

**THE PROCESS OF MI'KMAQ COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT: A
CASE STUDY OF THE BEAR RIVER MI'KMAQ NPISUNEWAWTI'J
(MEDICINE TRAIL) PROJECT**

by

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This thesis is dedicated in loving memory of my father

Alexander A. MacDonald

A devoted father, teacher and social activist who committed his life to helping people and communities foster their own potential for development. Your legacy is an inspiration to all.

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Abstract

This study focuses on the process of a Mi'kmaq community-based development project entitled the *Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j (Medicine Trail) Project*. The project is community-based and is focused on the cultural revitalization of traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge through the medium of an interpretive hiking trail. The main objective of this research was to document the conception and development of the trail project as a case study that illustrates the process of culture-based Mi'kmaq community development. This includes documenting and outlining the trail project sequence of events, examining community members' participation and perceptions with respect to the project, and reflecting upon the participatory process and my role as project facilitator. A second objective was to examine community members' perceptions concerning their traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge, their thoughts on revitalization of the knowledge, and the trail project's potential for holistic Mi'kmaq community-development (e.g. physical, spiritual, mental and emotional development). The project is being conducted by the trail committee (a core-group of community volunteers) who, with my help as facilitator and the First Nations Forestry Association in Nova Scotia, were involved in assessing, planning, implementing, and achieving trail objectives. Methodology included a case study approach using interviews, content analysis and Participatory Action Research.

In contrast to the framework frequently discussed in CBD literature, it was found that success of the project did not lie in strict adherence to systematic plans and linear deadlines but in the trail committee's commitment to 'getting things done' in their own way and at their own pace. Project achievements occurred when committee members were spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically prepared. In the future, increased recognition and responsibility for the trail will lead to increased participation from the broader community. This will work to strengthen and sustain project momentum. Elders' participation is important because they bring guidance, balance and consensus to the project process. Youth are also important because they will ensure the sustainability of the trail by being its future keepers. Key in the success of the project is adherence to Mi'kmaq values of democracy, consensus, respect, sharing, integrity and honesty. These values, combined with the trail committee's participatory learning experiences, will provide a strong base for continued community-based management of the trail project.

This study also found that participants from the trail committee and the broader community were interested in building on their knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants. They stated that the trail project could not only revive the knowledge, but also foster traditional Mi'kmaq values, education about the ancestors, offer a recreational opportunity, and an opportunity for community spiritual strengthening and emotional pride. All of these elements are supported by CBD literature as being the successful underpinnings for holistic culture-based community development.

List of Acronyms

ATVs	All-Terrain Vehicles
BRFN	Bear River First Nation
BRMNTP	Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j (Medicine Trail) Project
CBD	Community-Based Development
CED	Community Economic Development
CFS	Canadian Forest Service
DIAND	Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development
FNF	First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia
MCBD	Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development
NIB	National Indian Brotherhood
PAR	Participatory Action Research
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
TEK	Traditional Ecological Knowledge

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Since time immemorial, Mi'kmaq¹ communities have maintained an intimate relationship with plant life and forests. Much of the physical and spiritual development of the Mi'kmaq Nation depended heavily on the medicinal, edible and spiritual potential of plants. This connection to, and use of, plants allowed the Mi'kmaq to develop extensive knowledge concerning their edible and medicinal uses. In addition, forests have helped the Mi'kmaq to sustain healthy communities² and traditional hunting and gathering economies. Mi'kmaq believed that the wealth of a person or community was measured in terms of four components; spiritual, physical, mental and emotional health (Lickers 1992), of which forests were an integral part. Mi'kmaq traditional knowledge and their connection to the forests is crucial to tribal identity (Marshall 1996). Sadly, this intimate connection to plant life and fulfillment of the four holistic components has been severely eroded through centuries of European contact, acculturation, assimilation, land dispossession and poor land management (Wein 1986; Brascoupe 1991; Bombay 1996). Under such eroding pressures, the Nation has suffered severely in retaining its traditional knowledge³, language, customs, practices, self-esteem and tribal identity. These

¹ The Mi'kmaq are a north-eastern Algonquian-speaking Nation who, along with the Passamaquody, Maliseet, Penobscot, Wonenock and Abenaki Nations form the Wabanaki Confederacy of the eastern seaboard of North America (Union of Nova Scotia Indians 1976; Robertson 1969 *in* Berneshawi 1998: 117).

Mi'kmaq traditionally occupied territory they called Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki territory extends over five Canadian provinces from the Gaspé Peninsula of Quebec, along northern New Brunswick, to all of present day Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, portions of Newfoundland and into the State of Maine (Native Council of Nova Scotia 1993: 5).

² The word "community" in this thesis refers to a band or tribe whether it be stationary or nomadic (Napoleon 1992: 3). A broader definition is given in Chapter II.

³ Traditional or indigenous knowledge is the culmination of generations of experience and insight passed down through oral tradition. This knowledge was holistic in nature incorporating spiritual, ecological, human and social experiences into one understanding of the Mi'kmaq place in the universe. Although this is ancestral

devastating losses proved to be catalytic agents for Mi'kmaq communities to redefine strategies towards self-determination⁴. In this quest, Mi'kmaq are presently redefining community-based initiatives that foster existing traditional knowledge and revitalize repressed or lost knowledge. In working towards a new era of community-based development (CBD), Mi'kmaq communities have recognized the potential of combining forest-based opportunities with culture-based development. Such initiatives are helping to rebuild tribal economies while simultaneously fostering Mi'kmaq cultural values and customs.

This research is focused on one such initiative. The Bear River Mi'kmaq First Nation, with the help of First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia (FNF), has embarked upon a community-based, restorative approach to forest management. More specifically, this approach promotes restoration of forest biodiversity, revival of traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge and viable opportunities for traditional forest-based activities. Some of these activities include restoration of Black Ash for traditional Mi'kmaq basket-making, the creation of interpretive trails for educational purposes, and the gathering of plants for medicinal and edible purposes. Based on this approach and the community's perceived need for the revival of traditional plant knowledge, the Director of the FNF suggested the idea of a medicine trail project to the Bear River Band Council (McKay pers. comm. 1999). In addition, community interest in the issue of Mi'kmaq medicinal plants had been brewing since 1994 (Proulx pers. comm. 1999). This interest eventually led to an embracing of the idea. Workshops and an adult education course focusing on plant identification and traditional Mi'kmaq plant use were held as community events leading up to the project to ascertain the community's interest level and people's commitment to conducting the project.

The project has come to be known as the *Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j* ('*Good Medicine*') *Trail Project*⁵, whose aim has been to educate Mi'kmaq community

knowledge, it is by no means static as it changes with the landscape and the societies which rely on it (Hoare et al. 1993: 48; Berneshawi 1998: 123).

members about traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge through the medium of an interpretive hiking trail. The trail and educational project focuses on identifying and interpreting plants that were traditionally used by Mi'kmaq peoples for edible and medicinal purposes. The aim is to nurture existing knowledge and revitalize disappearing knowledge concerning the Mi'kmaq traditional use of plants. The project is being conducted at the community level by a core group of volunteers who, with my help as facilitator and the FNF as an external advisor, were involved in assessing, planning, implementing and achieving trail objectives. This research documents the conception and development of the trail project.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research were:

- i. To document the conception and development of the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project as a case study that illustrates the process of culture-based Mi'kmaq community development.
 - To document and outline the trail project sequence of events.
 - To reflect upon community members' participation and perceptions with respect to project planning, action and achievements.
 - To reflect upon the participatory process and my role as project facilitator.
- ii. To examine community members' perceptions concerning their traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge, their thoughts on revitalization of the knowledge, and the trail project's potential for holistic Mi'kmaq community-development.

⁴ Self-determination is the right of a people to determine their own political status and to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development (Leavitt 1995: 318).

⁵ The Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project will be referred to as the 'trail project' throughout the remainder of this thesis.

1.3 Significance of Research

This research highlights the significance of culture in MCB. Traditional Canadian models of CBD mostly focus on economic and physical elements. Although these elements are important, failed efforts in Mi'kmaq communities have proven these models to be too rigid and unaccommodating of Mi'kmaq values. Many Mi'kmaq have attributed this failure to a lack of initiative to include spiritual and cultural strengthening in community development projects. This research highlights the importance of redefining 'development' in Mi'kmaq communities to include cultural, spiritual, mental and emotional values. In addition, it is shown that forest-based opportunities such as interpretive trails and medicinal plants have much potential to contribute to restorative, educational and sustainable approaches to community-based forest management. This research also outlines the trail project's participatory process within the context of planning, action and accomplishments. The potential of Mi'kmaq communities to define, conduct and benefit from community development projects is great. The trail project has provided a participatory and experiential base for community responsibility, ownership and management of the trail project. Reflections on the role of facilitators (in particular outside facilitators), researchers and external agencies in the community development process are provided. This research highlights the difference between simply helping communities to achieve an end-result and enabling them to thoroughly experience, learn and benefit from both the process and product. Reflections and recommendations are made for the Bear River Mi'kmaq First Nation and other Mi'kmaq communities involved in community-based projects. Overall this research contributes to a growing body of knowledge with respect to cultural revitalization, participatory research and CBD in Mi'kmaq communities.

1.4 Definition of Terms

1. *The Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project (BRMNTP):* A community-based project focused on the revitalization of traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge of edible and medicinal plants through the medium of an interpretive hiking trail. The aim of the trail as defined by the community is to help heal the minds, bodies and souls of the Bear River Mi'kmaq people (Trail Committee 1999).
2. *Action Learning:* Is a means by which people learn with and from each other by attempting to identify, and then implement, solutions to their problems, issues and opportunities (McGill et al. 1989).
3. *Core group:* Is a group of interested and committed community members, organized to work on a CBD project. They assess, define, plan, achieve consensus and take action towards project objectives.
4. *Cultural Revitalization:* Is an attempt by native communities to ensure that traditional values are understood, strengthened and made central to tribal life (Elias 1991; Newhouse 1993). Examples of cultural revitalization include language preservation and revival, revival and maintenance of traditional ecological knowledge, revival of traditional values and customs. In the context of this thesis, cultural revitalization refers to education focused on the traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge associated with edible and medicinal plants. In addition, the community hopes that the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview and values will be revived both for their children and themselves.
5. *Experiential Learning:* Is learning that is rooted in peoples' lived experiences (Weil and McGill 1989).

6. *Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development (MCBD)*⁶: Community-based development is a problem-solving process that enables community members to identify their own problems, needs and desires (MacDonald 1965; Lee 1992; Napoleon 1992). It enables them to work together in finding solutions that are appropriate for them (MacDonald 1965; Lee 1992; Napoleon 1992). For Mi'kmaq holistic development to occur, the CBD process and end-result must encompass the mental, physical, spiritual and emotional components of individual and community development.

7. *Medicine Wheel*: The medicine wheel represents the circle of all life and all that is known or knowable (Hartz 1996). It is linked together in a whole with no beginning and no end. It can metaphorically illustrate, invoke and reinspire understanding of Ancestral beliefs in the contemporary world (Graveline 1998). Through the wheel people are taught to acknowledge the interconnectedness of all things (Graveline 1998). The medicine wheel is associated mainly with the First Nations of the plains, such as the Cree, Blackfoot, Dakota and others (RCAP 1996). Yet, it has been adopted by many First Nations, including Mi'kmaq as a teaching tool. The medicine wheel is used in the trail project both as a metaphor for development and a guide to the project process.

⁶ Mi'kmaq CBD is a concept that has not been documented extensively. Most literature written on community-based development and First Nations communities has been referred to as 'Aboriginal Community-Based Development'. One of my resource persons has advised me that this thesis research specifically and distinctively illustrates 'Mi'kmaq community-based development' not 'Aboriginal community-based development'. Community-development workers view the term 'Aboriginal' with trepidation (McKay pers. comm. 2000). Although the term is used in the Canadian Constitution and to represent the 'rights' of First Nation peoples, many Native communities and front-line community workers feel it is a term coined by the Canadian federal government to lump and homogenize all Native communities into one, in an attempt to assimilate them into Canadian society. Since little has been written on Mi'kmaq CBD I attempt in this thesis to apply broad based literature often referring to 'Aboriginal communities' to the specific tribal context of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Many First Nations like the Mi'kmaq have begun to incorporate the practices of other First

8. *Participatory Action Research (PAR)*: Is an integrated approach involving the participation of community members to study and understand their social reality, and build local skills and capacity for the purpose of increasing community autonomy and empowerment (Hall 1981; Tandon 1988).

8. *Project Facilitator*: A person who helps to facilitate the core community group in its planning and action towards project and community-development objectives. Many times a facilitator acts as a middle person between external agencies and community groups. A facilitator listens to community concerns and provides ideas, tools, resources and options for community members to make their own decisions concerning project objectives (Napoleon 1992: 25).

10. *Resource Persons*: Are people who are well informed as to their community surroundings, and whose input and opinions can aid in providing explanations as to what has or is happening in the community (Patton 1987).

1.5 Thesis Organization

This thesis consists of nine chapters. Chapter Two provides context and background to the research. The focus of the case study is the Bear River Mi'kmaq First Nation and a history of the community is provided along with contemporary challenges, initiatives and projects the community is working on. A synopsis is given of the trail project, as well as my rationale for considering the project to be a CBD initiative. Chapter Three reviews approaches and components of MCBDD that provide the analytical context to the research. The nature of CBD is outlined to provide a stark contrast to the following section on the Canadian government's past approaches. The detrimental effects of these past development efforts serve as a reminder of the mistakes of past

Nations (e.g. Medicine Wheel, Seventh Generation, Talking Circle) into their development projects.

development and as motivator for Mi'kmaq-defined approaches to CBD. The following section outlines contemporary approaches to CBD, focusing primarily on spiritual renewal and cultural revitalization. The final section describes the Medicine Wheel and its four holistic components (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual) of Mi'kmaq development. The medicine wheel serves as a metaphor and an analytical tool for what Mi'kmaq community members' believe the trail project should encompass. Chapter Four draws from the experiences of other Native communities involved in community development planning to form a conceptual model for the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j trail project. It specifically focuses on planning, action and accomplishment in community development projects. In addition, the implementation of participatory research in First Nations communities and the concept of experiential learning are reviewed.

Chapter Five outlines the research design and highlights methods, tools and analysis used in the research process. Ethical considerations and research limitations are also considered. Chapter Six discusses focus group and workshop findings and reflects on the trail project process with respect to project planning, action and accomplishment. Chapter Seven presents an analysis and discussion of interview findings. Participants responses are summarized with respect to categories of interview questions. In addition, community members' responses and perceptions are recorded to honour the voices of Mi'kmaq community members and add illustrative depth to the results. Chapter Seven concludes with a summary of the links between the research findings and relevant literature. The final chapter consists of reflections, recommendations and conclusions drawn from the discussion, and suggests areas for further research.

CHAPTER II: BACKGROUND: THE BEAR RIVER (MUI N SIPU) MI'KMAQ FIRST NATION, THE NPISUNEWAWTI'J MEDICINE TRAIL PROJECT AND COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

2.1 The Bear River (Muin Sipu) Mi'kmaq First Nation

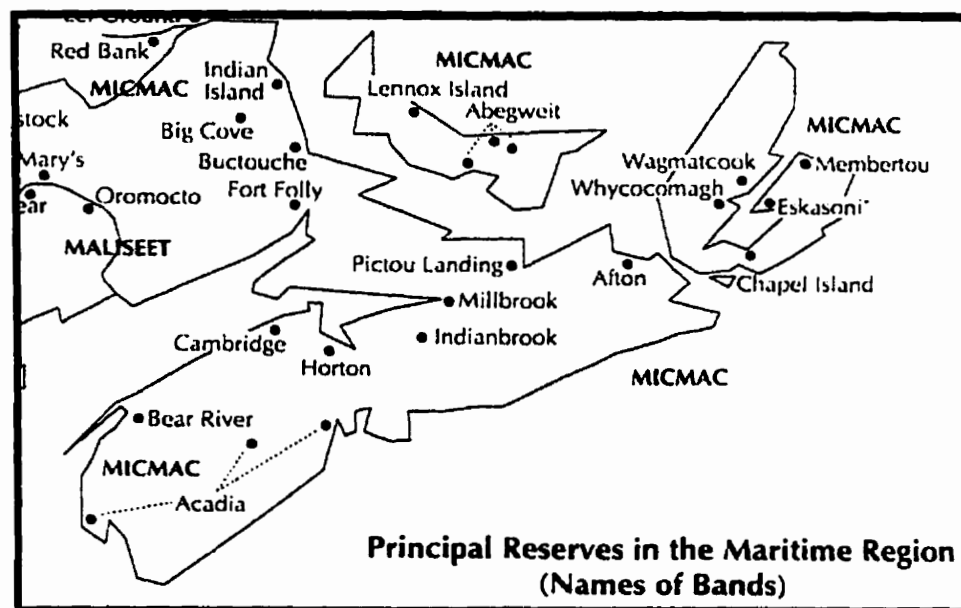
The Bear River (Muin Sipu) Mi'kmaq community is located in southwestern Nova Scotia (see Figures 1 and 2). The area is presently known as Digby and Annapolis County. The Bear River Reserve, also known in Mi'kmaq as *L'sitkuk*⁷, has a population of approximately a hundred people and is situated on 698 hectares of land (Department of Indian Affairs 1999). It is thought that the reserve has the largest land base per capita in Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaq occupied this area of Nova Scotia long before European contact and settlement and have resided there for thousands of years (Ricker 1997). Historically, this part of the province and lands to the south and west were known to the Mi'kmaq as *Kespukwitk* (where the land ends), which was one of the seven socio-political districts of *Mi'kma'kik* or the Mi'kmaq territory (Ricker 1997; Pictou 1996; Hoffman 1955). In addition, the Bear River area is of special note because it was once the seat or the meeting place of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council (Mi'kmaq socio-political body) and the Wabanaki Confederacy.

Mi'kmaq economic life changed with the seasons as the people moved between the coast and interior to fish, hunt and gather various resources (McMillan 1988). Most documents pertaining to the traditional customs and lifestyle of the Mi'kmaq have been written by European people⁸.

⁷ Darlene Ricker has recently published a book entitled 'L'sitkuk: The Story of the Bear River Mi'kmaw Community' (1997). She states that the word *L'sitkuk* is the original Mi'kmaw word for Bear River. It means "flowing along by high rocks" (Ricker 1997; vi).

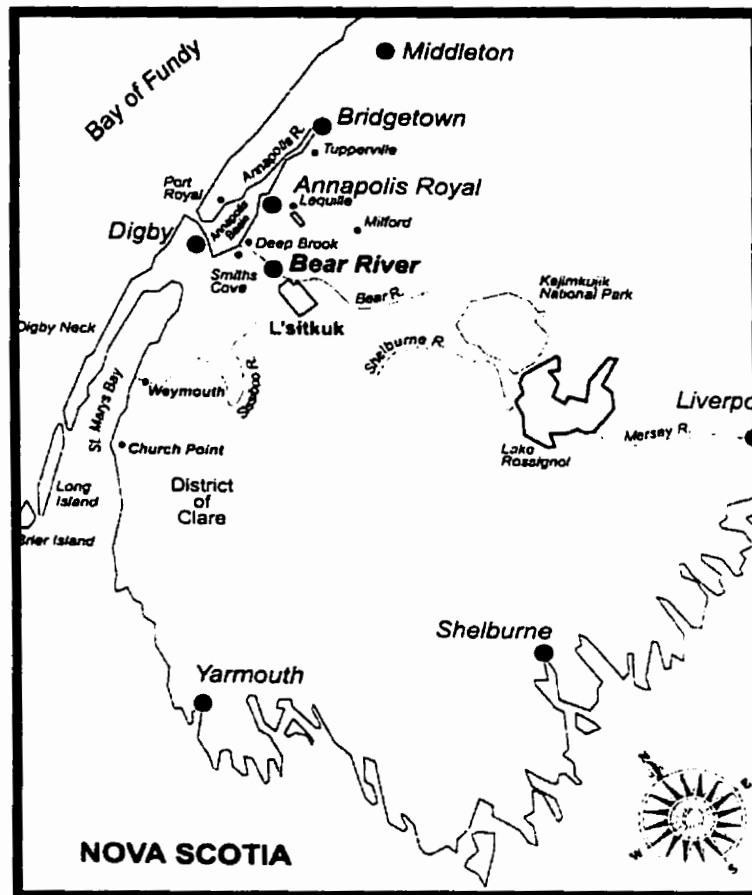
⁸ For information about the traditional lifestyle and customs of the Mi'kmaq peoples and the history of Mi'kmaq and non-Native relations see R.G. Thwaites. 1610-1791. *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, ed., 73 vols. Cleveland: Burrow Brothers; P.A. Maillard. 1758. *An Account of the Customs and Manners of the Mickmacks and Maricheets, Savage Nations, Now Dependent on the Government of Cape Breton*. London: S. Hooper and A. Morley; S.T. Rand. 1850. *A Short Statement of Facts Relating to the History, Manners, Customs, Language and Literature of the Micmac*

Figure 1. Map of Nova Scotia Showing Location of Bear River Mi'kmaq First Nation (Leavitt 1995: xviii)



London: S. Hooper and A. Morley; S.T. Rand. 1850. *A Short Statement of Facts Relating to the History, Manners, Customs, Language and Literature of the Micmac Tribe of Indians, in Nova Scotia and P.E. Island*. Halifax: James Bowes and Sons; F.G. Speck. 1922. *Beothuck and Micmac, Indian Notes and Monographs*, No. 22. New York: Heye Foundation, Museum of the American Indian; E.C. Parsons. 1926. Micmac notes. *Journal of American Folklore* 39: 460-485; B.G. Hoffman. 1955. "The Historical Ethnography of the Micmac of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries." Ph. D. thesis, University of California, Berkely; W.D. Wallis, and R.S. Wallis. 1955. *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; V.P. Miller. 1976. Mi'kmaq Micmac population: A review of the evidence. *Ethnohistory* 23: 117-27; L.F.S. Upton. 1979. *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.; R. Holmes-Whitehead and H. McGee. 1983. *The Micmac: How Their Ancestors Lived Five Hundred Years Ago*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd.; H.F. McGee. 1983. *The Native Peoples of Atlantic Canada: A History of Indian-European Relations*. Eds. Ottawa: Carleton University Press; R. Holmes-Whitehead. 1991. *The Old Man Told Us*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd.; S. Davis. 1997. *Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd.; Y.S. Henderson. 1997. *The Mi'kmaq Concordat*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

Figure 2. Map of Southwestern Nova Scotia Showing Bear River Mi'kmaq First Nation (Ricker 1997: Book Cover)



In 1801, the colonial government designated Bear River as land reserved for Indians, yet the reserve itself was not established until 1830 (Canadian Forest Service 1999; Ricker 1997). Mi'kmaq who had not yet succumbed to disease, starvation and poverty were pressured by government and church officials to live on this land (Ricker 1997). Farming was encouraged, yet the soil was nutrient-poor and rocky. In addition to hunting, fishing and gathering, the porpoise hunt became a lucrative part of the reserve economy in the 1830s (CFS 1999). The community ate the meat while oil was rendered and bottled to be used as machine lubricant. Eventually petroleum products replaced porpoise oil and the porpoise hunt was not sustained and the people became poverty struck (Ricker 1997; Wood pers. comm. 1998). The permanent effects of European

settlers, missionaries and fur traders deeply affected the people. Land was appropriated and fish and game became severely depleted. Ricker (1997:19) states that the Bear River Mi'kmaq were among the first to be exposed to European disease, technology and Christianity. The descendants of those who survived developed a great resilience while still maintaining a distinct and proud identity (Ricker 1997). Important Mi'kmaq values and customs were adaptive even in times of poverty.

Presently, the community's government is a product of the *Indian Act*⁹ (Ricker 1997). As a member of the Assembly of First Nations and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, the community is presently striving towards self-determination (Meuse and Pictou pers. comm. 1998). In this quest, various projects including silviculture, fisheries, housing and the arts are being pursued (Ricker 1997). Currently, an important initiative of the Bear River Mi'kmaq is their participation in restorative forestry practices (McKay pers. comm. 1998). The forests of the Bear River watershed have been exploited as a result of many years with little forest management or regulations (Parson 1996). This has resulted in the breakdown of the forest-based economy and has left the forest in a severely degraded state (Parson 1996). A restorative forest management approach was needed to bring back the natural diversity and ecological integrity of the forest ecosystem (McKay pers. comm. 1998). The FNF has facilitated initiation of this approach. With its help, band members have been active in the development of trail systems, silviculture treatments, maintaining wildlife habitat, brook enhancement and education (Meuse pers. comm. *In* Parson 1996). The goal of the FNF is to develop, deliver, control, and be

⁹ The *Indian Act* was originally passed in 1876 under Parliament's constitutional responsibility for Indians and Indian lands. It is based on policies developed in the nineteenth century and has come down through years in roughly the same form (RCAP 1996a). It consists of rules and regulations that cover a wide spectrum of the affairs of Indians (Brown 1991) thus giving the federal government almost complete assimilative control over the customs, practices and every day living of 'Indians'. The Act has come to signify a symbol of government discrimination and racist legislation (Weaver 1981a: 19). Ambiguity surrounding the act is ongoing and centers on First Nation's resentment

accountable for a program of community-based sustainable forest management (Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq First Nations Forestry 1999:1). Key in this approach is the implementation of forest-based initiatives that encompass the priorities of biodiversity, ecological integrity, Mi'kmaq culture, community control and sustainable economic development (McKay pers. comm. 1998). The FNF promotes and supports forest management projects that place Mi'kmaq values at its core. These values are manifested through forest-based opportunities such as medicinal plants, basket making, guiding and tourism. An holistic approach to forest management has set the backdrop for the community's enthusiastic initiation of the trail project.

The initial idea for the medicine trail project came from the FNF. They saw the trail as an important educational tool for sustainable community forest management (McKay pers. comm. 1999). Interest in the topic of medicinal plants had been brewing among community members for some time (Proulx pers. comm. 1999). This interest combined with the Chief-and-Council's enthusiasm led to an



introductory workshop. Prior to this workshop, the FNF suggested the topic to me and asked if I would be interested in facilitating research focused on traditional Mi'kmaq uses

towards its constraints and dependence on it for recognition of special rights (Paul 1993; Weaver 1993b; Weaver 1981a).

of plants. They stressed the initial focus of the research to be educating the community about traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants (Bear River Band Council pers. comm. 1998). They hoped the project would revitalize their traditional knowledge and contribute to mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development (Meuse and Pictou pers. comm. 1998).

Community interest in the trail project was assessed based on an introductory workshop in January, 1999 focused on the '*Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Plants and Plant Identification*'. The community's strong interest in this workshop set the backdrop to my introduction into the community and community members' future participation in the trail project.

2.2 A Synopsis of the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j ('Good Medicine') Trail Project

This thesis research is focused on *Phase I* of trail project planning and accomplishments. Presently, *Phase I* plans have been defined and implemented with the main accomplishment being the generation of a trail map in August 1999. Other accomplishments to date include the formation of a trail vision, identification of 71 plants on the trail, allocation of special places, completion of the cutting, and implementation of trail structures (e.g. sawdust flooring, bridges and boardwalks). These accomplishments are discussed in Chapter Six. The following information gives a general synopsis of the trail vision and characteristics of *Phase I* accomplishments.

A trail vision was decided upon in September 1999, and is as follows:

To create an educational trail which fosters a better sense of respect for edible and medicinal plants given to us by our mother earth and to help with our development of a spiritual, physical, mental and environmental approach to life. (Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Committee 1999).

In addition, the winner of the 'Name the Trail Contest' was announced in October at a community trail gathering (see Chapter Six, Plate 19). The winning name was chosen by an Elder of the community and was submitted as follows:

Npisunewawti'j (knee-bull-sink-ow-di) Medicine Trail. This is a good name for the trail because not only will we learn more about the use of these plants, but the beauty of the trail will be that it is 'good medicine' for our minds and souls. Displaying the name of the trail in both Mi'kmaw and English will help the community recognize our language and keep it alive (Community Member 1999).

The trail is located on the southwestern portion of the Bear River reserve. The trail is approximately one kilometer in length and was designed in a loop configuration (see Figure 6). It has been designed for ease of access and use, and with the highest consideration for ecological impact. Depending on the pace at which the trail is walked, it can take anywhere from

20 to 45 minutes (without stopping to read interpretive material).

Entry points for the trail are located behind the new Health Centre and the trail building (see Plate 2). It is hoped the trail vision will be tied in with the new

medical and cultural centres. The parking lot for the trail will be located east of the medical centre and is quite large, as there is talk of tour buses and multiple users.

Trails have existed in this particular area for centuries and within the past one hundred years Mi'kmaq used these trails for hunting and for gathering berries, medicines and ash. In addition, they were used for oxen hauling in the logging industry and as paths to traditional eel fishing spots.

Trails have always been a source of physical and spiritual sustenance for the people. They have also a spatial medium for communicating with plant and animal spirits. Some community members' remember as children walking through this now over-grown trail with grandparents and Elders. Many of the old trails in this area simply needed clearing, cleaning, maintenance and, from an ecological standpoint minimal

Plate 2. The New Community Health Center

The entrance to the trail is located in the wooded area behind and to the right of the health center.



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, October 1999

disruption needed to occur. The committee has also chosen not to use chemically treated wood for bridges (in fear of cumulative impacts on plants and people), and will be using the trees cut from clearing various parts of the trail. From a spiritual standpoint, community members working on the trail have felt a spiritual connection to both the plant spirits and the ancestors who once used these trails. It is hoped a community member will conduct research on which families specifically lived in this area.

Within the past one hundred years, much of the reserve land has been cleared and used for farming. Much of that farmland now consists of secondary growth comprised of mixed hardwoods and softwoods. In some spots where clearing was extensive, the predominant tree is beech (northwest portion of the trail) and in others that were left more untouched, older majestic hemlocks prevail (southwest portion of the trail). Ecologically the trail encompasses mixedwoods, swamps, coniferous (softwood), and hardwood habitats (see Plates 12,13, 14 and 15). A botanist with the help of a core group participant has identified approximately 71 plants on the trail loop (see Appendix 9). She has stated that the greatest portion of plants are native to Nova Scotia, with only eight introduced species¹⁰ in areas where people lived (Proulx pers. comm. 1999).

The plants are scattered throughout the trail with many of them occurring in wetter areas surrounding the swamp drainage. The main divisions of vascular plants are represented (e.g. ferns, conifers and flowering plants with the latter including herbaceous plants, woody shrubs and trees) (Proulx pers. comm. 1999). Medicinal and edible values from these plants are present in the inner and outer barks, saps and resins, nuts, fleshy fruits, roots, bulbs, tubers and greens (Proulx pers. comm. 1999). These plants offer medicinal potential in terms of their vitamin and mineral contents and their use as tonics, antiseptics, anti-inflammatories, emetics and in blood detoxification. Ailments generally treated by the plants found on the trail include indigestion, infections, flues, high blood pressure, arthritis, diabetes, tuberculosis, cancer and prevention of sickness for overall

¹⁰ The eight introduced species are Apple, Mullein, Broadleaf Plantain, Waxberry (Snowberry), Common Speedwell, St. John's Wort, Yarrow and Colts-foot (Roland and

general health. Research on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of these plants is being conducted by me and core group participants. Information gathered from interviews and oral histories of community participants, workshops and content analysis of published documents is being compiled. This information will be submitted in a separate report to the Band Council, and permission to read it must be granted. This research will consequently be transferred into interpretative material for trail purposes. In addition to the edible and medicinal plants, other special trail features include an old foundation, a standing camp, a well and the reserve line which is marked by a line of cleared trees. Open areas abound where animals once may have grazed or where community members have picnicked. There are spectacular rocks and trees covering the landscape that stand out from the rest and comprise of some of the 'special places' on the trail.

As part of *Phase II* objectives (summer 2000), the committee has decided that plants will have small number signs beside them, so that a prospective hiker would simply need to refer to a corresponding pamphlet, to find the matching number and interpretative write-up. Larger interpretive signs will be placed in special places and where numerous plants are clumped together. It is also hoped that multiple loops (similar to a figure eight) will be added, once the main loop is completed.

2.3 The Roles of Project Facilitator and First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia

The FNF has been the external agent for the Bear River trail project. It has provided valuable financial, moral and technical support. Without its support it is doubtful the idea for the project would have become a reality so quickly. The FNF saw great potential for the community and helped in fostering the community to see that potential for themselves. This organization, espouses Mi'kmaq values and helps to promote forest-based projects that foster Mi'kmaq communities to become self-sufficient. The trail project is an example.

Smith 1983). All of these plants are known to have nutritional and medicinal values that may have stemmed from French Acadian descent.

Based on extensive experience in these kinds of projects, the FNF helped to guide my facilitation of the committee. Together we found the balance between when to step in and help the core group, and when to back off. In addition, it helped maintain the core group's momentum when I became engaged in writing this thesis. This relationship will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

My role was as a project facilitator and a middle person between the core group and the FNF. Much of the initial undertaking of the project remained in my hands, with the help of a co-facilitator community member. At that point I was essentially one step removed from the grassroots and from the participatory process (Erasmus 1993). In other words, I was mostly working 'for' and guided by the Chief-and-Council as well as the FNF. I organized the workshop discussed above and helped to obtain resource books and linkages for the Adult Education Course on plant identification. I also maintained the budget, submitted proposals for future funding and began the research process. It was not until the formation of the 'core group', later known as the 'Trail Committee', that I truly began working in a participatory fashion 'with' the community.

The role of outside facilitators in Mi'kmaq¹¹ CBD is directly relevant to my experience as a non-Native facilitator in the trail project. With respect to CBD, I define

¹¹ Leavitt (1995) notes that a number of words are used to refer to the Native people of Northern America – Mi'kmaq, First Nation (s), Indian, Indigenous and Native. Many of these terms are interchangeable but it is helpful to know their meanings with respect to the research. Leavitt (1995) defines the following:
Mi'kmaq (adjective) refers especially to the conditions, rights, and way of life that existed before contact with Europeans, and to any aspect of these which still exist today- Mi'kmaq rights, Mi'kmaq government, Mi'kmaq people.
First Nation (s) (adjective or noun) refers in particular to governments or communities of Native Peoples- First Nations leaders, representatives of the Assembly of First Nations.
Indian (adjective or noun) refers to land or people in relation to the Indian Act, other legislation, or federal or provincial government policy – Indian reserves, status Indians.
Indigenous (adjective) Is essentially the same as Mi'kmaq, but with emphasis on being the original inhabitants of a place, or "belonging to" the land.
Native (adjective or noun) refers to the original inhabitants of North America at any point in history, past, present or future (Leavitt 1995: x).

outsiders as people who are not community members; they may be Native¹² or non-Native and in relation to development usually take on the roles of community development workers, liaisons, organizers, facilitators and consultants (Erasmus 1991). Key in the CBD process is the understanding that facilitators are not working “for” the community, but “with” it. Communities must always be the ultimate authorities on decision-making and ownership. A facilitator can help in offering expertise, resources and guidance and help community members to make their own decisions (Erasmus 1991). Their role must always remain at an arm's length from community ownership and responsibility. Sometimes communities rely too heavily on facilitators with the impending fear that if the facilitator left, the project would crumble. Other times a facilitator can inadvertently disempower the community by making decisions for them in the spirit of thinking they know better. My facilitative experience with balancing this role is relayed in Chapter Six.

2.4 Understanding Mi'kmaq Values in CBD

In addition to being an empathetic and supportive adviser, a facilitator must have a good understanding of the values, views and customs of the communities they are working in. This understanding will help the facilitator to help the community root the project in community values.

Hartz (1996: 72) states:

When First Nations utilize processes that are based upon their own views within their own communities, then the people determine their own destinies. Individuals working from the Euro-Canadian perspective can become part of this process. But these individuals must first recognize the importance that to fully comprehend a peoples' life requires an understanding of their ways of thinking, experiences, and behaviors. From this point, community workers can

¹² I was told by two Mi'kmaq community development workers that although they were Native, when they worked with communities other than their own they considered themselves, and were perceived by the community, as outsiders (Labrador and Sark pers. comm. 1999). However, Mi'kmaq communities perceptions of Native outsiders may be quite different than their perception of non-Native outsiders.

acknowledge First Nation's perspectives, values, views, and practices. They can support First Nation's people by implementing programs and practices that are reflective of First Nation's worldviews.

In addition to my attempts towards understanding Mi'kmaq values and customs in the context of the project process, I was also told to understand and adhere to the following principles; kindness, honesty, sharing, strength, bravery, wisdom and humility which are central to the Mi'kmaq way¹³. I was told that if I genuinely adhered to these principles, my work and research with the community would be productive. In all my thoughts and actions pertaining to the project process, I attempted to incorporate these principles into the research process. All development workers in Mi'kmaq communities need to work with these principles in mind not only to gain the trust of the community, but to facilitate a process which places Mi'kmaq principles at its core.

At Elders' conferences, cross-cultural educational workshops and health conferences, the First Nations are continually reminded that the retrieval of their teachings, traditions, languages, and culture will promote self-identity and healing (White 1996; 108). First Nations people have identified how important it is to develop programs which respect the Native worldview and culture. In regards to Mi'kmaq communities, community development workers must help community members to assess and plan their own culturally appropriate development. Community-development workers must have an in-depth and empathetic understanding of the following Mi'kmaq values and ways:

- i. *Mi'kmaq Worldview* - Mi'kmaq worldview encompasses all living things. Knowing that all animate and inanimate beings are alive and embraced with spirit, they are obligated to respect and honour them (Mi'kmaq Fisheries 1993: 5).

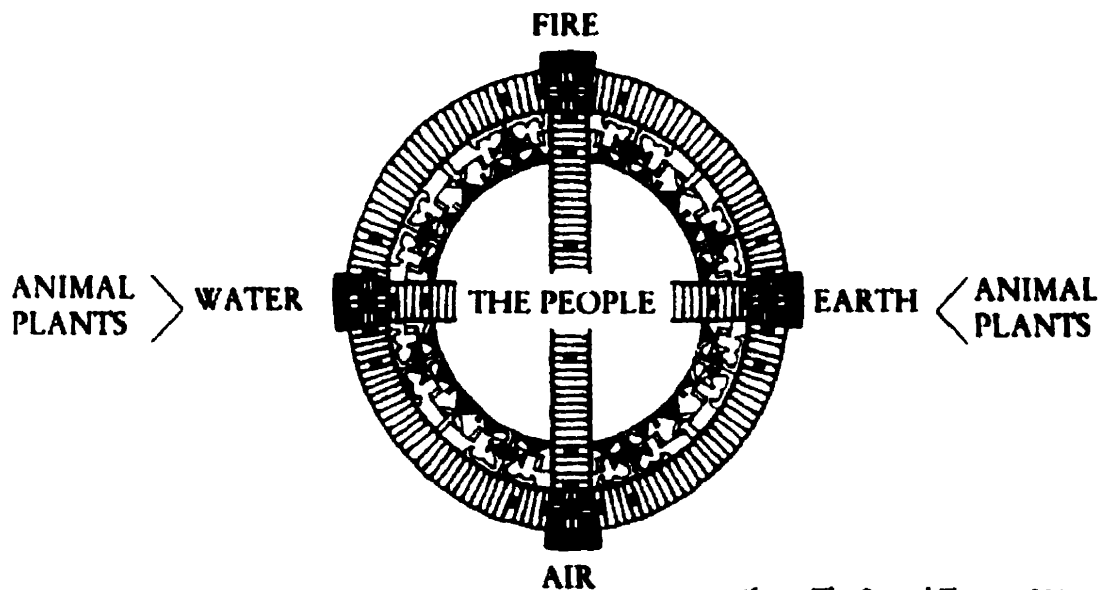
In order to survive and exist in harmony with the universe, we believe that it is essential to have an all-encompassing relationship with the universe and our understanding and respect for all living things. Since time immemorial our

¹³ This is not to say that non-Native community workers try to become Mi'kmaq, as I was told by a few community members that the reason they spoke with me was because they didn't see me as a "want-to-be Mi'kmaq" of whom they would be skeptical.

understanding of the relationship with the environment is demonstrated in songs, stories, dances, art, rituals and practices. They show the respect we have for our surroundings (Mi'kmaq Fisheries 1993: 6).

