

## **26 August 1726: A Case Study in Mi'kmaq-New England Relations in the Early 18th Century**

Bill Wicken

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## 26 August 1726: A Case Study in Mi'kmaq-New England Relations in the Early 18th Century

### *The Event*

AT TWO O'CLOCK ON THE AFTERNOON of 25 August 1726 the Tryal, a Massachusetts fishing sloop, sailed into the harbour at Mirligueche with five crew members on board.<sup>1</sup> Standing on the shoreline were Jean Baptiste Guedry and his 14-year-old son, Jean Baptiste fils,<sup>2</sup> residents of Mirligueche. Not far distant stood a group of Mi'kmaq men, women and children, among whom were James and Philippe Meuse and John Missel, all inhabitants of the nearby Mi'kmaq village. The master of the vessel, Samuel Doty, hailed Guedry and his son to come on board. He asked them whether there was any news. Guedry père replied that there was peace with the Indians — a reference to a treaty signed at Annapolis Royal several weeks earlier, on 4 June 1726, between the English Crown and the Gespogoit Mi'kmaq (Cape Sable Micmac).<sup>3</sup> After a short discussion, Guedry fils returned to the shore while his father and Doty went to the sloop's cabin to have a drink. Later Doty and three of the crew went on shore to acquire needed provisions and "to drink some punch" at the house of Guedry's mother. Guedry père remained on board the vessel with the one remaining crew member, Philip Sachimus. They were soon joined by Guedry fils, who now returned to the vessel with James and Philippe Meuse.<sup>4</sup> Together the men seized Sachimus and tied him to the masthead, took down the vessel's red colours and began shifting through the cargo. At this stage four Mi'kmaq men and a woman with two children also joined them on board.<sup>5</sup>

- 1 *The Trials of Five Persons for Piracy, Felony and Robbery...Held at the Court House in Boston, within His Majesty's Province of the Massachusetts-Bay in New England on Tuesday the Fourth Day of October, Anno Domini, 1726* (Boston, 1726). The events described here have been compiled through a careful examination of the testimony of all those involved in the incident. Mirligueche is the Micmac name for what is now called Lunenburg, Nova Scotia.
- 2 Hereafter referred to as Guedry père and Guedry fils in order to avoid confusion. In the court document Jean Baptiste is identified as Jean Baptiste Jedre, alias Laverdure. In French documentation the family name is written Guedry.
- 3 Also known as Dummer's Treaty, the peace was first signed at Boston in December of 1725 and ratified by Maliseet and Mi'kmaq peoples in June 1726 at Annapolis Royal.
- 4 In English documentation, they are referred to as "Mews". In French documents their name is written "Meuse" or "Mieusse". I have chosen to use "Meuse".
- 5 An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Canadian Historical Association's Annual Meeting, Kingston, 4 June 1991. I thank Cornelius Jaenen and the audience for their comments. Earlier drafts were also read by Louise Dechêne, Toby Morantz and Robert Sweeny, whose comments assisted me in making subsequent revisions. Finally, I would like to thank the four anonymous reviewers for their constructive criticisms.

Bill Wicken, "26 August 1726: A Case Study in Mi'kmaq-New England Relations in the Early 18th Century", *Acadiensis*, XXIII, 1 (Autumn 1993), pp. 5-22.

Seeing that the sloop's colours had been struck, the fishermen on shore returned to their vessel and they too were seized by the men on board. James Meuse and Guedry père told the Englishmen that three of them would be released to inform Massachusetts authorities that the others would be exchanged for prisoners in Boston. Those plans came to naught, for the following morning the fishermen overpowered their captors. Three of the Mi'kmaq men escaped by jumping into the ocean. The others were captured and taken by Doty and his crew to Boston. Of the eight prisoners, the names of five are known: three Mi'kmaq men, Philippe Meuse, James Meuse and John Missel, and Jean Baptiste Guedry père and fils, who were described in the *Boston Newsletter* as "Frenchmen".<sup>6</sup> The names of the Mi'kmaq woman and her two children are not known, though documentation indicates that the woman was the wife of one of the men who had escaped. On 4 and 5 October 1726 the five men were tried for piracy and sentenced to death by a special session of the Massachusetts Admiralty Court. On 2 November they were hanged.<sup>7</sup> The fate of the woman and her children is not known.

