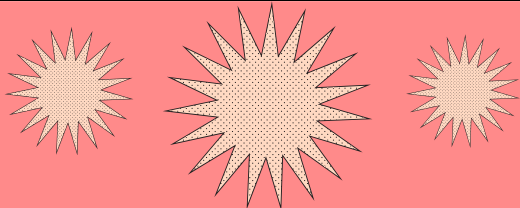
FRED METALLIC- TREATY AND MI'GMEWEY

EXTENDED FAMILY IN TREATY:

- Fred Metallic is a Mi'kmaq scholar who was raised in Listuguj, Quebec. Metallic discusses the profound importance of extended family within Mi'kmaq culture. He says that through a collective family system, in which each person is deeply interconnected with one another, stories are shared across generations, and from extended family to extended family. He describes being raised not only through the teachings of his parents, but through the teachings of friends, uncles, cousins, and elders.
- Metallic's understanding of the treaty came from lived experience and lessons shared with him by this extended family on the land. This type of interconnectedness through extended family is at the heart of the Mi'kmaq nation.
- Through the lens of extended family, Metallic provides the reader with a sense of how Mi'kmaq peoples understood their relationship to those with whom they made treaties with: including French and British settlers.
- Metallic explains treaty-making as a way of extending family and creating family-like relationships with those who are not of blood relation. In this way, treaty is an act of mutual understanding, respect, and trust. In his explanation of extended family as a broader concept, Metallic implies that every treaty signed extends the Mi'kmaq family. Treaties allow for ethical relationships, founded on the basis that all aspects of creation have something to offer one another. Metallic highlights the concept of extended family in relation to treaty, in order to emphasize the differences in approach toward treaty that the Mi'kmaq took, in comparison to colonizers.

THE CREATION STORY:

- Metallic begins his chapter by explaining the Creation story. This is a story often embedded in Indigenous teachings and culture. Metallic explains the Creation story and its importance in contextualizing the foundation of treaty-making as not only an agreement, but an ongoing responsibility. In this way, the Creation story lays the foundation for treaty-making.
- This story centres Glusgap, the first being following the sun (the source of life). Glusgap, while on his journey of creation, is sent family members that help him to learn about the world: Grandmother Nugumi, who shares with him the Mi'kmaq language, and the lessons of gratitude and respect for all that is living. Here, Glusgap learns that he must ask consent from the animals to provide him with food, and when that is given, and thank them through ceremony. This tells us the importance of reciprocal relationships with nature.
- He also meets his nephew, Netawansum, who provides him with teachings of deep perception and balance. In return for his teachings, Netawansum is provided with a feast by Glusgap. Once again, highlighting the importance of giving back. By offering a feast to his nephew, he puts into action the idea of reciprocity and gratitude. Through these teachings, Glusgap learns that all beings are interconnected; none are able to flourish without the help of others.
- The Creation story explains that the first treaties of the Mi'kmaq nation were not with other nations, but rather with animals, and with the land. This lays the foundation for later treaties.
- It is highlighted that upon creation, the earth gives life to animals, and they, in turn, give life to humans. When referring to the animals, Nugumi says "brothers and sisters." This use of language conceptualizes the Mi'kmaq view of animals as family. Nature is a part of human creation and survival; therefore, nature is family.
- The other important element is that of ceremony: ceremony is what allows for the maintenance of this relationship with nature. In later Indigenous treaty making, ceremony allowed for renewal of indigenous-settler relations. Metallic explains that by understanding and acknowledging the creation story, we can understand the spiritual and moral foundation that Mi'kmaq treaty making is based on.



LIVING TREATY:

- Metallic centres the concept of "living treaty." He explains that his understanding of treaty was shaped by the teachings he has received, his experiences on the land in the Listuguj community, and the Mi'kmaq language.
- Metallic explains the teachings he received from his mother and father, sharing that his first understanding of his culture was through fishing with his father, Isaac, on the Restigouche River. Here, he learned about the generations of Mi'kmaq men who had also been fishing on those same waters. He explains that on the river, he and his father spoke Mi'kmaq together as he learned how to fish for the seasons. Here he learned "ta'n tett tle'iauwultieg—how we truly belong to this territory" (Metallic 43). Metallic also shares that his mother taught him how to cook the salmon he caught, how to store it for the winter, and how she had learned those same lessons from the woman before her.
- Metallic explains the importance of intergenerational storytelling and oral tradition as an integral component of Mi'kmaq culture and identity.
- One of the most prominent stories is how Mi'kmaq peoples were all "made from the ground" (Metallic 44) and have an innate relationship and responsibility to their land. This is how he explains the concept of "Living Treaty." In the Mi'kmaq nation, having relationships with the land does not mean it is yours for the taking. Rather, a person then has a responsibility to uphold that land, and foster its well being. Treaty relations with all things do not continue without maintenance of their meanings, significance and values. In this way, treaty is to be lived by each day, not ever disregarded. You must live respectfully with all that creation has provided.
- When living treaty, treaties are not seen as legal documents but rather as an ongoing, living relations between parties. By acknowledging our responsibility to renew our treaty relations, we acknowledge the intention behind treaty-making itself: peace, balance, and interconnection. Rooted in kinship and responsibility, treaties do not only exist between nations but with the land and with all of creation.