Mi'kmaq wisdom teaches that relationships found with nature are inherently circular, interconnected and all-inclusive (see Figure 3). Spirituality was the essence of every aspect of being Mi'kmaq. It served as the foundation or framework on which all other aspects of life were built. Spiritual life was everywhere and everything they deemed animate or inanimate had spiritual dimensions (Holmes-Whitehead 1988). Henderson (1997: 15) states that “since all things have a common origin in the sparks of life, every life-form and every object has to be respected”. Similar to a person who has a life force (*manitu*), so too does a plant, rock or animal (Henderson 1997). All of creation was seen to be sacred and deserving of respect and honour (Bernashawi 1998; Henderson 1997). Henderson states (1997: 15):

Figure 3. Mi'kmaq Worldview of Interconnectedness



(from *The Sacred Tree*, p. 28.)

(Bopp et al. 1989: 28)

This respect requires people to develop a special consciousness that discourages careless treatment of things. Thus, a person gathering roots, leaves or bark for medicinal purposes pleases the life-force of each plant by placing a small offering of tobacco at its base, believing that without the cooperation of the manitu the mere form of the plant cannot work its cures.

Mi'kmaq neither apologized nor felt shameful for their needs, but accepted the interdependence of all things (Marshall 1997; Labrador 1999). The spiritual relationship with the land was and is vital for keeping a close relationship with nature and the Creator (Berneshawi 1998: 120). Erdoes (1989 in Berneshawi 1998: 120) states that:

[the] relationship to the Earth, the winds, and the animals is intimate and intensely personal, closely related to their sacred beliefs. This relationship arises out of their environment... It arises out of the nature-related language and out of age-old oral traditions passed on from generation to generation.

Mi'kmaq modes of thinking are reflected in their intimate connections with nature and the environment which in turn are essential parts of the culture (Leavitt 1995). Mi'kmaq peoples identify traditional knowledge associated with these interconnected relationships as a crucial link to their cultural past, present and future (Hoare et al. 1993).

ii. *Mi'kmaq Concepts of Land, Time and Space:* Mi'kmaq have forever known the land has life (Leavitt 1995: 52). Mi'kmaq language is verb-based, and 'land' is described in terms of people's experiences in relation to it (Leavitt 1995). Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (1999: 33) state "the Mi'kmaq worldview of the land reflects a spatial consciousness rather than a material consciousness." They quote Henderson's description (Bedwell-Doyle and Cohen 1999: 33 in Henderson 1991) of 'spatial consciousness':

Generally, Algonquin People and their linguistic worldview do not have a defined concept of territory or land. Instead, they had a concept of space. Their vision of the concept is different realms enfolded into sacred space. Their earth is a series of ecological spaces, each filled with natural resources, sights, sounds and memories. The relationship between the earth and their ancestors informs their spirituality and religion.

In general, the landscape is described in terms of how each ecological feature relates to another. Land is not marked by artificial boundaries, such as hectares or degrees. Mi'kmaq groups used the natural watersheds to define their socio-political territories. Leavitt (1995: 52) states that Mi'kmaq see "the land" as a unitary concept, not "pieces of land" that can be divided or sold. One community member told me that "the people are the land". The unitary concept of land is extended to humans as well as animate and inanimate beings.

iii. Netukulimk: The Mi'kmaq concept of 'Netukulimk' includes the sharing of the natural bounty provided by the Creator for self-support and well-being of the individual and the Nation (Native Council of Nova Scotia 1993). Netukulimk is the Mi'kmaq way of harvesting resources without jeopardizing the integrity, diversity or productivity of the environment (Mi'kmaq Fisheries 1993: 8; Bernashawi 1998). The land, her resources and the doctrine of Netukulimk are inherited from Mi'kmaq forefathers and are passed down throughout the generations by Elders and parents. The land and its tenure are the custodial responsibility of the community and is held 'in trust' for future generations (McKay pers. comm. 1999b). It enables the present generation to survive without threatening future generations. Without access to natural resources, the inherent right to survival of future generations is endangered (Bernashawi 1998). Essentially, when Mi'kmaq people make a decision, they must think about its impact on future generations. As touched in this chapter, the trail committee has incorporated the concept of Netukulimk in trail planning and implementation. It is being constructed with the highest regard for ecological impact and with the hope that the plants and the trail project will be sustained for their future generations.

iv. Cooperation and unity: These concepts are like a sacred circle that must be kept intact at all costs. Within the Mi'kmaq community, everyone was to be treated as a relative whether she was a blood relative or not (Marshall 1997). In terms of the trail project, it was found that cooperation and unity were essential elements in achieving trail

objectives. As will be discussed later, swaying from these values early on led to project difficulties.

v. *Democracy and consensus:* Most Mi'kmaq have maintained their ancestral practice of decisions by consensus and delegating the community voice to those who represent them (Berneshawi 1998: 135). Berneshawi states (1998: 135):

Reaching consensus and seeking advice from Elders are fundamental processes of decision-making within most Mi'kmaq communities. This obvious cultural difference towards decision making does not conform to the impatient Western approach, and therefore presents a delay to the process. Time is not of the essence: it is speaking with the assurance of the support community.

It was generally believed that power was manifested in the people as a whole (Napoleon 1992; 5). While consensus in the trail project was sometimes hard to attain, it was realized that without it project momentum would be detrimentally affected.

vi. *Family, Children, Elders and Mi'kmaw Teaching:* The value of family is strong amongst Mi'kmaq people. Extended families were well-organized systems that allowed for extra support and cooperation in the sharing of roles and responsibilities, ranging from parenting and training to providing food (Marshall 1997). If an individual was adopted by an extended family, he or she would have the same status and respect as someone related through bloodlines. Strong families meant strong communities (Napoleon 1992). Special respect is shown towards Elders and children, as it was believed that the Elders were the grandparents of all and the young people were the future of the tribe (Napoleon 1992). Elders are essentially the keepers of the past, and the road to the future. Marshall (1997:54) states that Mi'kmaq must respect Elders because:

[they]... not only hold the knowledge of our ancestors, they have the language through which the knowledge must be imparted to youth. Their years of searching, listening, experiencing and understanding all that is bodily, emotionally and spiritually possible, grants them the wisdom and strength needed by our youth to become good Mi'kmaq. Elders are the keepers of the sacred lessons of tribal and global harmony for all living things within the environment.

Elders were also respected for their abilities to unite families and offer spiritual guidance and advise in appointing leaders (Clarkson et al. 1992). They were often the traditional healers and spirit leaders of the community (Hart 1996). Traditional healers were predominantly concerned with balancing emotional, physical, mental and spiritual aspects of their people, the environment and the spirit world (Malloch 1991 *in* Hart 1996).

The following quote by Gwen Bear Orechia (1995 *In* Leavitt 1995: 116) parallels well the role Elders should play in the trail project:

Elders know how to keep the balance. As they get older, they are so in tune with what the circle is, the right path, that they recognize when you are veering from it. Instead of telling you, "Hey, you're heading the wrong way." They'll tell a story. They don't want to impose their will on someone else. They tell about somebody who started going the way you're going. They're not telling you that you're wrong, just, "I'll give you an example of what happens." They give you a choice: are you going to keep up that way or change?

The second part of Orechias's quote pertains to the Mi'kmaw teaching concept of non-interference. This Mi'kmaq way of teaching allows people to learn through their own experience. They must come to the realization themselves. By Elders giving advice or telling stories that are similar to the person's problem or situation, people listen, watch and think about everything they hear. Orechia (1995) states they are then left to make up their own minds, without people telling them what to do. This way of teaching is very similar to the concept of experiential learning, which is an essential element of the participatory process. Community members felt they had learned extensively from their experiences, mistakes and successes. Interview findings of the broader community also found that the majority of community members expressed they learned best through hands-on experiences. The community hopes that the trail will not only revive their traditional knowledge but also the concept of learning through hands-on experience.

vii. *Indian Time and 'The Notion That the Time Must be Right'*: Leavitt (1995) states that non-Natives and even Natives themselves often joke about the concept of 'Indian Time' and the Native attitude towards time and schedules. This concept often leads to

misunderstood stereotypes and frustration by people who do not understand the Mi'kmaq culture. Mi'kmaq never used numbers to tell time; they did not measure time (Leavitt 1995: 55). They felt time could not be thought about in units or blocks, or divided into a schedule. They focused on the ordering of events and activities, as opposed to how long each one took (Leavitt 1995: 55). In his book *Dancing With a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality*, Rupert Ross (1992: 38) explains the notion of the "time being right". He states:

It involves not only taking the time to walk through possible courses of action in advance but also preparing one's self emotionally, and spiritually, for the course chosen. It also requires not acting until there is a conviction that the task can be performed successfully....Successful activity, then, required waiting until all the physical variables promised optimum opportunity, all the preparatory thought promised optimum performance and, just as importantly, all the preparatory spiritual dedication promised optimal cooperation from the spirit world. Only then could it be said that the time was right for acting with the greatest chance of success.

It is a concept that I had difficulty grasping, but based on my experience with co-facilitating the trail project, I am beginning to understand. What is crucial is the concept that things get done, when they 'need' or are 'meant' to be done. With respect to the trail there were problems with consensus and various participants wanting things to be done at different paces. Being attuned to the non-Native world of deadlines, I often recommended that the committee adhere to a time frame. For instance, I would ask committee members when they hoped to have an objective started and when they anticipated it would be completed. I was flexible in this, as I knew that non-Native concepts of planning, schedules and deadlines are often too rigid to work well, even in non-Native contexts. Yet sometime objectives would be attained before they were expected to occur, and at other times they happened long after they were planned. Occasionally Mi'kmaq community members admitted that some of their people misused the concept of 'Indian time'. Checks and balances would have prevented such abuses historically, especially when things had to be done (e.g. hunting, fishing, gathering, and travelling) in time for the need to be met. The concept of Indian time and community

development projects is an important concept for facilitators to understand and will be discussed in relation to the trail project in Chapter Six.

viii. *The Circle*: The concept of balance is critical in the lives of Mi'kmaq people personally and in their communities. Orechia (*in Leavitt 1995: 22 sic*) states:

The first time I looked at the medicine wheel, everything just fit right in; I could place myself in it. I felt that I was rediscovering something in myself. This is why I think the circle was used here too- just the way people took care of one another and thought collectively. We still do that in many ways- except for politics, which used to be a circle, but no longer is.

She goes on to speak about the concept of responsibility within this circle. She states that you take responsibility for your own choices even if you do not consciously think of it. An Indian has a responsibility to be balanced and by taking on this responsibility, there is potential to develop self-esteem and balance in the community (Orechia *in Leavitt 1995: 22*).

The concept of the circle is very important for the core group (trail committee). Balance in terms of the committee helps the committee to be productive. One potentially useful model is the 'talking circle', a Native method of conducting a meeting where everyone in turn has the opportunity to speak, going around the circle one or more times (Leavitt 1995: 23). No one else is allowed to talk while the person holding the feather (or another object) is speaking. In this way no one person dominates the meeting (Leavitt 1995: 23). This practice has not been used to date but could be very useful to the trail committee in the future. In addition, community members participating in project roles that are new to them has much potential for increasing self-esteem and self-confidence. Some community members have come to understand more clearly where their strengths are in relation to the project. In turn, each person's strengths are being pooled to culturally invigorate the community.

ix. *Oral Tradition*: Mi'kmaq culture is based on oral tradition. It is a means of identity and education to those of Mi'kmaq ancestry (Berneshawi 1998). The oral

tradition is vital for a sense of honour and place. Stories, legends, songs, chants and dances are the traditional forms of education (Holmes-Whitehead 1988). From these oral traditions, one can view the world through the window of tribal consciousness (Marshall 1997). The importance of the oral tradition is in its guidance; its effectiveness lies in the careful and gentle manner that Elders tell the stories and sing the songs of their ancestors (Bernawhawi 1998). Marshall (1997: 52) states:

These “oral traditions” are the foundations of our tribal consciousness. It is the feeding ground of tribal epistemology. It is the beginning and the end of Mi’kmaq life. Without these sets of rules we would not be any different from all other human beings and we would lose that uniqueness of being Mi’kmaq.

In recent times some Mi’kmaq stories and songs are being recorded as some Elders feel that their oral stories are not being passed on and are becoming lost (Bernawhawi 1998; Marshall 1997). The concept of recording oral traditions on paper is important to consider in this research. I questioned whether it was appropriate to record knowledge pertaining to Mi’kmaq medicinal and edible uses of plants for interpretive trail material. My main fear was that it would be difficult on paper, to capture the essence of this knowledge. When knowledge is passed down through such means, the learning is multidimensional; and encompasses much more than just the physical uses of plants. Respect, spirituality, honour and interconnectedness were important elements permeating oral stories. In a sense, writing down words in a one dimensional way through focusing on the plants’ medicinal and edible properties, undermines the authenticity of the knowledge as well as the traditional process used to pass it on. By this I do not mean authenticity in terms of amounts and doses, but in terms of relaying the holistic way in which plants were used by Mi’kmaq. The medicinal and nutritional properties were just one part of a much larger healing process. Although the spirituality associated with Mi’kmaq worldview will be elaborated upon in trail interpretation material, it does not have the same effect as lived experiences relayed through oral traditions. One option of partly (but not totally) remedying this problem would be to record the knowledge on an audio cassette. This could be included as part of the trail interpretive material.

After seeking guidance from an Elder and other community members, it was deemed critical to have this information recorded for future generations. In reference to the Bear River First Nation Ricker (1997: vii) states that “preserving the memory of the elders is most important because it seems to be only one generation away from extinction”. Many community members revealed that their knowledge was limited and identified a large knowledge gap between themselves and their parents’ (or grandparents’) generation. York (1990 *in* Berneshawi 1998: 140) states that:

When this lifeline is severed, the younger generation’s knowledge of their cultural traditions and the relationship with the land, which sustains them, is lost and the future of the Nation is jeopardized.

This phenomenon is occurring in the community and many community members stressed the urgent need to have this education for their children and future generations.

2.5 Intellectual Property Rights, Indigenous Knowledge and the Trail Project

I have spoken to the community’s tribal government (Chief-and-Council) about this issue of intellectual property rights and the plant knowledge that will be publicized on the trail. IPRs are best defined as rights to the products of the mind (Shiva 1997:7). Much of the debate concerning IPRs has focused on indigenous knowledge of plants and their useful properties (Pinel and Evans 1994). With respect to the Mi’kmaq culture, traditional knowledge of edible and in particular medicinal plants have come to the fore with respect to the IPR issue. This issue is complex and has no definitive legal solution.

Currently IPR law is heavily criticized for its inability to deal with issues facing indigenous peoples (Shiva 1997). Due to these limitations, tribal governments are taking steps toward protecting their rights to control the use of cultural information by building on their own sovereign right to owning and controlling their knowledge (Pinel and Evans 1994). I have implemented Pinel and Evans (1994: 53) advice with respect to tribal sovereignty and the trail project. They state that researchers involved in any type of work with tribal members on land controlled by the tribal government must be granted

permission and authorization by the tribal government representatives (Pinel and Evans 1994: 53). They add that in doing so, the cultural group can feel confident it has some control over its cultural knowledge. Key in this approach is the following:

It is to the advantage of both the outside professional and to the cultural group if the reports of information are limited to that which the group feels is appropriate for a given situation. In this way, uncontrolled broadcasting of information that can be used by others for private gain is limited and the people whose knowledge is being documented retain the maximum leverage to benefit from its future uses. (Pinel and Evans 1994: 53).

The BRFN has specified that it wants the plant knowledge to be shared with all people and decided 'what' knowledge will be made accessible (Band Council pers. comm. 1999). Great care has been taken in this process to ensure cultural integrity. I have faith in the fact that knowledge which has not yet been abused will most likely remain within the secretive realms of Mi'kmaq families. In reference to the trail project, the knowledge will be displayed in literature form for any community member or prospective hikers to absorb. This community decision is not one that I as a researcher have a right to be opposed to. Much of the knowledge collected for trail interpretation has already been published and that which is not, the community participants have verbally expressed they are willing to share. I am compiling a separate report on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants for the community, based on some of the questions asked in my interview guide (see Appendix 7). Permission to read this report must be granted from the Bear River Band Council.

The plant workshop summary, the categories of plants on the trail, and information concerning the depth of knowledge in the community is all that will be revealed in this thesis. The focus of this research is not to describe the plant knowledge per se, but to examine how its revival can contribute to holistic CBD.

In my view the IPR issue must be addressed in terms of its relevance to community members, since they have the most to lose. Although extensive damage has occurred in the past, many communities are now choosing to share knowledge in a culturally appropriate way. The Chief-and-Council as well as other community members

did not understand why I had to deal with this issue as they felt it could stifle the project more than develop it (Band Council pers. comm. 1998). This is why I agree with Pinel and Evans' (1994) moralistic as opposed to legalistic approach. They state:

Rather than providing legal models for patents, copyrights, or trademarks, the examples discussed in this paper illustrate the more fundamental rights of indigenous peoples to define the appropriate use of their cultural knowledge and to participate in decisions as to its dissemination (Pinel and Evans 1994:53).

By allowing the community freedom to decide on what knowledge becomes public, accessible or published allows it the freedom of choice. Until law forums become more accommodating of indigenous IPRs, researchers need to help communities by warning them of problems and recommending that they only share knowledge as they deem appropriate.

CHAPTER III: APPROACHES TO MI'KMAQ COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explores approaches to Mi'kmaq community-based development. Some researchers argue that because MCBD is action oriented, it lacks theory. There may be good reason for this, since many times action was seen to be more important (Jackson 1993). Yet, theory in this area can be important for making sense of the process and end results of MCBD. Beaudry (1975: 15 *in* Lamoureux et al. 1989) states that "theoretical knowledge enables us to order and systematize the data gathered through perceptual knowledge. It is also used to discover causes in order to give the data broader, more universal meaning." In addition to principles and practices of MCBD, theories of 'cultural revitalization' as applied to Native communities, Medicine Wheel teachings, Experiential Learning and Participatory Action Research are explored.

This chapter begins with a brief synopsis of the nature of CBD. Its fundamental premise of community participation and ownership of the development process provides a sharp contrast to the Canadian federal government's past approaches to CBD¹⁴ in First Nations communities. Research has shown that top-down, narrowly defined CBD approaches have served mostly to develop a state of government dependency and disempowerment amongst First Nations communities.

Light is then shed on contemporary approaches, principles and practices of MCBD. These approaches include the merging of Mi'kmaq values with CBD principles and often are based on 'cultural revitalization'. Although cultural revitalization is sometimes met with mixed emotions by First Nations communities, overall it has become an approach that many communities view to be key in their development and increased self-reliance.

¹⁴ Assimilative recipes for development were based on healthy French and English communities, and economies. The federal government gave no recognition of cultural uniqueness or attempt to have indigenous peoples define development for themselves (see Elias 1991; Brascoupe 1993a; Weaver 1993b).

Three major approaches to culture-based development initiatives as proposed by Douglas Elias (1991) are reviewed. The final section is devoted to the medicine wheel teachings as they pertain to the trail project. These teachings add clarity of purpose to the process and product of Mi'kmaq development.

3.2 What is Community-Based Development?

Community development offers leaders and community members a way to take matters into their own hands and move ahead, knowing where they want to go; how to develop the skills to get there; and how to tap into existing skills (Napolean 1992: 5).

A community consists of people who (in most cases) live together in a particular locality and who have on-going political, socio-cultural and economic relationships with each other (Bopp et al. 1982a: 4). Lee (1992) contends that a community is a living organism which is constantly changing, and warns that this changing process must be taken into consideration when facilitating the learning process.

Community development (CD) is a problem-solving process that enables community members to identify their own problems, needs and desires and work together in finding the solutions that are appropriate for them (MacDonald 1965; Lee 1992; Napolean 1992). Helping a community to become productive in fulfilling its full potential is the essence of CD (Bopp et al. 1982a: 4). A premise fundamental to CD is the firm belief that community members are informed and involved in decisions that affect them (Bopp et al. 1982a; Elias 1991; Erasmus 1991; Napoleon 1992: 15).

Motivation to implement CD strategies are based on the following assumptions:

1. All people have a desire to better themselves; they all have personal and communal needs; suffering exists as a result of these needs not being met.
2. All groups can do something to help themselves when given an opportunity to do so on their own terms.
3. Difficulties in fulfilling personal and group needs often exceed community resources. However, given the appropriate opportunities and the

necessary resources, the people would do something about meeting their needs.

4. There are enough capacities for leadership in all communities, regardless of their social status, to make possible the development of effective self-help programs.
5. People are competent to participate in decision-making (Napoleon 1992: 15).

Strategies of community development have become some of the most significant social forces in the process of planned change (Chekki 1979). In essence, community development will manifest its meaning in the extent to which changing patterns are translated into real change in the ability of people to live fuller lives and to retain power over their destinies (Sreagelding 1994).

Community development is neither a method of selling or promoting preconceived plans and programs, nor is it an elitist approach dealing only with the Chief and Council or members who are most educated and vocal (Erasmus 1991; Napoleon 1992). It is a grassroots¹⁵, bottom-up approach that involves any community member who is interested in participating (Bopp et al. 1982; Erasmus 1991; Lauer 1993; Campfens 1997). The government-dependent mode that many communities are often caught in is impossible to change over night; hence the development process can be frustrating and slow. Campfens (1997: 25) states:

Those who have had a long experience in CD practices know all too well that frustration and pain accompany the process, and that success is never certain. But they also know how challenging, liberating, empowering, and exhilarating CD can be for the participants.

¹⁵ Grassroots community members are not members of the formal leadership (government) of the community. Erasmus (1993) states that true community ownership can only occur if members from the grassroots are actively involved. He argues that the leadership of the community (in this case Chief and Council) is one step removed from the grassroots and their participation and ownership alone would not constitute grounds for community ownership.

Ryan and Robinson (1990: 61) argue that part of this slow process is allowing people to make mistakes, and to learn from those mistakes.

This process takes time and integrity to put in place; the danger lies in preempting the decision-making process in the interest of efficiency. Additionally, the consensual process sometimes results in decisions, which may not work because they are made in the absence of direct experience or knowledge of group members. However, another basic premise is that people have the right to extend their own experiences and knowledge by making mistakes and then addressing the outcomes.

In addition, calls for mobilization of communities to address issues of economic, social, cultural or spiritual development have often been based on an idealized notion of the community as a 'unitary' concept (Campfens 1997). Campfens (1997: 21) states that "there is an assumption that democratic consensus will somehow overcome difference and bring the various segments in the community together to form a united front of community actions". He recommends that within the context of intergroup conflict and competing interests, community development theory and practice may choose to focus on intergroup relations and mediation to achieve a fair and balanced state of development (Campfens 1997).

Past approaches to CD focused primarily on community physical needs such as water, roads, housing and sewage treatment (McKay pers. comm. 2000d). Although these are critical elements, this research seeks to expand the conventional definitions of CBD to include cultural needs (see Chapter One, Sec. 1.4, #5). Mi'kmaq leaders argue that cultural needs such as spiritual strengthening, emotional healing, revitalization of traditional practices and mental development must become central to CD projects. Core Mi'kmaq values and knowledge must be central to the CBD process for successful development to occur. As two forestry workers state with respect to Mi'kmaq communities: "the trees are like the tools to achieve spiritual, mental, emotional and physical development" (McKay and Hudson pers. comm. 2000). Many Mi'kmaq leaders believe that culture-based development is the only recipe for fostering self-sufficient communities. The trail project is premised on cultural attributes and places Mi'kmaq values at its core. For these reasons I believe the trail project is a strong CBD initiative.

3.3 A Brief History of the Canadian Government's Approach to Community Development in First Nations Communities

Historically, CD in Canadian First Nations communities took the form of rigid governmentally defined-initiatives (Bopp et al. 1989b; Elias 1991; Erasmus 1991; Ponting 1997). Often initiatives were implemented or imposed with ends that may or may not have contributed to the interests of Indian people (Wein 1986; Bopp et al. 1989b; Elias 1991; Erasmus 1991; Napoleon 1992). External policies concerning development focused on 'top down' approaches that were unaccommodating of tribal values and customs (Napoleon 1992). In 1977, the National Indian Brotherhood (15) stated:

What is beyond dispute is that over the past one hundred years of domination by the Euro-Canadian governments, socio-economic systems have failed to identify the needs of the Indian people. The last 10 to 20 years of major 'development' effort by government has been totally ineffective, as evidenced by comparisons with Canadian norms in education, health, justice and economic well-being.

The 1969 *White Paper* entitled *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* sought to end the federal government's special relationship with Indian peoples (Royal Commission on Mi'kmaq Peoples [RCAP] 1996).

The White Paper argued that 'equality,' or 'non-discrimination' as it was often phrased, was the key ingredient in a solution to the problems of Indians, and that special rights had been the major cause of their problems (DIAND 1969 in Weaver 1981a: 4).

Among other things, the *White Paper* included plans to eliminate protection for reserve lands, to end legal status of Indian peoples, and to transfer delivery of services from the federal to the provincial government (Prins 1996; RCAP 1996). The paper illustrated succinctly the federal government's stance concerning how to improve the bleak economic situations of Indian communities (Jamieson 1995). The *White Paper* rejected the Indians' insistence that they were culturally unique peoples within Canada and that any attempt to alleviate problems through community development would have to do so with tribal culture and values in mind (Elias 1991; Prins 1996). The government instead

took the position that there were no cultural issues involved, only issues of economic class (Wein 1986; Elias 1991). In addition, the paper placed a liberal emphasis on the individual and the role of government relative to individuals. It rejected any focus on communities or ethnic groupings (Elias 1991). Jamieson (1995) argues the *White Paper* reaffirmed the ongoing assimilative policy of converting reserves into municipalities. Weaver (1981a: 5) states:

Indians wanted their special rights honoured and their historical grievances, particularly over lands and treaties, recognized and dealt with in an equitable fashion. Equally important, they wanted direct and meaningful participation in the making of policies that affected their future.

An angry attack of the *White Paper* by First Nations caused it to be rejected (Ponting 1997).

The wake of the *White Paper* left a legacy of bitterness and mounting suspicion that implementation of its proposals would gradually occur (Weaver 1981a; RCAP 1996; Ponting 1997). Nonetheless, the serious implications of the *White Paper* served as a catalytic motivator in uniting Indian peoples' political efforts (RCAP 1996). In Nova Scotia, Mi'kmaq bands joined forces with other Indian Nations. First came the establishment of provincial organizations across Canada and these unions then partnered to form the National Indian Brotherhood (Prins 1996). Through the voice of the NIB, Indian peoples together contended that all development initiatives from that point on would be premised as much on historic and cultural uniqueness as they would on economic needs (NIB 1977). Across Canada Indian peoples recognized it was their time to resist domination, to protest repression and to undo the damage of past policies (Prins 1996). In 1970, the NIB presented the Canadian government with the Red Paper demanding recognition of natives rights, treaty rights, Aboriginal title and self-determination (Prins 1996). Mirroring the same issues the Mi'kmaq Nation replied with the 'Brown Paper' (Chute pers. comm. 2000).

After the 1970s, a new era was epitomized by Indian spokespersons who articulated their views of their future within a comprehensive development framework

(Elias 1991; Prins 1996; Ponting 1997). The Manitoba Indian Brotherhood's 1971 response to the White Paper, entitled *Wahbung: Our Tomorrows* was a landmark in the evolution of a native approach to development (Elias 1991). In the Brotherhood's view, beneficial change leading to increased economic sufficiency had to be directed and evaluated by Indian peoples, taking into account both individual and communal interests (Elias 1991). Beneficial change had to involve the revitalization of tribal traditions within the environment of Canadian institutions, laws, and ways of doing things. On the one hand, beneficial change would come when Canadian governments relinquished political power to Indian peoples. On the other hand, beneficial change also required Indian people to merge elements of Canadian and local culture (Elias 1991; Newhouse 1993). Most important, it was felt that development could not proceed selectively in bits and pieces. Development had to be launched from a sound ecological, cultural, and economic base with a full awareness of historic realities (Copet 1990).

The *Wahbung's* ingredients have proved essential to most native approaches to development from the 1970's onwards. Important documents preceding the *Whabung* were *A Strategy for the Socio-economic Development of Indian People* and the Berger Report (1977). The Berger Report (1977) concluded that Euro-Canadian domination and imposition of alien institutions on communities was rooted in a completely erroneous understanding of indigenous cultures, and especially their economies (Elias 1991). Although the report did not offer a specific approach to development, it (1977) did construct a model of change based on specific history, cultures, and environment of the regions. Berger's (1977) approach, consistent with the NIB's strategy, recommended that ideas be built from the grassroots up, supported by expert opinion, and forming strategies useful to a local situation (Elias 1991).

By the late 1970s, Indian people had been working towards an integrated development approach, which included a crucial role for social and cultural models. Yet, the task of accommodating these various strategies entailed substantial resources and became overwhelming. The need for increased government funding left the First Nations vulnerable to opposing government policy, and by the 1980s the social development

approach had given way to a greater re-emphasis on economic development. After several decades of welfare, unemployment, make-work projects, and extensive government dependence, the question of how long-term economic development and full and rewarding employment could be achieved still remained (Wein 1986).

Presently the federal government is receiving heavy criticism for its inability to show an increased awareness of the importance of individual and community healing (Ponting 1997). Even in response to the recommendations of RCAP, the federal government still avoids making a more concerted policy thrust to address the widespread and profound need for healing within community development initiatives (Ponting 1997). Development strategies that do not encompass tribal traditions, values and customs, which form the heart of Indian cultures, will only perpetuate the assimilative mal-development of past decades. Like other First Nations, Mi'kmaq communities are presently defining CBD approaches that are rooted in culture, spirituality and their tribal economy.

3.4 Contemporary Approaches to Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development

It is unrealistic to think that Aboriginal people can simply go back to ways of living that existed decades or centuries ago. If we think of culture as a piece of fine furniture, we can imagine the essential structure surviving centuries of neglect and abuse and then being revitalized at the hands of a skilled artisan. The word 'restore' suggests that an underlying cultural order, as maintained by language, values and beliefs, can be sustained, and that traditions and practices can be rediscovered and improved so that they can meet the challenges of a constantly changing world (RCAP 1996a: 67).

Indigenous peoples in Canada are presently engaged in a process of cultural rediscovery and are eager to rebuild their communities' foundations (Friesan 1997). They have set a rapidly accelerating pace for economic, political and cultural development, and are now very knowledgeable of how the Canadian institutional system works (Elias 1991; Friesan 1997b). Determination to achieve and maintain this pace

towards development has been supported by Section 35(1) of the *Constitution Act*¹⁶ and by the reaffirmation of Aboriginal¹⁷ and Treaty Rights¹⁸. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to delve in-depth into the implications of certain court cases, but generally cases such as *Calder v. British Columbia*¹⁹, *Guerin v. the Queen*²⁰, *R. v. Sparrow*²¹, *R. v. Apasassin*²², *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia*²³ and most recently *R. v. Marshall*²⁴ recognize and reaffirm that: Aboriginal rights cannot be extinguished by regulation; Aboriginal rights to hunt, fish, trap and gather, take precedence over other uses; and the Crown has a fiduciary obligation to protect Aboriginal interests (Bombay 1996b: 4). More specifically, in the *Calder* decision it was agreed that “Aboriginal title exists as a legal right derived from historic occupation and possession of tribal lands, where not

¹⁶ Section 35 (1) of the 1982, *Constitution Act* in part states, that “existing Aboriginal and Treaty rights of the Aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.”

¹⁷ Aboriginal rights can be defined as “rights based on traditional Aboriginal uses and pursuits of organized Aboriginal society that predate colonization, where they have not been extinguished, as such by treaty or statute.” (Paul 1995: 23).

¹⁸ Treaty rights are rights set out in treaties or comprehensive land claims agreements (Paul 1995: 23). There are various forms of treaties, which include the peace and friendship treaties of the Maritime Provinces, cession of land right treaties and treaties that contain hunting and fishing rights (Paul 1995).

¹⁹ *Calder v. British Columbia* (A.G.), [1973] S.C.R. 313, [1973] 4 W.W.R. 1, 34 D.L.R. (3d) 145, affirming 73 W.W.R. 481, 13 D.L.R. (3d) 64 (B.C.)

²⁰ *Guerin v. R.*, [1984] 2 S.C.R. 335, [1984] 6 W.W.R. 481, 36 R.P.R. 1, 20 E.T.R. 6, 13 D.L.R. (4th) 321. [1985] 1 C.N.L.R. 120, 55 N.R. 161, reversing [1983] 2 F.C. 656, [1983] 2 W.W.R. 686, 13 E.T.R. 245, 143 D.L.R. (3d) 416, [1983] 1 C.N.L.R. 20, 45 N.R. 181.

²¹ *R. v. Sparrow*, [1990] 3 C.N.L.R., [1990] 1 S.C.R. 1075, 56 C.C.C. (3d) 263, 46 B.C.L.R. (2d) 1, [1990] 4 W.W.R. 410, 70 D.L.R. (4th) 385, 11 N.R. 241, cited to C.N.L.R.

²² *Apasassin v. Canada (Department of Indians Affairs & Northern Development)*, [1993] 2 C.N.L.R. 20 (Fed. C.A.)

²³ *Delgamuukw v. British Columbia* [1997] 3 S.C.R. 1010, cited in SCR.

²⁴ *R. v. Marshall*, unreleased decision File No. 26014,

<http://www.droit.montreal.ca/doc/scs-scc/en/rec/html/marshall2.en.html> as found on the website noted. Appeal from a judgement of the Nova Scotia Court of Appeal (1997), 159 N.S.R. (2d) 186, 468 A.P.R. 186, 146 D.L.R. (4th) 257, [1997] 3 V.N.L.R. 209, [1997] N.S.J. No. 131 (QL), affirming [1996] N.S.J. No 246 (QL).

extinguished by appropriate legislation” (Bombay 1996b: 4). In the Guerin decision, Aboriginal title was referred to as unique. Aboriginal peoples were found to have rights of occupancy, possession and use of land (Bombay 1996b: 4). In Marshall, the government’s obligation to reaffirm and honour a covenant chain of 240 year old Mi’kmaq treaties was upheld (specifically the 1760-61 Treaty which ratifies a chain of prior peace and friendship treaties starting with the Treaty of 1752), respecting the Mi’kmaq right to hunt, fish and sell “skins, feathers, fowl, fish or any other thing that they shall have to sell, where they shall have liberty to dispose thereof to the best advantage” (*Treaty of 1752*) to earn a moderate living (*in Sunday Daily News*, Donham 1999: 15). The Court held that Mi’kmaq people had not lost their right to trade and sell their goods because of the demise of ‘truckhouses’ (those trading places specified in the treaty) (Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen 1999: 20). These landmark accomplishments are catalytic to the beginning of a new era of development in First Nations communities.

Mi’kmaq are presently reflecting on current problems and issues and exploring development approaches that involve a new vision, and a replacement of outdated conceptual models (Lacasse 1995). They are defining their own objectives, goals and visions which merge to create alternative approaches to development. Yet, in this transition from being wards of a paternalistic state to becoming masters of their own destinies, some Mi’kmaq communities are floundering. They are struggling with the pressure to respect tradition, while simultaneously moving into a productive sustainable future (Jette 1995).

Many First Nation leaders believe that for a community initiative to succeed, a prerequisite to economic development must be spiritual and cultural strengthening (Friesen 1997b; Ponting 1997). When community development is examined holistically, it is not difficult to see how spiritual, social, cultural, political and economic development are interrelated. Most Native communities must undergo a process of healing and dealing with social ills before they can be truly productive (Napoleon 1992: viii). Robertson (1993: 75) relays his research revelations concerning the Mi’kmaq Escasoni reservation:

I was easily persuaded of the importance of Mi'kmaq spiritual revival; I had long ago realized that the solutions to the problems of Mi'kmaq communities are to be found in spiritual and psychological change. My hosts in Eskasoni had talked almost entirely about cultural, spiritual and psychological matters, and I felt that through them I had touched the essence of what was happening in the village. When I talked to the administrators, they too acknowledged that spiritual revival was the key to creation of a renewed Mi'kmaq society.

Recent developments in Mi'kmaq communities have been attributed to spiritual revival (Friesen 1997; Robertson 1993). Healing of social ills has been identified as one of the greatest needs and "basic challenges" of First Nation communities (Ponting 1993a). With respect to Northern Native communities, Warry (1998: 212) states:

When asked the one thing that is central to community healing, people often reply that they must 'know their culture' or utilize traditional values, such as honesty, respect, caring, and sharing, in their everyday lives. And when pressed about the authenticity of ceremonies, people often suggest that there is no right or wrong way of conducting a specific ceremony so long as the ritual is done with good intention or a 'good heart'.

One contemporary community development approach that aims to heal and deal is that of 'cultural revitalization' (Newhouse 1993). There are great attempts underway in First Nations communities to ensure that traditional values are understood and are made central to tribal life again, a process which sociologists call 'cultural revitalization'. Integral to this concept of revitalization is a broad definition of culture. The UNESCO definition of culture emerged out of the World Conference on Cultural Policies (1982 *in* Serageldin 1992:18):

Culture may now be said to be the whole complex of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features that characterize a society or social group. It includes not only arts and letters, but also modes of life, the fundamental rights of the human being, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

With this definition in mind, it is evident that cultural revitalization can take many forms, including language preservation, revival of traditional knowledge, values and customs, or traditional resource management techniques (Kleymeyer 1994). Ponting (1997: 140) argues that development in these areas can reconnect First Nations in several ways:

- i. with their past;
- ii. with the tribal spirituality from which many had been alienated by their exposure to Christianity; and
- iii. with their language.

He goes on to state that these are all stable foundations that help ground the individual in the reality that he or she experiences (Ponting 1997). Lack of a stable foundation contributes to alienation and disorientation. The presence and development of these foundational elements help to contribute to a source of empowerment and stability (Ponting 1997). This process of relearning and reinterpreting traditional values is at the heart of successful CBD (Newhouse 1993: 95). Newhouse (1993: 99) states that:

The question, then, as I see it, is not one of preserving Mi'kmaq worldviews and values but finding ways to assist in the creative interpretation of these worldviews and values in the contemporary reality, a process that is already underway.

Douglas Elias outlines three approaches to cultural revitalization within a CBD framework. The first approach aims at revitalizing tradition (Elias 1991: 137). The second adopts innovations to complement tradition and the third aims at healing pathologies left when traditions are lost (Elias 1991: 137).

The first approach maintains that Indian people hold a living culture, continuous with ancient traditions that must be sustained if they are to persist as distinct peoples (Elias 1991: 137). It holds that traditions serve useful purposes and are not just remnants of a lost culture. Cultural development is supported from the perspective that indigenous ways are entirely valid on their own. Key in this approach is the re-examination of local tradition to find new ways for tradition to serve in contemporary constructions of Indian life (Elias 1991: 137).