### *The Problem*

The history of Mi'kmaq-European relations is best understood by first defining the social and economic status of each society. Historians have generally portrayed the "English" people as irreconcilable enemies of the Mi'kmaq while the "French" have been viewed as their allies and friends.<sup>8</sup> Within each of these broadly defined "ethnic" groups, however, adequate socio-economic or political distinctions have not been made. L.F.S. Upton uses the term "English" interchangeably when describing Mi'kmaq relations with the garrison at Annapolis Royal, Massachusetts political authorities and New England fishermen. Since his analysis of the "English" relies upon source materials written by colonial officials, the expansionist ideology revealed in this correspondence becomes, for Upton, the principal means to understand relationships established by English people with the Mi'kmaq. The assumption is that all English-speaking peoples shared similar attitudes and interests and that therefore their relationships with the Mi'kmaq were also similar. By implication, this interpretation suggests that colonial fishermen, farmers, tradesmen and artisans absorbed the ideology of ruling elites and transposed them into their relationships with native peoples.

Also, in terms of understanding the Mi'kmaq people, Upton and others have not made clear distinctions among the numerous Mi'kmaq villages. Although both anthropologists and historians have pointed out, as Upton has, that the Mi'kmaq occupied "well-defined sites...year after year", no systematic attempt has been made to integrate the location of these sites into an understanding of Mi'kmaq-European

6 *Boston Newsletter*, 8 September 1726.

7 *Boston Newsletter*, 4 November 1726.

8 Olive Dickason, "Amerindians Between French and English in Nova Scotia, 1713-1763", *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, vol. 10, no. 4 (1986), pp. 31-56; Cornelius J. Jaenen, *The French Relationship with the Native Peoples of New France and Acadia* (Ottawa, Research Branch Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1984), pp. 176-81; L.F.S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritimes, 1713-1867* (Vancouver, 1979), pp. 31-60.

relations in the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>9</sup> In part this problem results from the correspondence of English and French colonial officials who often did not identify the geographical area occupied by the Mi'kmaq whom they discussed. These distinctions are important to make since not every Mi'kmaq community interacted with Europeans in a similar way. For example, Mi'kmaq living adjacent to the Bay of Fundy were exposed to larger population concentrations and encountered Europeans on a more consistent basis than Eastern Coast Mi'kmaq, whose contact with non-native peoples was sporadic.

The following analysis examines interactions between Eastern Coast Mi'kmaq<sup>10</sup> and New England fishermen between 1690 and 1726. In order to focus the discussion upon a specific Mi'kmaq community, the events which occurred at Mirligueche in August 1726, as described in court transcripts, have been used as a means by which to understand these relationships. Court records offer a useful avenue through which to explore social relations and to examine how social and political events occurring outside of a community affected the lives of individual people. The "clues" and "signs" revealed in the events at Mirligueche allow us to view more closely the cultural, economic and political forces which either directly or indirectly influenced relations between the Mi'kmaq and New England fishermen.<sup>11</sup> This analysis shows that relationships established by the fishermen did not reflect the attitudes or policies of colonial officials. Rather, these relationships were principally shaped by the economic character of both the fishery and Mi'kmaq society and by cultural differences between the Mi'kmaq and the New England fishermen. However, by financing militias, offering scalp bounties and commissioning vessels to guard the fishery, political elites in Boston and Annapolis Royal influenced the texture of Mi'kmaq-fishermen relations and exacerbated existing tensions.

### *The Sources*

New England fishermen appear in records during the late 17th and early 18th centuries because boats in which they worked had been involved in conflicts with Eastern Coast Mi'kmaq. Merchant proprietors of such vessels lodged complaints, made depositions and signed petitions to the Massachusetts government asking for the protection of their boats.<sup>12</sup> Often the incidents were reported in Boston newspapers.<sup>13</sup> As these records do not include the fishermen's testimony, it is

9 Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, p. 3.

10 The term "Eastern Coast" refers to its 18th century connotation, that is the Nova Scotia coastline from Canso to Cape Sable. This is the coastline which directly faces the Atlantic Ocean.

11 As the Italian historian Carlo Ginzburg has written, "Reality is opaque; but there are certain points — clues, signs — which allow us to decipher it": Carlo Ginzburg, "Morelli, Freud and Sherlock Holmes: Clues and Scientific Method", *History Workshop Journal*, 9 (Spring 1980), p. 27.

12 "A Memorial concerning the fishery of Massachusetts Bay", 1710, vol. 63, fo. 166v-167, Massachusetts State Archives [MSA], Boston; Massachusetts General Council Minutes, 13 April and 12 August 1710, Colonial Office Records [C.O.] 5, Public Record Office, Great Britain, vol. 791, fo. 64v, 82-82v; Petition to Lt.-Gov. William Dummer and Council, 18 July 1724, vol. 63, fo. 408-408v., MSA.

13 For example, *Boston Newsletter*, 23 September 1706, 20 August 1722; *New England Weekly Courant*, 5 August 1723, 20 July 1724, 31 May 1725; *New England Weekly Journal*, 6 October 1729.

difficult to determine the sequence of events leading up to the incidents. Some of these incidents were also mentioned in the correspondence of the French governors of Acadia and, after the establishment of Louisbourg in 1714, of Île Royale.<sup>14</sup> The governors' concern, however, was to show officials in Versailles that the Mi'kmaq continued to thwart English attempts to extend the political influence of Nova Scotia; consequently they do not provide extensive information regarding the altercations or the people involved.