MI'KMAQ POLITICAL GOVERNANCE:

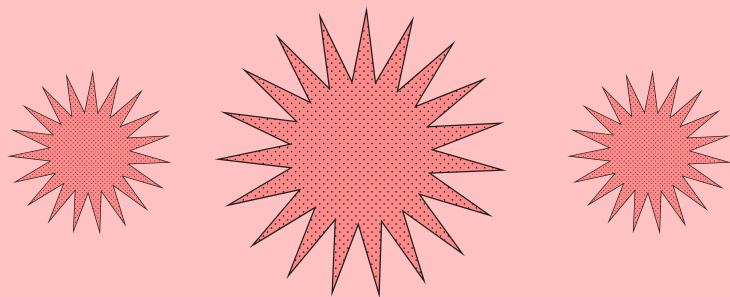
- Metallic’s approach toward reframing a colonialized vision of treaty-making relies on Mi’kmaq political governance and ecology. He explains the importance of consensus in Mi’kmaq politics, rather than democracy (majority rules).
- Consensus is used to provide a resolution to conflict in which all voices of the council are heard. Political meetings open with ceremony, Metallic says. This connects our physical world with the spiritual world, as all political decisions exist in relation to kinship and ecology.
- As well, leaders are chosen not by a vote, but rather for their wisdom and abilities. This ensures that they are capable of taking accountability in front of the council and those who the decision may impact. This way, individual ambitions associated with power cannot overtake the community and its well-being.
- Many of these Mi’kmaq ways of enacting governance are contrasted to those of British settlers. Metallic explains that for settlers “treaties were fixed not only in time, but also in place” (Metallic 45). This disregards the necessity for treaty to be constantly renewed and maintained over time. Metallic puts emphasis on this Mi’kmaq process of treaty renewal to contrasts how colonial law and political ideology centre hierarchical relationships between man and land; while relying on written law, majority vote, and absence of peace keeping.
- A fundamental aspect of the Mi'kmaq political process is that of generational interconnectedness. By this, I mean future generations of the Mi’kmaq nation having an intricate understanding of political systems that have been put in place. Mi’kmaq youth are educated in wampum diplomacy, record keeping, and political protocols. These teachings were all rooted in patience and respect.
- Young men are also made to sit in on treaty signings, this way, the youth of the generation are present and able to recount political decision making so that future generations are taught about these processes and able to recount them themselves. In order for young men to eventually step into positions of power, Metallic says they must recall oral and written treaty agreements. This ensures the protection of treaty rights for future generations of Mi’kmaq citizens, and it also guarantees that the spirit of the treaties lives on.

COLONIAL REFUSAL TO UPHOLD TREATY

- In 1928, Mi’kmaq Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy was convicted of illegal trapping for catching muskrats out of season. This reflects a direct betrayal of the 1752 peace and friendship treaty between Mi’kmaq and the British Crown.
- In this treaty Mi’kmaq people were guaranteed the right to fish and hunt on their lands. Sylliboy’s conviction ignores treaty rights and the Canadian refusal to uphold the Mi’kmaq understanding that this treaty is a living, ongoing agreement. Sylliboy explained his understanding of the treaty as it had been past down to him orally. The court declared that this treaties terms would not be up held because “the Mi’kmaq did not have the status to enter into treaty as they were not then an independent power” (Metallic 45). This is a case in which the Supreme Court of Canada denied Mi’kmaq people of their sovereignty as a nation.
- Later, in 1985, a new court case of a similar nature took place, in which the Supreme Court ended up affirming the Mi'kmaq treaty right to hunt and fish on their land. This has not stopped conflicts from occurring between settlers and Mi’kmaq regarding their treaty rights.
- Despite of this Supreme Court ruling, Mi’kmaq people were subjected to restrictions on their rights, and ongoing refusal of their rights.

EUROCENTRISM VS ORAL TRADITION:

- There are many ways Mi’kmaq children are taught and socialized. But to a great extent, Mi’kmaq children are taught about political ecology through oral tradition. This means they are verbally handed teachings and necessary information about the political past and present of their territories.
- When Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy was charged, he defended himself by saying, “Since I was a boy I heard that Indians got from king free hunting and fishing at all times.”
- The tangibility of oral tradition is deeply woven into Mi’kmaq culture. Colonial power has historically invalidated the legitimacy of spoken word. Metallic discusses how colonial courts favour written tradition over verbal. The colonial privileging of their own documents sets up a hierarchical imbalance between nations and highlights the disconnect between eurocentric law-making practice and Indigenous oral tradition.
- Under this structure, settlers were able to justify the uprooting of indigenous interconnectedness through oral tradition passed down for generations.
- Settlers have justified their disregard for integral Mi’kmaq political systems. This is an example of the Mi’kmaq struggle for autonomy and sovereignty to govern themselves. It also exemplifies the erasure of Indigenous legal memory. It wasn't until Delgamuukw v. British Columbia that the Supreme Court recognized oral tradition as an authentic source. There continues to be an ongoing effort by Mi’kmaq Peoples for their laws to be respected within Canada's political system.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

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