In the second approach, there is an implicit recognition that the realities of Canadian life demand skills, knowledge, and ways of doing things beyond those which can be found in local traditions (Elias 1991: 138). Here, the objective is to allow enough innovation to better equip Indian people for achieving economic self-reliance and self-government without further threatening tradition (Elias 1991: 138). These initiatives examine skills and knowledge available from non-native sources with the objective of

merging innovation and tradition in new constructions that serve Mi'kmaq people in the realities of the Canadian context (Elias 1991: 138).

The third approach deals with what happens when tradition collapses. Prominent in this approach are intense concerns with social pathologies - substance abuse, child abuse, wife abuse, Elder abuse, violence, family breakdowns, corruption, suicide, and dependency (Elias 1991: 139). Native people believe these pathologies were non-existent in pre-contact times and are the consequences of relations between Native people and Canadians²⁵ (Elias 1991; RCAP 1996). Pathologies are indicators of serious damage to the core of tribal culture; values and behaviour that once sustained the people have been replaced with alien values and behaviour (Elias 1991: 139). In this context, cultural development would revitalize traditions and enable people to manage the causes and consequences of these detrimental pathologies. These initiatives aim at healing social ills so that local life will be stabilized enough to retain revitalized traditions and non-native innovations (Elias 1991: 139).

I would add that the resurgence of Mi'kmaq values is as important as the revitalization of knowledge and customs. Mi'kmaq values such as those outlined in Chapter Two are as integral to cultural revitalization as the rituals through which culture is manifested. For some Mi'kmaq communities that have lost many of their customs and practices, their values have allowed them to remain distinct from non-Native culture (Meuse pers. comm 2000). RCAP (1996) writes:

When Aboriginal people talk about returning to their traditions, the response of non-native peoples is often incredulous, because they associate First Nations, Inuit and Metis cultures with buckskin, igloos, and buffalo. It is not well known that being Aboriginal is a matter of mind, that the stories that teach Aboriginal

²⁵ For evidence supporting these views see H.F. McGee. 1983. *The Native Peoples of Atlantic Canada: A History of Indian-European Relations*. Eds. Ottawa: Carleton University Press.; J.H. Bodley. 1990. *Victims of Progress*. California: Mayfield Publishing Company; I. Knockwood. 1992. *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaq Children at the Indian Residential School at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia*. Lockport NS: Roseway Publishing; B. Richardson. 1993. *People of Terra Nullius*. Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre; D. Paul. 1993. *We Were Not the Savages*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing.

people how to live with each other and with creation (how to be fully human) are loaded with symbols that transcend time and the particular circumstances in which they originated.

Culture-based development allows Mi'kmaq peoples to seek and retain their special cultural strengths while enabling them to achieve change in their social and economic conditions (Kleymeyer 1994: 241). Kleymeyer (1994) warns that this approach does not try to maintain or revert traditional peoples to an unchanged or "pure" cultural state.

In communities described in the third approach, traditional knowledge or practices may be limited (Warry 1998). Some Mi'kmaq peoples are only now beginning to learn the fundamental tools for talking and thinking about their culture, such as their sacred plants, or the way to smudge (Warry 1998).

For some people the return to traditional ways involves some initial unease as they acknowledge their lack of understanding of Indian culture and take the risk of being criticized as they begin to participate in ceremonies. In other words, Aboriginal cultural revitalization, though gaining momentum, is a process that needs to be fostered and nourished. One of the most fundamental challenges facing communities is to create environments where people can participate in ceremonies or learn traditional ways (Warry 1998: 213).

However, not all First Nations want to retain parts of their traditional culture. Well-intentioned development workers who see this approach as the key to development may perpetuate the wrongs of the past by not determining if this is the approach a community actually wants. Development workers must support Mi'kmaq communities in defining approaches that are most comfortable for them. Warry (1998: 219) warns:

Ideas about restoring culture imply a spiritual or moral quality for some, and a political agenda for others. Some suggest, for example, that there is political capital to be made from capturing the rhetoric of cultural revitalization. While non-Natives may assume that demonstration of traditional practices is an indicator of community vitality, for community members the restoration of cultural ways is potentially divisive.

Indeed development workers must make an assessment concerning the culture of the community. Maybe it is mostly traditional, maybe it has taken on non-Native cultural

traits, and maybe it has combined traditional native culture with non-Native culture. The Bear River First Nation fits somewhere in the third category (the community has lost many of its traditions and customs and is implementing initiatives that aim to retain traditions and non-Mi'kmaq innovations). Culture is manifested in various ways on the reserve; in traditional Mi'kmaq singing, drumming, and dancing, traditional Mi'kmaq art such as basket making, wooden flowers and porcupine quill boxes. Yet, there are various other cultural interests such as country, folk and gospel singing, quilting, cross-stitch, taekwon-do and toll painting, to name a few. With respect to religion, some community members practice only the Roman Catholic religion, while others have rejected Christianity to practice only traditional Mi'kmaq spirituality, and many others practice a combination of the two. One example would be an Elder who uses the words 'God' and 'Creator' as synonymous²⁶. The following quote exemplifies some important issues concerning Mi'kmaq culture.

In this century, as in the past, Mi'kmaq individuals and groups respond differently to confrontation with dominant white society. Some acquiesced to assimilation. Many become accommodationists, trying to fit into mainstream culture while holding on to parts of their past. A modest number stood firm as conservatives, staying aloof from white society, maintaining fluency in its ancestral tongue, and sheltering remnant traditions. Others took a confrontational approach. This latter group, often uprooted and alienated from their ancestral identity and angry about domination by white culture, has frequently been in the forefront of battles for natives (Prins 1996: 198).

It is not surprising that with so many dimensions of Native culture, the topic of 'cultural revitalization' can be highly charged, particularly when 'values' and 'spirituality' overlap (Warry 1998). Some people feel insulted or angry at the suggestion that they cannot be true Indians unless they reject Christian values. Others are trying to learn about their culture, which for many years was labeled pagan by the churches. Warry (1998: 220) quotes one person as saying that 'tradition alienates some people.'

²⁶ When questioned, it was clear that she viewed 'God' and 'Creator' to be synonymous. This Elder made me a gift of a medicine wheel and explained that it represented both her traditional native beliefs (e.g. the medicine bundle and sweetgrass) and her Catholic beliefs (12 beads surrounding the wheel represented the 12 Disciples).

Although there are mixed emotions within Native communities (Warry 1998; Friesen 1997), overall there have been increasing numbers of First Nations people seeking to rediscover their culture. The spiritual renewal among First Nations has given them positive energy for rebuilding (Friesen 1997). The common denominator amongst culture-based approaches is that Mi'kmaq peoples' cultural heritage strengthens the foundation upon which equitable and sustainable development is built. The 'cultural energy' that is tapped and directed, serves as the driving force for effective development (Kleymeyer 1994: 241). The notion of making culture central to the community development process is not a new concept (Klitgard 1994). The question in present times is how culture can be made central to the development process (Klitgard 1994).

3.5 Merging Mi'kmaq Values and Principles of CBD

We have come to the conclusion that the structures and traditional values of different villages have been the point of departure of a dynamic of development, a conclusion that destroys the theory which affirms that the obstacle to development resides precisely in these structures and values of tradition (Piet Buijsrogge 1989 *in* Klitgard 1994: 78).

Mi'kmaq community development initiatives should involve approaches, methods, and techniques that are unique and distinct to the context of Mi'kmaq people's lives and history (Copet 1990; Elias 1991). These approaches also respect cultural traditions and norms and build on the interests and backgrounds of community members. In Chapter One, I outlined Mi'kmaq values that are viewed to be the foundation of a strong community. My understanding of these values was critical to my role as a facilitator in the project process. Ideally, these values become the core around which planning and implementation of a CBD project revolve. In his RCAP discussion paper, entitled *Modern Aboriginal Economies: Capitalism with an Aboriginal Face*, David Newhouse (1993: 97) merges tribal values with principles of CBD to create the following

unique CBD principles. These principles help to conceptualize Mi'kmaq values with respect to CBD and the trail project. They are:

1. The concept of personal and social development will be broad. Using a holistic view, development will encompass four dimensions: physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, the same dimensions as contained within the Cree Medicine Wheel. The development process will have to encompass all four elements simultaneously without favoring the economic (physical) dimension.
2. Development will be seen as a process and not a product. Based on the Mi'kmaq view that life itself is a journey, the development process will be seen as a journey, not as an end state to be achieved. This is not to say that movement along the journey cannot be measured but that the emphasis will be upon the quality of the journey rather than the specific place to be reached. This view of development may mean that there will be a willingness to pursue long-term results over short-term improvements.
3. Development will be seen as a joint effort between the individual and the collective and its institutions. The process will aim to be collaborative rather than competitive.
4. Development will be seen as a partnership between the individual and the environment. In a world in which the fundamental value is respect, one needs to have permission from the environment in order to change it or transform it into something else. This will affect the choice of development projects engaged in, and the type of technology employed.
5. The development effort will emphasize human capital investment rather than individual capital accumulation. Focusing on the human aspects of development will cause people to explicitly consider the effects of their activities upon the quality of life and the surrounding environment and will affect development choices.
6. Traditional wisdom as interpreted by the Elders will be used to guide planning and decision making. Elders may be accorded a formal place in planning and development efforts through a variety of mechanisms: councils of elders who must approve plans, advisory councils that sit at the same table as councilors, or as advisers.

7. The issues surrounding wealth distribution will be tackled using Mi'kmaq values of kindness and sharing.
8. The desire to arrive at decisions by consensus will guide the development of community and organizational structures and processes, which are consistent with this value. This has implications for the development planning process. Planners will not be able to proceed with plans unless consensus, using an acceptable process, has been reached that this is what should be done.
9. The notions of honesty and respect will result in a heightened sense of accountability for the committee and decision-makers. This accountability will be focused on two issues: adherence to the direction as consensually approved; and adherence to Mi'kmaq notions of holism and development.
10. To develop community-based participatory planning mechanisms to ensure that the project reflects community needs, aspirations, and long-term objectives.

La Violette (1961) argues that survival of ethnic groups depends on their ability to assert control over their own fate. Frideres (1988a) adds that this ability must be set in motion at the grassroots level. In his handbook entitled *A Practical Framework for Community Liaison Work in Native Communities*, Peter Erasmus (1991: 11) (a community development worker) also contributes the following principles with respect to the practice of CBD at the grassroots level. He states that the following individual principles work to strengthen the practical application of MCBDat the grassroots:

1. **Involvement:** Unless people are involved in their own planning, they will be forever "done to." Because people were conditioned to a leader telling them the way it is, it is hard for them to accept a facilitator who functions in a non-directive role. The answer to this dependency lies in the process. Real change and real development start with people-involvement.
2. **Ownership and Responsibility:** The ultimate goal of any development process is ownership by individuals and communities. When "it" belongs to the people, they are responsible and "feel" responsible. The task is to work "with" the community, not "for" it. When local community people recognize and become responsible for themselves and their own potential,

social and economic resource developments will evolve; without self-responsibility, they will not.

3. **Coordination:** Coordination of participants involved in different aspects of the community is important if more than an ad hoc development approach is desired. Ideally, this coordination involves an overall development plan, funding, and services. If a development project is acceptable and useful to all parties involved, it strengthens the process.
4. **Long Term Process:** The problem, as seen from the “outside”, is that the process is time-consuming. It does not bring quick results and you can not seem to justify it dollar-wise. It takes time because it is, in essence, people-development. This involves a basic attitude change and the acquiring of new skills and knowledge. These changes are difficult to evaluate and assess on any performance appraisal. Development work should be recognized as being a long-term process. If not, it is highly unlikely that the community will benefit.
5. **Practical:** People must be able to “see” tangible results. This leads to a desire for further involvement. Further involvement leads to more ownership, and more ownership leads to more needs identification and so on.
6. **Common Sense:** Within people are ideas and knowledge. They already know what they need to do for themselves and their community. The ideas are there. Community facilitators encourage them to emerge.
7. **Grassroots:** Even the leadership level of a community is one step removed from the real ‘grassroots’ level. Unless the common, ordinary people are involved, true community ownership has not happened (Erasmus 1991: 11).

Lauer (1993) agrees with these principles and adds that community development must flow from a planning process. He states that the shared understanding of values, issues, and goals provides a unified focus, which acts as a catalyst in mobilizing local resources (Lauer 1993: 6). A successful CD approach rests on these principles which contributes to a well-planned sustainable program or project (Klitgard 1994). Indeed, each community will find an approach which is appropriate for its unique circumstance

(Copet 1990). In essence, the successful implementation of any well-planned project relies upon its ability to meet the needs of local people, to rely on self-help, to gain access to technical assistance and accurate information, and to integrate specialist services around the agendas of the community as opposed to agendas of outside agencies (Napoleon 1992; Klitgard 1994; Health Canada 1998a). Newhouse (1993: 99) gives a brief outline of recent developments within First Nation communities, which provide evidence that the CBD approach is working:

- i. There is an increasing number of primary and secondary economic institutions.
- ii. Increased involvement of Elders in decision making.
- iii. Adoption of community economic development models with their broad notions of development and the subsequent development of indicators to permit communities to measure their movement.
- iv. Continued and expanded use of programs designed to provide First Nations people with the skills, knowledge and capital to participate in the broader Canadian economy.

The principles outlined in this section are coherent with traditional Mi'kmaq values and beliefs.

3.6 The Medicine Wheel Teachings and Mi'kmaq Circular Development

This section describes how culture-based development initiatives like the trail project can integrate medicine wheel teachings with CBD. The medicine wheel (see Figure 4) represents the circle of all life and all that is known or knowable (Hartz 1996). It is linked in a whole with no beginning and no end. Humans have their place in the circle of life, along with all other beings and seen and unseen forces (RCAP 1996). It is manifested as a centred and quartered circle, with flags at the end of intersecting lines which signify the four winds whose movement is a reminder that nothing is static, and that change is a normal experience (RCAP 1996). The medicine wheel is a philosophy, a way of thought and a learning tool that can be adapted to many different situations. Graveline (1998: 75) states that in terms of a pedagogical tool the medicine wheel:

Is also a metaphor used by modern-day traditionalists to illustrate/invoke/reinspire understandings of Ancestral beliefs in this contemporary world of separation and abstraction. Through use of the Medicine Wheel, people are taught to acknowledge the essential immanence and interconnectedness of all things.

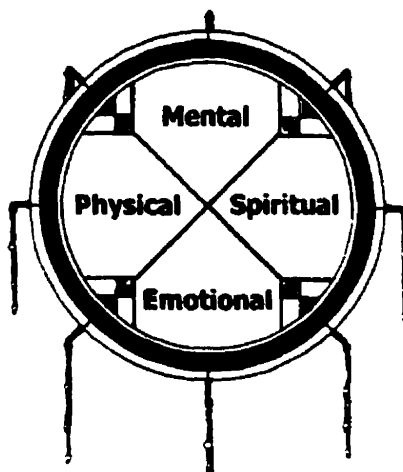
The medicine wheel is associated mainly with the First Nations of the plains-Cree, Blackfoot, Dakota and others (RCAP 1996a). However, it has been adopted by many First Nations, including the Mi'kmaq people as a teaching tool. The concept of the four directions of the north, south, east and west and the four holistic components of the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual are fundamental to Mi'kmaq culture (Orechia 1995; McKay pers. comm. 1999; Meuse 1999). The medicine wheel helps people to see things holistically in all aspects of personal and collective development (White 1996: 108). The basic teachings of the medicine wheel include being holistic, in balance, connected and in harmony (Hartz 1996).

There are many manifestations of the medicine wheel (e.g. earth, water, fire, wind, animal spirit guides, stages of growth). Concepts are usually explained in sets of four, with one component representing each direction of the wheel. Four primary components of individual and community development include the spiritual, the emotional, the physical and the mental (Bopp et al. 1984; White 1996). The medicine wheel teachings always begin in the east because this is the direction that signifies the 'power of beginnings' and birth; the holistic component of this direction is spirituality (Wolf 1998; Meuse 1999). Continuing clockwise around the wheel to the south, we find the 'powers of curiosity'; the holistic component for the south is 'emotional' (Wolf 1998; Meuse 1999). The next direction, the west brings with it the 'power from within' and symbolizes the 'physical' as its holistic component (Wolf 1998; Meuse 1999). Following the west is the north, which signifies the 'power of wisdom' and symbolizes the 'mental' as its holistic component (Wolf 1998; Meuse 1999;). Finally, the centre of the circle brings the 'power of connectedness' with the holistic component being balance (Wolf 1998; Meuse 1999). When each aspect is developed equally, an individual or a community is considered well balanced and in harmony. If only one component is focused on, then the other three will suffer (Hartz 1996; Graveline 1998). Humans

thrive when there is a web of interconnectedness between the individual, the community and nature (Graveline 1998).

The medicine wheel is often used as a model for community healing and CBD projects (White 1996). It provides a guide for the vision, the project process, and the intended long-term benefits (White 1996). It also provides a model for Mi'kmaq holistic development. In Chapter Eight, this approach to development is used to analyze the trail project with respect to its potential for meeting the four holistic components. Its ability to do so is based on community members' perceptions. At present, a community member is helping others develop their full potential as human beings through the medicine wheel teachings. Hence, the concept is familiar to some community members. The following outline of the medicine wheel components (see Figure 4) is unique to the trail project. They are based on medicine wheel literature, personal communications with my resource persons and community members, and my own reflections concerning what each component means with respect to the trail project.

Figure 4. Medicine Wheel of Mi'kmaq Development: The Four Holistic Components



(Bopp et al. 1989 in Leavitt 1995: 167)

3.6.1 The East: Spiritual Component

The spiritual dimension of the wheel may be understood in terms of four related capacities (Bopp et al. 1982a: 29). First is the capacity to respond to realities that exist in a non-material way, such as visions, ideals, spiritual teachings, goals or theories. The second is the capacity to accept those realities as a reflection of unrealized potential to do or be something more or different than we are now (Bopp et al. 1982a: 29). The third capacity is to express these nonmaterial realities using symbols such as speech or language. The fourth is to use this symbolic expression as a guide to future action, making what was only seen as a possibility, a living reality (Bopp et al. 1982a: 30). With respect to the trail project process these four capacities could represent the following:

- 1) The community's response to its ideals and goals concerning the revitalization of ancestral traditional ecological knowledge.
- 2) People's realization of the community's need for cultural revitalization.
- 3) Their capacity to express this need in the form of writing; for this project this took the form of a documented vision.
- 4) Their capacity to translate their volition (will) into action towards a project that addresses their needs.

Collectively, the will and spirit of the core group is what motivates community participants throughout the project process. This will or volition helps them to attain the spiritual, mental, physical and emotional strengths needed for their role in the project process. Development of these four capacities is mostly applicable to community members who participated directly in the project. However, broader community participation in the trail ranges from verbal input in the planning phase, to physical input in the action stage, to use of the trail in its completed form. Hence, fulfillment of the four capacities is always different for everyone who participates. Some possible ways the trail could affect community members in spiritual ways include the following:

1. The trail can provide an atmosphere of comfort, safety, solitude and peacefulness for inward reflections and sense of well-being. It is a place

that belongs to the community that could help in turn foster community members' sense of belonging (McKay pers. comm. 1999; Meuse pers. comm. 1999).

2. The medicine trail can foster a connection to the spirit beings within the trail (a connection between the Spirit World and the Earth World). These spirit beings could be plants, trees, rocks, etc. Wolf (1998: 28) states that plants have spiritual values and recalls his grandmother's connection to the plants:

My grandmother knew which plants to grow and harvest, not only for food, but for spirit. Dealing with the spirit is very powerful because it unites the seen and the unseen worlds.

This kind of connection may occur at different levels. Some people who follow the more traditional Mi'kmaq ways may feel an inward alignment with plants and trees and may be able to communicate with them at the spirit level (McKay pers. comm. 1999). Some community members told me that they would be afraid to go into the woods alone, but they stated a trail would allow them to focus on this connection without the fear of becoming lost. With respect to the medicinal and edible uses of the plants, the Mi'kmaq believe that without this inward connection and alignment, the plants would not work. Wolf (1998: 30) states:

Anything that exists with the power to heal has an equal and opposite power to harm. It is only by attuning to the energy of a plant that one can learn how to extract its medicine.

Others may have an inward feeling of respect through learning about the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview that surrounded the use of the plants and still others may simply feel a closer connection to nature and the environment.

3. The trail can also provide a closer connection to the Mi'kmaq ancestors. The trail aims to educate people about the plants but also about the grandparents, great-grandparents and the ancient Mi'kmaq ancestors who used them. Interpretation will identify spots that were used for certain purposes, by certain families on the reserve. This education could provide and strengthen the connection to their ancestors and instill senses of honour, identity, pride and dignity.

Individually and collectively, the medicine trail can foster healing and a sense of belonging. All these elements have potential to nurture inward spirituality and foster connection to certain things (whether it be the ancestors, herbs, special places, a tree). If this trail touches individuals in any of these ways, then they potentially go home feeling better, motivated or enlightened. No matter how small the effect, like a chain reaction this will reflect on someone or something else, thus having a potentially positive, permeating affect on the community (McKay pers. comm. 1999).

3.6.2 The South: Emotional Component

The emotional component of the medicine wheel aims to heal, foster and develop emotions of the heart (White 1996). The medicine trail may offer people emotional medicine by simply fostering feelings of happiness and connectedness in a natural atmosphere (Elder pers. comm. 1999). Simply feeling closer to the ancestors may bring community members feelings of revitalization, pride and curiosity. It may provide children with a happy environment and safe environment in which to learn about their ancestors and their traditional ways. It may help people to deal with their anger and sadness by giving them a private place to vent. For some people it may simply provide a relaxing walk in the woods. Yet this act in and of itself can help people feel better after a bad or hectic day. All these aspects can in one way or another help develop, foster, and heal one's emotion in all directions (Meuse pers. comm. 1999).

3.6.3 The West: Physical Component

Mi'kmaq Elders teach that there are five physical senses and six non-physical senses (Pictou 1993 in Graveline 1998). Graveline (1998: 77) states with respect to the physical senses that:

A traditional Mi'kmaq perspective pays attention to learning and teaching as an embodied experience. Our Ancestral consciousness was mimetic and participatory. Traditionalists continue to believe that the more of our senses- sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch- that we use in learning/teaching something, the more likely we are to understand and remember it.

Through using the five senses, community members can experience the trail in a way that improves physical health and fosters energy and will. This experience in turn will help individuals to develop the other three holistic components. Community members physical involvement in the trail process will mostly be in the form of ‘cutting and cleaning’ labour, which provides exercise and mobility. The trail in its finished state will provide recreational opportunities like exercise, fresh air, scenery and can develop healthier bodies and clearer minds improving the overall physical state of individual community members.

In addition, education concerning the medicinal and edible herbs may teach people to use plants to improve their physical wellbeing in a way that is similar to traditional ways. Possible economic benefits flowing from the trail could also help the community as a collective at the physical level. More jobs could improve the physical wellbeing of people by providing income to care for physical needs.

3.6.4 The North: Mental Component

With respect to Mi’kmaq teaching, Graveline (1998: 77) states that “traditionally, no special education institutes existed. Everyday lived experience and the sacred, as manifested with the social group, as a whole was the “school” of our Ancestors”. A core component of this experiential educational model was ‘learner initiation’ and direction of the process. Instruction was provided only upon request, after the learner observed and reflected (Gravelline 1998). Graveline (1998: 77) states that her Elders warned that “too much thought only leads to trouble, keep your eyes open and your mouth shut because there is more to life than meets the eye.” She states that by this they meant that to educate about Mi’kmaq knowledge is to learn from what we experience within our daily lives (Graveline 1998: 77). The trail project has much potential for self-directed, hands-on, experiential learning. Knowledge can be derived both through the participation and experience of community members in the project process as well as in its final state. Knowledge gathered from the trail can contribute to mental development in variety of ways that are explored in Chapters Six and Eight.

3.6.5 *The Centre: The Whole*

Some writers have referred to the centre of the medicine wheel as a person's or a community's 'will' (Bopp et al. 1989). The interdependence of the four holistic components is integral to developing and healing this will. Abosolon (1994: 5) states that:

The holiness, or sacredness, of healing is manifested as striving towards wholeness of spirit and an attempt to incorporate this wholeness of spirit into ourselves, our families, our communities, and the environment.

Similar to an individual's health, a community's health rests upon its ability to utilize its will in achieving balance (Hart 1996). This process at the community level involves much more than one project but instead is dependant on the networking and linking of all projects and programs to all aspects of Mi'kmaq life. However, just like an individual, project participants must have the will to balance these four components at the project level.

3.7 Combining Mi'kmaq Traditional Values with Contemporary Development Projects: The Case for Cultural Tourism

In the quest for cultural revival and economic development, First Nations communities across Canada are presently combining traditional knowledge and new technologies to initiate sustainable development based on their own values and knowledge. Communities are effectively integrating Elders' advice and using consensus based decision-making, participatory CBD, partnerships with stakeholders, and capacity-building for holistic ecosystem management (Brascoupe 1996b: 365). Brascoupe (1996b: 365) contends that the most economically lucrative opportunities for First Nation communities will originate from the environment, self-government, and education. Two target areas for development are identified as forestry projects, with priority placed on sustainable resource harvesting, and multi-use strategies, with priority placed on those projects that involve traditional knowledge which help to strengthen local culture and education (Brascoupe 1996b).

Multi-use strategies that include tourism are fast becoming growing sectors of the Canadian economy. Cultural and ecotourism initiatives directed at Mi'kmaq destinations will attract both the domestic and foreign markets (Brascoupe 1995a: 118). The potential of tourism is that it offers opportunities to employ Mi'kmaq peoples on the basis of traditional knowledge and ways, and supports their tribal economies. There are many employment opportunities in tourism services and operations that can generate significant jobs for Mi'kmaq peoples. These include tourism operations, visitor centres, museums, trails, travel agencies, services, lodges, and restaurants (Brascoupe 1996b: 370). In addition, these initiatives help to educate Canadian and foreign tourists about traditional environmental practices and values with respect to Mother Earth. Brascoupe (1996b: 371) states that ecotourism and cultural tourism are likely to interest tourists seeking new experiences in the natural environment.

An example of this kind of project is the Eel River Bar First Nation, in northern New Brunswick, that has embarked upon a large-scale cultural tourism initiative entitled the 'Aboriginal Heritage Gardens' (Labillois pers. comm. 1998). One of the project workers stated that:

The idea behind the Eel River Bar Mi'kmaq Heritage Garden is to show through interpretive gardens the relationship between our people (Mi'kmaq) and nature. We want to teach what these plants mean to us and show what they have provided for us throughout history. We have a team of people who have a lot of knowledge in culture, mythology, botany and medicinal plants that are working on the project (Labillois pers. comm. 1998).

The Pabineau First Nation in New Brunswick is also involved in the creation of a Mi'kmaq Hiking Trail. The trail will follow traditional Mi'kmaq travel routes that frequently border along majestic rivers and streams. This project will highlight legendary and special features of interest with respect to the Mi'kmaq peoples (CFS 1999).

Wildland Adventures (1998:1) a brand of the American Ecotourism Society, defines ecotourism as "responsible travel that conserves natural environments and sustains the well being of local people." Wildland Adventures works under the mandate of using nature and culture travel as a means to protect natural environments, preserve

cultural heritage, and bring direct economic benefits to tribal communities (The Ecotourism Society 1999).

Cultural and ecotourism opportunities offer Mi'kmaq communities the option to combine their traditions with contemporary projects. Yet currently most reserves in NS do not have the land base to support these kinds of projects. Chapter Nine touches upon the importance of the recent reaffirmation of certain treaty rights and land title that will help give Mi'kmaq communities access to a larger land base. A larger land base will allow Mi'kmaq communities to sustainably manage tourism ventures from a Netukulimk management perspective.

CHAPTER IV: CONCEPTUAL MODEL: PLANNING AND PROCESS IN MI'KMAQ COMMUNITY-BASED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Introduction

The essence of process does not consist in any fixed succession of events...but in the growth that occurs within individuals, within groups, and within the communities they serve (Biddle and Biddle 1965: 79).

In the quest for self-determination, First Nations communities across Canada are involved in defining various projects and programs to improve their economic, political, spiritual and cultural situations (Napoleon 1992: viii). Yet, the effectiveness of these projects and programs to achieve self-determination is dependant on the process in which they are implemented (Hedley 1986). While many Native communities are defining their own projects and programs for CBD, their process still remains 'top down'. Funding is secured, resources are developed, consultants are hired, and programs are created, yet despite these and other initiatives, serious problems and inadequacies persist (Napoleon 1992: viii). A substantial gap lies between the grassroots community, Band Councils and external agencies. Side effects of this 'top down' development include disinterested and uninvolved community members, communication breakdowns, community alienation from the band staff or project workers, and a lack of purpose, spirit and direction to community life in general (Napoleon 1992: viii). Based on the legacy of past initiatives, communities may meet new programs with distrust and animosity. Napoleon (1992) recommends that good community development planning should allow for a 'bridging of the gap' between the grassroots, Band Councils and external agencies.

Copet (1990) states that successful project planning is formed on community values and a desire for change. Facilitating a development approach which helps community members change from a stance of 'waiting to be told' to one of 'acting because it is the right thing to do' calls for an educational process that ensures principles of active participation and guarantees adaptability, continuity and sustainability (Keregro 1989). Community development workers such as Art Napoleon and Peter Erasmus have

outlined approaches, principles and practices gathered from years of experience in working with Native communities. Much of their writing parallels almost exactly experiences I have had working with the BRFN. Hence, I draw heavily from these two CD practitioners in the formation of my conceptual model. Through the principles and practices they write about, they provide a comparative blueprint for the planning, action and accomplishments of the trail project and this research.

4.2 A Medicine Wheel Model for the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project

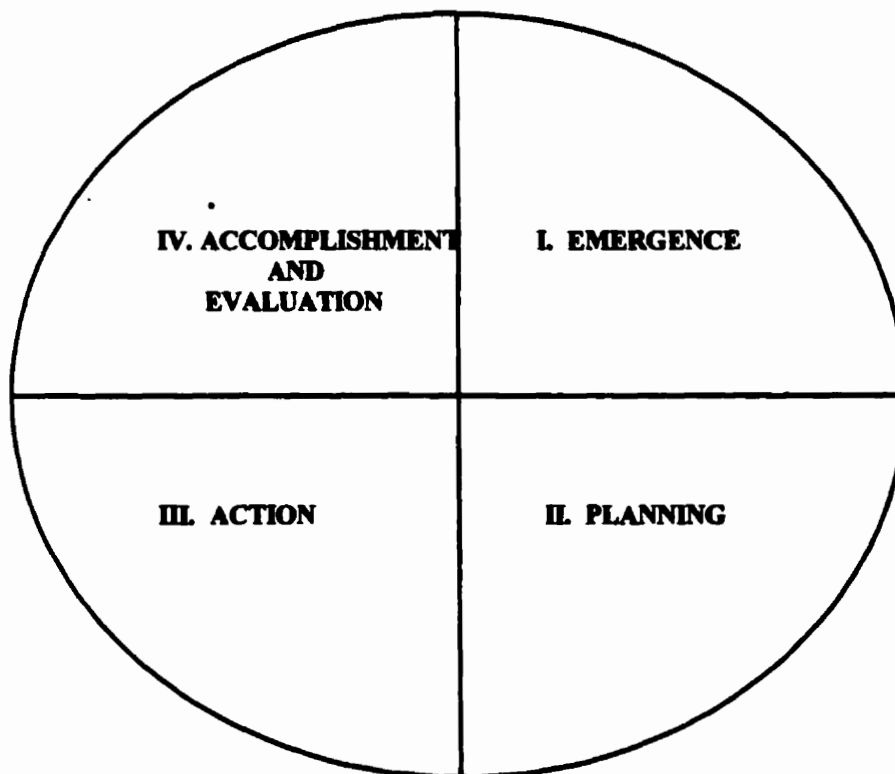
As outlined in Chapter Three, the medicine wheel model is often used as an organizing principle (White 1996: 110). The wheel is adaptable, and can be used to reflect goals and objectives of any activity that is planned or represented (White 1996). The medicine wheel model is chosen to represent the trail process because like the project, a circle has no beginning and no end; the process is continuous (RCAP 1996). With respect to the project phases it should be noted that no one or all-encompassing definition can be assigned (RCAP 1996). Different communities will define different phases and elements that are appropriate to their needs. The following model outlines a process for the trail project and provides a basis for analysis of this research. This project model is for phase I of the trail project. I have altered and contributed key elements from various Mi'kmaq sources to form a planning and practices medicine wheel for the trail project.

The four phases of this Medicine Wheel (emergence, planning, action and accomplishment) are selected because they generally represent the requirements and tasks needed to ensure a successful CBD project (see Figure 5). The following sections entail broad outlines of what each phase means with respect to the trail project process.

4.2.1 Project Emergence: Getting Started

All community-based projects must have volunteers that constitute the soul of the project (Health Canada 1998a). A 'core group' of interested and motivated community volunteers must be organized with the help of a community facilitator to assess the needs and aspirations of the community. Bopp et al. (1982a) state that in this stage of development the challenge is twofold. The first task is to find among community

Figure 5. A Medicine Wheel Model for Planning the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project (Bopp et al. 1982; Napoleon 1992; Smith et al. 1995; Hart 1996; RCAP 1996; White 1996; Health Canada 1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 1998d, 1998e)



volunteers those individuals who are natural leaders. Bopp et al. (1982: 5) state:

Some of these may be high profile members of boards or councils, while others may be quite invisible to the uninitiated observer. Whoever they are, these people are leaders of thought and action around whom other people cluster. Without the support (even if it is not spoken) of these key individuals, very little occurs in the community.

The second task is to unite the hearts and minds of these people to form a common vision for change (Bopp et al. 1982a). The core community group must assess the gap between the current situation and the situation they would like to achieve (Health Canada 1998a).

A needs assessment with respect to the project will help the core group to do the following:

- Provide a basis for planning the project with respect to community needs and interests.
- Clarify the actual need for the project.
- Highlight community needs and interests (Health Canada 1998a: 10).

The 'emergence stage' is characterized often by a period of observing, researching and gathering information from internal (on reserve) and external (off reserve) sources, and facilitating community members to articulate their concerns, ideas and desires with respect to the community and the project (Smith et al. 1995; Napoleon 1992; Copet 1990). The process of articulating and forming a vision for people to interact with is critical to the development process (Bopp et al. 1982a). Bopp et al. (1982a: 16) state that a vision must give some idea of the following:

- how things used to be;
- how things got to be the way they are now;
- what the current situation or condition is;
- what steps are needed to enter into a new way of being that would be more desirable than the current one.

Methods for fostering this process can range from informal kitchen table meetings, to listening to Elders, to more-structured meetings and focus groups (Erasmus 1991). Brainstorming with respect to community values and aspirations for the project can help to identify themes among community members. Community facilitators must always be aware of what is going on around them even if something seems insignificant (Kirby and McKenna 1989). Observing special events and simple everyday activities of

the community can help the facilitator to grasp certain values and practices. Although these are characteristics of the project emergence stage, they often continue throughout the entire development process (Bopp et al. 1982; Napoleon 1992).

CBD literature promotes that the formation of a vision is an essential element to the emergence stage because it gives communities a sense of purpose, perspective, direction and conviction (Napoleon 1992). Napoleon (1992: 34) states that:

Creating a vision is a process of gently pulling out the ideas, hopes and desires of the community in order to build a common vision that is visible to all. Only when a vision becomes visible and tangible can a community work as an organized team. Effective strategies and plans stem from a united vision. Vision building is also a way of motivating participants to become more involved. Once community members see the possibilities available to them or when they see key individuals being involved, chances are they will become curious and maybe even supportive.

The core group must then gather broader community input and assess feedback for working towards a project vision. The vision is what is relied upon to make the most appropriate initial steps in implementing the project process (White 1996). It should be noted that although many Native CBD writers promote the defining of a vision at the outset of CBD projects, the term vision in Mi'kmaq literature pertains to an evolutionary process that will only occur when people are physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually prepared. This may not happen at the beginning stages of a community project. This does not mean however that CBD projects should not begin from a united focus or purpose. It is for this reason, that I use the word purpose instead of vision. This problem may lie more in wording than it does in any real contradiction. This concept will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

4.2.2 Project Planning

The planning phase is characterized by analyzing the current situation, finding potential to achieve priorities and assessing how this potential can be attained. Crucial in this process is the defining of goals, objectives, and action plans (Health Canada 1998b; Band Councilor pers. comm. 1999). The task of transforming the above vision into project goals (Smith et al. 1995) entails the following tasks of the core group and

community facilitator: research, learning, problem-solving, decision-making, legitimizing, capacity-building and gathering consensus (Copet 1990). Goals formed from a broad vision will often be too vague and can become frustrating and overwhelming. Hence, the process of this transformation involves breaking down the broader vision into smaller components. With respect to the trail project, smaller purposes were outlined concerning culture, education, recreation and the environment. These smaller components of the project help clarify achievable goals. From the smaller purposes, the goals are articulated (Health Canada 1998b; Napoleon 1992). Smith et al. (1995) state that a goal is a “destination to strive for in order to realize the vision”. It is a statement that specifically describes something to accomplish which helps the community move closer to its broader vision. Napoleon (1992: 70) outlines several principles to conceptualizing a good goal:

- A good goal states the end result of activities, which result in a new service, state of affairs, or facility.
- A good goal must be observable and therefore measurable.
- It must be achievable and realistic.
- It must be written in simple language to allow all persons to understand its meaning.
- It must be completed by a specific date.
- It must state who will achieve the goal and who the goal will serve.

A caution should be made with respect to Napoleon’s (1992) assertion that a goal must be completed by a specific date. This notion is in direct opposition to the Mi’kmaq notion that ‘the time must be right’ for things to happen. Although, it make’s planning difficult this concept dictates that time flexibility must be incorporated into the CBD process.

After defining clear and attainable goals, the next step in planning is to form objectives, as mini-steps towards meeting project goals. Napoleon (1992) states that objectives are a list of what exactly needs to be accomplished to attain certain goals. They are also the specific and measurable results the community wishes to achieve (Health Canada 1998b). Health Canada’s CD booklets entitled *Community Action*

Resources in Inuit, Metis and First Nations (1998b: 36) state that objectives should specifically describe:

- what you want to accomplish;
- what will be done;
- how it will be done; and
- when it will be finished.

Within this process, the core group must identify what objectives will be needed to begin to think about how they will be attained (Bopp et al. 1982). Resources, expertise and traditional knowledge from within the community should be identified with respect to carrying out certain objectives (Napoleon 1992; Health Canada 1998b). Other objectives may involve accessing resources and expertise from external sources. All Mi'kmaq community groups need resources. These include:

- time and effort invested by volunteers;
- volunteers' specific and unique skills;
- use of services such as a Band Hall for meetings;
- materials, such as literature, pamphlets or films;
- funding (Health Canada 1998c).

Bopp et al. (1982a: 13) state that "there is no living process that can sustain itself without input from the outside". The role of outside experts, funding and ideas can work to strengthen or sometimes undermine community-based integrity. The danger occurs when outsiders take over the process, thus robbing the people of their ability to develop (Erasmus 1991; Bopp et al. 1985). Bopp et al. (1982: 13) state that:

The critical key to the successful use of outside resources of all kinds (people, money, plans and ideas, and even vision of hope) is that insiders must control the use of these resources and redefine their meaning and importance in terms of the community's own process. In other words, ownership and control of the development process should never be given over in exchange for needs input.