This is well-illustrated in the communication by Governor Joseph de Saint-Ovide of Île Royale to officials in France regarding the events at Mirligueche. On 18 November 1726 Saint-Ovide wrote as follows:

Lorsque les jeunes gens qui avoient été au Port Royal pour y recevoir des presents en ont été Sortis, Sept ou huit autres Sauvages ayant trouvés un Batiment Anglois dans le port de La Hève, Côte de l'est, ils l'ont pris, été pillés, mais s'étant en ivre, Les anglois s'en sont rendus maitres, et ont tués deux, trois se sont jettés à la mer, et les deux autres ont été conduit par les dits Anglois à Baston, ceux qu'y s'étoient jettés à la mer ont été sauvés par un batiment de cette ile qui s'est trouvé dans le Port...<sup>15</sup>

Regardless of what Saint-Ovide actually knew of the affair, what is important are the details he conveyed to his superiors. In retelling the events at Mirligueche, as he had heard them from those who rescued the three Mi'kmaq men, Saint-Ovide made a number of errors and omissions. He did not indicate the reasons for the vessel's seizure, although he implied that Mi'kmaq actions stemmed from a deep-seated hostility towards the "English". As well, he mistakenly thought that two Mi'kmaq men had been killed by the fishermen. He was apparently unaware that five men, one woman and two children had been transported to Boston, and not the two men he had mentioned in his letter. These inaccuracies illustrate how unreliable and selective the information conveyed to European authorities could be. Such records, however, have since become the principal source to understand 18th-century Mi'kmaq-European relations. The challenge is to find a way to overcome both the empirical weaknesses and the intellectual limitations posed by such records.

In this case one alternative method of approach is offered by the court proceedings of the Massachusetts Court of the Admiralty in which Jean Baptiste Guedry, his son and three Mi'kmaq men were tried for piracy. Included in the court record are the testimony of the five New England fishermen and depositions taken

14 Saint-Ovide au ministre, décembre 1729, Correspondence Générale, Île Royale (C11B), vol. 10, fo. 190-190v, Archives des Colonies, Archives Nationales, Paris [AC] [on microfilm at National Archives of Canada, Ottawa]; Correspondence Générale, Acadia (C11D), vol. 2, fo. 260, AC.

15 Saint-Ovide au ministre, 18 novembre 1726, C11B, vol. 8, fo. 47, AC. A translation can be given as follows: "After the young men who were at Port Royal to receive there some presents had left, seven or eight other Indians had found an English vessel in the port of La Heve on the Eastern Coast, they seized it, pillaged it, but became drunk. The English re-assumed control, killed two, three threw themselves into the sea, and the two others were transported by the said English to Boston. Those who had jumped into the ocean were saved by a vessel from this island which they had found in the port...."

from the four adult male prisoners soon after their arrival in Boston. Taken together, this testimony provides a unique personal perspective on relationships between the Mi'kmaq and fishermen, but also an indication of the influence which Europeans had upon individual Mi'kmaq adults.

The testimony is contained in a 34-page printed text which records the proceedings of the Admiralty Court on 4 and 5 October 1726. The court had been established by the Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts, William Dummer, to try cases of piracy on the high seas. Dummer presided over the trial and was assisted by a 17-member jury, 15 of whom were members of the Massachusetts General Council, the governing body of the colony. The case was prosecuted by Robert Auchmuty, and the five prisoners were defended by George Hughes. First, Auchmuty presented the Crown's case, trying to prove that Doty's vessel had been taken with "force of arms", that the fishermen had been detained as prisoners, that "all or the greatest part of the Stores and Provisions belonging to said Vessel" had been robbed or consumed, and finally that the prisoners knew of the peace treaty signed between the English Crown and the Cape Sable Mi'kmaq in June 1726.<sup>16</sup> Auchmuty requested the five fishermen to tell what had happened at Mirligueche, and, following this, the prisoners' depositions were read. The depositions of the three Mi'kmaq men had been taken in Micmac, translated verbally by the court's interpreter, John Gyles, and recorded by the Justices of the Peace for Suffolk County on 3 and 4 September 1726. Jean Baptiste Guedry's testimony was taken in French and translated orally to the Justices of the Peace by Stephen Boutineau. No deposition was taken from Guedry fils. Either before or after the depositions were read in front of the court, the defendants were questioned. Their attorney, George Hughes, then presented his case, and after this the jury deliberated.<sup>17</sup>

### *Mirligueche People*

Mirligueche is located along the eastern coast of Nova Scotia near to where Lunenburg is situated today. During the 17th and 18th centuries, Mirligueche was the site of a Mi'kmaq village, as were other coastal areas situated along the Eastern Coast.<sup>18</sup> As the Mi'kmaq did not grow agricultural crops extensively, they depended upon a variety of food resources, most of which came from the ocean or from the rivers flowing into it. The abundance of marine life in the region made possible the continuous occupation of coastal villages from early spring to late fall. During the

16 *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 6.

