



**MI'KMAQ MALISEET
NATIONS NEWS**
L'NU'K COMMUNITY CONNECTION



**The 2025 50th Kepik Winter Carnival
Princess Pageant Queen!!**
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Monthly Reminder of being Mi'kmaw-Wolastoqiyik

SIKEWIKU'S: March; Spawning Moon
SIQONI-KISUHS: March; literally, spring moon

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Shared Stewardship: Strengthening Connections Between NMAI and MDCC



At the basket workshop of Frank Meuse (L'sitkuk First Nation): Left to right: Ursula Johnson (Eskasoni First Nation), MDCC Research and Interpretation Specialist Leah Rosenmeier, MDCC Communications Officer Ross Nervig, MDCC Program Development Officer Gerald Gloade, MDCC curatorial associates Ashley Sutherland and Kamden Nicholas, MDCC Collections Manager Sharon Farrell, NMAI conservators Céline Wachsmuth, Caitlin Mahony, Sydney Collins, NMAI Assistant Director of Collections Rachel Shabica, and Frank Meuse.

by **Ross Nervig**
Communications Officer
Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural
Centre

In July of last year, a group of conservators from the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) traveled to Mi'kma'kik for a unique and transformative experience. Their visit was part of the ongoing

collaborative effort between NMAI and Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC) to strengthen the stewardship of Mi'kmaw cultural belongings and lay the foundation for their eventual return. This shared stewardship initiative is not only about preserving and protecting Mi'kmaw heritage but also about building deeper relationships between the institutions, the people, and

the land. The group of conservators, including Caitlin Mahony, Céline Wachsmuth, Sydney Collins, and Assistant Director of Collections Rachel Shabica, spent the week immersing themselves in Mi'kmaw culture. Their visit marked a pivotal moment in the collaboration between NMAI and MDCC, as they sought to gain a better understanding of the

context and significance of the Mi'kmaw cultural belongings they care for at NMAI. These objects, such as baskets, beadwork, and quillwork, have been housed at NMAI for decades, but the visit helped the conservators reconnect these items to their origins and cultural context.

Gaining Context: Connecting Objects to Place

The conservators' intention was to gain a deeper contextual knowledge of the Mi'kmaw cultural belongings in the NMAI collection. Caitlin Mahony, an objects conservator, shares her thoughts on the importance of experiencing Mi'kma'kik in person. "Our intention was to gain a better contextual understanding of the Mi'kmaw cultural belongings that are in the NMAI collection,"

she explains. "The visit impressed upon me the strong connection between the Mi'kmaq and Mi'kma'kik. There was a deep sense of time at many of the sights we visited. It makes a difference hearing the stories of the Mi'kmaq while standing in the place where they take place and have been told since time immemorial."

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The NMAI team (L to R) Caitlin Mahony, Céline Wachsmuth, Rachel Shabica, and Sydney Collins, pose for a pic at Mniku with Basil Johnson (Potlotek First Nation).

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During their weeklong stay, the conservators took part in hands-on cultural activities to deepen their comprehension of the craftsmanship behind the artifacts they work to preserve. The group had the opportunity to learn basketmaking from Frank Meuse (L'sítukuk First Nation) and Ursula Johnson (Eskasoni First Nation), as well as quillwork from Crystal Gloade (Millbrook First Nation) and beading from Nik Phillips (Millbrook First Nation) and Jocelyn Marshall (Membertou First Nation). For the conservators, witnessing these art forms in their natural environment offered a new level of appreciation for the cultural significance of the artifacts they care for.

Assistant Director of Collections Rachel Shabica reflects on the importance of seeing the artists at work in their own communities. "There is nothing better than seeing people work in their own space," Rachel says. "While NMAI stewards Mi'kmaw basketry, beadwork, and quillwork, observing the practitioners interact with and craft these items in Mi'kma'kik provided a much clearer window into the importance

of place to their art."

The Power of Shared Storytelling

The visit provided a valuable opportunity for the conservators to witness the significance of Mi'kmaw craftsmanship in the cultural landscape of Mi'kma'kik. Sharon Farrell (Miawpukek First Nation), MDCC's Collections Manager, speaks about the importance of this experience in shaping the storytelling around Mi'kmaw heritage. "By hosting the NMAI conservators here in Mi'kma'kik, we were able to share our stories and our practices that are directly related to the cultural items they are stewarding. The ability to observe and learn from our practitioners and knowledge carriers in their own creative spaces, has given the conservators a new perspective that expands beyond museum cases."

This hands-on approach to curation helped the conservators understand the deep cultural ties between the Mi'kmaw people and their belongings. The connection to place is vital in understanding the cultural context of the artifacts. When the conservators saw the objects being made in their place of origin, they were able to grasp the full

meaning behind the items, which in turn influenced how to care for them in the future.

The visit also involved cultural exchanges and meaningful interactions with Mi'kmaw community members. The group gathered at Mniku with Basil Johnson (Potlotek First Nation) in Potlotek First Nation to discuss the importance of community and shared knowledge. One of the most memorable moments came at the end of the week, when the group shared an outdoor meal at Maliko'mijk. Caitlin Mahony describes the experience fondly, saying, "I keep returning to the day on Maliko'mijk. I'm glad we got to spend a significant amount of time there to get a sense of the place because it holds so much meaning for the Mi'kmaq and the project. The meal that MDCC Mi'kmaw Language Specialist Geordy Marshall prepared for us to share that day is a special memory. It was low key, yet thoughtful, and the food represented different aspects of Mi'kmaw cuisine. It was also absolutely delicious."