The planning phase also becomes more task oriented. It maybe at this stage that the core group deciphers who is volunteering at face value and who will actually be committed to getting the work done. If community members are not committed to

carrying out objectives, faith in the planning process will be lost (Elder pers. comm. 1999; McKay pers. comm. 1999c).

The final step in the planning stage is the community's creation of an action plan (Health Canada 1998b). Napoleon (1992) defines action plans as "strategies for achieving specific objectives". The action plan essentially defines who does what, how they will do it, and when they will have it completed (Napoleon 1992; Health Canada 1998b). The tasks for carrying out the action Plan include organizational capacity, good and open communication, and teamwork. Napoleon (1992) states that a good action plan identifies methods, strategies, materials, resources, time frames, and anticipated problems towards accomplishing goals and objectives. Admittedly, action plans stem from a Euro-Canadian perspective. Yet like the medicine wheel, many First Nations have appropriated this non-Native tool for their own means. Mi'kmaq people are beginning to engage in merging non-Native innovations (e.g. ecotourism) with traditional values and practices. Hence, there is a need by Mi'kmaq to appropriate certain non-Native concepts (e.g. budgets and timelines) and merge them with Mi'kmaq values and modes of working. Although the blueprint for action may be based on a Euro-Canadian perspective, important to remember is that Mi'kmaq will define their own unique and creative ways of implementing the plan.

4.2.3 Taking Project Action

Mi'kmaq community values will foster, develop and enhance self-awareness and skills needed to achieve stated goals and objectives (White 1996). This is made possible by the implementation of a vision, efficient planning and appropriate strategies outlined in the action plan. This phase is heavily dependent on commitment of volunteers to hands-on work. It also dependent on organizational skills, teamwork and monitoring of completion of objectives (Health Canada 1998d). Copet (1990: 53) states that a mechanism for implementation of an action plan involves three components: education, citizen participation and empowerment. He states (1990: 53):

The mechanism for implementation is intended to foster a sense of mutual understanding and greater local control. Mutual understanding is achieved

through the processes of education and participation, while greater local control is achieved through empowerment. These three components can be separate, but they do not operate in isolation of one another. Rather there is an interaction among them. Education and participation interact to generate empowerment; empowerment, in turn, propagates further participation and education.

Generally, the goal of education and the participation process is to enable communities to improve, prosper (Copet 1990) and exercise their will to achieve development (Bopp et al. 1989). At the individual level, education and increased self-esteem fosters participatory behaviour and motivations to exert personal effectiveness (Copet 1990). At the committee and community level, shared leadership and opportunities to develop skills are all part of the project implementation phase (Florin and Wandersoman 1990 *in* Copet 1990; Zimmerman 1990). In its entirety, increased self-confidence and self-esteem have both psychological and motivational influence on a group's ability to implement action plans towards their desired objectives.

4.2.4 Project Accomplishments and Evaluation

Accomplishments are the eventual positive project outcomes. From these accomplishments, an on-going evaluation and monitoring (Smith et al. 1995) of the project must flow. Core group reflections on problems and successes in the planning and action phases will help to make the next phase of the project more productive. Evaluation is the process of finding out what the actual circumstances or conditions were that led to project accomplishments and setbacks. Bopp et al. (1982: 23) state that the following two questions must be asked with respect to project evaluation:

1. Have the actions we have taken in fact met our objectives?
2. Are our objectives still adequate in light of what we have learned through our action?

Throughout this process, an evaluation of the program can be designed in the form of a project evaluation medicine wheel (White 1996: 112).

Although the phases outlined above are common 'tried and proven' steps in the development process, this does not mean that each activity defined under each phase is

static. It is imperative that volunteers follow their own path, which could deviate from the model shown above. There is no absolute right way of doing things in MCBBD planning, in fact that would undermine the often dynamic and creative ways Mi'kmaq communities choose to do things. However, Copet (1990: 44) recommends that any community planning framework in Mi'kmaq communities should generally encompass three goals: community planning education for members of Mi'kmaq communities who will become community planners; cultural education for Mi'kmaq and non-Native people alike; and community planning awareness for community residents not involved in the project process.

It is important to understand with any model that a living, growing development process never works exactly the way models are laid out. There are always new events, challenges or opportunities that create totally unanticipated results. Yet models, like the one above offer a very useful and manageable planning approach. The concepts within this model are not new, but the combining of these concepts with Mi'kmaq values has allowed Mi'kmaq people to define development on their terms. Chapter Six relays the trail project sequence of events with respect to the model above. Community members' perceptions and participation, as well as my own participation as facilitator, will be examined in terms of this model.

4.3 Participatory Action Research and the Process of Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development

There were a few times when people would have preferred me to make the decisions and times when I wished I could! To be able to work this way, it is necessary to hold to the basic belief that the local people know how things should be done in their own ways and no outsider has equal wisdom. Further, it also means that one must be able to hear what is being said and able to take the time for the process to work (Joan Ryan, Project Coordinator *in* Ryan and Robinson 1990: 62).

Similar to conventional economic approaches to CBD, conventional research approaches have met with little success when measured by their ability to strengthen the

cultural and economic wellbeing of Mi'kmaq communities (Chambers 1993; Ryan and Robinson 1990 *in* Hoare et al. 1994). Many researchers argue that PAR is an obvious way to build a successful research relationship and facilitate MCBD. Hoare et. al (1994) quote Hall (1981) and Tandon (1988):

PAR can be defined as an integrated approach involving the participation of community members to investigate social reality, build local skills and capacity for the purpose of increasing community autonomy throughout a process of praxis.

It can be succinctly described as a process which combines three activities; research, education and action (Hall 1981). PAR is rooted in the experience of the people; it values the culture and builds on human capacity within the community (Hoare et al. 1994: 3). It seeks to connect community members with actions to better community circumstances. Paulo Freire's (1985) 'conscientization approach' is one of the central underpinnings to PAR research. Lamoureux et al. (1989: 79) state this approach has the following characteristics:

- a) Instead of merely getting the population to take part in the research, the researchers participate not as "experts" but as resource persons, in research initiated by popular groups.
- b) The results are provided not only to the sponsors of the project or to the "initiated", but also to the entire population.
- c) Research starts from the action of a group and aims to shed light on the action itself.

PAR promotes the notion that the research hypotheses should also be the hypotheses for action. A review of literature by Hoare et al. (1994: 4) reveals the main steps that are undertaken in PAR initiatives:

- Needs are identified by the community; the community investigates the needs and isolates its components;
- Adult participants acquire the tools for research and analysis, in order to identify the social, economic and political structures contributing to the problem;

- **Alternative actions are identified which offer the potential to address the need;**
- **A program is designed for implementation of the preferred alternatives; and**
- **Community awareness is raised of the potential to effect change and to foster a subsequent deeper commitment to work towards resolving community needs (Naylor 1990; Ryan and Robinson 1990; Hall 1989; Tandon 1989; Maguire 1986),.**

More scientific approaches primarily focus on the “ends” of research objectives with little concern for the means or manner in which the process affects the lives of community members (Fals Borda 1991). Native researchers see PAR as a research tool that integrates well with tribal cultures through providing an alternative to scientific research and a means for facilitating and recording traditional ecological knowledge (Jackson 1993). PAR methods represent an alternative system of knowledge and counters the myth of neutrality and objectivity and emphasizes the principles of subjectivity, involvement, insertion and consensual validation (Tandon 1989: 7).

PAR is also an excellent means for cultural revitalization (Jackson 1993). PAR encourages communities to critically incorporate technical knowledge with traditional knowledge, allowing them to identify knowledge, which they see as relevant to improving their community (Tandon 1988). The potential for PAR to help community members through this process include: becoming more self-assured and self-reliant, becoming computer literate, developing competent proposal writing skills, developing skills in conducting and evaluating interviews, to unlimited possibilities (Robinson 1996). The participatory benefits committee members gained from the trail project are discussed in Chapter Six.

The use of PAR in First Nation communities became popularized in the 1980s and is still popular (Jackson 1993). In Joan Ryan and Michael Robinson’s (1990) paper entitled *Implementing Participatory Action Research in the Canadian North: A Case Study of the Gwich’in Language and Cultural Project*, they affirm existing PAR literature and extend it to include the group dynamic process and a feminist perspective. They state that throughout time, PAR has been used in Native communities of the Canadian North.

Again and again in the Canadian North, the tools of participatory action research have been recreated in the process of community economic development, land-use planning, mega-project planning, linguistic and cultural research and local curriculum development (Ryan and Robinson 1990: 59).

As a community development practitioner in northern Native communities, Ryan contends that she is committed firmly to PAR and community development projects.

My experience in community action groups, in institutions and in many native communities have consistently affirmed that things work better when people make their own decisions about what they want to do, how, when and with what assistance (Ryan and Robinson 1990: 61).

Through PAR's premise of investigation, education and action (Fals Borda 1991), communities generate their own knowledge, control the knowledge and control the means of production of the knowledge (Tandon 1988). In Ryan and Robinson's (1990: 62) case study, Ryan's work fits all the prescriptions of participatory research:

The problem originated in the community, the beneficiaries were the local people, the community participated in the entire process, power was acquired by trainees and shared, self-confidence was gained, and trainees became more reliant and aware of their own abilities, the "reality" was Gwich'in, and the researchers learned a great deal from participation.

The literature supports that PAR has produced effective results for Native communities. Through this process community members become involved in actions that work to strengthen their spiritual, physical, mental and emotional components of development.

4.4 Experiential Learning and the Community-Development Process

People cannot be developed; they can only develop themselves. For awhile it is possible for an outsider to build a man's house, an outsider cannot give the man pride and self-confidence in himself as a human being. Those things a man has to create in himself by his own actions. He develops himself by what he does, by making his own decisions, by increasing his understanding of what he is doing and why; by his own full participation (Nyerere 1973: 60).

Key in the PAR approach is the notion of experiential learning. It can mean different things to different groups, but for the purpose of this research it is defined as that which “is concerned with using learning from experience as the basis of group consciousness raising, community action and social change” (Weil and McGill 1989: 12). Experiential learning simply put is “learning which is rooted in our doing and our experience” (Weil and McGill 1989: 12). Action learning lays the basis for the experience. Weil and McGill (1989: 116) state that “action learning is a means by which people learn with and from each other by attempting to identify, and then implement, solutions to their problems, issues and opportunities”.

Experiential learning approaches are used in a conscious bottom-up process, whereby facilitators and community members are both treated as knowledgeable participants (Keregero 1989: 193). With respect to MCBBD projects, experiential learning illuminates an experience and provides direction for making a judgement, as a guide to choice or action (Hutton 1989). The role of community facilitators in experiential learning is to provide:

- support to the learner;
- access to resources for learning;
- critical feedback to learners; and
- facilitation and management of the project (Burgess 1977 *in* Packham et al. 1989: 142).

Hutton (1989) presents an experiential learning model that is premised on identifying a process for making a judgement or decision (rather than focusing solely upon the expected outcome). This kind of framework provides a process whereby action can begin and new learning emerges, thus fostering on-going learning (Hutton 1989: 58).

The approaches described above are conceptually close to the teachings of Moses Coady and Paulo Freire, two of the most revolutionary minds behind adult education and the community development movement. Robertson (1998: 18) states that Coady “wanted community members to make up their mind to take action, to resolve their

situation, to take control of their situation, to rebuild themselves, and in the process, to rebuild their community.” With respect to Freire (1970), Robertson (1998: 23) states that:

Freire proposes a two-step process to address this [oppression] challenge. In the first step, the oppressed must gain an understanding of the relationship between themselves and their oppressors. They must examine the basis and foundation for their relationship and, through an educational process, critically reflect on the future of this relationship. If they can be convinced that they can make a difference, they must commit to initiating the process, and ensuring its completion. The second step involves the transformation of the oppressed as they begin to see themselves differently, and consequently begin to act differently in an effort to take control of their lives, to argue substantively for that which they believe in, and to explore new and innovative ideas.

Coady and Freire have one clear point of congruence in their thoughts, that being the emphasis on the interconnection of thought and action (Brookfield 1983). Armstrong (1977: 14) argues that although the two men were quite different in their approaches, they both attempted to foster the learner towards a particular goal; neither would rejoice if that learner chose to ignore the process.

The experiential process offers facilitators an understanding of the way in which Mi'kmaq communities learn. These tools are already inherent in Mi'kmaq ways, hence it is not the job of the facilitator to implement or apply an experiential model 'to' the community, but instead to find ways in which experiential customs can be used in CBD projects (e.g. talking circles, medicine wheels, hands-on learning and oral stories). The potential of PAR is that it provides facilitators and communities with a conducive approach to working towards CBD. PAR is not a generic development equation, it is simply an approach that helps foster the existing potential Mi'kmaq communities have to define, plan and implement principles and practices that are conducive to their needs and values.

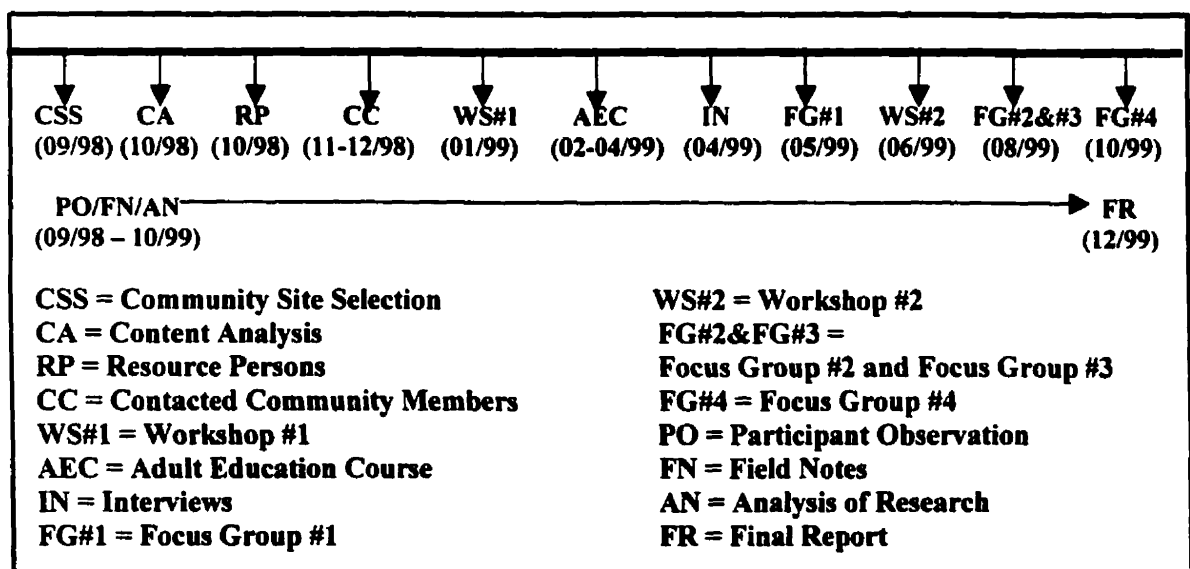
CHAPTER V: RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

A case study of the trail project is investigated and reflected upon with respect to cultural revitalization, Mi'kmaq-defined community-based development approaches, the medicine wheel teachings and participatory research. This research is what Stake (1992: 237) refers to as an intrinsic case study because it helps to further understanding of this particular topic. Stake (1992: 237) states that this method is undertaken primarily because, in all its distinctiveness and ordinariness, this kind of case is of interest.

This research however entailed more than an investigation of a case study in that it actively engaged participants (community members) in the research process. Hence, it fits into the realm of Participatory Action Research. As stated in Chapter Four, the fundamental premise of PAR is that of community investigation, education and action (Fals Borda 1991). This research attempted to encourage community members to become educated and take action towards their self-identified need for cultural revitalization through planning and implementation of the trail project. Given the PAR nature of this research, the elements or stages of data collection were not totally predefined prior to implementation. The stages evolved during the research process and are represented in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Research Process Timeline



Content analysis, workshops, participant observation, semi-structured open-ended interviews and focus groups were the data collection tools used. In total, 72 community members participated in at least one aspect of the research (see Table 1). In addition, personal communications were made frequently with my resource persons. This chapter outlines the rationale for choosing the Bear River First Nation as the case study site, the research process, and a description of the sample and data collection tools used. In addition, research challenges and limitations are highlighted. The chapter concludes with a description of the analytical techniques used.

5.2 Community Site Selection and the Research Approach

The factors providing the rationale for choosing the BRFN as the research site were the community profile, the initiative of the community to define and undertake the trail project, and the request to me to facilitate the research. In addition, it was thought that a case study of this community and the trail project could contribute to a growing body of knowledge of participatory research and MCB. It is important to point out that many Mi'kmaq communities contend with difficult bureaucracies, inner politics, and more recently the implications of reaffirmed treaty rights. These elements combine to make life challenging for people living on reserves, let alone for outsiders coming in. Although affected by similar issues, the BRFN seems to co-exist in a spirit of harmony and cohesion (Ricker 1997; McKay pers. comm. 1998). This has been observed by one of my resource persons, and through my own brief exposure to the community. Although there is some factionalism and conflict between families, tensions seem low. Frank Meuse Jr. has worked for 12 consecutive years in the office of Chief and was recently re-elected for another two year term. Many community members told me of his honesty and fairness. In addition, the Chief-and-Council depend mostly on community consensus and input when making decisions. Overall, the community seems productive and close-knit. Due to these factors, this Mi'kmaq community seemed practically a good one for me to study. In summary, from a PAR perspective, the community identified the

potential of the trail project for development. From a case study perspective, I identified the potential significance of the project with respect to its contribution to MCBD research.

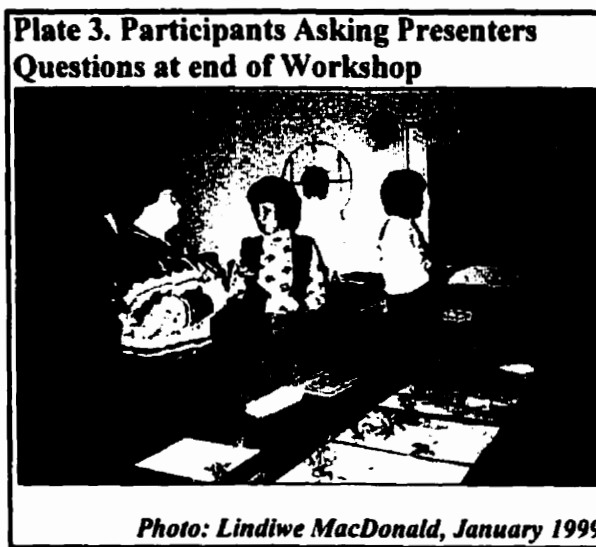
5.3 Background to the Research Process

I began meeting with the Director of the First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia, in February 1998. We met three or four times subsequent to this where we discussed Mi'kmaq peoples, forestry, traditional forest-based opportunities, eco-forestry, value-added forestry, and CBD. In July 1998, I presented him with a proposal to examine the issue of forest-based opportunities and MCBD. He critiqued this proposal and had it reviewed by a community-development worker. Upon his recommendation we discussed a plan for presenting it to the BRFN Band Council. The first meeting with the Chief and Council was held in late August 1998 at which time I presented my original thesis topic, and was given a tour around the reserve by the FNF Director. The band was positive about the research and stated that they would think about it. The second meeting was held in September 1998, at which point my original proposal was partially accepted, but both the band and the FNF suggested I change the focus to look at the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants and specifically the creation of a medicine trail. Essentially the BRFN Band Council accepted parts of my original proposal and redefined the research to be the topic at hand. It selected me as facilitator, as opposed to me selecting the BRFN for the research. The FNF offered to fund the trail project, as well as my expenses for commuting and accommodation. I received my letter of permission from the Band Council to conduct the research in October 1998.

I began with a content analysis of books, journals, theses and unpublished writings by Mi'kmaq and non-Native people that pertained to traditional Mi'kmaq uses of medicinal and edible plants, Mi'kmaq culture and spirituality and CBD. I also began speaking with people who were knowledgeable about the Bear River reserve. The Band

and the FNF asked if I would organize a workshop focusing on traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants. In late November 1998 we had another meeting to discuss budgetary issues pertaining to the workshop and at this point I was introduced to a community member who became one of my resource persons and a core group participant. Throughout November and December 1998, I spent time being introduced and meeting face to face with community members. I informed community members about myself, the research, the workshop and the possible trail project. I informed community members about myself, the research, the workshop and the possible trail project. Darlene Ricker, a local free-lance journalist for the Bear River First Nation, did a brief write-up on me and my thesis research in the monthly edition of the 'Bear River Beat'²⁵ (see Appendix 1). On January 21, 1999 the workshop entitled '*Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Edible and Medicinal Plants*' was held in the Bear River Band Hall (see Appendix 2 for workshop handout). The workshop was funded by the FNF and co-organized by a community member and me. A moose stew dinner was provided by the community's Action Committee. The presenters were knowledgeable persons on relevant topics (see Plate 3).

Approximately 60 community members attended demonstrating strong interest for a small community. The workshop helped to assess broadly the interest level of the community in this kind of education. It also helped to assess if there would be



enough community interest to facilitate a participatory process in the trail project.

²⁵ A page in the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nation Newspaper dedicated to Bear River First Nation news and events .

Consensus was gathered through interviews and personal communications conducted by me. Community members were asked to express their thoughts on the workshop and the eventual creation of a Mi'kmaq medicine trail. Community reaction was positive.

At the next day's meeting with the Chief-and-Council and the FNF, it was determined that the trail would be a worthwhile community project. The Band, the FNF and I worked out more specifics concerning my role in the process. We decided I would help to facilitate the research and that the focus would be on an educational initiative focused on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants, leading to the eventual creation of a trail. It was agreed that for the following year I would commute once a week from my home in Halifax to the community. I would usually stay for two days at a time. I initially resided at a nearby Bed and Breakfast but then was offered accommodation off reserve, by a non-Native friend of the community (who gave the first workshop and later offered an adult education course on plant identification). She lived about 20 minutes from the reserve. Her accommodation kept me out of uncomfortable situations, because I was worried that community members would perceive me as being biased towards the person I was staying with. Not knowing the community dynamics at this point, my best option was not to stay with anyone on the reserve. In the summer of 1999 I spent longer periods in the community (a whole week at a time at some points) and continued commuting once a week for 1-2 days at a time for the rest of the summer and into the fall of 1999.

After the January 1999 meeting, I began spending the next months conducting interviews, focus groups, workshops and participant observation of educational events. These are described in detail below and were all conducted with the main purpose of gathering information for the trail and this thesis. In February 1999, I began pre-testing the interview guide on community members and summarized the January workshop into booklet form for community members (see Appendix 3). In March 1999, a plant-use open house was held for community members who did not have a chance to attend the workshop. Community members were invited to watch a video of the workshop, obtain a

pamphlet summary as well as read some of the resources and literature gathered for the trail project (see Plates 4 and 5).

Plate 4. Labrador Tea, Sweet Fern, Lambkill and Plantain Plant Specimens.

These plants and their Mi'kmaq medicinal uses were on display at the openhouse.

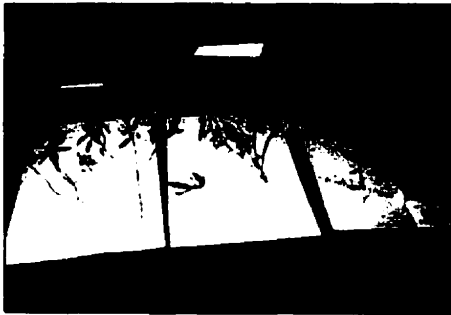


Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, March 1999

Plate 5. Plant Identification Books and Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Literature

Books: Flora of Nova Scotia, Spring Wildflowers, etc.

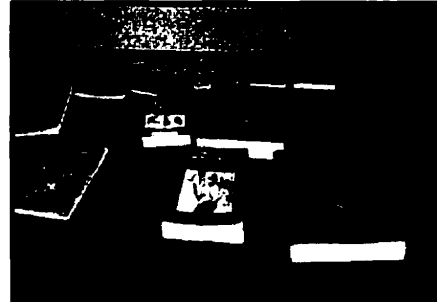


Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, March 1999

Following these activities, five community members had expressed interest in forming a trail committee (the core group), as well as participating in an adult education course. The adult education course was focused on wild plant identification and edible and medicinal plant uses. It was held every Thursday night in the Bear River Band Hall. Instructors for the course were two non-Native friends of the community who are knowledgeable of plant botany and uses (see Plates 6, 7 and 8). Five field trips were held between May and

Plate 6. Instructor for Plant Adult Education Course



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, April 1999.

Plate 7. Participants of Class #2

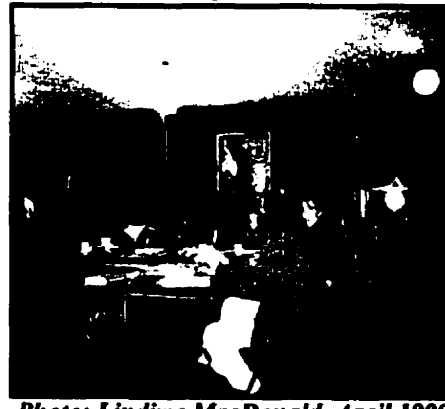


Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, April 1999.

August of 1999. The classes and field trips plant identification, as well as to edible and medicinal uses. Twelve community pertained to all aspects of members and I signed up for the course. I participated and observed each of these classes and field trips to gather information for the trail and to observe community members' participation (see Plate 9).

Plate 8. Mi'kmaq Participant of Class #3: Learning How to Identify Plants



Photo: Bonnie Trimper, April 1999

Plate 9. Instructors and Participants of Field Trip #2



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, 1999

From April to August 1999, interviews and four focus groups were conducted. Focus group themes revolved around planning and implementation of trail objectives. Throughout the spring and summer, core group members and I did hands-on trail work. Participant observation was used in all of these cases. A youth workshop was also held on June 15, 1999. This workshop was held as part of the after-school day program and the focus was on the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview and traditional Mi'kmaq uses of plants and animals (see Plates 10 and 11 in Sec. 5.7). At present, more work is being done on the trail and three core group participants have attended an environmental workshop focused on Mi'kmaq spirituality and the environment. This kind of education is being accessed for the purpose of training a trail interpreter. Events held in October and November 1999 included a community gathering to inform the community of trail accomplishments to date, as well as a two day, overnight workshop at Windhorse Farm (eco-forestry farm). The purpose of this educational trip was to expose and educate community members about sustainable and restorative forest management techniques. In addition, based on decisions at two trail meetings held in the fall, it was decided that implementation of the trail flooring, restoration of the camp and implementation of trail steps could begin immediately. Research on the plants will be ongoing throughout the spring of 2000.

5.4 Identifying Resource Persons and Selection of Sample

5.4.1 Resource Persons

Resource persons are people who are well informed as to their community surroundings, and whose input and opinions can aid in providing explanations as to what has happened or is happening in the community (Patton 1987). Resource persons helped me identify community issues, community participants, and community dynamics. They provided explanations for community specific occurrences which otherwise would have been confusing. In essence, the resource persons paved the way for my introduction into the Bear River community, the trail project and the research process.

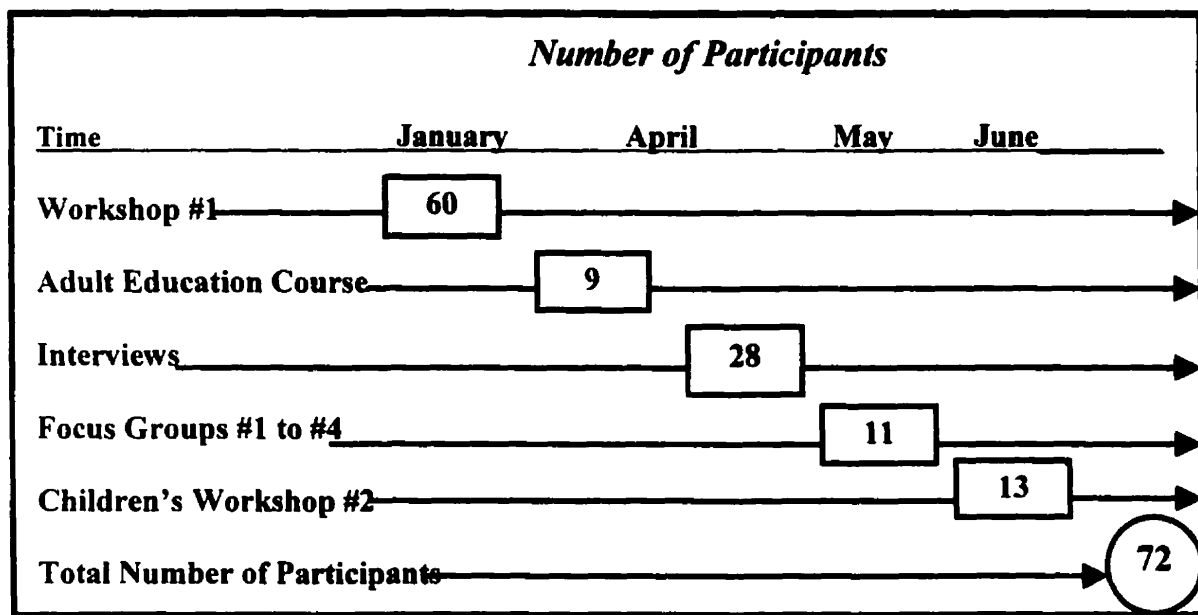
Two types of resource persons were identified in this research. The first are people who have much knowledge and experience working with Mi'kmaq communities in general. These people are cognizant about political, cultural, spiritual, social and economic aspects of the Mi'kmaq Nation. They are also well respected by the communities they work with. Over time they have noted themes and occurrences within, between and across Mi'kmaq communities and were able to provide me with both general and specific context.

The other resource persons were people specifically knowledgeable about the BRFN community. They are recognized and respected community members whose advice is often sought for major decisions and events that guide the community. These people helped to guide me in my introduction to the broader community and throughout the entire research process. Their advice and guidance was key in the research process.

5.4.2 Selection of Sample

The tools used for sampling consisted of a combination of convenience and snowball sampling (Jackson 1995). The Band Council gave me a telephone list of community members who were status band members, that I used to contact potential participants. In addition, community members with whom I had been in frequent contact (e.g. at the Band office, trail meetings, workshops) often participated and recommended other people they thought would be willing to participate. I would then contact the potential participant. In total, 72 people participated in some part of the research (see Table 1). Refer to Appendix 4 for a more specific sample breakdown.

The sample was comprised mostly of Mi'kmaq band members (status). However, since non-Native people comprise about 30% of the reserve population, four non-Native participants were interviewed. These people are married or partners of a Mi'kmaq community member. A few of these participants also played active roles in the focus groups and adult education course. In addition, about 20% of people attending the first workshop were non-Native. They felt the need to participate to learn more about the Mi'kmaq culture for themselves, their Mi'kmaq children and the community in general.

Table 1. Research Tools and Number of Participants

5.5 Data Collection Tools and Project Participants

5.5.1 Content Analysis

Pertinent books, journals, newspapers and unpublished writings were reviewed to conceptualize this research. Mi'kmaq-defined approaches, principles and practices of CBD were reviewed to provide the trail project with a guide for planning, action and achievement. In addition, documents on traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants were reviewed for trail interpretation material and educational events. Newspaper articles and books on the Bear River reserve were also reviewed to give me a more familiar orientation to the community.

5.5.2 Workshops, Participant Observation, Interviews and Focus Groups

Research methods with the core group (trail committee) of community participants' included workshops, focus groups and participant observation. These tools contributed to education and to action towards trail planning and implementation. In

addition, interviews were used to gather individual community members' perceptions pertaining to plant knowledge and the trail project. These tools were supplementary in the sense that people who were not verbal in group participation expressed their feeling in interviews. In the following description of data collection tools, I include general sample characteristics to show that, although tools used were non-random, the participants involved constituted a good cross-section representation of the community (e.g. gender, age, employment).

5.5.3 Workshops

The first workshop occurred at a time when I was still becoming acquainted with the community, hence it was difficult to ascertain specific details of whom attended. However, I recorded the following general details. The participants consisted of children, young adults, middle aged adults, and elderly persons. There was approximately a 60/40 (female/male) split in gender representation. The workshop was held January 21, 1999 (see Plate 3). It began with a prayer and moose stew meal, and was approximately 3 hours in length. The facilitator was a non-Native local friend of the community. She introduced me to the community and I spoke briefly about my thesis research and the trail project. One presenter spoke on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of medicinal plants and the other spoke on positive plant identification. The workshop aimed to be participatory where people could share their knowledge and ask questions. I transcribed and summarized the workshop into booklet form for community members and a local journalist wrote an article in the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations Newspaper (see Appendices 3 and 5). The second workshop was held as part of the after-school-day program. Approximately 10 children participated and all were female. Both the teacher and I facilitated this workshop. The purpose was to allow for hands-on learning with respect to traditional Mi'kmaq plant-use. A *First Nations Education Kit*, was borrowed from the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History. Children were able to touch and ask questions about traditional plants such as sweetgrass, spruce root, Labrador tea and bear berry

(KnickKnick) and share their feelings on what these plants meant to them (see Plates 10 and 11).

We also talked about the Mi'kmaq ancestors, Elders and respect for all life. Children were told about the traditional uses of certain plants which they claimed had been previously unfamiliar to them. In addition, we talked about the trail project, their interest in it, and the fact that they would be the future keepers of the trail.

5.5.4 Participant Observation

Participant observation can generally be described as observations made by a researcher who is playing an established participant role in the topic being studied (Jorgensen 1989). I participated in an adult education course on plant identification as

Plate 10. Participants of the Children's Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Workshop

This workshop was held as part of the after school program at the Muin Sipu (Bear River) School.



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, June 1999.

well as various trail activities (e.g. identifying trail location, cutting and cleaning the trail, and trail education).

Approximately 15 members signed up for four classes and five field trips. The class focused on various aspects of plant ecology (e.g. plant parts, habitat, plant families, plant cultivation). The course was taught by two local

knowledgeable self-taught botanists (both non-Native and both friends of the Bear River Mi'kmaq community.) Field trips focused on different kinds of habitats (e.g. barrens, salt marshes, mixedwood). The registration and cost of the books were provided free of charge by the FNF. The idea behind the course was to get participants involved who were willing to work on the trail project (see Appendix 5 for course outline). The purpose was to educate participants about plant identification,

plant use and environmental ethics so that they could benefit from their experience and contribute their knowledge to the trail project. I attended classes and field trips so that I could learn about plant identification and gather knowledge for the trail, as well as observe the actions and perceptions of community members in class and on field trips. Participants had different levels of knowledge ranging from very little to a lot. The original class size dropped to about ten people, which consisted of eight women and two men.

Plate 11. Mi'kmaq Child: One of the Participants of the Children's Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Workshop

Plants on the table include sweetgrass, Labrador tea, KnickKnick and spruce root. All of these plants are both historically and presently spiritually significant to the Mi'kmaq peoples.



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, June 1999

I also used participant observation in meetings with the band, socializing with various community members (at their homes, offices, studios, the Bear River Grocery store and the Band Office), attending some of the 'St. Anne's Day' activities (e.g. a medicine wheel workshop), a trail-making workshop, various trail-related activities (e.g. cutting trail, cleaning trail, trail meetings), an overnight excursion to Windhorse Farm and a community trail gathering (see Plates 18 and 19 in Chapter Six). I was often invited to various social activities (e.g. Burning of the sacred fire, Children's Christmas concert, Sweat lodge, Cherry Festival, Two Planks and Passion Theatre Show, GED School Graduation), but my visits were mostly during the week days and I was not able to attend all activities held on the weekends.

5.5.5 Interviews

Semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with individual community participants. Interviews were conducted with 28 participants, 20 females and

eight males. Participants ranged in age from 25 to 81 with the majority being middle-aged and young females. Participants ranged in backgrounds and worked as band administrators, teachers, artisans (e.g. basket making, jewelry), authors, personal care workers, band grocery store employees, tourism workers, environmental project workers (CARP), construction workers and fishers. A few were unemployed and three were retired.

The interview questions were pre-tested on a few community members in February 1999. Interviews were conducted from May to September 1999. Interviews ranged in length from 20 minutes to four hours. All interviews were conducted individually, with the exception of one group interview. Interviews were informal and conducted face to face mostly at participants' kitchen tables or sitting outside (with the exception of one telephone interview). This approach allowed for open-ended discussion and development of interesting lines of inquiry. Participants were asked 17 questions pertaining to their knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants, their opinions concerning educational materials on the issue (e.g. workshops, books, courses), and their perceptions concerning the trail project in relation to themselves and the community (see Appendix 7 for interview guide).

5.5.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical guidelines were adhered to at all times. The research was approved by the Human Ethics Committee of the Dalhousie University Faculty of Graduate Studies. Participants were informed as to my identity, the nature of the research, and the use of the research for both academic and project purposes. In addition, confidentiality was promised except when someone else was in the room (e.g. often there was another family member present during the interview, hence total confidentiality could not be promised). A few participants asked that certain comments remain out of the thesis and I have respected those wishes. Permission was asked of certain participants for the use of a tape recorder. I only used the recorder in cases where I thought the person would be detailed

5.5.7 Focus Groups

A focus group can be defined as a research technique that collects data through group interaction on a topic often determined by the facilitator. The community or facilitator's interest often provides the focus, and the data come from the group's interactions (Morgan 1997). Morgan (1997: 58) states:

I find it more useful to think that the degree of formal structures in a focus group is a decision that the researcher makes according to the specific purposes of the research project. In particular, the use of either a more formal or a less formal approach will depend on the researcher's goals, the nature of the research setting, and the likely reaction of the participants to the research topic.

In this research the focus groups served mostly as an exploratory technique (Morgan 1997) driven by the needs of the trail project. The focus groups for this research revolved around planning and implementation of trail project objectives.

They allowed for reflective group participation, but were restricted in terms of time (we decided at the first meeting that focus groups should be no longer than one hour) and should strive for consensus on certain issues. Four focus groups were conducted over a four-month period (May to October 1999). The focus groups consisted of the core group of community volunteers who formed to make the trail committee. Participants ranged in age from 26 to 65 and consisted of nine women and two men. Not all participants were present at the four focus groups. Eight participants were Mi'kmaq and three were non-Native (two of whom are married to a Mi'kmaq person and have Indian status). In one session, two male Mi'kmaq youths participated. Four participants are employed full-time by band administration, one is an artisan, three work in seasonal and temporary employment and one is retired.

Focus Group #1 This first focus group was held on May 20, 1999, in the Bear River Band Hall. I called people ahead of time to find out what would be the best time and best place to meet. The Band Hall was deemed to be the best meeting place. The focus group consisted of four core group participants, one Band Councilor and me as facilitator. The main objective of this focus group was to form the trail committee structure and

to outline the purpose, goals and objectives for *phase I* of the trail. The specific agenda consisted of:

1. Establishing community values with respect to the trail.
2. Picking a trail name.
3. Structuring the trail committee (core group).
4. Discussing a trail vision (purpose).
5. Discussing funding for trail.
6. Discussing conflict issues (e.g. ATVs).
7. Discussing a general location for the trail.
8. Obtaining a trail building.
9. Discussing trail resource books.
10. Discussing insurance issues.
11. Discussing goals, objectives and action plans for Phase I.

The group met for approximately two and a half hours, despite our agreement that we would not go past one hour.

Focus Group #2 The second meeting was held on August 3, 1999. This meeting took the form of a field trip and began outside the trail building (see Plate 17). The group consisted of four core group members, one technical FNF advisor and me as facilitator. Issues were discussed and decided upon as participants walked through the proposed general area for the trail. The committee decided the main focus was to determine the specific location for the trail and the activities that would be implemented during the summer and fall of 1999. The specific agenda consisted of:

1. Determining the specific trail location.
2. Discussing trail design (bridges, boardwalks).
3. Determining special places.
4. Plant identification (Who would do this and when?).
5. Cutting and clearing the trail (Who would do this and when?).
6. Discussing spirituality with respect to the trail and its construction (e.g. making offerings before cutting and disturbing).
7. Discussing ecological aspects with regards to trail practices.

This meeting lasted approximately two hours, since the decision for the location entailed a lot of debate concerning the best spot. This decision will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

Focus Group #3 The third meeting was held on August 29, 1999. It was held inside the newly acquired trail building and consisted of two core group members, one technical advisor and me as facilitator. The main focus of this group was to discuss the trail budget, and the implementation of trail bridges and boardwalks. In addition, an FNF advisor was in attendance to help map the trail. The specific agenda consisted of:

1. Continuation of Phase I budget.
2. Trail activities for the fall.
3. Type and design of bridges and boardwalks.
4. Mapping the trail.

This focus group lasted approximately 2 hours and we spent about 1 hour recording distances and directions for generation of a trail ITMAP.

Focus Group #4 This group was held on October 14, 1999 at 1:00pm in the the new health centre. Participants included two core group members, two interested volunteers, one technical FNF advisor and me as facilitator. The focus of this group was to talk about conflicts that arose concerning trail related issues (this will be expanded upon in Chapter Six), budget issues and objectives for the fall. The specific agenda consisted of:

1. Discussing accomplishments since last meeting as well as conflicts concerning trail cutting and the creation of an ATV trail for clearing garbage.
2. Discussing budgetary issues.
3. Discussing trail objectives for the fall.
4. Deciding who would make the bridges and clean the trail.
5. Deciding on when, where and how objectives will be accomplished.

Similar to the other three groups, this meeting was two hours in length.

5.6 Limitations and Challenges

5.6.1 *Limitations*

One limitation of this research is what Jackson (1995: 336) refers to as generalizability (external validity). Generalizability causes difficulty in many research designs, but it presents special challenges in ethnographic studies (Jackson 1995: 337). Although the authenticity of case study research is increased in terms of detail, its capacity to be extrapolated is limited (Sandelowski 1986: 29). In regards to Native communities, I would argue that, although they are all diverse and unique, there are common themes that bind communities in their quest for self-determination and MCBBD. Although the comments and reflections of this research are directly relevant to the BRFN and cannot be extrapolated to others, I believe this research experience will provide insight for other native communities.

Another limitation has to do with the scope of the research. Aggregate perceptions were gathered concerning community members' perceptions of the trail project and the revival of traditional plant knowledge. More in-depth details such as education, income, and age were not used in the analysis. Therefore, correlations concerning specific characteristics of the kinds of people who were most interested or disinterested in the research cannot be made. In addition, although the project process is an integral component of Mi'kmaq development it is beyond the scope of this thesis to critique the trail project in great detail because it is still in progress.

5.6.2 *Challenges*

The challenges of this research mostly pertain to time and method. As a non-Native outsider, I needed to be sensitive towards establishing trust, so that people would feel comfortable speaking with me. One year was not much time to establish this trust. However, most people were receptive to the interviews and project process.

My role in the project process presented another challenge. For example, in the early months of this research, community members kept asking questions like "How is

your project coming along?” In the initial phases of the research I worked ‘for’ the band council and the FNF and was one step removed from the participatory process and the grassroots. When I began working ‘with’ the core group, I began working in a participatory fashion with the community. Presently, I am best understood as a facilitator who is doing research ‘with’ the community (Gaventa 1993: 33). Gaventa (1993: 33) states that although this approach to research goes a long way towards narrowing the knowledge gap (between researchers and the community), and relating the process of knowledge to the process of action, it still has its limits. The limits concern the extent to which the research still remains in the hands of the researcher, and sometimes a real transfer of ownership may not occur (Gaventa 1993: 33). Gaventa (1993: 33) adds that, “the approach is usually dependent upon the initiation of an outside, committed researcher, and is dependent upon the researcher’s presence.” This was the approach I had taken and although community responsibility and ownership of the trail project has increased immensely, there is still a fear that when I leave, problems would occur. Hence, as a facilitator I have taken the advice of De Oliveira (1982: 58 *in* Gaventa 1993: 34) who states that from a community standpoint “we must prepare for the moment when the presence of the researcher- who came from the outside- is no longer necessary”.

5.7 Analysis

Chapter Six reports on the trail project sequence of events as well as my reflections and interpretations with respect to the focus groups, workshops, field notes and journals from participant observation. Focus groups, workshops and other events were all part of the participatory process in which trail planning, action and accomplishments occurred. The findings of each will be reported and reflected upon with respect to the perceptions of core group participants, my own perceptions as facilitator, and MCBD literature. Chapter Seven reports results from the interview findings. Response frequencies are summarized with respect to categories of questions from the

interview guide. This systematic approach to summarizing results fosters the direct link between the research findings and my second research objective. In addition to the response summaries, illustrative depth is added to the results through relevant quotes from Mi'kmaq participants. Themes and patterns generated from the results are also explored in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER VI: THE STORY OF THE BEAR RIVER MI'KMAQ NPISUNEWAWTI'J (MEDICINE TRAIL) PROJECT: PLANNING, ACTION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

6.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter One the first objective of this research was:

To document the conception and development of the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project as a case study that illustrates the process of culture-based Mi'kmaq community development.

More specifically and with respect to this chapter the objectives were to document and outline the trail project sequence of events, reflect upon community members' participation and perceptions with respect to project planning, action and achievements and lastly to reflect upon the participatory process and my role as project facilitator. This chapter is devoted entirely to the findings of focus groups, workshops and participant observation with respect to these research objectives. Activities leading up to the project are outlined in Chapter Five and a more specific outline of events can be found in Table 2. This chapter provides discussion of events, challenges, and successes of the trail project within the context of project planning, action and accomplishments. These concepts are discussed in reference to observations of the committee (committee members are referred to as persons A, B, C, D and E), my own reflections and observations and relevant community-based development and Participatory Action Research literature.

6.2 Project Emergence

Although the input and ideas of First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia and the Bear River Band Council were important, I believe the critical force behind the trail project was the community's dedication and interest in pursuing this undertaking. As one participant commented, "all these things had happened at just the right time for a reason, and the project was destined to be." (Participant #23) As another participant stated:

Table 2. The Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project Timeline of Events (September 1998 – November 1999)

<p>September 1998</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chief Frank Meuse and First Nations Forestry in Nova Scotia suggest researching the topic of medicinal and edible plants for the creation of a medicine trail. 	<p>October 1998</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter of permission granted to me for permission to conduct research. • Began content analysis of pertinent documents pertaining to edible and medicinal plants. • Contacted botanist for help with community project research. 	<p>November 1998</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Met with community member who became a community co-facilitator in the project process. • This person introduced me to other community members.
<p>December 1998</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued meeting and conversing with community members concerning their thoughts on traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants. • Designed poster and began advertising a workshop on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants. 	<p>January 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meal and workshop entitled 'Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Edible and Medicinal Plants: A Plant-Use Workshop' (see Appendix 3 for summary). • Purpose of workshop was to introduce the topic to the community to assess interest levels and the feasibility of a community based project focused on this kind of education. • Facilitator: Darlene Ricker. • Presenters: Gini Proulx and Laurie Lacey. • Funded by the FNF. 	<p>February 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Began interviews for trail project and thesis research with community members.
<p>March 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Mi'kmaq Traditional Plant-Use Open House' • The purpose of the open house was to provide an informal opportunity for community members to review books associated with Mi'kmaq plant use and Mi'kmaq heritage. It was meant to be a brainstorming forum for trail ideas an adult education course and the formation of a trail committee. • Collection of trail books and resources. • Funded by FNF 	<p>April 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education Course: Introduction to Wild Plant Identification (four classes held from April 8 to April 29 five field trips held from April to August 1999) (see Appendix 6 for course outline) • Teachers: Gini Proulx and Anne Littlewood. • Books provided on Mi'kmaq traditional plant use and wild flower identification. Course funded by the FNF. • The purpose of the course was to have community participants learn about plant identification, plant habitats, plant ethics, and edible and medicinal plant uses. It was hoped that community members who participated in this course would participate and share their knowledge on the trail committee or in the trail project. 	<p>May 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two committee members attended 'Trail Development workshop' in Hebron, Yarmouth Co. • Formation of the Trail Committee. • May 20: First Trail Committee Meeting. • May 29: Adult Ed. Field Trip: The Barrens.

Table 2. Cont'd

<p>June 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 12: Adult Ed. Field Trip. • June 14: Children's Workshop: Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Plants. The purpose of this workshop was to engage children in thinking about their ancestors, their traditional ways concerning plant use and their respect for all things. We also talked about the concept of future generations and how some day they would be the caretakers of the trail. • Began flagging general location for trail • June 19: Adult Ed. Field Trip: Salt Marsh and Woodland. 	<p>July 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scoped out specific location for trail. • Flagging, trimming and plant identification. • July 10: Adult Ed. Field Trip: Briar Island. • Obtained Trail building to house trail books and resources. • Two committee members attended 'Project Wild': Environmental Education workshop. 	<p>August 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trail Committee Meeting. • Continued Cutting and Clearing trail. • Identification of special places on trail. • Approximately 71 plants have been identified on the trail. • Began 'Name the Trail Contest'. • Another Trail Committee Meeting: Discussed Budget and Funding Issues. • An ITMAP trail map was generated with the help of the FNF Advisor.
<p>September 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up of garbage in trail area as well as around the camp. • Construction of bridges in process. • Three committee members attend a workshop on 'Aboriginal Spirituality and the Environment': Environmental and Interpretive Education. • Formation of a Trail Vision: "To create a trail that will allow people to leave it with a better sense of respect for edible and medicinal plants given to us by mother earth and to help us with our developing a spiritual, physical, mental and an environmental approach to life". 	<p>October 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Gathering: Trail Feast and update. Children's presentation and trail information for broader community. • Elder announced the winning name for the trail. • Construction of trail parking lot. • Collection of plant specimens for research. • Trail committee members attend an educational weekend to Windhorse Ecoforestry farm. Learned about the principles of ecoforestry, sustainable forests and viable forest management opportunities that encompass Mi'kmaq spiritual and culture values. The trail is also an educational tool for restorative forest management. 	<p>November 1999</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continued work on trail structures (e.g. bridges, trail flooring etc.). • Research on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants.

There has almost been eight years of cultural revitalizing going on in the community and their self-esteem level has come up a big notch, and I really see more community togetherness. Twenty-five years ago it was really good and then the community almost went into the dark ages like the bottom of the medicine wheel, but you have to go through that to learn from it and in this 25 year period I've seen them go through this and come into spring, and they are beginning to grow again and they continue revolving around the wheel, and this trail is just another stepping stone in that process. They're ready for it and I keep saying culture is in your heart, but I think this timing thing happened for a reason. You were directed and connected and things have just sort of fallen into place. I think it is right. I just don't think a lot of them know how to verbalize their need for it (Participant #27).

Without the interest of grassroots community members, all other factors would not have mattered.

6.3 The Core group (Trail Committee)

The core group consisted of eleven grassroots community members who were committed and devoted to the creation of a trail focused on the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants. Nine members were female and two were male. Three had previous knowledge of plants and had some experience working in groups. Two had minimal knowledge of plants and had never participated in any groups or community projects. The committee agreed at its first meeting (focus group #1) that it wanted the committee structure to be informal. It did not want a chair, but asked if I could continue managing the financial responsibilities until a committee member could. Participants also asked if I could help to facilitate meetings, as they were unfamiliar with doing this. I expressed at this point that I did not mind doing these things in the beginning (with the intention that another committee member would learn how) but that eventually such duties would have to be taken over by a committee member.

From the outset I made it clear that although I was helping with the meetings as well as offering advice, I did not consider myself a decision-making member of the committee. Decision-making had to depend entirely on committee consensus. Members could accept or reject any comments I had to offer. In addition, I acted as a liaison

between the committee and the FNF, a duty I also stated would eventually be taken over by a committee member.

Agreeing to an informal committee structure seemed fine at the time, yet I believe this later led to problems such as lack of legitimacy in the eyes of the band, informal leaders sometimes pursuing their own agendas, and lack of capacity to plan and implement project objectives. An example of this would be when the committee discovered that a well-intentioned committee member thought she would informally oversee the project. This became problematic when her personal views did not coincide with the committee consensus. In addition, no one knew who had real authority in terms of making decisions to take action towards trail objectives (ideally it was supposed to be the whole committee which had authority to make consensus-based decisions). This confusion manifested itself a few times, as in the following example. The consensus agreed upon at one meeting was that flagged trails were ready to be cut. However, one committee member felt it was premature to begin cutting the trail for spiritual reasons, but used financial reasons as her excuse for preventing the cutting. She prevented one of the committee members from cutting out the trail, thus causing frustration for him and other committee members who felt that the trail work was progressing too slowly. The first problem with this situation was that one committee member believed that her way was the only proper way to do things and the second was that committee members were too influenced by her self-recognized authority. The following dialogue illustrates this situation.

I told (Person B) that he could go out and cut the other trails we flagged because I thought we decided at the last meeting that if we're paying him to do one, we might as well do the others. Then she (Person A) stopped him from doing it saying that we never decided that at the meeting (Person C, Trail Committee Member).

I don't remember deciding that at the last meeting. I didn't think we had enough money to let them do it so I told them no (Person A, Trail Committee Member).

I was all ready with two people to go out and do our work. Then she (Person A) stopped us because she didn't think we were going to do it in a respectful way.

My ancestors have been walking these trails forever. I don't want to have anything to do with the trail anymore (Person B, Trail Worker).

I told her the other day, look at it this way, I said let the trail happen; whatever happens, happens. After all, who are you to say that the trail should be done in this way. The reserve encompasses a lot of people. If (Person B) wants to go and cut it, then let him do a section. Because next year you and I might branch off and do our own sections. You will have your spiritual parts somewhere, somehow, but we can not tell other people this is the way its got to be, because that's almost like communism woman (Person D, Trail Committee member).

It became clear that it was not always lack of decision-making and planning that was the problem but instead individual dissenting opinions interfering with committee consensus. As the experiential literature portrays, conflicting or dissenting opinions can divert much of the core group's focus from the task at hand (in this case the trail) to dealing with the competing perspective (Hutton 1989). It was not initially clear that this was a problem until I had spoken with all committee members and we agreed that this was the only explanation for reoccurring problems.

I believe the presence of an Elder would have helped the core group in this situation. A community Elder should have been invited to sit on the committee. As stated in the literature, traditional wisdom of Elders is often used as a guide to planning and decision-making (Newhouse 1993). I believe an Elder's wisdom, presence and participation at trail meetings would have enabled the committee to become more productive in forming a united purpose, concrete goals and realistic objectives. An Elder's presence also would have brought balance and consensus to decisions. With such a presence, individual committee members would be less apt to feel their opinions should supercede committee consensus.

6.4 Project Planning

6.4.1 Purpose, Goals and Objectives

After deciding upon the informal organizational structure of the committee, the first topic discussed was the purpose of the trail project. The Aboriginal community-based literature suggests that the first task of any group is to define a project vision (Bopp

et al. 1989; Erasmus 1992; Napoleon 1992). Hence I recommended that the group should define a vision. The core group members felt that they were not ready to form a vision and that it would come in time. This decision ties in with the Mi'kmaq concept of doing things 'when the time is right'. As described in Chapter Two, the notion that the time must be right entails many variables coming together to provide the best results (Ross 1992: 38). These variables include an evolution of physical, mental and spiritual preparations. How could any of these variables have been in place prior to our first meeting? It makes sense, then, that the committee was almost ten months into the project before it defined a vision. It was only then, that members felt physically, mentally and spiritually prepared to create the vision.

Although the MCBBD literature seems more holistic in its rhetoric, some of the approaches are still based on systematic non-Native concepts of development (e.g. must define a vision prior to defining objectives). As a facilitator, this issue was difficult for me because although it may have been premature to form a vision, I believe the lack of consensus concerning the purpose of the trail ultimately led to problems throughout the remainder of the process. It became evident that committee members had quite different opinions concerning the purpose of the trail. Some committee members felt it was for spiritual purposes, some felt it was only for educational purposes, and others felt it was for recreational, cultural and economic purposes. However, it was not the differences of opinion concerning the trail purpose that caused miscommunication (since it would be quite easy to incorporate all of these purposes into one holistic vision), but instead how the trail would be made with respect to these purposes. For example, the member who thought the trail was for spiritual purposes felt that no tree should be cut or plant should be moved. The committee members who felt the trail was for educational and recreational purposes felt that some trees would have to be cut and that it would be unrealistic not to use ATVs in its creation. The committee member who felt the purpose of the trail was for recreation and tourism felt that the committee's progress was too slow and that the pace of trail implementation should have been faster. These differences consequently led to frustration and miscommunication in the project process. Essentially

the problem was as follows: without a clear united purpose, no clear goals could be made and without clear goals, no objectives could be defined, and fulfilling objectives became difficult. In retrospect I have realized that perhaps the committee and I were meant to encounter these challenges, to learn and evolve from them. In addition, many community groups find their own way of working and progressing and this often means that plans that are set in stone become too restrictive, and as in our case can be discouraging.

Although project objectives were agreed upon and often achieved, no one was verbally clear about what they felt these objectives were contributing to. Of course the formation of the trail was the main objective, but it was not until recently that committee members as well as non-committee community members began to express what the trail really meant to them personally. The committee agreed upon the following vision in September 1999.

To create a trail that will allow people to leave it with a better sense of respect for edible and medicinal plants given to us by mother earth and to help us with our developing a spiritual, physical, mental and an environmental approach to life (Trail Committee, 1999)

The following objectives were defined over four trail meetings during a six month period:

- To implement trail objectives in a way that is both ecologically and spiritually appropriate. More specifically they decided that no treated wood would be used in the creation of the trail and they would use mostly wood cut from clearing the trail. A smudging and offering were made to the Creator by a community Elder to ask for permission to make the trail.
- To agree on a trail name. The trail committee decided that they would put the onus on the community to decide upon a name. The committee had held a Name-The-Trail-Contest. The judge was an Elder of the community and the name was announced at a November 1999 community trail gathering. The winning name was as follows:

Trail name: NPISUNEWAWTIJ MEDICINE TRAIL

Npisunewawti'j (Medicine Trail) is a good name because not only will we learn more about the use of these plants, but the beauty of the trail will that it is 'good medicine' for minds and souls. Displaying the name of the trail in both Mi'kmaq and English will help the community recognize our language and help keep it alive (Community Participant, Winner of the Trail Name Contest).

- To seek community resources internally and assess what was needed externally (e.g. funding). Many community members had skills and knowledge which were valuable to the project. Some knew the history of the trails, others had experience working on trail projects, and still others had carpentry skills. Wood was donated by a local contractor to help in the building of bridges. The core funding for the project continued to be from the FNF.
- To acquire a trail building to house trail books and resources. One of the trail committee members who used to work for the Fish and Wildlife habitat group on reserve wrote a detailed letter to the band requesting the use of a small building to the left of the building for the trail committee to hold its trail books and resources. Permission was granted by the Band for the committees' use of it, with the agreement that the committee would pay a rental fee and power bills (see Plate 17). The Band also wanted an update on the continued use of the building throughout the winter.
- To determine a specific location for trail.
- To cut, clear and clean trail.
- To identify plants on the trail with the help of a botanist.
- To collect specimens and conduct research on the plants and their uses.
- To install trail structures (e.g. bridges and boardwalks).
- To create a trail parking lot.
- To generate a map of the trail.
- To keep the broader community informed and solicit other community members through gatherings, workshops and newspaper write-ups.

6.4.2 Challenges in Planning

A committee participant stated early that planning in the community was sometimes difficult. He expressed that it was hard for people in the community to make long-term plans or to commit to them because of their lifestyles. He stated that things often came together at the last minute and many people would just show up. Hence, it

was sometimes difficult to organize a committee meeting or make plans for the trail project. Getting everyone in the same place at the same time was sometimes very difficult. Yet every event the committee organized was quite well attended. Often the family and community togetherness would shine through in trail events. For example; the first workshop we held was attended by about 60 people, showing strong support for such a small community. On various days a few people cleared and cleaned the trail and five or six other community members just showed up to help. Wood that was donated to the trail committee for trail bridges had to be moved from behind the community center and five community members showed up to move it. Every meeting was attended by committed community members. At the latest trail gathering, community members contributed food for a feast, volunteered to clean and helped with setting up trail resources for community members to view. It was impossible to know how many people were going to attend, or how much to budget for or who would be there to help, but the community members support each other and one could be guaranteed that someone would be there to help.

In terms of project decision-making, if we could not organize a trail meeting, I would call each committee member and gather individual opinions to form consensus. My fear was that if I did not do this, the project would lose momentum to the point of halting. This issue of when to step in and play more of a catalytic role as opposed to a facilitative role is difficult. On the one hand, I did not want the project to become dependant on my actions (e.g. if the members are not committed it is counterproductive to the community-based process that facilitators take on their roles). On the other, I did not want the project to cease if I saw that committee members were committed but did not have the time or the skills and capacity to keep the momentum moving. I am still working on this intuitive skill, but it often depends on both my own and the committee's interpretation of the circumstances. Most of the time we were able to have meetings where decisions were made. Committee members often liked to be outside doing hands-on work. We sometimes worked this to our advantage by having a committee meeting as we walked through the trail. At one of these meetings the committee decided on the specific location for the trail, and the objectives they would like to see achieved (e.g.

cleanup and restoration of camp, clearing of trail and trail flooring). Many expressed that they preferred walking outside as opposed to sitting down inside. At a few of the meetings, time ran short and committee members became restless. Twice we ended meetings with informal consensus on certain issues, but with no definitive agreement on what objectives were to be achieved, how they were to be achieved, and when they were to be started. Committee members often went away with different ideas on these issues. As highlighted already, this came back to haunt the committee when there was confusion concerning who, when, where and how an objective was to be implemented.

6.5 Project Action

You have to believe in what you are doing and know that it's not going to happen overnight (Participant #8).

6.5.1 Trail Location

The committee's final decision on a specific trail location took about two months (see Plate 12). This was a low point for the committee in terms of its momentum.

An enthusiastic community member, who knew the trails well, and I went out twice attempting to flag a general trail location, trying each time to get committee members to participate. This occurred during June and July 1999. This also

Plate 12. Trail Committee Participants Deciding on a Trail Location



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, July 1999

happened to be a very busy time for three of the committee members. The eager community member was willing to cut the trail but was quickly becoming impatient with

the committee's lack of decisiveness. It was not until the beginning of August 1999 when the full committee was able to meet, and walk through the proposed general area that a community member, the Chief, an FNF advisor and I had suggested would make a good trail. At this meeting, the committee decided with a few changes that this suggested trail location would be the one. The following factors went into choosing the location. This area presently had minimal use in terms of housing, ATVs and timber production, hence reducing multi-user conflicts. In addition, the loop configuration of the trail passes by four main buildings (the Cultural Centre, the Medical Centre, the Trail Building, and the Band Hall/Multi-Purpose Building (includes the BRFN store), providing easy access to bathrooms, interpretive information (until the kiosk is built), refreshments, parking and emergency information (e.g. telephone, doctor). From a spiritual and ecological standpoint, the area was chosen because it is the location of trails traditionally used by the Mi'kmaq ancestors. The ancestors used these trails for hunting and for gathering berries and medicines. Within the past one hundred years the trails were also used by Mi'kmaq for oxen pulling in the logging industry.

6.5.2 Resources, Skills and Expertise

The tools and resources for project implementation were mostly found within the community. Resources such as trucks, shovels, wood, chainsaws, clippers, machetes, and backhoe (for parking lot) have to date all been found within the community. Flagging tape, markers and sawdust were the only materials bought externally for Phase I. In addition, most of the work skills were also found within the community. The committee decided early on that a diversity of community members should be involved in the trail work (to avoid one person receiving all the work). The committee initially used a bid process for work projects on the trail, but later felt that the bid process was too formal and have now asked interested community members to submit a 'scope of work'. To date a variety of community members have worked on numerous trail tasks.

Clearing of the trail occurred shortly after the location was decided upon. Two community members with the help of various volunteers on different days cut and cleared

the trails with the use of clippers and a chainsaw (see Plate 13). They were very careful not to step on identified plants and to cut only the trees that the committee agreed on.

For clean-up of the trail and specifically around the camp¹, the committee decided that a small feeder trail would be made so that a worker could collect the garbage, gather it on the trailer, take it out of the trail and then transport it to the municipal dump (see Plate 14). All organic materials (like wood from the camp) were pushed

Plate 13. Community Participants Beginning to Cut and Clear the Trail



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, August 1999

Plate 14. A Camp Once Lived in by a Community Member Named Franklin Claire 'Fart': One of the Trails Special Places



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, August 1999

back further into the woods to decompose naturally. A community member with an ATV was hired to do this. In the end he did not use the ATV because he knew one of the committee members had a problem with it. He and another worker carried the garbage out on their backs. A community member who had worked on river restoration projects and was

experienced at making bridges was offered the job of making trail bridges in the areas

¹ An abandoned camp once lived in by a band member is one of the special features of the trail and is located on the southwest portion of trail. The committee has decided to restore it for trail purposes.

Plate 15. Beginning of Bridge Construction



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, September 1999

designated by the trail committee (see Plate 15). The resources for this came from leftover trees cleared for the trail and a large donation of spruce wood left over from the unsuccessful rafters of the new cultural building.

To date the only expertise sought externally was for plant identification and map generation. Although one of the committee members was knowledgeable about plants, she did not feel confident she could be totally accurate in identifying the plants on the trail or that she could do it in a timely fashion. The botanist chosen to identify the plants was the same person who helped the community in fostering the idea for the project. The knowledgeable committee member accompanied her in identifying a total of 71

plants on the trail (see Appendix 9).

The characteristics of these plants and the categories of their uses have already been summarized in Chapter Two. As for the trail map, the FNF advisor, a trail committee member and me walked throughout the perimeter of the trail, recording directions and distances. The advisor has entered these points into a program called ITMAP to create a rough trail map (see Figure 7). This was a valuable learning experience both for the committee member and me, as we had never done this before.

A committee member who had his own backhoe was offered the job of making the trail parking lot. He has made an in-kind donation of crushed gravel for the parking lot surface. The committee decided that the trail flooring will consist of sawdust, because it is ecologically benign, easy to walk on, and economical. A newly formed youth group in the community has also expressed interest in working on the trail. The idea to have the youths involved is important because they will be the future keepers of the trail.

6.5.3 Implementation Issues

A main challenge that arose both within the committee and in the broader community was the issue of ATVs in trail construction. It was decided that ATVs could not be used on the main trail itself because of their ecological impact. However, the committee agreed that feeder maintenance trails could be made leading into the trail so work could be done realistically and efficiently. One of the committee members was opposed to any ATV use because of their detrimental ecological impact. The committee then discussed alternatives such as carrying garbage out by hand, burning the garbage in a controlled burn, and laying sawdust on the trail floor by carrying garbage bags full of sawdust in and laying it with a shovel. None of these alternatives seemed feasible to the committee, since there were items like a kitchen sink and large pieces of scrap metal to be carried out. The committee decided to make the trails but they would only be used for maintenance and would be closed off when they were no longer needed. In addition, they decided that, to minimize ecological impact, they would only be used in the months of November and December when the ground was substantially harder. Yet the committee member who did not want the feeder trails was not willing to compromise or listen to the emerging consensus of the committee. The disgruntled committee member was making demands that the rest of the committee and people actually doing the work did not agree with. The dialogue between two of the committee members was as follows:

There is no way we are using ATVs on the trail. If we have to, we'll carry stuff out on our backs (Person A).

I thought we were going to make a feeder trail for ATVs to take the garbage out. We wouldn't even touch the trail and we could do it when the ground is hard so there wouldn't be much impact. We'll need a small trail for emergencies and maintenance and we could just put posts in to prevent it from being used as an ATV trail. I'm not carrying a kitchen sink out on my back (Person C).

The committee met again and decided that ATV feeder trails would have to made. After this decision was made by the committee, the FNF advisor and I went straight to the workers suggested by the committee and asked them on behalf of the committee to make an ATV feeder trail, hence not allowing for any problems or miscommunications to occur.

6.5.4. Keeping the Momentum

One of the most important forces behind community-based projects, and in this case the trail project, is momentum. In contrast to CBD planning literature, one of my resource persons observed that in the case of the trail, community success would not be based on definitive plans of when, where and how, but simply on things being done. Peter Erasmus (1993) supports this by stating that community members must be able to see tangible results if momentum is to continue. He argues that this leads to a desire for further community involvement, which eventually leads to a sense of ownership (Erasmus 1993). As long as there was work to be done, community members would show up. By keeping project momentum going and work for people to do, the project continued. Often people would be gathered in the new parking lot or at the entrance of the trail, plainly visible to other community members who were driving by. In such a small community, these minor events had a permeating effect that often led to increased community support.

Without momentum, people who are willing to do work become discouraged. At such times, the FNF advisor and I would step in and help the committee to regroup. We would essentially help them gain insight on what things they would like to have done (e.g. trail bridges, the materials used for the them and who in the community could make them). It became clear that gauging hours or setting clear deadlines did not always work,

but if the committee could gain general consensus on what it wanted done and agree on a few people who would do it, this would lead to accomplishments. Similar to the ATV situation, the FNF advisor and I would, upon the recommendation of the committee, find the people recommended for the job and ask the person specifically what the committee agreed upon. The main problem with this approach was that things as simple as having a meeting, facilitating decisions for trail objectives, recording objectives on paper and seeking out and finding the people who would do the work would often depend on the presence of the FNF advisor or me. The reason for this was that the few members of the committee who were doing much of the decision-making and work wanted a break and there was no one left to follow-up on decisions made. To remedy this problem, the committee is now soliciting to bring more community members on board. The trail gathering held in October 1999 (see Plates 17 and 18) was an attempt not only to inform the broader community about trail events, but also to find other community members who were willing to participate on the committee.

With respect to this problem, I believe the committee is in need of two major things. The first one is a committee worker who will oversee paper work, organize committee meetings and record committee concerns, items to be discussed and committee objectives. A new member of the committee is beginning to take on this role and is doing an excellent job. The second is the need for a person who will oversee work that is done on the ground. Like a coordinator, this person would communicate clearly with the person overseeing the committee and people working on the trail. Another new committee member is beginning to undertake this role and project momentum is moving much more smoothly. Until these roles are completely fulfilled, much of the momentum will depend on the presence of the FNF advisor and me. Although we are not doing the work or making the decisions, we seem to be providing the platform for these things to happen. I believe committee capacity in terms of technical and organizational skills will not be up to par until I am worked out of the equation and someone from the community can fulfill what the FNF and I have been doing. As supported by CBD literature, it is only

at this point that the committee and the community will retain true ownership and responsibility for the trail (Erasmus 1993, Napoleon 1991).

6.6 Project Accomplishments and Successes

The committee has achieved with success the following objectives:

1. a trail vision.
2. a trail name.
3. acquisition of a trail building (see Plate 16)
4. cutting, clearing, cleaning and implementation of trail structures.
5. identification of plants on trail (see Appendix 9).
6. generation of a trail map (see Figure 7).

Plate 16. Trail Building (No Sign Yet)

The Chief and Council granted permission to the Trail Committee for the use of this little building, to house trail literature and resources.



Photo: Lindwe MacDonald, 1999

These trail accomplishments were shown through 'picture stories' to the community at the trail feast/gathering held in October 1999. In addition, 'Mother Nature' and a 'Water Spirit' were in attendance to give a talk on nature for the children of the Bear River First Nation (see Plate 17).

Plate 17. Mother Nature Doing a Talk for the Bear River Mi'kmaq Children at the October Trail Gathering



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, October 1999

It was at this gathering that an Elder of the community announced the winner of the 'Name the trail Contest' (see Plate 18).

Plate 18. Chief Frank Meuse, Elder Agnes Potter, Louise Wood and Children: Picking the Winner of the 'Name-the-Trail-Contest'



Photo: Lindiwe MacDonald, October 1999

The Digby Courier sent a reporter to write about the trail committee's accomplishments to date (see Appendix 10). Another accomplishment for the trail committee has been the transfer of financial responsibilities from me to a committee member. This transfer of responsibility is an important indicator that the committee is beginning to establish skills, respect and legitimacy in the eyes of the Band Council and the FNF.

I believe the success of the committee was based primarily on the trail committee's determination and community spirit. A few times members could have given up but I believe they saw the true potential of the trail both for themselves and for the community. I think this hope and potential kept them going and helped them to form a vision that gave their work purpose. Good plans, clear goals and definitive objectives will help channel this potential in the future. In addition, the eventual involvement of a community Elder, the participation of other community members, and the moral and technical support of the FNF has helped the committee to achieve project objectives.

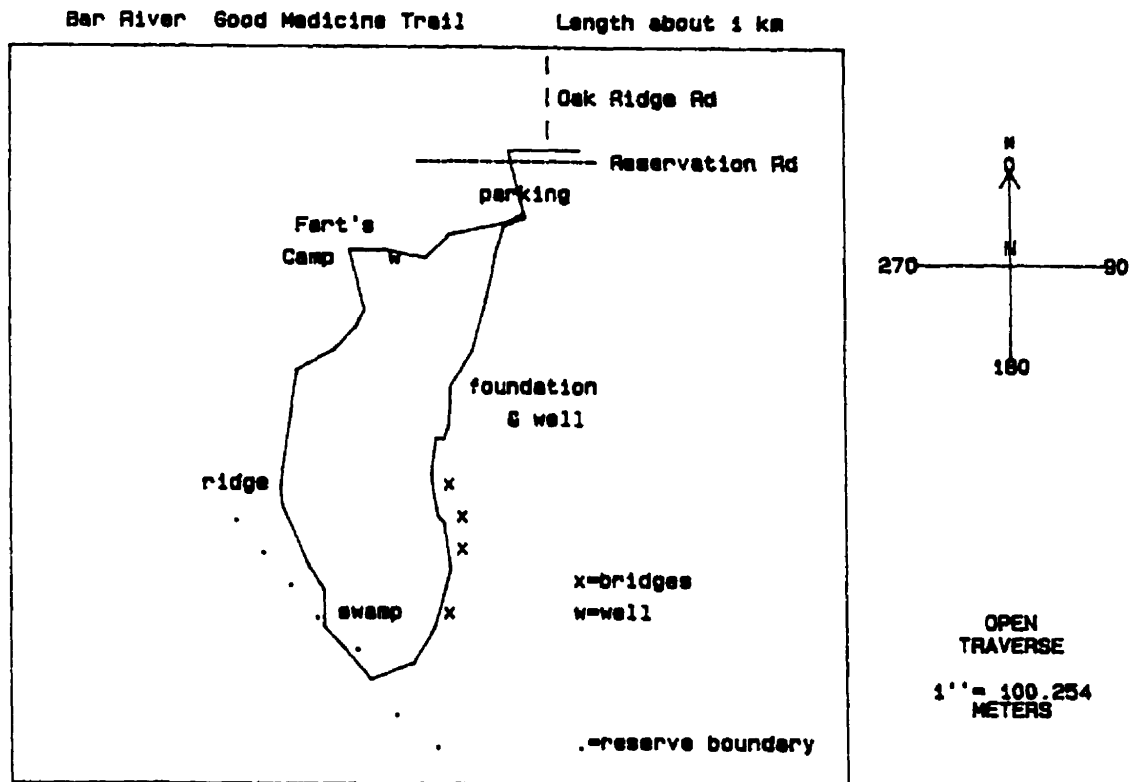
6.7 Phase II Planning

The next part in the project process will be planning for Phase II. The committee will draw from its Phase I experiences and continue to build capacity and keep momentum moving in the project process. Objectives for Phase II include, seeking more funding, research on the traditional Mi'kmaq medicinal and edible uses of plants found on the trail, historical research on the trail, restoration of camp on trail, installation of signs and picnic tables, creation of interpretation material and training of a community trail interpreter.

Phase II will require the planning and implementation of a trail maintenance and monitoring system. The following trail committee members expressed concern about monitoring.

There has to be monitoring. If there is no long-term plan or monitoring put in place it [the trail] will not last. It would have to be a paid job or it won't work (Person B Trail Worker).

Figure 7. Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j (Good Medicine) Trail Map



(McKay 1999, *sic*)

I think if people knew how serious and important this could be to the community and they actually know that there's not ATVs allowed and if they could get someone to monitor it, I think it should be okay. I don't think people would intentionally rough it up. But still, maintenance is what would worry me. It would be nice to have someone from the community look after it, and I've been told that sometimes if people from the community do this job, they will take more pride in what they do (Person E, Trail Committee Member).

I don't want to put three years of work in this to find out that it won't be taken care of in the future and will just fall apart like other things in the community (Person A, Trail Committee Member).

If the community can achieve a sense of ownership and responsibility for the trail then they will be more apt to be active in protecting and maintaining it. Plans for monitoring and maintenance may include a person designated for the upkeep of trail structures (flooring, signs and bridges) and accessing funding to maintain upkeep (unless the community chooses eventually to charge a fee or ask for a voluntary donation). Important in future plans for monitoring and maintenance is presently including community youths. Their involvement now will help ensure there will be experienced and responsible trail keepers into the future.

6.8 Experiential Learning and PAR

Community members expressed to me how impressed they were by certain committee members' involvement in the project, because in all their time on the reserve they had never seen these members become so active. A community member who takes initiative to learn about something she never knew signifies development. Community members who build their own capacity through learning how to write a proposal, or research plants or plan a budget, also represent development. At this point I believed that even if the project did not succeed in its end result (e.g. the trail), to have participants involved in events like the workshop and adult education course, something they had never before attended, was a development accomplishment in and of itself. Their participation in these events further reinforced the importance of the process in which CBD projects are implemented. The following committee members spoke about their experience with the trail process:

I loved the workshop and I thought that was done really well. The way it was structured was really good. You have to get everybody interested in it and I thought the workshop was a good way to do it, plus it was a learning experience. The ones that came all the time are the people you'll find working on the project. You just don't know how hard it is to get (Person E) to do anything and I was quite impressed that he was there and that he came to the classes. (Person E) is very attuned to nature, and spends all his time in the woods. He's one I don't think ever lost that connection (Person D).

I think this work (on the committee) has been really good. I just wish I had more time to do more and be able to come to more things (Person E).

Anything that has to do with the outdoors I like. That's why I like doing this. I'm learning a lot more about plants and their uses (Person B).

I thought the adult education course was excellent. I learned so much. If it had gotten any more technical than the first class, it might have turned people off. But I have learned so much (Person A).

One community member felt that she had learned a lot about the project process in general (e.g. forming a vision, setting objectives, implementing plans, writing proposals). Two committee members stated they had learned how to do research on plants as well as how to identify them. Another committee member felt that she had learned a lot from her experience with an environmental education workshop she attended. Three committee members were very positive about the adult education course and thought that the field trips were a very good learning experience.

6.9 Time and Patience in the Participatory Process

The community development literature advocates that CBD projects are time-consuming and that understanding and patience on the part of facilitators, external agencies and advisors is crucial. Many community members involved in the trail project had never been involved in this kind of project and found it difficult to take on some of the roles I discussed earlier.