Strengthening Relationships for Future Work

This shared stewardship approach goes beyond

mere preservation; it's about building lasting relationships that will influence how these objects are cared for and presented in the future. Rachel Shabica expresses her appreciation for the experience, noting, "Since the beginnings of this project, MDCC staff and Mi'kmaw community members and practitioners have come to NMAI. It was important for NMAI to come to Mi'kma'kik and experience the place that links all the

community belongings to the community. It allowed us to feel the deep connections of the people and the belongings to the land and reinforced why it is so important for the belongings to return home."

The collaboration between MDCC and NMAI emphasizes the importance of understanding cultural heritage within its own context, both geographically and historically. For the conservators, the visit reinforced the idea

that caring for cultural belongings is not just about preserving physical objects, but about nurturing relationships with the communities that created them. As Caitlin Mahony notes, "The visit influenced directly how we handle and preserve the collection. It feels like each of us who went there came back with something—an insight into the location's essence and history, Mi'kmaw culture and principles. It influences our choices in



The group at Kejimikujik National Park: Back row (L to R): MDCC Curatorial Associate Kamden Nicholas, NMAI conservator Caitlin Mahony, MDCC Program Development Officer Gerald Gloade, MDCC Research and Interpretation Specialist Leah Rosenmeier, MDCC Executive Director Tim Bernard, MDCC Sharing our Stories Coordinator Mercedes Peters, MDCC Collections Manager Sharon Farrell. Front Row (L to R): NMAI conservators Sydney Collins and Céline Wachsmuth, MDCC Curatorial Associate Ashley Sutherland, NMAI Assistant Director of Collections Rachel Shabica, and artist Ursula Johnson (Eskasoni First Nation).

preservation."

Looking Ahead: Bringing Mi'kmaw Artifacts Home

The ongoing collaboration between MDCC and NMAI is focused on bringing Mi'kmaw cultural artifacts back to their rightful home in Mi'kma'kik. This partnership is a crucial step toward the return of these important items, ensuring that they are returned with respect and care. The shared stewardship approach is not just about protecting cultural heritage; it is about

restoring it to the Mi'kmaw people, where it belongs.

As Sharon Farrell puts it, "We have developed and maintained our relationship with the NMAI for decades, but we have known for a long time that our communities hold the knowledge and expertise that need to be connected back to these collections. We are very appreciative of the care the NMAI and its conservators have taken with the collection, but now it is time for the Nation to take care of our

belongings."

This partnership exemplifies how collaboration, respect, and appreciation are key to preserving and returning cultural heritage. The work being done by MDCC and NMAI is a powerful reminder that the cultural items held in D.C. are much more than just objects—they are living pieces of history, deeply tied to the communities that created them.

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PEI Mi'kmaq Reach Historic Milestone with Proposed Settlement of Hog Island Specific Claim

by L'nuey
on behalf of the Epekwitk
Assembly of Councils

The Abegweit and Lennox Island First Nation Councils have accepted an offer from Canada to settle the Hog Island Specific Claim, which was first filed in 1996.

The term "specific claims", refers to claims made by a First Nation against the federal government which relate to the administration of land and other First Nation assets and to the fulfilment of historic treaties and other agreements. The objective of the federal government's Specific Claims Policy is to discharge its lawful obligation for these grievances. Specific Claims

are completely different than comprehensive land title claims.

The Hog Island Claim arose from a purchase of lands in 1942 by Canada for the purpose of adding the lands to the Lennox Island Band reserve. Canada failed to do this, and the specific claim was filed for breach of Canada's fiduciary duty in failing to do so. The Lennox Island Band divided in 1972 to create the Abegweit Band. Because the breach predated the division of the Bands, this specific claim is a joint claim for both PEI Bands.

A settlement agreement is not finalized until it is successfully ratified by a community vote. A date for the vote has not yet been set. The settlement amount that will be voted on is \$17.5 million. The offer

represents compensation for the loss of use of the lands and compensation for replacement reserve lands, should the Councils choose to purchase them. If this Agreement is successfully ratified by the communities, it will be the first Specific Claim settled in PEI. No details have been released as to the structure and intended use of the settlement. Both Councils have confirmed that a range of options will be discussed over the coming weeks.

"This is exciting news for the Epekwitnewaq Mi'kmaq. We have been working hard to resolve this Specific Claim since it was first accepted by Canada for negotiations in 2007. There is still work to do but this is an important moment. Whether it is co-management agreements

over protected lands, acknowledgements of the importance of Mi'kmaw history and culture in Epekwitk or the settlement of specific claims like this, they are all steps in our reconciliation journey, and we need to celebrate them all," said Chief Darlene Bernard.

Chief Junior Gould added, "After almost

30 years of effort, it is gratifying to be able to bring this settlement to our communities for ratification. We never gave up on this claim and we are pleased to finally be nearing a conclusion. While the process isn't completed yet, we have reached a critical milestone. We see this as just the beginning - we are actively working on more

specific claims through L'nuey and our Councils will continue to push for resolution of these past wrongs as well. This is a significant achievement for our communities."

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Frank Meuse made a fern hat for NMAI conservator Caitlin Mahony.



The group fashioned quillwork medallions at the studio of master quiller Crystal Gloade.