Some of the roles can be daunting at the best of times. Time is needed for people to learn from their participation and from their experience. It should not be expected that people will learn new roles overnight. Project facilitators or external agencies may find this slow process frustrating, but it must be respected. On the same note, community members cannot always depend on the fact that facilitators will always be there to help them in roles that they can do, but do not want to do (e.g. paper work). This is unfair both to the facilitator and to the external agency. Community members must make concerted efforts to learn from their participation and experiences to take on new roles.

Although funding was provided for this project, many parts of it relied on volunteer work. Like everyone, volunteer community members have busy lives.

Problems sometimes specific to Mi'kmaq communities (e.g. the recent implications and impacts of the controversial Marshall ruling has caused conflict between Mi'kmaq and non-Native fishing communities) put added stress on volunteers who may be directly impacted, which may lead to discouragement, quicker burn out, and apathy. These issues must be dealt with in a gentle and empathetic way. It is imperative that facilitators and external agencies are cognizant of these issues and their impacts on volunteers, workers and community-based projects.

6.10 Summary

The trail committee's initial lack of united focus in the trail project ultimately led to difficulties in project planning and implementation. The most significant challenge the committee faced was that of balancing different opinions concerning how to implement trail decisions. Consensus was sometimes hard to build when more vocal committee members would overshadow the less vocal. The initial loose structure of the committee led to problems such as well-intentioned community member imposing their set-in-stone ways on committee members with other views. As mentioned earlier, I believe an Elder would have helped the committee to gain consensus and those who felt their ways were better than others would have been less apt to cause problems. Another challenge the committee faced was volunteer burn out. A few of the same committee members were doing all the work and became tired and discouraged. Yet in late 1999 and early 2000, more community members have become actively involved on the committee and have taken on financial, educational and on-the-ground trail work. To date the committee members feel very content with their accomplishments and many of the challenges they initially faced no longer exist. The committee makes all decisions by consensus and these decisions are implemented. The eventual input of an Elder has also helped the committee to achieve perspective and consensus when discussing trail issues.

In contradiction to some community development literature, it was found that defining a vision from the outset of the project is an imposing concept that does not fit

with the Mi'kmaq concept of 'Indian time' or 'doing things when the time is right'. The committee members defined a vision about ten months into the project when they were spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically ready. Through their trial-and-error experiences, they have endured successes and mistakes. The members have now learned what works for them and for the trail project. It is doubtful that this process could have been condensed into a shorter time. This was the amount of time the committee needed to evolve and no recipe for development would have changed that. Meetings are presently held once a month where an agenda is set by committee members and each member reports on their personal accomplishments (e.g. financial responsibility, working on-the-ground, plant research). The members feel they have learned a great deal from their experience and are planning for present and future work on the trail. The trail project can be a circular process that will constantly evolve. So although there will be certain phases to trail development, if the community chooses, there will always be future phases (e.g. monitoring, maintenance, added trails, trail interpreter, etc.). Within this circular process, the potential for holistic community development builds continuously.

CHAPTER VII: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I'm very interested in learning about the use of the plants and about how our ancestors used them and their traditional ways. Because I find at this particular reserve we've lost a whole lot of stuff. We've lost our language, we've lost many of our Elders and we only have a few left. So we want to hang on to the Elders and we have to depend on them a lot, probably too much (Participant #23).

7.1 Introduction

The research findings are illuminated by considering the second key objective of this research:

To examine community members' perceptions concerning their traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge, their thoughts on cultural revitalization of the knowledge, the trail project and its potential for holistic Mi'kmaq community-development.

Interview guide questions (see Appendix 7) were created with the intent of addressing and exploring this research objective. Hence, this chapter has been organized with respect to categories of interview questions in an attempt to systematically summarize research findings. More specifically, categories of summarized responses include: participants' knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants (Interview Questions #1-3), the significance participants' place on plants (Interview Questions #4-5), participants' perceptions concerning cultural revitalization of the traditional knowledge (Interview Questions #6-11) and participants' perceptions concerning the trail project and its potential for holistic (spiritual, emotional, physical and mental) community-based development (Interview Questions #12-15). Twenty-eight participants were interviewed ranging in age from 21 years to 80 years with the average age being 40 years. Eight participants were male and 20 were female. The participants represented a good cross-section of the various families on the reserve and are employed in a variety of areas.

Illustrative depth is given to the result summaries through representative quotes from community participants. These quotes²⁶ honour Mi'kmaq voices²⁷ of the Bear River First Nation and represent first-hand framing of participants' communications concerning traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants and the trail project. The purpose of reporting response frequencies is to discern aggregate response themes. The following summary and discussion also works to explore these themes.

7.2 Traditional Mi'kmaq Knowledge of Edible and Medicinal Plants

Since one of the purposes of the trail project is to revitalize traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge then it is logical to first ascertain the amount of knowledge community members already have. In response to questions one through three of the interview guide participants answered questions that pertained to their knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants (see Table 3). The relevance of this category of questions is that it explores individual participants' knowledge and also shows an aggregate knowledge base. Assessment of participants' knowledge was based primarily on the number of plant-uses they identified, as well as details concerning gathering and preparation. Examples of details include the time of year to gather the plant, whether to use it internally or externally, how to prepare it, the dose required and spiritual or ceremonial practices associated with its use.

²⁶ It should be noted that some participants were much more descriptive in their interviews than others. Participants #2,#3,#15, #20 and #21 were quite shy and mostly responded to questions with a simple yes or no. Their responses are no less important and are represented in Chapter Seven.

²⁷ The majority of quotes contained in this discussion are given by Mi'kmaq participants. Those which are not are indicated as a quote given by a non-Native participant.

A theme that formed amongst all of the responses was participants' perceptions that their knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of plants was limited. More specifically, they perceived that their present knowledge with respect to medicinal and edible plants has diminished significantly from what their Elders and ancestors once knew. As these participants share:

I really don't know anything about plants (Participant #2).

I have none [knowledge] with respect to medicinal plants. My Grandmother had a lot of the knowledge you're looking for but she died and I was too young to learn it when she was alive (Participant #19).

Table 3. Traditional Mi'kmaq Knowledge of Edible and Medicinal Plants

Responses to Interview Guide Questions #1-3	Total Number of Respondents
1. Do you have any knowledge concerning edible and/or medicinal plants? Total Plant Uses Identified 63 Edible Uses 18 Medicinal Uses 45	28
2. Do you have any knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and/or medicinal plants? <i>Number of plant uses identified by respondents:</i> Knowledge of ten or more plants (10+) 4 persons Knowledge of five to nine plants (5-9) 4 persons Knowledge of four plants or less (1-4) 17 persons No knowledge of plants 3 persons	28
3. Do you gather and use edible and/or medicinal plants? Edible plants only 12 persons Edible and medicinal plants 5 persons Do not gather edible and/or medicinal plants 11 persons	28

We never learned too much about it [medicinal plants]. What we did learn, I learned from my mom. That's why I think it's a great idea to do research on it and get it recorded down for people to read. If your looking to help, I think the knowledge should get recorded down because the Indians won't pass it on. It was the old guys who are gone now who knew a lot. Laurie Lacey did a lot of

research that is important. I don't think the Mi'kmaq people would have let him in their door if they didn't want to talk to him (Participant #16).

Numerous participants referred to two Elders who had died within the last ten years who were perceived as being knowledgeable of traditional uses of edible and medicinal plants. Most participants stated that the small amount they did learn they learned from these Elders. The majority of participants regretted not having taken the time to learn more. They stated reasons such as lack of interest when they were young, their grandparents being sick and dying by the time they did become interested, fear of abuse of the knowledge, and the hesitancy of grandparents and parents to share their knowledge in fear that their children would be discriminated against. These participants describe their reasons:

One lady that's gone now but boy you look back and she could have given so much and she didn't have any kids but I often hear my mom talk about her. She could cure a nosebleed just like that. Mom said she knew all that type of stuff and she had jars sitting on the counter full of plants and those are the people that you look at and you kick yourself so bad for not going after it. But then again when you're a teenager and stuff you just don't care. The knowledge is not gone but it's going (Participant #17).

I wish we could have gotten into it more because it's so interesting. The only things that stuck were things I was going to need right then and there. Just like a long time ago with Elders, I really wished I had listened to their stories. When you're younger you don't really care where you came from or why (Participant #23).

One participant recalled the sentiments of one of the Elders in regards to this issue:

They had knowledge but you had to ask and you had to inquire and I remember an Elder saying 'young people don't want to know, they don't want to know anything today' (Participant #27).

Interestingly, the participant possessing the most Mi'kmaq medicinal and edible plant knowledge stated:

There's a lot of stuff I don't know. What my father told me was that if I didn't have a problem [an illness or an injury] I wouldn't learn about it. There's still a lot that I don't know about. The older Indians were kind of leery about telling their secrets that were handed down to them. There are a lot of things that he

knew but when you're a child you don't stop and think or listen to what your father's saying. You want to go play (Participant #12).

It is clear that even with an in-depth knowledge of ten or more plants, participants on the whole perceived their knowledge did not match those of certain Elders²⁸. Two non-Native participants have long perceived that the community's use of medicinal plants was limited.

I moved on the reserve in I think it was 1974. And I can't say that a lot of people made use of plant medicines. I remember ----- grandmother always had a few plants around but it wasn't like they went out and made a real lifestyle of it. ----- -- would talk about it but he never really gathered the stuff. Like if you had a cold he'd tell you to go out and get alder bark. I don't ever really remember the community ever particularly using a lot of medicinal plants except for maybe sweet fern. I don't remember ----- ever really teaching us anything about it but if you asked him he would tell you. Like once I asked him to show me witch hazel and he took me right to it. Same with ----- I asked her to show me sweet grass and she took me right to it. I think they had been so far removed (Participant #27).

When I first came on this reserve some 20 years ago, I never knew anything about plants until I met ----- mother, ----- and then it was like the little bit that she taught us and shown us over time. But she's gone now. She knew quite a bit. She passed not too long ago (about 5 years ago). There's a lot of knowledge out there that the older people did have and it's gone with them. We're losing it all and that's why this trail is important (Participant #22).

In general, participants believed the effect of non-Native cultural assimilation to be the major factor leading to, amongst many other things, loss of language and a loss of traditional plant knowledge.

Traditional knowledge was passed down between Elders and young people who showed a gift for the art of medicinal healing, or an interest in learning. Plant uses, which parts are useful for particular ailments and the seasonal uses of the local plants was known to traditional Mi'kmaq healers. Now much of the traditional medicinal knowledge is lost along with the Mi'kmaq language (Participant #1).

When I was a child a lot of my culture was lost because my father couldn't speak the language. We lost a lot because of our ancestors losing the knowledge. Our children are now in jeopardy. If it could some how be brought back, then go for it. Where I've lost so much, anything that can be brought back in any way is very important (Participant #25).

In addition to the loss of language, participants also stated factors such as low self-esteem (feeling ashamed of Mi'kmaq ways) and separation from the land as contributing to the loss of traditional plant knowledge. One 25-year-old participant stated:

I find that we, this generation, know more than my mom's and the reason I think is that we're not ashamed so much no more. I do a lot of thinking about this. We're sort of proud, but they are like ashamed. Mom's not ashamed but she was in the group that was ashamed and tradition wasn't focused on. There's four generations and like my great-grandmother started to feel ashamed, and nanny (grandmother) was ashamed and then she made her daughter feel ashamed, and my mom has taught me not to be ashamed. You get my generation saying that we want to find our traditions, but by the time you find it, it's too late. So you'll find that a lot of the people probably from 40 to 60 years don't know as much as the younger (Mi'kmaq) kids know. The Mi'kmaq who know the most are probably 80 and 90 years old by now (Participant #17).

It seems logical that if members of this community and other Mi'kmaq feel that loss of their language contributed to the loss of their knowledge, then revival of the language will be crucial in regaining the knowledge. With respect to the trail, Mi'kmaq names will be written in interpretive material, however there are only a few community members who can actually speak Mi'kmaq. There are now attempts in the community to teach the language in the school. This will be an integral component of the revival of traditional Mi'kmaq values and knowledge. Although there has been a loss of knowledge and language, many of the participants still retain a very strong spiritual connection the land. I believe that community members who have this connection will be important teachers and guides in the revival of traditional plant knowledge.

As stated in the literature, the return of some First Nation peoples to their

²⁸ I say 'certain Elders' because many participants stated that there were quite a few community Elders who simply did not have the knowledge or chose not to teach it if they did.

traditional ways involved some initial unease as they acknowledged their lack of understanding of Indian culture and took the risk of being criticized as they began to participate in ceremonies (Warry 1998:213). One participant shared her thoughts on her own and the communities initial uneasiness with regaining and practicing some traditional Mi'kmaq rituals.

I've been told that even people older than me were not brought up in the so-called native tradition or way. When we do sweetgrass ceremonies and different kinds of ceremonies like they [community members] might not feel comfortable doing that, or perhaps they're not comfortable leaving an offering because it's not something they were taught to do. I can relate to that because I felt the same way at one point. When I first started doing a sweetgrass ceremony I'd be looking around wondering if anyone was watching me. Anyway the trail education will be good because it is information for people, so if they're interested it will be there for them (Participant #23).

Compounding people's initial uneasiness is the issue of the authenticity of what is being revived.

I would say presently, culturally in this area because of the early contact, a lot of knowledge is gone and lost, so a lot of things we are learning now are coming from other areas and we're having to adapt them to what's happening now (Participant #11).

Alex Dedam (1995), a spiritual advisor with the New Brunswick Burnt Church First Nation, argues that what Mi'kmaq are learning about spiritually comes from other Indian tribes. He argues that the Mi'kmaq cannot just pick out things from British Columbia and South Dakota and they must do more research on the identity of their spiritual practices. He promotes studying the writing of the original missionaries. The problem with this is that language barriers and ethnocentric bias on the part of the missionaries led to writings that were infiltrated with European views. Nevertheless, some Mi'kmaq rituals have been recorded in these documents and must be interpreted by Mi'kmaq themselves. Perhaps continued research on these writings, combined with the rich oral stories and history retained by certain Elders, will help people become more comfortable with researching and relearning their spiritual practices. In present times, many Mi'kmaq

are apprehensive about learning their culture from the writings of non-Native people.

With respect to medicinal plants, one participant had this to say:

My sister is really into connecting with her native side. She is in Banff right now doing a native dance school. She brought to my attention that sometimes people will see outsiders who come to them asking about Mi'kmaq culture... and then they sort of make up stories. So I sort of wonder how much of Laurie Lacey's books is real. This situation makes it even more difficult for those of us who never knew the culture and want to get to know it, but don't want to be made to feel like we're outsiders and we're going to take advantage. I want to go to a medicine woman or man and learn about the traditional medicines but I also don't want to, I mean I present myself more as a white person. I don't dress the way they do or talk the way they do. Even though I am native [Mi'kmaq], my daily activities are mostly non-native (Participant #13).

Although some Mi'kmaq may be apprehensive about the revitalization of certain rituals, most of the Mi'kmaq participants have incorporated plant rituals into their daily lives. Many of these ceremonies are associated with sacred herbs and plants.

Participants who have regained some of their tribal knowledge and ways, place substantial significance on edible and medicinal plants (see Table 4). For many, plants have become (or always were) an important part of their spiritual, physical, emotional and mental health.

7.2.1 Specific Knowledge of Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Edible and Medicinal Plants

The purpose of questions two and three (see Table 3) was to distinguish between those participants who simply had knowledge of plant uses and those who actually gathered and used the plants. Data gathered concerning participants' specific knowledge of plants are being given to the Band Council in a separate report. General uses for these plants ranged from treatment of cuts, sores, headaches, colds, flues, sore throats, indigestion, diarrhea, diuretic, menstrual cramps, insomnia, arthritis (rheumatism), sprains, swelling, lameness, cancer, nutritional vitamins, emergency foods, dysentery, high blood pressure, diabetes and pin worms. Participants described preparations that included teas, tonics, edible fruits, inhalants and poultices. Four of the five participants

who gathered medicinal plants were listed as having significantly more knowledge than other 24 participants.

7.3 The Significance Placed on Plants

Questions four and five of the interview guide pertained to the significance participants placed on plants as well as their knowledge concerning the significance Mi'kmaq historically placed on plants (see Table 4 for response summaries).

Table 4. Perceptions of Mi'kmaq Ancestral Medicinal and Edible Plant Usage

Responses to Interview Guide Questions #4-5	Total Number of Respondents
<p>4. Are edible and/or medicinal plants significant to you?</p> <p>Plants are spiritually significant 11 persons</p> <p>Plants are ceremonially significant 18 persons</p> <p>Plants are not culturally significant 7 Mi'kmaq persons 3 non-Native persons</p>	28
<p>5. Do you have any knowledge concerning the cultural (e.g. Physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) significance Mi'kmaq historically placed on plants?</p> <p><i>Participants who had some knowledge of the significance</i></p> <p><i>Mi'kmaq ancestors placed on plants</i> 21 persons</p> <p>Physical Significance (nutrition and medicine) 13 persons</p> <p>Spiritual Significance (offerings, smudging) 14 persons</p> <p>Ceremonial Significance (prayer, smudging) 10 persons</p> <p>Environmental Respect 14 persons</p> <p><i>Participants who had no knowledge of the significance</i></p> <p><i>Mi'kmaq ancestors placed on plants</i> 7 persons</p>	28

My purpose with these questions was to discern whether participants placed significance other than physical (e.g. medicinal and nutritional significance) on the plants.

Participants who responded that plants were ceremonially and spiritually significant usually stated that they practised rituals such as smudging (a cleansing ceremony for the body and soul), sweet grass ceremony, drumming, peace pipe ceremony, and used plants as gifts and offerings to the plant spirits and Creator. As shown in the oral stories and writings about Mi'kmaq plant-use (Dennis 1921; Holmes-Whitehead and McGee 1983;

Moore 1991; Knockwood 1992; Denny 1993; Lacey 1993; Marshall 1995) sacred herbs play an integral role in the lives of Mi'kmaq. Sacred herbs are used as gifts to the Creator or burned in smudging ceremonies to cleanse the mind, body and spirit. One of the Bear River participants tells about the sweetgrass braid which is a vital symbol and spiritual ritual for Mi'kmaq.

The three pieces of the sweetgrass braided represents the mind, the body and the soul and when they are braided together this represents the combining of the three. This intertwining is burned and the smoke goes up as a gift to the Creator. Its use is very sacred (Participant #14).

About half of participants stated that plants were significant to them in physical, spiritual and ceremonial ways (see Table 4). Most participants sometimes saw these as the same, but stated that some ceremonies were done more in a community or public context. As one participant shares:

Plants are very spiritual for me and I pray to the Creator for them. I wish that I could remember more, but if I went deep into prayer, I could recall some of the things my grandfather taught me (Participant #1).

Often participants would specifically state the four sacred herbs as being most significant to them in spiritual ways.

Plants have a lot of significance for me in every way. I use cedar, sage, sweetgrass, and tobacco for smudging. They all have a lot of spiritual significance for me (Participant #18).

One participant also felt that discovering more of her Native spirituality caused her to see plants in a whole new way. She also stated that smudging was very important to her in difficult times, and similar to other participants she uses Mi'kmaq rituals (e.g. smudging) to practice both her Native and Christian beliefs.

Plants have a lot of spiritual significance for me. You start to see it with your Native side that even the ugliest of plants are beautiful. Their colour, shapes and heights. I don't know if you see these things if you're not in touch with your spirituality. When you are, you start to see things in a different way. The smudging ceremony is very important for me. In rough times I smudge. It helps to calm things down and you feel connected to God. I gain balance and strength from smudging. I use it to practice both my native and Christian beliefs (Participant #24).

A typical response of the ten who stated they did not place significance (other than physical) on the plants, is as follows:

Plants don't really have a lot of significance for me in a cultural way. I was never taught that way (Participant #19)

Although some participants stated they personally did not place spiritual or ceremonial significance on plants, a few were knowledgeable about the significance their ancestors placed on the plants.

The Mi'kmaq people were very, very spiritual people. They never overdid it. Everything is all intertwined like these plants they need air, water and sunshine. It's just this really nice circle that everything is evolved in. They tried not to disturb anything even if they were camping here or there and they just took what they needed and left the rest. They had a deep respect for everything. Tobacco and sweetgrass were used in ceremony (Participant #12).

A problem with question #4 (see Table 4) was that I asked it in an ethnocentric fashion and it consequently was not clearly understood by some participants. For some community members these rituals are an intrinsic part of their cultural identity, hence they do not separate their plant use and label it as 'culture' or 'significant'. Once I clarified what I meant by giving examples (e.g. offerings, smudging), they understood more clearly. For participants who did not place significance on the plants, three stated it was because they were non-native and seven Mi'kmaq participants did not give a reason. Important to note is that of these ten participants three knew that their ancestors once did.

7.4 Interest in and Perceived Future Benefits of Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Education

7.4.1 Introduction

Questions six through eleven of the interview guide pertain to participants' interest in traditional Mi'kmaq plant-use education as well as their perceptions concerning future benefits it will bring personally and to the community (see Table 5). With respect to the research objectives these questions were asked to ascertain participants' interest in revitalization of the knowledge. In addition they help to guide the

trail committee in determining community members thoughts on the educational events of 1999 and deciding on what kinds of education would be most conducive to community members in the future.

7.4.2 Why were people interested?

All except two participants were interested in learning more about traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge of edible and medicinal plants. Of these, many were also interested in learning more about the traditional worldview, legends and lore associated with the plants (see Table 5). Nine responded that this education could affect them spiritually through fostering feelings of connection to the ancestors and their traditional ways, to nature and to the plant spirits. Seventeen felt it could affect them in a physical way through education about holistic health and medicinal herbs. Seventeen said it could affect them in a mental way through education and awareness about plant identification and use, and three stated it could affect them in an emotional way through fostering feelings of pride associated with learning their traditional knowledge and about their ancestors. As two participants expressed:

Yes I am interested. It would be nice to know when you're going through the woods what plants can be used for what. Everything you need is right at the tip of your hands when you're in the woods. If one of the kids's eat something, it's good to know that it isn't poisonous (Participant #10).

Yes, I am. But people should learn about the plants as a whole like looking at the mind, body and spirit in relation to the plants. Like I said, look at the plants in a holistic way. So we should look at all aspects of using the plant so learning about the traditions is important (Participant #24).

Table 5. Interest in and Perceived Future Benefits of Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Education

Responses to Interview Guide Questions #6-11	Total Number of Respondents
<p>6. Are you interested in learning about traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants? Interested in learning more 26 persons Not interested 2 persons</p>	28
<p>7. Are you interested in learning about traditional Mi'kmaq worldview, legends and lore the peoples associate/ed with the plants? Interested in learning more 22 persons Not interested 6 persons</p>	28
<p>8. What do you think about the educational initiatives (of the past year) concerning traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants (e.g. workshops, courses, fieldtrips)? Excellent/ Very Good 10 persons Good 10 persons Good but needed improvement 2 persons Did not attend but thought they were a good to very good idea 6 persons</p>	28
<p>9. Do you think this kind of education is beneficial to yourself? <i>Education could be personally beneficial</i> 24 persons Spiritually beneficial (connection to ancestors, plant spirits and Nature) 9 persons Physically beneficial (education about holistic health) 17 persons Mentally (intellectually) beneficial (education and awareness concerning plant identification and use) 17 persons Education would not be personally beneficial 4 persons</p>	28
<p>10. Do you think traditional Mi'kmaq plant use education is beneficial to the Bear River First Nation Community? <i>Education could be beneficial to the community</i> 28 persons Spiritually beneficial (strengthen connection to Ancestors and nature) 6 persons Culturally beneficial (reviving Mi'kmaq knowledge and values) 15 persons Mentally and Intellectually beneficial (education about plant botany, Identification, habitat and edible and medicinal plant uses) 21 persons Emotionally beneficial (will foster feelings of pride, happiness, dignity and self-esteem) 4 persons Physically beneficial (education about traditional medicines) 9 persons Increased environmental awareness (promoting respect for plants, the Creator and Mother Earth) 8 persons</p>	28
<p>11. Are you interested in participating in future educational events pertaining to Mi'kmaq knowledge of edible and medicinal plants? Interested in participating in future educational events 24 persons Interested in attending workshops 16 persons Interested in hands-on learning and attending field trips 16 persons Interested in using books, pamphlets and literature 11 persons Not interested in participating in any educational events 4 persons</p>	28

7.4.3 *What is being revitalized?*

All participants stated they felt that traditional plant-use education could benefit the community spiritually, intellectually and physically. Six participants responded that this education would benefit the community spiritually through strengthening connections to nature (e.g. plants), Mi'kmaq traditions and Mi'kmaq ancestors. Fifteen felt that the community could benefit culturally through learning and reviving Mi'kmaq knowledge and values. The majority stated that the community could benefit intellectually through increasing community members' knowledge of plant botany, identification, habitats and edible and medicinal plant uses. Some responded that the community could benefit physically through promoting interest in traditional medicines for health problems. Eight said that the community could benefit by learning about the environment through teaching awareness and promoting respect for plants, the Creator and Mother Earth (see Table 5). These perceptions will be described further in section 7.5. However the following 40 year-old Mi'kmaq participant touches on this potential:

Spirituality should be a component of the trail teaching. But it will go phase by phase. So although my generation might not incorporate or understand spirituality in relation to plants, we can still learn about it. We might not understand it but at least we could read and learn about it. It will be our children that understand and begin to feel it. It will be taken at their own pace. So I think it is important for our children (Participant #8).

Another participant thought that cultural revival of the traditional worldview was good, but she was not convinced that this teaching would necessarily be translated into true understanding and feeling.

I think the revival of the culture is important but teaching about the worldview is done and then words come out of people's mouths that sound good, but I'm not sure it is in their heart, sometimes I wonder. I really believe that many have lost their connection to the land. Spirit is more inside of you, in your heart, than it is playing a drum or burning sweetgrass (Participant #27).

Only two participants stated they were not interested in learning more about the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of plants. One felt that he was happy with conventional

medicine and did not see potential other than 'physical health' for the trail and its education. At the same time he felt it was important for the children.

I'm not really interested because we have pharmacies that we can use today. But then again anything that has to do with teaching about our [Mi'kmaq] past is good for the children (Participant #2).

The following participant was keenly interested in learning about the plant uses, but when asked about his interest in learning about the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview, he said the following:

I never really got involved in the spiritual aspect. Why bother leaving tobacco? Why not plant a tree instead? How are we supposed to teach native spirituality when our ancestors could not teach it to us? I don't understand why people leave an offering. What does that do (Participant #5)?

This participant found great comfort and faith in the Roman Catholic religion in the past ten years. This is the case with others on the reserve and for older members who have practiced Catholicism their whole lives. Yet, no matter what their beliefs, community members experience spirituality in their own way. Those who want to revive the traditional Mi'kmaq way feel that the trail can work towards teaching their children to embrace and feel traditional Mi'kmaq spirituality. Those who do not will still feel spiritual connections to their ancestors and to nature.

7.4.4 How Will Knowledge Be Revitalized?

As shown in Chapters Six, a series of events led to the beginnings of the trail (see Table 2). Two workshops and an adult education class were held. The majority of participants felt the educational projects ranged from being good to excellent (see Table 5). The following quotes pertain to perceptions concerning the resource books gathered, the adult education course and the workshops. These perceptions will be helpful to the trail committee in assessing the best way community members can learn and the kind of educational events the trail committee could host in the future.

Many participants felt they liked learning in a variety of ways (e.g. books, hands-on experience). But some were adamant that they would like to learn on their own time

and in their own way. These people tended to value learning from books and stated that if they had easy access to trail literature and books, they would definitely use them.

I think this education is great and I definitely want to learn more about it because I would use the plants. I mean you won't see me going to a course at the Band Hall or anything like that, but I'd definitely use the trail, books or pamphlets to take home and use them (Participant #16).

Well I learn more from books. I don't participate in a lot of things going on (part of my seclusion). Like putting a name in for the trail was a really big thing, I normally would never do something like that. Participation is above my safety level or fear of feeling dumb (Participant #24).

The trail committee is presently categorizing its literature on this topic for use by the community. The committee is still debating about the best way to make the literature accessible to the community.

Other participants stated that they preferred learning in a hands-on fashion. These participants tended to value the educational opportunities of the adult education course and its associated field trips.

They were very good- I just wish I could have attended all of the classes and field trips. I got so busy towards the end that I couldn't come when I wanted to (Participant #3).

I found the course to be very helpful in terms of learning how to identify plants and what some of them were used for. This knowledge will be very helpful for the trail project (Participant #11).

Field trips are great. I like actually getting out and seeing. However, I do actually like the workshops because that kind of broke the ice, but I know personally that I would rather be out there just because I don't learn well sitting there reading (Participant #23).

The majority of participants felt they liked learning in different ways. In addition to the course and fieldtrips, some participants enjoyed the educational value of the workshop.

I loved the workshop and I thought it was done really well. The way you structured it was really good. You have to get everybody interested in it first and I thought that was a good way to do it, plus it was a learning experience. Unfortunately, I guess I don't know about people's attendance like the course

where I think some signed up just to get the free books. It's too bad about that part. But the ones who came you'll find working on the project (Participant #27).

One participant expressed that the educational events were too focused on plant identification and use. She was hoping to learn more about the spiritual aspects of Mi'kmaq plant use.

They were good if you just wanted to learn what the plants and the plant parts are. That's good but extremely one sided. When you have questions about the spirituality part, they are personal and it's kind of hard to ask them. I know they were there to teach us the plant parts. I guess we thought he [Laurie Lacey] would talk about the spirituality. That's what I went for. Like if I wanted to just learn about the plants I would go to an agricultural school and I learned a lot about that from school in biology (Participant #16).

The trail committee hopes within the coming year, a Mi'kmaq friend of the community will do a presentation on Mi'kmaq spirituality and the land.

7.5 Perceptions of the Trail Project and its Potential for Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development

7.5.1 Introduction

Questions 12 through 15 of the interview guide pertain to the trail project and its potential for MCBDD (see Table 6). The following section is divided not only by question categories but also by themes that were generated from participants' responses. In particular, lengthy responses with respect to Question 14 (see Table 6) are divided under the headings of spiritual, emotional, physical and mental development, cultural revitalization, tourism and economic development.

The majority of participants were aware of the trail project and rated it as being a good to excellent idea (see Table 6). Most who were interested in the trail project stated they could contribute in a physical way (cutting, clearing, construction).

I could help with the more physical stuff of getting the trail cut out. I'd be interested in getting involved (Participant #10).

I'm most definitely interested in working on the trail. I thought you guys would be working on the construction of it already. I work during the weekdays but I could get in the woods and work on Saturday or Sunday (Participant #19).

Others felt they could participate through offering knowledge, guidance and education.

The following participant is helping with plant identification and various educational activities.

I'm very proud and honoured to be participating in this and I really look forward to the following year to participate in all of this. I think I should sort of be like a back person that would be like a troubleshooter. like I could help with saying where certain plants are gonna go. Like I could give advice such as 'well there's a fir tree there and that's too much shade and well that plant's not going to grow there.' I could see myself being that sort of person (Participant #11).

Table 6. Perceptions of the Trail Project and its Potential for Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development

Responses to Interview Guide Questions #12-15	Total Number of Respondents
<p>12. Are you aware of the creation of the Bear River Mi'kmaq medicinal plant trail project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Aware of the trail project 26 person</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Not aware of the trail project 2 persons</p> <p>What do you think of the project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Excellent 9 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Very Good 12 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Good 7 persons</p>	28
<p>13. Are interested in participating in the trail project?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Interested in participating 23 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Not interested in participating 5 persons</p> <p>How do you perceive your participation?</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Physical Labour (trail worker) 12 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail Committee Member 7 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Plant education and project guidance 4 persons</p>	28
<p>14. Do you believe the creation of the trail could benefit of develop The Bear River First Nation? (e.g. spiritually, physically, mentally and/or emotionally)</p> <p>Spiritually develop the community</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Will move the community forward in their spiritual strengthening 1 person</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Foster spiritual connection between nature and Mi'kmaq spirituality 5 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Trail will offer a place of solitude and peacefulness 3 persons</p> <p>Emotionally develop the community</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Community ownership of the trail will promote community Pride and boost self-esteem 3 persons</p> <p>Physically develop the community</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Recreational (exercise) opportunity 17 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Tourism and economic development 3 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Education about traditional medicines and holistic health care 5 persons</p> <p>Mentally develop the community</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Cultural revival through traditional Mi'kmaq plant-use education and education about Mi'kmaq values and ways 19 persons</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Education and awareness about the environment and respect for the interconnectedness of all things 6 persons</p>	28

Education concerning plant identification and traditional Mi'kmaq		
Plant-use	21 persons	
Important education for all community members	9 persons	
15. Do you believe the creation of the trail could benefit of develop the Bear River First Nation? (e.g. spiritually, physically, mentally and/or emotionally) [Cont'd]		
Important education for children and future generations	19 persons	
Promotes hands on, on-the-spot learning	4 persons	
16. What do you feel the vision (or purpose) of the trail should be?		28
A symbol to move the community forward	1 person	
Awareness of the interconnectedness of all things	1 person	
Awareness and knowledge of the ancestors and their connection to Mother Earth	3 persons	
Beauty	1 person	
Cultural education about the Mi'kmaq ancestors and traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge of plants	13 persons	
Environmental education and hands-on learning	15 persons	
Mi'kmaq spiritual revival	3 persons	
Recreation	5 persons	
Traditional healing	1 person	
Did not know what the vision should be	4 persons	

7.5.2 The Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail Project and its Potential for Community Development

In a recent Digby Courier newspaper article, an Elder of the community stated how she felt the trail would affect the community (see Appendix 10).

The trail is not just about physical healing, but also the mind and the spirit. It will bring us closer to the Creator. Plants and trees will help us to be healthy and help us to heal (Digby Courier, Nov. 3/1999).

The medicine wheel teachings state that development must always occur at the individual level before anything else (Meuse [Medicine Wheel Workshop] 1999). For this reason, I asked participants about how they perceived the trail would affect them personally. As shown in the results (see Table 5), the majority of participants perceived that the trail

could be personally beneficial in a variety of ways. Similar reasons were also given for why the trail could benefit the community. Participants' responses revolved around physical, emotional, intellectual, mental, cultural, spiritual, environmental and economic components of development. Often their responses combined several or all of these elements, illustrating the interconnectedness of each. For example it is difficult for people to have a spiritual experience with nature if they do not have a place to be physically (the environment). Many times the benefits they perceived were simply reflections of what they valued most about the trail.

7.5.3 The Trail Project and Spiritual Development

Over half the participants felt that the trail could give themselves and the community an opportunity to develop spiritually (see Table 6). As one participant stated:

Privacy and solitude. The trail will provide so much in terms of education, in terms of edible and medicinal knowledge. But also the journey that it can provide. I think the trail is a great idea. Just to travel the trail it would help give me peace of mind. I want to absorb the knowledge and being with nature makes me feel whole. The trail will give me a special place back in the woods to pray. If this trail can provide me with a space to pray and feel connected, this would be wonderful (Participant #25).

Several participants expressed the community's need for spiritual strengthening and the potential of the trail to help in this process.

Because of cultural assimilation, the community is lacking in spirituality and I think that education about the spirituality between the ancestors and the plants could be very beneficial and healing. The younger people are really trying to regain and search for their identity. Education about the plants and the Mi'kmaq spirituality could be very beneficial to the youth. Our ancestors would want us to pass this knowledge and wisdom and continue to teach our people (Participant #1).

For the people on the reserve, it's going to put them in touch with their traditions and roots, things that they didn't even know about. It's going to allow people to become reconnected with nature and Mother Earth. The trail has the potential to bring the community back to its roots (Participant #27).

One participant commented that the trail could help her in her journey to heal her mind and spirit.

I think this [the trail] would be beneficial for myself. I have to heal my mind and spirit but I'm not quite ready for it. I have been starting to get out more now and I feel like I'm coming out of seclusion and I'm ready to learn and to move on. I participated in the St. Ann's day this year. I could really benefit from the trail. It will help me to get on with it (Participant #24).

Participants generally felt that reconnecting to this knowledge would help the community as a whole in strengthening its spiritual connection to the ancestors and nature.

7.5.4 The Trail Project and Mental, Intellectual and Emotional Development

Over half the participants felt the trail had much potential as a learning tool for development (see Table 6). As this participant states:

Like I say I'm learning. It's benefiting me cause I'm learning. Myself I don't believe in a lot of pills and stuff from the drug stores and I would rather be taking something naturally that I know just grows out there and it ain't gonna kill you and all that good stuff. With plants you don't have all the side effects and stuff. Myself I'd rather try something natural out there (Participant #22).

This participant described the trail as a mental stimulant:

Mentally it's a stimulant to get the mind working and to get back into reading about this kind of education. Being with nature is always something that I love to do. To be with nature and learn how to use it and how it works with the cycles within yourself and outside of yourself (Participant #11).

Many participants felt that the trail would be an excellent medium for learning about their ancestors and their traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge. They felt that the hands-on (experiential) approach would be the best for the children and for other community members. People could learn at their own pace and in their own way. Here is how some participants described the potential benefits:

Mentally and emotionally, the community will benefit because people will be thinking about the Creator, so they'll have this peace of mind so mentally that's a good thing. But I also think people will get a sense of pride which will mentally

prepare them for the fact that they'll start thinking about the things they're going to learn on this trail. These are things that our ancestors used on an everyday basis and here we are beginning to revive that, rekindle it or bring it back and so mentally that gives you a real sense of pride that this is happening. Now this ties in with your emotions. So like when these things are happening, that could bring my emotions out to the point that I may shed tears. But it would be tears of joy, brought on by these thoughts and the happiness of being in this serene place (Participant #8).

The trail is something that you can see and touch, so you learn this way. It will help maintain our culture for future generations for others to see and sustain it (Participant #7).

The majority of participants felt strongly that the trail would provide important education for community youths. As these participants express:

This education is important for our youth. Our youth are our tomorrow and they should know everything there is to know about our culture. It will be beneficial for old and young to learn about the woods and everything that goes along with it (Participant #26).

Well I think it's great in terms of access because otherwise a 9 or 10 year old might not necessarily have an opportunity to get to know the plant and they might just see it as being a weed or whatever. They can actually walk [on the trail] and it's a way for them to spend time with nature and the earth to educate themselves. It's great that way and access is what it's all about. They are the future and they're the ones who are going to be taking care of it [the] trail in so many years (Participant #13).

One participant stated that the trail would be an excellent educational tool for use in part of the school's classroom curriculum. She states:

It's nice for the children. This kind of education could be incorporated into the schools. The science class could go outside and actually see the trail and incorporate education about the plants into their learning. The trail should be wide enough for a wheel chair and should also be made accessible to elderly people (Participant #6).

Others like these participants felt it would be an excellent hands-on teaching tool for the children.

The trail will definitely benefit the community. They can use the trail for on-the-spot learning and then take the pamphlet home with them. People won't have to

learn it in a book; they can actually see the plants and read about them there [on the trail]. This will be good for teaching our children (Participant #10).

One participant also felt it would help to boost the self-esteem of community members through recognition of its accomplishments.

I think the trail will be an excellent tool for teaching the kids hands-on. It will be also good because the community seeing what they've done will help boost their self-esteem (Participant #14).

Some participants felt that the trail project would help to increase the environmental awareness of the community by teaching about the plants and the interconnectedness of all things. As these participants describe it:

It's going to create awareness as I said before. If people could learn to gather and use the plants this could help our community. If what our ancestors did was researched properly, then I think teaching about the culture of the plants would be a good thing (Participant #18).

Your environment plays such a major role in who and what you are. One thing when we talk about the trail is understanding that we're all connected to the earth, so recognition of being in oneness with that because we are all connected. The three of us in this room are connected. And in spite of how this trail affects individuals, it's still a trail that can affect everyone in the community (Participant #7).

Anything that is rare we could take it up and move it from that spot if there is some kind of development or cutting. So it will help the community environmentally in terms of teaching them what kinds of plants are rare (Participant #12).

One participant, who stated she was very spiritually connected to Mother Earth felt the trail concept was a great idea for the community but did not feel that she would need it the way others would.

For myself, I don't think I'll be using it a lot, only because I only need to walk in the woods around here, I don't need the trail concept. But I think it's a good beginning for a lot of the people on the reserve and hopefully with the workshops that we do this winter, they'll see the practical aspects of it as well. Like if they

see skull cap then big deal, but if they know it can be used to cure headaches, I think that will drive its importance home. Also hands-on is how they were taught

years ago. Hands-on is always a better approach. Children are like an open sieve and we're like a closed book sometimes (Participant #27).

7.5.5 The Trail Project and Physical Development

The majority of participants responded that community recreation and exercise would be the main physical opportunities offered by the trail (see Table 6). As these participants describe:

Physically the trail will provide us [the community] with that [physical] opportunity, but at people's own pace. That's what is unique about the trail. Physically it will provide an opportunity for exercise at your own pace. Whether you want to go fast or only do part of it, this gets back to the individual but also meets the needs of everyone in the community (Participant #8).

I think the community could benefit from the trail because of the education and recreation it will offer (Participant #19).

I think physically it will benefit myself because I'll get out there and hopefully lose a couple of pounds (Participant #11).

The following participant felt that walking on the trail would be a good place to clear her mind:

I like to walk in the woods just to clear my head. It's good for the soul (Participant #22).

Some participants felt the trail could affect them physically through teaching them how to use the plants for holistic health. As this participant states:

I myself am interested in learning more because I would use the plants. I cure migraines on other people, but I can't cure them myself. Maybe I will learn through learning about the plants (Participant #4).

7.5.6 The Trail Project and Cultural Revitalization

The majority of participants saw great potential in the trail to contribute to cultural revival within the community (see Table 6). Participants felt that the trail would help increase community members' knowledge with respect to traditional Mi'kmaq plant

uses, as well as some of the customs, rituals and values the Mi'kmaq ancestors associated with plants. In regard to the trail project and cultural revival, this participant said:

Oh definitely! Culturally for sure, because everyone wants to get back into their roots and know where this knowledge came from and why they used certain things. Along with the education about plants, there should be education on how they got to be where they are, how they are used and legends and lore (Participant #13).

In addition, it was felt that revitalization would help instill feelings of community identity, self-esteem and pride:

When you get back your culture, you get back your self-esteem. When you get back your self-esteem there's not as much jealousy over which one knows more and things like that (Participant #17).

One participant explained that the trail not only had potential to revive traditional plant-knowledge but also the traditional Mi'kmaq teaching method of 'learning by observation':

When we talk about regaining or reviving or even learning for the first time as an individual that jeez these are the things that our ancestors did on a daily basis. So its like all of a sudden now I'm beginning to learn and then I teach my kids and now their learning and then the next thing you realize that your actually rekindling that teaching by observation. So that is another aspect of the trail, the fact that mentally your going to feel better teaching your kids the spiritual part of the plants and the trail (Participant #8).

7.5.7 The Trail Project, Tourism and Economic Development Opportunities

Although I believe that economic development could be listed under almost all of the categories listed above (in particular physical development), I have chosen to put this topic under its own heading. Most participants perceived the present primary function of the trail to be for cultural and spiritual development. However some participants commented on the potential of the trail for tourism and economic development. This participant perceives that the trail will have an economic spin-off effect:

I don't foresee a lot of jobs coming from this trail, I thought it was more for the spiritual enjoyment. Some people are seeing dollar signs with this trail. I do think there will be a spin-off effect. You get people up onto the trail, well they might stop at the craft store or the basket place (Participant #27).

In the future, the community may choose to pursue further economic opportunities from the trail. A few participants felt that this would be good for the community in terms of providing more jobs.

Hopefully, eventually in a few years down the road it will be like a tourism project, like something for the reserve. The reserve is lacking in these kinds of projects, and employment. I think it can be a really good thing because the trail combines all of these things (Participant #22).

The economic development potential of the trail will be expanded upon later in this chapter.

7.6 Participants' Perceptions Concerning a Trail Vision

Participants responded in thoughtful and creative ways when asked about a trail vision (see Table 6). Although answers varied, the following themes were predominant:

- Education about plant identification, habitats, and traditional Mi'kmaq uses of medicinal and edible plants.
- Reviving knowledge and ways of the Mi'kmaq ancestors.
- Promoting environmental education, awareness and access to medicinal and edible plants.
- Recreation.
- A holistic combination of all elements.

The following visions are reflections of what participants value most about the trail. The following section relays the visions that participants perceived for the trail.

Some participants felt that a vision for the trail should focus on education concerning plant identification, habitats and the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of medicinal and edible plants:

To teach people about the plants and the environment. Education and recreation would be two things that kids could definitely benefit from (Participant #19).

The vision should focus on education about the plants and their uses. Education should be an important part of the trail (Participant #8).

Education. Anything that our youth can learn about in the culture is good for them. They should know everything there is to know (Participant #26).

I would say education maybe. The education that kids, adults, the Elders and everyone could get from it, because there are so many things that have been lost up here that maybe this could be something that is kept alive (Participant #23).

Other stated the vision should be focused on the Mi'kmaq ancestors and the revival of their knowledge. As these participants state:

The trail will be like a book of knowledge. The vision should focus on bringing back the ancestors' knowledge (Participant #4).

At one point we had talked about the idea for a Mi'kmaq village. That was something we thought of long ago. You could have wigwams and education about the Mi'kmaq peoples. This might be something that could be included in the trail vision (Participant #16).

A few participants felt that the vision should promote awareness of Mi'kmaq plant uses, access to the plants and respect for the environment. As these participants elaborate:

It should include education and access pertaining to plants and the Mi'kmaq knowledge. Making people feel like they're getting to know their culture more. In terms of access for people, it gives people a trail to walk down. It also gives the nurse and the health representative access to the plants for them to learn about, for the benefit of the community (Participant #13).

Awareness of everything the ancestors did surrounding the plants. Awareness of Mi'kmaq culture and connection to the plants and education about the uses of the environment while at the same time showing how to respect the environment. This kind of education will teach about the importance of plants and the environment (Participant #18).

Many participants believed that the trail would be an excellent recreational opportunity.

As this participant states:

Recreation and I think education. I know that once this trail gets built its going to get well used, because there are so many walkers up here and a lot of people go down town just to walk around the flat. Myself, when I walk I'd rather walk in the woods instead of along a highway so I definitely think its going to work and benefit the community (Participant #22).

Lastly, a few participants felt that the trail vision should encompass many aspects of development. As these three participants share:

Beauty! Education, recreation and culture, it's beautiful that you can find all these things in one place. You don't have to go to Digby Neck to find this one and then all the way to Colchester Co. to find another. It's all there in the same place and that's beautiful. (Participant #17)

Culture, education and solitude (Participant #25).

Culture and education. It will also be good for exercise. It gives people a place to go for these things (Participant #28).

7.7 Results Summary

As stated in Chapter One a key objective of this research was to examine community members' perceptions concerning their traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge, their thoughts on revitalization of the knowledge, and their perceptions concerning the trail project and its potential for holistic MCB. With respect to their knowledge, all participants (including the ones who knew ten or more plant uses) stated that they felt that their knowledge was limited concerning the traditional Mi'kmaq uses of plants. Yet, a positive finding of this research was that almost all participants stated they were interested in learning more about traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants and revitalizing the knowledge for personal and community benefit. In addition, most were also interested in learning more about the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview, legends and lore surrounding the plants. They stated that this kind of education could benefit themselves mentally and intellectually through increasing their knowledge of edible and medicinal plants uses, traditional Mi'kmaq culture, and the ancestors spiritual relationship to nature. With respect to whether or not they felt the trail project could contribute to holistic CBD a significant finding was that all participants felt the trail project had the potential to develop the community in spiritual, physical, emotional, cultural and intellectual ways. All but two participants were aware of the creation of the trail and thought that it was a good or excellent project for the community. This is a

relevant finding that indicates the trail project has a good reception by the community. In addition, most participants said they would be interested in participating on the trail project through physical labour, helping with trail planning (e.g. on the trail committee), teaching plant knowledge, and offering guidance and direction to the trail project. Participant responses concerning a trail vision were very creative and ranged from Mi'kmaq spiritual revival, education about the Mi'kmaq medicinal and edible uses of plants, education about the Mi'kmaq ancestors, recreation, traditional healing and environmental education and awareness focused on hands-on learning.

7.8 Linking Research Findings to the Literature

The Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Trail project was a participatory process that aimed to facilitate community participation, ownership and pride. The project fits the essential elements of Participatory Action Research literature. Community members were engaged and involved in defining, planning and implementing the trail project. They became involved in different aspects of the trail ranging from simply giving their opinion, to participating in the workshops and adult education course, to offering physical and mental labour in the trail's creation. Participants have stated on numerous occasions that they have learned greatly from their experience.

An important point to highlight with respect to the trail project and CBD literature is the issue of time. The Mi'kmaq concept that 'the time must be right' for certain things to occur must be considered very carefully in CBD projects. The CBD literature promotes a very linear and systematic approach to project planning. Yet, it also suggests that projects must be flexible and that time and patience are of the essence. The important question surrounding this issue is that of control. Who is in control? If a Mi'kmaq community chooses to use or modify tools to their advantage, does it really matter where they came from? If as a community they choose these tools, then they no longer exist as imposed instruments of development, but instead tools to pick and choose from, in the CBD process. Through contemporary community projects the BRFN has

incorporated many non-Natives tools of development into their traditional ways. This history of combining the two approaches has allowed the conceptual framework defined in Chapter Four to be both familiar and conducive to the BRFN and the trail project.

In support of the medicine wheel literature described in Chapter Three, this research shows that both the project process and the end result (a Mi'kmaq interpretive trail) have the potential for participants to develop mental, emotional, physical and spiritual components of their wellbeing. Every way community members experience the trail process fosters potential for some form of development.

Community members are attempting to revive traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge with respect to edible and medicinal plants through the medium of an interpretive hiking trail. Essentially the community is employing what the literature calls a cultural revitalization approach to holistic Mi'kmaq development. As the literature indicates, not all community members will be happy with the revitalization of traditional ways (Dedam 1995 *in* Leavitt: 114; Warry 1998). Dedam (1995: 114) states:

There are some people here in our community who want to go back to Indian spirituality, but there's a great deal of resistance from many other people because they don't see Indian spirituality in relation to Catholicism or Christianity, and they feel threatened by it. When you look at it spirituality is not a religion; it's a way of life. Yet some of the people are scared of it – for example, when there was a sweetgrass ceremony here at the band hall. They feel that if they start participating then all the things that they used to practice are not good; it's one or the other.

Although I believe some community members share the fear that Dedam talks about, the majority are very positive about learning traditional Mi'kmaq knowledge and ways. According to the experiential literature, a core component of Mi'kmaq learning is based on learning from everyday lived experiences (Graveline 1998). Integral to this kind of education is 'learner initiation and direction of the process' (Graveline 1998: 183). This participant shares her experience with beginning to learn about plants:

Last Sunday we went out to camp and ----- was there and she had her plant book and I really never paid much attention to any of that stuff. I didn't really know didly squat about much of it. So anyway the water had gone down at Grand Lake and so all of us, the kid's, the dogs and basically the women, went down to

the water edge and I learned about something that I never saw before in my life, about a pitcher plant. Never heard tell of it before. We found cranberries that we never knew were there and we camped on that lake for years. And I just thought that was neat. Like it [experience] sparked, some interest in plants that I never knew was there (Participant #7).

She went on to say that she would definitely use the trail experience to learn more about medicinal and edible plants. The enthusiasm this participant expressed in realizing her interest in plants is what one of my resource persons (1999) refers to as:

...the component that natural resources play towards mental health. When you develop a sense of pride and ownership through an awareness of things, then you become healthier as an individual, and then it's contagious, it spreads to your children, houses, and relatives and throughout the community.

Awareness of natural surroundings can also instill feelings of pride and responsibility. These emotions can work towards strengthening an environmental awareness amongst community members (McKay pers. comm. 1999).

As supported by community development literature, the physical and economic elements of CBD are very important. The committee has chosen to work in phases and for now cultural development is the primary focus. It is thought that the trail will mostly provide economic spin-offs in terms of more people coming to the reserve and buying from local artisans, stores and possibly materials related to the trail. Yet to date, some paid jobs have included the removal and trucking of garbage from the trail, the cutting and clearing of the trail and construction of trail structures (bridges and boardwalks). Future jobs include the camp restoration, construction of picnic tables, garbage cans and trail signs. It is also hoped that a community member could become employed as a trail interpreter. If the community chooses, its future could be similar to those projects of other Mi'kmaq communities which have initiated sustainable economic development from cultural and eco-tourism ventures. Frideres (1991a: 154) states that development of tribal economies must do the following:

1. development must be of a scale that can be controlled by the tribe.
2. development should be labour intensive, not capital intensive. It is better to create more jobs at moderate pay than few at high wages.
3. jobs should be consistent with Indian lifestyle and kinship obligations.

4. development should be oriented to the 'inner economy' of the reserve.
5. development should focus on tribal rather than individual businesses.

I believe the trail project encompasses these criteria perfectly. A recent Nova Scotia Nature Tourism Study (Nova Scotia Economic Development and Tourism 1999: 2) showed that "nature tourism is of interest world-wide and one in which there is significant growth potential". As mentioned in Chapter Three, multi-use, forest-based and cultural opportunities offer the most potential for Mi'kmaq communities to define, own and benefit from development on their terms. If the BRFN chooses, there is much potential for the trail project to become a sustainable economic opportunity.

7.9 Conclusion

The benefits derived from the trail project combined with a participatory process help to form the essential criteria for Mi'kmaq CBD. Also important in the CBD process are the roles of facilitators and external agents. The following Chapter reflects on some final points with respect to my role as facilitator in the trail project and the role of the FNF. In addition, the importance of language and oral history in cultural revitalization projects is touched on. Chapter Eight concludes by highlighting the significant role land title will play in community-based development and discusses recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER VIII: REFLECTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

My role in the research process was not typical of a conventional researcher. I maintained an active research role mainly through offering comments, advice and reflections to help community members in the trail project. As discussed in the thesis, these comments were not always accepted, but that was not the point. The point was to facilitate the group members to make their own informed decisions concerning the project process. The following reflections and recommendations are from my non-Native experience and are not meant to represent the views of Mi'kmaq involved in this research. However, I hope that these reflections will contribute food for thought for the trail committee, the BRFN and other Mi'kmaq communities engaged in similar community-based projects. In addition, I hope it will contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning participatory research, Aboriginal communities and CBD.

8.2 Project Reflections

8.2.1 The Role of Language and Oral History in Cultural Revitalization Projects

No cultural revitalization project would be complete without addressing the issue of language. Community members perceived that their traditional knowledge with respect to Mi'kmaq uses of medicinal and edible plants is limited in comparison to what their ancestors once knew. Many factors have contributed to this loss, but Elders have identified the loss of language and oral stories as key causes. It only makes sense that some of the factors that contributed to its loss will be key in its revival. It is important that the few community members who still have remnants of oral history and who have retained some of the Mi'kmaq language become engaged in the project process. These are the people who truly understand traditional plant knowledge and can teach it in an authentically Mi'kmaq way. Language is an integral part of Mi'kmaq identity and unfortunately there are very few community members who can speak it. Attempts are

being made in the community's school to teach the language and this will only have the positive effect of culturally strengthening the community and the trail project.

8.2.2 Fostering Community Potential

As shown in the literature, one of the main benefits of cultural revitalization projects is the strengthening of community self-esteem. Often Mi'kmaq communities do not realize the potential they have to offer themselves and the outside world (McKay pers. comm. 1999). At a time when the project momentum was low, I desperately tried to understand what I was doing wrong. One of my resource persons advised me that it was important for me to understand the cycle of failure many Mi'kmaq communities are caught in. An Elder once told him that "Our people do not know how to win". He was implying that sometimes low points in the project or the negativity certain community members bestow, could mostly be attributed to this problem. The key to dealing with this lies in helping communities to realize their potential to succeed. All communities have natural leaders, who will be most important in helping their communities become conscious of their potential. I believe the BRFN is starting to realize their potential with respect to the trail project. Already it is being recognized as an exciting initiative by the community and in the surrounding non-Native community (see Appendix 10). I believe that with the popularity of hiking trails, and broader society's increasing interest in naturopathic medicine, recognition of this trail will become far-reaching.

8.2.3 Reflections of a Facilitator: My Experience

Theoretically and practically, it is important to discuss the empowerment of Aboriginal communities to define, implement and maintain their own initiatives of community development. But similar to all community-based projects, MCBBD can be a difficult and time-consuming process. The following are questions and possible impediments to the development process that I encountered in my work with the BRFN:

- i. What happens when the more highly educated community members, who could facilitate participatory development projects, become bogged down

in the bureaucracy of Mi'kmaq government or other jobs and simply do not have time?

- ii. What happens when there is a core group of grassroots community members who are interested and motivated to address a community need, but do not know where to start?
- iii. What happens when there are no partnerships or communications to the outside world where viable funding opportunities and certain technical expertise remain untouchable?
- iv. What happens when inter-community politics and lack of unity stifles the development process?
- v. What happens when volunteers get burnt out or are too busy to participate?

If there is not someone within the Mi'kmaq community or Nation who can deal with these questions at a time when initiation of a CBD project is critical, then I believe there is a role for certain outsiders in the CBD process. It is important to note that these outsiders should not be just anyone. Community development workers must work with the wellbeing of the community upper most in their minds. No matter for whom they are working externally, they are always accountable to the tribal government and the traditional leaders of the community, and through them accountable to the broader community (McKay pers. comm. 1999).

My research experience with the Bear River First Nation has been a positive one. Initially I had fears of perpetuating the wrongs of the past by facilitating research that was not culturally appropriate. Fundamental to this was my fear that I could cause more harm than good. The fact that I was a non-Native outsider contributed to my overly sensitive attitude, and was apparent when I talked or wrote about the topic. With the help of a Band Councilor, the guidance of one my resource persons and an Elder, I was able to convert my nervousness into productivity. I felt truly honoured to facilitate this research but was unsure of what I would be able to offer in terms of the project research process. The conventional researcher/informant relationship became almost reversed. If anything, I was one step behind in terms of life experience. In terms of education I offered

technical, motivational and organizational skills. In addition I was able to access resources for the trail committee that were more difficult to obtain. I often thought of myself as the 'nagging force' behind the trail committee's actions. Two non-Native people who were once members of the BRFN told me that they were surprised by the community's positive response to me. I would say that there are both dependent and independent variables that contributed to my research experience with the Bear River Mi'kmaq community. The following are certain variables that I perceive have positively affected this research:

- i. The resource person who introduced and helped me present my original thesis topic to the band is very well respected by Mi'kmaq communities. On numerous occasions, people from the grassroots and Mi'kmaq government have told me of his integrity and respect. Without his help, guidance and recommendations, this research would not have occurred. The Chief-and-Council's faith in him contributed greatly to my legitimacy and the research project.
- ii. The community member whom the Band asked to help introduce me to the community became one of my resource persons. She helped introduce me to community members by taking me door to door and explaining who I was. She also provided me with context when I was unsure about certain things. She has also been an instrumental person in the trail project process. Her help contributed significantly to the commencement of this research project.
- iii. Being in the 'right place at the right time' was an important factor in this research. I was told that because of a lack of human power (meaning no Mi'kmaq community member at that particular moment, had time to facilitate this project), I would be an asset to help with the project. I was also told that the fact that I was an outsider could of work against me but could also work to my benefit in the sense that I would be more objective with respect to the community and the project (Meuse pers. comm. 1998).
- iv. Due to a relatively small Mi'kmaq population on the Bear River reserve, there is much intermarriage with non-Native people. Perhaps this integration with the non-Native world has fostered a more trusting attitude towards certain²⁹ non-Native people.

²⁹ I say certain because it would be an overgeneralization to say that the community has a trusting attitude towards all non-Native people. Many times I have heard comments

- v. Each community member who participated in the research, whether through workshops, focus groups or in-depth interviews, was told that although this research would help contribute to my academic objectives, it could also benefit the community through a participatory process with the result being a Mi'kmaq interpretive trail. Hence, I believe the fact that this research was defined and owned by the community (as opposed to myself) helped strengthen my legitimacy and intentions for doing the research.
- vi. Various community development workers told me the phrase “either you got it or you don't” prior to my work with the BRFN. This phrase pertained to how well people would respond based not on my research methods but on me as a person. There were certain things I could not learn in a book and realized had to come from within. I believe that my understanding of Mi'kmaq values and customs and my genuine belief in the seven principles gave me guidance in working with community members.

8.2.4 The Role of External Agencies in Mi'kmaq Community Development

Community members have most of the skills needed for the trail project, but sometimes there is a need (as in the case of this project) for both technical advice and financial support. In general, community groups must be realistic about partnerships with external agencies and must be able to strike the fine balance between the needs and objectives of projects and those of outside agencies. This does not mean that they succumb to or become dependent on an external agency or receive substantial funding and not be held accountable for where and why money was spent. It means that community groups must maintain a comfortable partnership for support that moves projects forward without jeopardizing the community vision and objectives. Groups should be conscious of what support they do gain, and before seeking support make sure that agency objectives coincide with community objectives.

Often a middle person between the external agency and the community is needed. This may be a community member but it may also be an informed outsider. Ideally it is

regarding distrust of non-Natives and that racial tensions still exist between the BRFN and the surrounding non-Native community.

best to have a person who can remain as objective as possible, knowing both the needs of the community as well as the external agency. Depending on the capacity of the community group, this person will act in different ways. If the group has capacity in terms of writing proposals, accessing resources, planning and implementation, then the middle person will work 'with' the community. The community group can define and direct the person to its needs. If the community group is lacking in organizational capacity but is motivated to learn, the middle person will initially work 'for' the community, as in my case. In this scenario, the facilitator and the core group will mutually learn with the ultimate goal being the complete organizational self-sufficiency of the community group. The middle person will work towards the scenario of working 'with' the community and like me, move towards working oneself out of a job.

In the trail process, I helped to reduce intercommunity (trail committee) tension, provided dialogue for clearer communication between the FNF and the trail committee, and helped with organizational capacity-building. Capacity building in reference to this project occurred mostly in terms of learning skills to design trail plans, finding resources, doing research, writing proposals, and implementing trail action.

I believe the role of external agencies like the FNF can help in strengthening grassroots capacity. If they are well-intentioned and foster the community to define their own agenda as in the case of the FNF, then this relationship works to enhance the project. No person or group can function in isolation. The difference from the detrimental development approaches of the past lies in the kinds of partnerships that are made. With strong organizational and leadership skills, grassroots community members will work towards making good decisions regarding partnerships for moral, financial and technical help.

8.3 Recommendations for Future Research

8.3.1 *Longitudinal Monitoring*

In this research I have reported on the perceptions and participation of community members. This project is still in its early phases and follow-up research could be beneficial. To understand in detail which participatory experiences positively or negatively affected trail committee participants, interviews would have to be conducted later in the project.

Much of my research was based on community members' perceptions. It would be interesting to conduct further research on the trail in its completed state, to determine if the holistic development (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development) that community members perceived would occur actually did. It would also be interesting to re-interview participants to see if their knowledge base with respect to traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants actually increased. This comparison would help in determining if this cultural revitalization project actually succeeded in increasing community members knowledge base and strengthening overall cultural and spiritual fulfillment.

8.3.2 *Mi'kmaq Land Title and Community-Based Development*

The BRFN is known to have one of the largest land bases per capita (in comparison to other reserves) in NS. Most reserves simply do not have enough land even to ponder a project like the trail. I believe the use of traditional territories is going to be critical to Mi'kmaq communities in their quest for CBD and self-determination. Smith (1998: 331) states:

Traditional territories are those lands which have been and are currently used by Aboriginal communities. Some of this land may be "Reserve" land, but much of it may also be "Crown" land. On some areas of Crown land, Aboriginal Peoples negotiated treaties with the federal government ensuring protection of their way of life and sharing of natural resources. In areas where treaties were not negotiated, the Canadian Constitutions and courts have recognized "Aboriginal rights." These rights include continued use of land based on historical custom.

The Mi'kmaq Nation only engaged in Peace and Friendship Treaties with the British government. It has become increasingly known that the Mi'kmaq never ceded or extinguished their rights to the land. This in essence means that Mi'kmaq should still have exclusive title to the land. Doyle-Bedwell and Cohen (1999: 13) state that in *Delgamuukw* it was found that Aboriginal title could be summarized as follows:

First, that aboriginal title encompasses the right to exclusive use and occupation of the land held pursuant to that title for a variety of purposes, which need not be aspects of those aboriginal practices, customs and traditions which are integral to distinctive aboriginal cultures; and second that those protected uses must not be irreconcilable with the nature of the group's attachment to the land.

Mi'kmaq people are now looking to receive a fair share of the land base and/or compensation for what they have lost. This may mean areas of Crown land or land that is not being used for its original purpose (e.g. military defense base). The Treaty Aboriginal Rights Research Center is conducting a Traditional Land-Use Study with Mi'kmaq hunters, fishers and gatherers throughout Nova Scotia. Oral histories and interviews, combined with historical documents, will form a significant portion of proof for use in comprehensive land claims. This research, combined with s. 35(1) of the Constitution Act of 1982, should ensure the rights of Aboriginal people to occupation (not just use) of their traditional territories. Future research concerning the issue of land title, Mi'kmaq communities and CBD will be crucial.

8.4 Research Summary

This research has reflected upon the perceptions and participation of trail committee participants in the trail project with respect to project planning, implementation and accomplishments. Overall it was found that problems such as the initial lack of core group consensus, lack of an Elders' presence and lack of unity concerning a project purpose led to problems in project planning and action. Cumulatively these factors led to a drain on project momentum. Yet community values such as commitment, dedication and spirit led to increased committee capacity. In addition, the eventual involvement of a community Elder, other community members and

an experienced, empathetic external agency helped the committee to restore balance and consensus. From this balance flowed a renewed commitment to project objectives and accomplishments. A key discovery in this process was that as long as momentum was occurring and work was being done, adherence to details did not always matter. Strict adherence to deadlines sometimes served only to discourage both the committee and me. Committee members realized the importance of clarity in making decisions so that misunderstandings in conducting trail work would not stifle the project.

The fact that the committee stated early on that they were not ready to define a vision may have been indicative of the fact that the idea for the trail did not originate from the community, but from the FNF. However, the interest in pursuing the project was very strong and the community members felt adamant that they could make the project work. The time frame from when the idea for the project was planted to when I advised the trail committee to form a vision was too short. As stated earlier this advise did not coincide with the traditional Mi'kmaq way. This is not to say that the committee should not have immediately decided on a united focus or purpose³⁰. As shown in this thesis, most of the project challenges stemmed from the lack of a united focus. The trail committee eventually defined a vision when members were fully prepared emotionally, spiritually, mentally and physically.

Integral to the future of the trail committee and the trail itself is broader support and participation by other community members. Volunteer burnout is a very real concern in projects such as these. A few community members have been doing much of the work and this may not be sustainable or productive. The broader community has given great verbal support for the project, but this support has often not translated into action. For true community ownership (as opposed to committee ownership), other community

³⁰ Perhaps for non-Native readers the distinction between a purpose and a vision is negligible. Yet they are important terms to distinguish with respect to the MCBP process. I believe the term vision for Mi'kmaq is much more layered and dynamic than the word purpose. For non-Native people like me the terms vision and purpose are almost synonymous. This issue exemplifies the importance of understanding Mi'kmaq ways even in something as small as one word.

members must become actively involved. Volunteer support is mostly needed on the trail committee, as trail workers are often easy to find once decisions have been made. In addition to gaining broader community support, the committee is in need of two major things. The first is a committee planner who will organize meetings, help to set agendas, facilitate project decisions and record down meeting minutes. Essentially this is the work both the FNF and I have done to date, and I feel strongly that for the committee to become completely self-sufficient, our roles must be appropriated by community members. In addition, a community member who could oversee work on the ground is also needed. Someone is also needed to implement committee decisions and identify community members with skills and dedication to do the jobs required. Two new committee members have recently undertaken these roles and are doing an excellent job. Their help on the committee and on the ground keeps the trail committee aware of the work that is being done and contributes to a good momentum. Community members are continuously learning the skills and capacity needed to own and sustain the trail project. Increasingly I sense the community retaining ownership and feeling proud of that ownership.

This research also examined community members' perceptions with respect to the trail project and its potential for holistic culture-based community development. Themes generated from this research included: the limited knowledge base of the community with respect to edible and medicinal plants; participants' perceived need for cultural revitalization of traditional Mi'kmaq plant knowledge; their interest in revitalizing the knowledge for their children and their future generations; their interest in both hands-on and literature-based education; and the potential of the trail project to contribute to personal and community development. The majority of participants felt the project had much potential for personal and community spiritual, physical, mental and emotional development. Perceived benefits of the trail ranged from revitalization of traditional knowledge with respect to Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants for mental development, to fostering a sense of emotional pride through community ownership and participation. In addition, community members felt the trail would offer a recreational

opportunity for physical health and help spiritually connect community members to nature, plants and the ancestors who once walked these trails. Promotion of environmental respect and strengthening awareness of the interconnectedness of all things were also mentioned as perceived benefits. In other words, community participants saw great potential for the trail project to contribute to CBD.

With respect to a trail vision, participants' responses generated the following themes: education about plant identification, habitats, and traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants; reviving the knowledge and ways of the Mi'kmaq ancestors; promoting awareness and access to medicinal and edible plants; recreation; and a combination of all elements. If the community can incorporate these visions with the four holistic components of Mi'kmaq development, there is great potential for the project now and into the future. Key in this balance will be the role of Elders and youth. Elders can help by giving advice that is rooted in past and present experiences and youth will help by being the future keepers of the trail. Having them involved in the present ensures there will be community members well into the future committed and responsible for the Npisunewawti'j trail.

8.5 Concluding Remarks

This research illustrates that both the process and product of the trail project have been integral components of Mi'kmaq culture-based community development. Trail committee participants stated they have learned extensively from their participation in the project, with some stating that they learned things they never knew before. This experiential learning has set the platform for increased self-esteem and committee capacity. The accomplishments of these community members, in turn, will equal the result of a completed trail. The trail will then affect other community members who use it for physical, mental, emotional and spiritual strengthening. This circle will revolve continually as long as community members constantly build on the trail project's potential for development.

Appendix 1

MI'KMAQ-MALISEET NATIONS NEWS, JANUARY 1999

Bear River Beat

by Darlene Ricker
MMNN Contributor

A very happy and healthy New Year 1999 to all readers of the Mi'kmaq-Maliseet Nations News, from the Bear River community.

Congratulations to Councillor Sherry Pictou and Kelly Spidle on the birth of their daughter Destiny Wasuek Spidle-Pictou. Destiny was born December 16, 1998 at the Valley Regional Hospital, Kentville, weighing 6 pounds 7 ounces. Destiny's middle name Wasuek, means "flower", in Mi'kmaq language.

Congratulations to Holly Meuse on the birth of her second child Jessie Chan Wasumuin Meuse, who was

born November 23, 1998. Jessie's middle name means "snowbear" in Mi'kmaq language. Holly is originally from Bear River, but now makes her home in BC.

The students at Muin Si'pu Mi'kmaq Elementary School hosted their annual Christmas concert December 17 at the Band Hall. After a delicious turkey supper feast, all were treated to a variety of holiday entertainment. Band Manager Clara Brooks welcomed everyone. The newest teacher at Muin Si'pu Candice Cress, emceed the concert. Steve Meuse Jr. recited the Lord's Prayer in Mi'kmaq language. The preschool class led by Lindy Swinimer, sang two songs and two Christmas poems.

Students in grades 1 to 7

offered a rendition of Little Drummer Boy. Amanda Pearle read a Christmas poem. The grades 5 to 7 students sang the Twelve Days of Christmas. Next, the junior grades did the Christmas pageant. We Three Kings was sung by grades 5 to 7. The concert finale was "Here comes Santa Claus, sung by all the students, in Mi'kmaq language.

Santa Claus made an appearance, and young and old had the opportunity to speak with him.

There was enough snow to snowshoe very lightly over the Christmas holidays. We almost had skiing snow a few days ago, but it melted just as fast. Perhaps this will be a skating winter.

Initial preparations are being made to build a new multi-purpose building next to the school. The land has been cleared and the brush burnt. It is hoped the actual building will commence this spring.

The traditional Mi'kmaq usage of medicinal and edible plants is the focus of a workshop to be held Thursday, January 21, 1999, at the Bear River First Nation Band Hall, beginning at 6 pm. All Bear River First Nation people are invited to a hot meal and this educational workshop. This is the first in a series of events aiming to revive and educate about traditional Mi'kmaq usage of plants. Lindiwe MacDonald, a Master's student in Environmental Studies at Dalhousie University, will speak and gath-

er information for her thesis research on traditional Mi'kmaq use of edible and medicinal plants.

Lindiwe is from Antigonish and is very interested in human rights and international development. She is especially interested in issues surrounding aboriginal people, resource management and community-based development. "It is my hope this thesis will help in some way to contribute to the cultural heritage of the people of L'sitkuk," she says.

Funding for the workshop is provided by the First Nation's Forestry Association and the Bear River First Nation Band Council. Children are welcome. Babysitting will be provided. Should this workshop be postponed due to the severe illness of Lindiwe's father, the backup date is February 11.

Happy January birthday greetings are extended to Gean Gregory, Morrisa Gre-



Christmas carols rang out at Bear River over the holi-

Appendix 2.

Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant Use Workshop Handout

Mi'kmaq Plant/Tree Medicines

In pre-contact times, the vast forests and landscape teemed with birds, animals and a vast array of plant/tree life, while the ocean, lakes, rivers and streams supplied a bountiful array of fish species. To the Mi'kmaq of eastern North America, this rich abundance of life must have been considered a great blessing.

In those days, a consideration of spiritual things was important in all activities, as there wasn't a sharp separation between the spiritual and physical worlds. Spirits were everywhere, inhabiting brooks, rivers, animals, birds, plants, trees and other special places in the landscape. Traditional Mi'kmaq medicine reflected this strong spiritual presence. Shamanistic healing ceremonies probably often involved the entire community, who was both audience and active participants in certain activities aimed at healing the sick, and maintaining the balance between the community and the spiritual nature of the world.

Plants and trees played a key role in the Native medicine system. Plant species such as sweet grass, Native tobacco, Indian turnip, sweet flag, labrador tea and others have a long history of usage by the Mi'kmaq, as do trees such as balsam fir, black spruce, white/black ash and maple, for example.

Later, with the coming of the Europeans, and the conversion of the people to Christianity, traditional medicine practices went through a period of great change, even persecution. Shamanistic practices were often forbidden by the Roman Catholic priests and, in many cases, were probably willingly given up by Mi'kmaq who were now Christians. As well, with the influx of settlers, there must have been some exchange of plant medicine practices between Native people and the Europeans. The Mi'kmaq would have also discovered uses for plant species introduced into the new world from Europe, such as plantain and dandelion.

Today, plant/tree medicines still play an important role in Native cultures throughout North America. Some medicinal and ceremonial uses for plants are very old, while other medicines are more recent, and are attempts to cope with introduced diseases such as tuberculosis.

Plant Identification and Plant Ethics

In the last decade a renewed interest in wild-plants as food or medicine finds a population lacking the important plant gathering skills formerly past down from generation to generation.

Aside from knowing the correct plants required, the ability to positively identify the plants and know where they are found is of utmost importance to the beginner herbalist who wants to collect wild medicinal and edible plants. There is now a need for a pooling of knowledge and fore education.

(Laurie Lacey and Gini Proulx, January 1999)

Appendix 3.

Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Medicinal and Edible Plants: A Plant-use Workshop Summary

A Summary of the January 21, 1999 Workshop that occurred at 6:00pm in the Bear River Community Band Hall

This summary was done by Lindiwe MacDonald based on a direct transcription of the workshop. It was summarized with the purpose of making the issues covered in the workshop easily readable and is by no means the direct transcription. Please do not use this summary for quotation purposes.

FEBRUARY, 1999

I. PURPOSE AND SYNOPSIS OF WORKSHOP

The main purpose of this educational workshop was to introduce the topic of edible and medicinal plants and their Mi'kmaq uses to the Bear River First Nation community members. More specifically, it was an educational forum for people to share their knowledge and express their interests concerning this topic. The workshop aimed to be participatory and acted as a tool to assess what level of community interest there would be towards an educational initiative focused on plants and their traditional Mi'kmaq uses.

This workshop has become the first in a series of events that aim to revive and foster Mi'kmaq knowledge of edible and medicinal plants and contribute to an important aspect of Mi'kmaq heritage and development. Events planned for the 'Traditional Mi'kmaq Plant-Use Education Initiative' include:

1. an 'Open House' where books on medicinal and edible plants will be available to look at, and questions will be answered by people who are knowledgeable about plants;
2. other smaller demonstrations by local people concerning medicinal and edible plants and mushrooms;
3. an adult education course offered by Gini Proulx and Anne Littlewood focused on plant identification and plant uses;
4. The formation of a community-based 'Bear River Mi'kmaq Trail Committee'.
5. The planning and implementation of a Mi'kmaq trail that specifically focuses on the Mi'kmaq culture surrounding the use of edible and medicinal plants.

The workshop also provided a forum to introduce myself to the community as a researcher who is interested in this topic and am pursuing it for thesis research in hopes to obtain my Master's of Environmental Studies degree. I also hope to record information concerning this topic for the cultural benefit of the Mi'kmaq people of Bear River and for their generations to come.

My thesis objectives include:

1. To produce a map and inventory of the plants that will be on the trail (this map will not go into the thesis, but into a separate report for the Bear River Community only).
2. Provide a comprehensive report of the Mi'kmaq traditional uses of edible and medicinal plants through personal communications (oral stories, interviews, hikes) and a review of literature.
3. To gather the perceptions of the Bear River community members concerning this educational initiative (most specifically the trail).
4. To explore the potential for this initiative to contribute to community-based development.

The workshop lasted about 2 1/2 hours (including the meal) and approximately 50 to 60 people were in attendance. We had a lovely moose stew supper provided by the Action Committee, which began with an opening prayer. Darlene Ricker was facilitator for the night, and I had a chance to introduce myself. Gini Proulx and Laurie Lacey gave a very interesting and informative presentation (complete with slides) concerning identification, location and use of medicinal and edible plants (see summary below). Anne Littlewood helped Gini in the research of her presentation and provided mounted plant specimens for people to look at. Gini and Anne also provided an informative layout of resource books. Laurie brought copies of his book to sell after the presentation.

Due to the limited amount of time, the speakers mostly spoke about specific aspects of the plants, that is, mainly their edible and medicinal uses (by Mi'kmaq ancestors and be people today) and their location and identification. This workshop was not meant to give a thorough description of every use of the plants or go into the in-depth ecology of the plants. Towards the end of the workshop certain plants were not given a thorough description due to lack of time.

II. SPEAKER AND TOPIC DESCRIPTIONS:

FACILITATOR, DARLENE RICKER

Darlene is the author of *L'sitkuk: The Story of the Bear River Mi'kmaw Community* and is a personal friend of the Bear River community. She is a freelance writer who contributes to the Micmac and Maliseet Nations News and edits 'The Bear River Beat', the L'sitkuk community newsletter.

SPEAKER, GINI PROULX:

Gini is an amateur naturalist who has enjoyed a life-long involvement with nature. Her special interest is in plants- both wild and cultivated. She has been actively involved in preserving and conserving rare plants and their habitats. She is mostly self-taught, with (in her own words) "a lot of help from family and friends". Through reading, exploring different habitats and membership in a number of nature-oriented organizations, she has acquired her present knowledge of Nova Scotia Wildlife. In December, she completed a biology course at Acadia University that dealt with the flora of Nova Scotia.

In 1988 she was a founding member of the Annapolis Field Naturalists Society. Since then, throughout lectures, field trips, displays and assistance with local nature trails, Gini has shared her love of nature with all ages.

For 20 years she was librarian at CFB Cornwallis. She now has an extensive nature library of her own. Above all, Gini has a deep respect for all things wild. She welcomes any opportunity to share her appreciation of nature with others.

Gini Spoke About:

- **Important plant gathering skills formerly past down from generation to generation;**
- **Positively identifying plants;**
- **The ecological habitat in which they are found and;**
- **The need for a pooling of knowledge and education concerning plant identification and use.**

SPEAKER, LAURIE LACEY:

Laurie Lacey is a writer and painter from Lunenburg County NS, where he lives in a cabin surrounded by woodland. A naturalist and outdoors' person, he has spent much of his life gathering impressions from nature and researching the medicinal use of plants. Laurie gives talks on herbal remedies and has published, *Micmac Indian Medicine: A Traditional Way of Health*, in 1977, *Micmac Medicines: Remedies and Recollections*, in 1993 and most recently *The Way of the Crow: Black Spirit*, in 1996.

Laurie Spoke About:

- **Traditional Mi'kmaq use of edible and medicinal plants;**
- **The roles that plants play in Mi'kmaq culture and spirituality;**
- **What plants were used for specific ailments.**

III. PLANT IDENTIFICATION AND MI'KMAQ TRADITIONAL PLANT-USE SUMMARY: BASED ON GINI PROULX AND LAURIE LACEY'S PRESENTATION

1. Cow Lily (*Nuphar variegatum* Engelm.):

was a very old traditional medicinal plant native to the province. It was a food plant as well as medicinal plant. It grows in slow moving and deep water. People would dive down into very deep water. It looks pre-historic, like something from Jurassic Park and has a big round thick root and it almost looks like it has tails on it. The roots would be collected and put under running water to get the starch out. They are like potatoes and are really starchy. The Mi'kmaq would leave the root in running water for a day or two (like a brook). They would be taken and allowed to dry and then pounded between two rocks and pounded into a powder. This would create a pancake like mixture. Medicinally it was used for sprained ankles and is wonderful for reducing swelling. It is also used as an emergency food.

Identification: Cow Lily is found in deep water and is quite often found at the shallow edges of lakes and also in slow moving streams where usually there is a good rich mucky bottom.

2. Water Lily (*Nymphaea odorata* Ait.):

some people call this a North American Lotus because it looks like a lotus. The blossoms can be used as a tea. It's not very strong and is similar to green tea. The buds were cooked as vegetables. There is nothing in it that acts like an alkaloid or a poison that will affect you in anyway so it would be hard to overdose.

Identification: The roots don't look so pre-historic or scaly. The leaves come directly from the root up to the surface and not from the stem. They have a purplish look to them and are smaller than the Cow Lily. It has a nice round shape and has a more open bloom and is beautifully fragrant with layers upon layer of white petals with a pinkish tinge. The Water Lily opens with the sun and closes in the mid-afternoon when the sun leaves it. This plant can be transplanted if you have the proper habitat like a pond with a mucky bottom and you might need some sort of weight to hold it down.

****Mi'kmaq Heritage Trail: This plant as well as the Cow Lily are two really important ones that should be on an Aboriginal Heritage trail.***

3. Poison Ivy (*Rhus radicans* L.)

is used in homeopathy for several things including building up one's immunity against poison ivy in very little doses. CAUTION: Be very careful because if you get it once it stays in the blood for up to 8 to 10 years. It takes about 2 or 3 years to build up immunity to it. One of the antidotes for poison ivy is jewelweed. Take some jewelweed juice from the stem and put it on where you think you were exposed to the poison ivy and it should neutralize the oil. An old Mi'kmaq remedy for poison ivy was sweet fern or antwood.

Identification: Leaves with three let it be! There are different species and if you see the three leaves and a notch you can be almost certain that it is poison ivy. There are three leaves and the middle one is on a longer stem and they're a little wavy around the edges. In places where they do very well there is often lots of sunshine over rocky areas. They have white berries on the vine that you might see in late summer and the fall. They have a tendency to grow up with shrubs and trees. Sometimes they're found in shady areas, by brooks and edges of bogs. Gini recommends wearing high boots, pants and tucking in your socks.

4. Burdock, Common (*Arctium minus* (Hill) Bernh.)

is used for anyone who has a skin condition. Burdock is wonderful for psoriasis or anything that comes through to the skin like a rash. It's also great for poison ivy and taken as a tea (one ounce to a pint of water). Before the water starts to boil and the little pins start to come up then steep the burdock for ten or fifteen minutes and take about two or three cups of it every day for a week and it works for your blood. You can eat burdock leaves and they are really good for the stomach. Laurie says that all the docks are most powerful in their roots. You have some leeway with burdock as far as strength.

5. Sweet Fern (*Comptonia peregrina* (L.) Coult.)

is good to eat and makes a nice tea too. About a tablespoonful and a cup of water and steep it for about ten minutes. Sometimes you can add a little honey or lemon. It has a beautiful smell, which comes from the resin. Fresh or dried leaves can be used for taking the musty smell out of an old basket, hamper, or sweaty sneakers. The leaf is what is used and it can be harvested from mid-July to August.

Identification: Sweet Fern is a pioneer species and pops up along woods roads that are a couple of years old.

6. Lambkill (*Kalmia angustifolia* L.)

CAUTION is a poisonous plant. One of the examples given to Laurie was that if you fell and sprained your ankle you would just pick off one of the leaves and put it in a big pot of water and boil it until it turns a fairly dark green, and then you let it cool. Put your foot in without it being too painful and leave it in and soak it. Lambkill water will take the swelling down, as well as the pain.

Identification: The blossoms are cup shaped and not individual petals. The stamens are a dark red or a burgundy color and they just have a little notch all the way around their chin. You'll find lambkill in old pastures, maybe along roadways and bogs. When it grows in the shade it can grow quite tall.

7. Labrador Tea (*Ledum groenlandicum* Oeder.)

goes way back and it was used in kniknik mixtures and was also used as a form of tobacco substitute. Knicknick mixtures were a combination of plants including bayberry, dogwood, Labrador tea, and willow species. One of the traditional uses was as a tonic medicine to treat kidney stones, and other ailments for the kidneys. People used to use it as a spring tonic to remove the bad blood of winter. It's a great tea and it goes way back not only in eastern Canada but the Cree, the Plains people the West Coast people, they all know very much about Labrador tea and use it for so many things.

Identification: The further north it grows the stronger it gets. In the Yukon it can be very hallucinogenic. It's strongest here in the springtime, the March leaves. This plant forms an almost umbrella like cluster of blooms and is very showy in late June. It is evergreen and the new leaves will come out and the wooly part underneath the leaf is a rusty colour for the rest of the year. Gini say's that she doesn't think there's any other kind of plant with the density of wool of this plant and the leaves are rolled under towards the other side. They are often found in boggy areas.

***This is an excellent plant for an Aboriginal Heritage trail/garden.**

8. Skunk Cabbage (*Symplocarpus foetidus* (L.) a Nutt.)

is a powerful plant. Skunk cabbage can be used as survival food. It has a very strong foul smell. It's a very strong medicine plant. It was used for diabetes and

many of these plants are being investigated now by conventional medicine. You cannot overdose on the stuff but you can give yourself a very painful experience especially if you have it in your mouth at the wrong time. It's a great medicine for a toothache as well. All you have to do is get a piece of the root and hold it on your sore gums for five or ten minutes.

Identification: You'll mostly only find it in Digby Neck and Yarmouth County. It is found in wet woods. Leaves are broad and oval and the flowers appear before leaves.

*** Mi'kmaq Heritage Trail:** *You could try to transplant it, but I don't know how successful you'd be.*

9. Balsam Fir bark (*Abies balsamea* (L.) Mill)

the inner bark was good as an emergency food. In the Mi'kmaq tradition many of these plants had spirit beings associated with them. The Jesuit Missionaries recorded an old legend where they said that there was a spirit being and the spirit creature was very huge. The Jesuits described it as a creature as high as the ceiling and very wide and the legend has it that its body was full of scabs. These scabs were oozing fluid down the body and the legend went on to say that if you were brave enough (say you had diabetes) and you could walk up and touch that fluid, you would heal instantly. The legend of the fluid running down the body of this spirit being symbolizes the blisters of the fir tree when you punch them; the sap runs down the bark. The resin is very rich in vitamin C. The Jesuits also recorded about a fishing ship in the 1760's that became frozen in the ice at Digby and all the people were coming down with scurvy. Half the crewmembers died and the other half made their way over to Bear River where the Mi'kmaq treated them with a conifer tree. The Jesuits didn't know which one it was, they said it was the aneda tree. Nobody has been able to positively identify it. Laurie believes it could have been the Balsam fir because of the legend and because of its high vitamin C, but it could have been the spruce or the pine, because they both have the vitamin C that you need to treat scurvy. It can also be used for cough medicine. Pour a little honey in a spoon and get one of the blisters. Take it internally down the throat and it takes away the coughing and sore throat. You don't want to take the balsam blisters alone because they would stick your mouth shut. It's also very good for fly and mosquito bites because it's an antiseptic.

Identification: Balsam fir as everyone knows is the Christmas Tree. A balsam fir has cones that are upright. In the winter they have matured and the scales are falling off and they look like little candles sticking up. There are lots of cones this year (1999).

10. Plantain (*Plantago major* L.)

is an introduced plant and it came into North America on the ballast of ships. In most European herbals it's seen as a very strong medicine and is held in high esteem. It is well established and is one of the safest medicinals you can use. In fact in early spring you can have it in salad. It becomes very bitter when it comes to seed and it's very high in vitamins A and C. Plantain is very good for stomach cramps and stomach ulcers. The standard herbal dosage is about an ounce and a half to a pint of

water, steeped for about 15 minutes. Put it in and let it steep ten or fifteen minutes take a cup or two and use it for upset stomach, or if your suffering from stomach indigestion or a stomach ulcer. It can be used as a poultice to put on a small cut or skin rash. Laurie's had great success using it for insect bites to take the itch out. Pull a leaf off, rub it and get the juice running, enough to put in the fly bite. It is also an astringent and Gini made a note from the Peterson's Field guide that it is a confirmed anti-microbial and it fights germs and stimulates the healing process.

Identification: This plant has the nickname *white man's footprint* as though it came with the settlers. In the new Flora of Nova Scotia it's considered that its partly native that perhaps it was here all along. It seems to grow in compacted soil where people are travelling along.

11. Mullein, Common (*Verbascum virgatum* Stokes.)

Two uses for it. It's biggest use is for asthma. The Mi'kmaq used the big long leaves that would be picked green, rolled up, tied, dried and smoked to inhale the smoke to relieve breathing difficulties. The other use would be for children's asthma, or breathing difficulties, you would take it and steep it like a vaporizer and have it in a room where a child was sleeping to fumigate the air and relieve breathing that way. You can drink it as a tea but you have to be very careful. CAUTION: Laurie made the mistake of once making it without straining it well and the little hairs can really irritate the throat.

Identification: It can grow up to 7 feet tall and they grow in 2 years stages, in the first year you get leaves and in the second you get a long stem and then you get the beautiful blossoms and you can see the little hairs on it.

12. Gold Thread (*Coptis trifolia* L.)

is used to treat sore eyes, sores in the mouth, sore gums, and canker sores in children. Some Mi'kmaq people have used it to treat stomach cancer or it was used to treat people who were suffering from loss of appetite. You can use it for an eye drop. Use about half an inch of gold thread to a cup of water, otherwise it's very strong. CAUTION: When you put it in your eye you want to strain it very well.

Identification: The Gold thread name comes from the underground root, which are gold in color. The evergreen leaves look very much like strawberry leaflets and the white flowers look somewhat like the strawberry blossoms long slender petals. It grows in woodlands, usually in mossy and shaded areas and blooms fairly early in May.

***This important plant should be on the heritage trail because it is very traditional in Mi'kmaw use.**

13. Teaberry (*Gaultheria procumbens* L.)

is a wintergreen species and is a very well known medicinal plant. It's known as blood thinner amongst many Mi'kmaq people. Laurie knew people who have used it Eskasoni, Shubenacadie and Conne River Newfoundland for that purpose. There

were two main ways of using it. The main way was to pick six to ten leaves and put it in a half a cup of water and steep it. For example he knew somebody who had a stroke and he came home from the hospital and used it to prevent blood clotting and he took about 2 cups a day for a couple of weeks to help prevent blood clotting. It is very good as a blood thinner and has aspirin qualities and chemicals in it. Laurie read the best way to make this plant is to get a little bottle or a little jar and fill it half full of these leaves, pour boiling water over them, put a cover over it and put it in a sunny place. Within 3 or 4 hours he had the most incredible wintergreen flavor. It was about ten times as strong as the cup so he's sure you would only need a tablespoonful at a time. The berries are also very good to eat.

Identification: The berries persist over the winter. It's a woodland plant and they usually grow in colonies because like goldthread they spread by underground roots. Even if there aren't any berries you can eat the leaves which have a lovely flavor. To make oil of wintergreen from this plant, a ton of leaves would make a pound of wintergreen oil.

14. Yellow Birch (*Betula allegheniensis* Britt.):

was one of the ones mentioned to Laurie a lot by Mi'kmaq people. He stated that one man told him that if you're out in the woods and you get the runs all you got to do is go ahead and chew some of the yellow birch bark and it would cure you right on the spot. Also, the inner bark is saliva proof, it's got all kinds of sugars and it's very good and tasty. The tips of the yellow birch are very food for nourishment. The inner bark is a survival food and the small twigs and buds have a nice minty taste.

Identification: On the south shore of NS yellow birch is pretty rare. You can find some in a few mixed stands. They've been overcut. These trees grow to be very old like maybe 300 years old. The leaves will be quite high up and if you look around in the general area you'll probably find leaflets in the understory. Another way to identify yellow birch is that in the winter they have quite large upright cones.

15. Cow Parsnip (*Heracleum lanatum* Michx.)

is the closest plant next to *bigosi* and *segabun* (*Indian Turnip*) to a panacea of all-purpose medicine. Some people used it for stomach cancer and some used it for kidney problems and some people used it for arthritis. It's just incredible and some people held it with such high esteem; they would sew it in the pocket of their pants or in the collar of their shirt. There is an incredible amount of legend and lore that surrounds it. **If there's any one plant that you should have on your medicinal trail you have to get the cow parsnip. It's very, very important.**

Identification: This is one plant that Gini is not sure grows in this part of Nova Scotia. According to the Flora of Nova Scotia it is common throughout the province. Gini has not seen it here, but has seen it in King's county and along ditches on the Trans Canada in Newfoundland.

16. **Beech (*Fagus grandifolia* Ehrh.)**
was used for tuberculosis by Mi'kmaq in the 1900's.
17. **Pearly Everlasting (*Antennaria neodiocia* Greene.):**
was used by the Mi'kmaq as a tobacco substitute.
18. **Juniper, Common (*Juniperus communis* L.)**
had lots of uses. It was used for fever and various other things.
19. **Indian Turnip (*Arisaema Stewardsonii* Britt.)**
is one of the classic Mi'kmaq medicinal plants that you want to have growing on the trail. It is known in Mi'kmaq as the '*segabun*' or the '*Indian Turnip*'. It was held in high esteem and people kept it on them (sewed to their cloths). It was used to treat lung problems. He was told by a Mi'kmaq man that, "you never eat that green it's poisonous". You cut it up like an onion and he said you put it outdoors on brown paper or on a rock if you want to, where the sun doesn't hit it. Let it there for two weeks and the poison goes out of it. After it dries you can eat it like a potato chip and it is used for tuberculosis or any lung problem. It is used for other things as well.
Identification: You'll find the Indian turnip growing near the Shubenacadie River. The New Brunswick species is a little different from the Nova Scotia species. There is a different shape in the leaf and length. It grows near or on water and one would have to keep in mind if you were collecting the root that would be the end of the plant so you have to be careful. The root is made up of oxalic acid, which are, what gives it that cutting sensation if you eat it before it is dried (Laurie relayed a story concerning his experience with *segabun*). You must be careful. Given the appropriate habitat they'll grow on the side of rivers and nitrate rich soil like the Shubencandie River. If you're in the proper habitat you'll find them but they're not what you'd call common.

IV. A FEW CHARACTERISTICS OF MI'KMAQ MEDICINE MENTIONED IN THE WORKSHOP:

- One of the main characteristics of Mi'kmaw medicine was that everybody's medicine was a little bit different. With mainstream western medicine there is a specific remedy for a specific population. With Mi'kmaq medicine everybody was seen to be different, and everybody was looked at in a different way and if somebody was going to treat you with lobelia and someone else with lobelia, they might give you a totally different dosage. It's not like mainstream medicine. However if you are unsure and inexperienced you should always consult for standard dosages.

- Often another Native characteristic of medicinal remedies was that things that were taken internally (e.g. teas and tonics) were steeped and things that were used externally (e.g. poultices) were boiled.
- Presently mainstream medicine is investigating and recognizing the effectiveness of Mi'kmaq and Native remedies. They're investigating the blueberry (a traditional Mi'kmaq remedy for diabetes) for having great potential for treating diabetes. Laurie knew of somebody in 1975 who said the blueberries were good for diabetes. Now twenty years later mainstream medicine is investigating its medicinal qualities.
- It is difficult to trace the origin of Mi'kmaq remedies since some may have come from the settlers and others they discovered themselves. Mi'kmaq people have been protecting this knowledge for centuries and that too may be another reason it is difficult to trace the origins.
- Mi'kmaq medicines vary from place to place. An example of this would be the Conne Mi'kmaq in Newfoundland who use many compound or combination medicines. The Mi'kmaq of NS use a lot of single remedies.

V. IMPORTANT PLANT POINTS GINI AND LAURIE SAY TO REMEMBER!

How do I know if I have the right plant?

If you're collecting plants to eat or use as medicine one very important thing is that you want to make sure that you have the exact plant that your field guide is telling you. The one sure way to make sure you have the right plant is to identify the plant by the scientific name in your field guide and then check for the common name.

Always be careful and selective when harvesting plants.

There is always a danger of over-harvesting plants because even though they may look to be very plentiful, they may not be to a certain area. You must be very selective when harvesting plants. You have to also make sure that the waterway that you collect these from (or any other plant) is not polluted, because these plants can take up heavy metals or other pollution. "I'd be leery about collecting and eating food plants from the Bear River" (Gini Proulx).

When using a plant for medicine, how does one judge the strength of that medicine to that of another in a different location?

In some cases plants that have poisons in them or are poisonous should only be used by skilled people. Strengths can vary from location to location not just year to year. "I think the general rule of thumb is that the more severe condition that a plant is growing under

the more alkaloids or chemical ingredients there will be” (Gini Proulx). A lot of people call it the personality of the plant. For example with Indian Tobacco (Lobelia), Laurie says his grandfather use to smoke it all the time for emphazima, breathing problems, asthma and anything like that. He knew how to use it. It’s not as safe, as using something like Mullein. You can use mullein for asthma or emphazima and there you have leeway in terms of how much you use. **The best thing you can do when you get into herbs you might think are dangerous is consult a lot of reference manuals. In many plants you have leeway. But in others it is so important for you to be much more careful, and you should be an experienced user.**

Is there a certain time of year that you should pick the leaves?

There can be for different plants. It depends a lot on the plant. There’s no general rule of thumb as to when plants should be harvested for use. Some plants are much stronger when they are dried as opposed to using them green. Like Yarrow when it is green is good but when you let it dry it doubles in strength.

VI. Special Thanks

The First Nations Forestry Association and the Bear River Band Council provided funding for this workshop. Special thanks is given to Louise Wood who was instrumental in helping to organize the workshop, Bill McKay, Steve Meuse and the Action Committee for providing a wonderful meal.

There seemed to be a general agreement that the workshop was successful and that there was indeed some genuine interest within the Bear River Mi’kmaq community. The only complaint to date was that it should have been longer, in order that people would have had more of a chance to ask questions and look over the books and plant specimens.

Appendix 4.
Research Tools and Number of Participants

Participants	Interviews	Workshop #1	Children's Workshop #2	Adult Education Course	Focus Groups #1-#4
Participant #1	X				X
Participant #2	X				
Participant #3	X	X		X	X
Participant #4	X	X			
Participant #5	X	X			
Participant #6	X	X			
Participant #7	X	X			X
Participant #8	X				X
Participant #9	X	X			
Participant #10	X				
Participant #11	X	X		X	X
Participant #12	X	X		X	
Participant #13	X				
Participant #14	X	X	X		
Participant #15	X	X			
Participant #16	X				
Participant #17	X	X		X	
Participant #18	X	X		X	X
Participant #19	X				
Participant #20	X				
Participant #21	X	X			
Participant #22	X	X			X
Participant #23	X	X		X	X
Participant #24	X				
Participant #25	X	X			
Participant #26	X				
Participant #27	X	X		X	X
Participant #28	X	X			
Participant #29		X		X	
Participant #30				X	
Participant #31					X
Participant #32		X			X
Participants #33-#45		X (12)	X (12)		
Participants #46-#72		X (29)			

Bear River Beat

by Darlene Ricker
MMNN Contributor

Did you know that water lily petals open and close with the sun? And that plants have personalities? And that the plants struggle the hardest to survive are often the strongest and most powerful medicines in the wild? Those who attended the "Traditional Mi'kmaq Uses of Medicinal and Edible Plants" workshop at Bear River, learned all this and more.

The education workshop held in January was the first in a series of events aiming to revive and educate about traditional culture surrounding the use of edible and medicinal plants. The workshop was planned by Lindiwe MacDonald, a Masters student at Dalhousie University's School of Research and Environmental Studies. The workshop is a component of Lindiwe's thesis research on traditional Mi'kmaw use of edible and medicinal plants, specifically focussing on

The following is a brief reporting of Gini and Laurie's talk and the ensuing open discussion and question and answers with the audience:

Cowlily or yellow water lily grows in deep water and slow moving streams. The flowers don't have much smell. The roots look prehistoric. The plant root can be used for taking down swelling and pain, as in a sprain.

the Bear River First Nation.

Funding for the workshop was provided by the First Nation's Forestry Association and the Bear River First Nation Band Council.

After a delicious supper of moose stew, prepared by the Bear River First Nation Action Committee, guest speakers Gini Proulx and Laurie Lacey led an open discussion and slide presentation on wild plant ecology and identification, and on the traditional Mi'kmaq use of plants. They discussed the properties and qualities of a number of common plants found in the area. Both speakers emphasized the importance of positively identifying a plant to be used for medicine or food. A field guide is the only safe way to really know what you are gathering, they said.

Gini is an amateur naturalist who has enjoyed a life-long involvement with nature. Her special interest is in plants, both wild and cultivated. She has been

The North American lotus or waterlily is beautifully fragrant. It can be transplanted, but the roots may need anchoring down until they take hold. The blossom can be used as a tea. The root is used similarly to cowlily. The buds can be cooked as a vegetable.

actively involved in preserving and conserving rare plants and their habitats. The Clementsvale resident is mostly self-taught, with a lot of help from family and friends, she says. Through reading, exploring different habitats and membership in a number of nature-oriented organizations, she has acquired her present knowledge of Nova Scotia wildlife. In December she completed a biology course at Acadia University that dealt with flora of Nova Scotia.

In 1988 she was a founding member of the Annapolis Field Naturalists Society. Since then throughout lectures, field trips, displays and assistance with local nature trails, Gini has shared her love of nature with all ages. Gini has a deep respect for all things wild, and she welcomes any opportunity to share her appreciation of nature with others.

Gini's talk focused on important plant gathering skills formerly passed down

Gini warned plant harvesters to question the eating of food plants growing in polluted water. Laurie mentioned that as far as medicine is concerned, every herbalist's treatment is different. He suggested consulting standard dosages. The more severe the growing conditions, the stronger the personality, or

from generation to generation; positively identifying plants; the ecological habitat in which they are found; and the need for a pooling of knowledge and education concerning plant identification and use.

Laurie is a writer and painter from Lunenburg County Nova Scotia, where he lives in a cabin surrounded by woodland. A naturalist and outdoor person, he has spent much of his life gathering impressions from nature and researching the medicinal use of plants. His great grandmother was Mi'kmaq. Laurie gives talks on herbal remedies and has published *Micmac Indian Medicine: A Traditional Way of Health*, in 1977; *Micmac Medicines: Remedies and Recollections*, in 1993; and most recently *The Way of the Crow: Black Spirit*, in 1996. Laurie's humorous and entertaining talk emphasized the traditional Mi'kmaq use of the plants for medicinals; the roles that plants played in Mi'kmaw culture and spirituality; what plants are and were used for specific ailments; and some personal stories about how he has gained his knowledge from Mi'kmaw sources.

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active ingredients, existing within the plant. A rule of thumb for preparation concerns steeping the plant if it is to be taken internally, and boiling the plant if it is to be used externally.

Poison ivy contamination stays in the blood eight to ten years. One way to identify poison ivy is to go by the saying, "leaves of three let it be," smiled Gini. The plant also carries white berries. She stated that jewelweed juice rubbed on exposed skin will neutralize the poison in poison ivy. A wash of sweet fern juice will get rid of the rash. Poison ivy is used in some homeopathic medicine, she said.

Sweet fern, or antwood, has a nice smelling resin. It makes a nice spicy tea. Traditionally is used as a poison ivy remedy.

Burdock root is a powerful remedy for skin problems including poison ivy rash. The burdock leaf is good for stomach problems.

Lambkill takes down swelling. A similar looking plant, the evergreen Labrador tea, has fuzzy under leaves. The new leaves are white and woolly underneath. The edges of the leaves are rolled underneath. Labrador tea is used in knikinik mixtures, as a tobacco, and in the treatment of kidney stones. It is strongest in the spring. The plant itself is stronger in northern regions of Canada, explained Laurie.

Skunk cabbage, although found locally only at East Ferry and along the trail to the Balancing Rock in Tiverton, is a very strong medicine plant and shouldn't be fooled with. The root is traditionally used for diabetes.

Balsam fir bark blisters are high in vitamin C content. It can be used as a cough medicine, and for fly and mosquito antiseptic. The inner bark can be eaten as an emergency food.

Plantain is an introduced herb. It is one of the safest medicinals. In the spring it can be added to salads. It can be used in a poultice form for rashes and cuts, and internally for stomach cramps and ulcers.

Mullen, another common plant, can be used to treat asthma. Goldthread is a medicine for sores in the mouth, stomach cancer, and eye problems.

Teaberry has aspirin-like qualities, and is also a blood thinner.

Yellow birch also has aspirin-like qualities. It will cure the runs. The inner bark is a survival food. The small twigs and buds have a nice minty taste.

In other Bear River news, congratulations to Krista Roop, who married Greg Peck of Greenland February 5, from all your family and friends, and students! A not-too-surprising surprise shower was held for Krista at the home of Clara Brooks, and organized by Krista's sister Lorraine Potter.

Wanda St. Louis was treated to a baby shower at the Band Hall. Best wishes to Wanda and her husband Steve on the up-coming birth of their child.

Councillor Steve Meuse has been making music in his spare time, and by early March hopes to be releasing his first CD *New Beginnings*, a collection of contemporary country rock gospel music. Produced by Larry Walker and Chris Best, all the music and lyrics are written by Steve. The disc also features local musicians Brad Hewey, Michael Alden Fells and Pam Spencer. More next time on this long-awaited production.

In Health Office news, February 11 will be marked at Muin Si'pu Mi'kmaq Elementary School with a health program. Health staff will do a workshop on "Healthy Heart Through Exercise," for both the school children and the preschool children. "Dress red for Heart and Stroke" will happen February 15. The breast screening van will be at the Annapolis Community Health Centre February 22 until March 3. Anyone interested can make an appointment by calling 1-800-565-0548.

Four Canada geese have been spotted on the Bear River near town, and at the highway 101 bridges. Is spring really on the way or did these guys take a wrong turn? Also heard reports the smelts are running at Young's Brook, St. Mary's Bay.

Appendix 6.

Wild Plant Identification Course Outline

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Introduction to Wild Plant Identification Course

A short course (approximately 8 sessions including field trips) dealing with plants – their identification, uses and habitats, will be offered in spring 1999. The instructors will be Gini Proulx and Anne Littlewood. Input from those interested in attending can help shape the course content to best meet the needs of the participants. With this in mind, a tentative outline of topics to be covered follows.

Course Topics:

- Parts of plant, Botanical terms
- Plant habitats
- Medicinal plants- Identification
- Edible plants – Identification
- Wild flowers – Identification
- Using plant identification keys
- Collecting and pressing plant specimens
- Propagation and cultivation of wild plants
- Using field guides and reference books
- Conservation and preservation
- ***Filed trips to various habitats including wetlands, woodlands disturbed areas and salt marshes**

Please indicate other interests:

- Field trips sessions will be half-day trips. The remaining topics will be discussed during indoor sessions at the Bear River First Nation Band Hall. Please indicate your preference of day and/or time for field trips and indoor sessions by circling your choice:

Field trips	Weekday	Weekend
Indoor Sessions (weekday)	Daytime	Evening

*****~*****

Appendix 7.

Interview Questions for Community Participants

1. Do you have any knowledge concerning edible and/or medicinal plants?
If no, then move to question #7.
Probe: If yes, please describe what you know?
2. Do you have any knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and/or medicinal plants?
If no, then move to question #7.
Probe: If yes, could you please describe what you know?
3. Do you gather and use edible and/or medicinal plants?
If no, then move to question #7.
Probe: If yes, Could you please identify and describe the kinds of edible and/or medicinal plants you use?
Probe: Could you describe what you use them for?
4. Are edible and/or medicinal plants significant to you?
If no, then move to #6.
Probe: If yes, in what way are they significant (e.g. physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually)?
5. Do you have any knowledge concerning the cultural (e.g. spiritual and ceremonial) significance Mi'kmaq peoples historically placed on plants?
If no, then move to question #7.
Probe: Do you place the same significance on the plants that your ancestors did?
Then move to question 7b.
6. Are you interested in learning about traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants?
7b. (For people who already have some knowledge of traditional Mi'kmaq uses of plants).
Are you interested in learning more about traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants?
7. Are you interested in learning about the traditional Mi'kmaq worldview, legends and lore the peoples associate/ed with the plants?
8. What do you think about the educational initiatives (in the past year) concerning traditional Mi'kmaq uses of edible and medicinal plants (e.g. workshops, courses, field trips)?

9. Do you think this kind of education is beneficial to yourself?
If no, move to question #10.
Probe: If yes, in what way or ways could it be beneficial to you?
10. Do you think this kind of education is beneficial to the Bear River First Nation community?
If no, move to question #12.
Probe: If yes, in what way or ways could it be beneficial to the community?
11. Are you interested in participating in future educational initiatives pertaining to edible and medicinal plants?
If no, then move to question #13.
Probe: If yes, what kind's of initiatives would you participate in?
12. Are you aware of the creation of a Bear River Mi'kmaq medicinal and edible trail?
If no, I will explain about the initiation and creation of the trail.
Probe: If yes, what do you think of this initiative?
13. Are you interested in participating in the trail project?
If no, move to question #14.
Probe: If yes, how do you perceive your involvement or participation in the trail project (e.g. planning, physical labor, contributions of plant knowledge)?
14. What do you feel the vision (or purpose) of the trail should be?
15. Do you believe the creation of this trail could benefit or develop the Bear River First Nation community? (e.g. spiritually, emotionally, physically and/or mentally)
Probe: If no, for what reasons?
Probe: If yes, in what way could it benefit the BRFN community?
16. Is there any one else you know that might be interested in participating in this research?

Appendix 8.

Informed Consent Form for Community Participants

My name is Lindiwe Mac Donald and I am a second year Master's of Environmental Studies student at the School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University. I have been permitted by the Bear River Band Council to facilitate research concerning the relationship between traditional Mi'kmaq use of medicinal and edible plants and Mi'kmaq community-based development. The research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of my degree in Masters of Environmental Studies. It is also being done in the hopes that valuable knowledge will be recorded for the future generations of Bear River Mi'kmaq. The First Nations Forestry Association, the Bear River Band Council and Dalhousie University is financially supporting this research.

You are being asked to participate in this research because you are a member of the Bear River First Nation. Your participation is completely voluntary. There are no foreseeable risks to participating in this research. If any discomfort should arise in regards to questions asked or topics being discussed you may stop your participation at any given point or refrain from answering a specific question.

During the research your recorded information will be kept in a locked box separate from your participant number. If you agree to consent to an interview or have a conversation (e.g. oral story telling, ethnohistories) about your experience you should understand that you can stop your participation at any time. If there is a specific question or topic you are uncomfortable with you do not have to answer or continue. You are welcome to ask any questions concerning clarification of the questions asked. Finally, if permitted, information gathered from your participation will be written in the content of the thesis and will be kept confidential unless you state that you want your name in thesis. Your participation is appreciated and I would like to thank-you in advance for your time.

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that:

1. *My participation is completely voluntary and I may terminate my involvement at any time.*
2. *All information gathered from my participation will be confidential.*
3. *All information gathered is for research purposes and is not meant to cause harm in any way.*
4. *If I have questions about the research I can ask the researcher for clarification.*
5. *I can receive more information concerning the research at a later date through contacting the researcher by calling collect or writing to:*

*Lindiwe Mac Donald
6014 Shirley St., Apt. #6
Halifax, NS
B3H 2M8
Ph: (902) 422-3875*

*Fay Cohen
School for Resource and Environmental
Studies
1312 Robie St.
Ph: (902) 494-4632*

Participant's Signature _____
Researcher's Signature _____

Date _____

Appendix 9.

Plants Identified on the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j Medicine Trail

Agrimony (Med. Caution)	Large Leaved Wood Aster
* Alternate Leaved Dogwood (Mi'kmaq Med.)	• Large Toothed Poplar (Mi'kmaq Med.)
American Fly Honeysuckle	Long Beech Fern
* Apple (Mi'kmaq Ed.)	Mad-dog Skullcap
* Ash, White (Mi'kmaq Utility)	Mayflower (Mi'kmaq Ed.)
* Balsam Fir (Mi'kmaq Med.)	• Moose Maple (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Bedstraw	* Mountain Maple (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Bittercress, Native	Mullein
* Beech (Mi'kmaq Med./Ed.)	Native Hawthorn (Med.)
Beechdrops (Med.)	New York Fern
* Blackberry (Mi'kmaq Med./Ed.)	Northern Bush Honeysuckle
Black-eyed Susan	• Oak (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Bluebead Lily	Pearly Everlasting (Mi'kmaq Med.)
* Blueberries (Mi'kmaq Med./Ed.)	Poplar (Trembling Aspen) (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Bracken Fern	* Partridge Berry (Mi'kmaq Med.)
* Broad Leafed Plantain (Mi'kmaq Med.)	Round Leafed Shinleaf
Calico Aster	Sedge
Cinnamon Fern (Ed.)	Sensitive Fern
Clintonia	Shinleaf
Coltsfoot	* Speckled Alder (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Common Speedwell (Med.)	Staghorn Sumach
Cow Wheat	Starflower
* Eastern White Pine (Mi'kmaq Med.)	St. John's Wort (Med.)
False-Lily-of-the-Valley	* Sugar Maple (Mi'kmaq Ed.)
False Solomon Seal	* Sweetfern (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Golden Saxifrage (Uncommon)	* Tea Berry (Mi'kmaq Med./Ed.)
Goldenrod	* Violets (Mi'kmaq Ed.)
Grass leaved Goldenrod	Waxberry (Snowberry)
Green-Flowered Shinleaf	* White Birch (Mi'kmaq Utility)
* Grey Birch (Mi'kmaq Utility)	Withrod
Hazelnut (Med.)	Wild-Lily-of-the-Valley
* Hemlock (Mi'kmaq Med.)	* Wild Sarsaparilla (Mi'kmaq Med.)
Indian Pipe (Med.)	Yarrow
* Jack-in-the-Pulpit (Mi'kmaq Med.)	Zigzag Golden Rod
Jewelweed (Med.)	
Lambkill (Med. Caution)	Total = 71 plants identified

Restoring plants, just part of aims

By Heather Killen

Members of Bear River First Nation have begun work on a medicine trail which they hope will heal the mind, body and soul of their community.

The trail is a restorative project which aims to identify traditional Mi'kmaq medicinal plants in the area and restore the plants which were native to the area, but have disappeared. It also aims at recovering a vital part of Mi'kmaq spirituality.

At least 66 plants have already been identified along the trail, which will be one kilometre long when completed.

Some plants which have disappeared from the area are being imported from other provinces and will be planted along the trail.

Bear River elder Agnes Potter said much traditional knowledge was passed down between elders and young people who showed a gift for the art of medicinal healing, or an interest in learning. Plant uses, which parts are useful for particular ailments and the seasonal uses of the local plants was known to traditional Mi'kmaq healers, she said.

Much of the traditional medicinal knowledge was lost along with the Mi'kmaq language, Potter said. She said she was fortunate to learn a lot of traditional plant lore while walking in the woods with her father.

"He taught me how to follow the stars to go through the woods at night and about the plants and their uses," she said.

The trail is not just about physical healing, says Potter, but also the mind and the spirit "because it will bring you closer to the creator."

Traditional Mi'kmaq culture views the earth as a sacred gift from the creator. "Plants and trees help us to be healthy and help us to heal."

The idea for the project started in September, 1998, when Chief Frank Meuse suggested researching traditional native medicinal and edible plants. A series of meetings and workshops followed and this May, a committee was formed. Work began on the trail this summer.

Nov 3/99



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 Proulx, G. Personal communication with L. MacDonald 1999.
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Interview Participants (Not in order of Participant Numbers)

Steve Meuse
 Bonnie Trimper
 Betty Pictou
 Robert McEwan/ Alicia
 Lois Harlow
 Louise Wood (Bub Harlow)
 Judy McEwan
 Cheyenne Bennete
 Christine Potter
 Lindi (Teacher)
 Theresa Meuse
 Sara Swinimar
 Lorraine Potter Melanie Meuse
 Jenna Meuse
 Greg McEwan
 Agnes Potter
 Frank Meuse Sr.
 Rose Meuse-Parker
 Kerri Payson
 Vi Harlow
 Mike Pictou
 Peter (Spike) McEwan
 Dusty (David) Meuse
 Jody Lupton

Clara Brooks
Christopher Haliday
Clara Harlow

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