17 The court tried Jean Baptiste Guedry and his son on 4 October and the three Mi'kmaq men on the following day. This was because the Crown's prosecutions of the Guedrys and the Mi'kmaq were based upon different legal precepts. As Nova Scotian inhabitants of European descent, the Guedrys were governed by the Treaty of Utrecht, signed in 1713, which had made them subjects of the British Crown. The Court, however, appears to have viewed the Mi'kmaq within a different legal context. See *The Trials of Five Persons*, pp. 7, 30-3.

18 Along the Eastern Coast, Mi'kmaq were also located near Canso, River Sainte Marie, Chebucto, La Heve, Port Medway, Port Rossignol (Shelburne), Ministiguesch (Port La Tour) and Ouimakagan (near Pubnico). For a more detailed discussion of these village sites, see Bill Wicken, "Encounters with Tall Sails and Tall Tales: Mi'kmaq Society, 1600-1760", Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1994, chapter 2.

winter, groups of kin-related families moved inland to hunt for moose, beaver and other animals, whose furs served a number of material needs. After the arrival of fishermen in the 16th century, furs were also traded for European goods. Population concentration varied considerably, increasing at times to as many as 300 people or more during the warm weather months, when peoples from neighbouring villages congregated at Mirligueche for social and political reasons.<sup>19</sup> During the winter villages dispersed into two or more fishing/hunting groups, each of which was composed of between two and five households.<sup>20</sup> In southern regions, these groups may have been larger, reflecting the shorter length and more moderate temperatures of the winter months and greater reliance on marine food resources.<sup>21</sup>

The Mirligueche Mi'kmaq lived in the territory stretching westward from Mirligueche towards Mahone Bay.<sup>22</sup> Continuous occupation of the region before and after contact with Europeans is demonstrated by both archaeological and historical data.<sup>23</sup> While some individuals moved to other areas after marriage, the region was inhabited from one generation to the next by a core group of families. This conclusion is suggested by a comparison between the 1708 nominal census of Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq population and the registers of St. Jean Baptiste parish, which between 1702 and 1735 list 34 baptisms, marriages and deaths among Mi'kmaq inhabiting the southern mainland. This analysis shows that at least eight individuals living with their parents at Cape Sable in 1708 were married and still living in the region 20 years later.<sup>24</sup> Though data is not available for the Mirligueche/La Heve region, similar marriage patterns would also have occurred there. Political leadership was often assumed by male members from a core group of families. In the Chignecto region, for example, male family heads from the Argimeau family often assumed leadership positions, while the Necout family occupied a similar position in the

19 "Sur L'Acadie" [1748], C11D, vol. 10, AC. On the general character of Mi'kmaq economic activities, see Virginia Miller, "The Micmac: A Maritime Woodland Group", in R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson, eds., *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience* (Toronto, 1986), p. 329; Patricia Nietfeld, "Determinants of Aboriginal Micmac Political Structure", Ph.D. thesis, University of New Mexico, 1981, pp. 400-407.

20 Serelle à Raymond, avril 1753, vol. 3393, Archives de la Guerre, Archives Nationales, Paris; "A General Return of the Several Townships in the Province of Nova Scotia, the First day of January, 1767", Colonial Office Records [C.O.] 217, vol. 45, Public Record Office; S.W. Prenties, "Narrative of a Shipwreck on the Island of Cape Breton in a Voyage from Quebec, 1780", MG 23, J6, p. 133, National Archives of Canada [NAC], Ottawa.

21 Regional variations in subsistence patterns are argued in Ronald J. Nash and Virginia Miller, "Model Building and the Case of the Micmac Economy", *Man in the Northeast*, no. 34 (1987), pp. 41-56.

22 Wicken, "Encounters with Tall Sails", chapter 2.

23 See for example, H.P. Biggar, ed., *The Works of Samuel de Champlain* (Toronto, 1922), vol. 1, pp. 236-7; "General Census of the Country of Acadie, 1687-1688" [Gargas Census]; William Inglis Morse, ed., *Acadiensis Nova* (London, 1935), p. 155; Alfonso L. Rojo, "Faunal Analysis of Fish Remains From Cellar's Cove, Nova Scotia", *Archaeology of Eastern North America*, 18 (1990), pp. 89-108.

24 "Recensement general fait au mois de Novembre mille Sept cent huit...." [1708 census], Ayers Collection, Newberry Library, Chicago; "Registres des baptêmes, mariages et sépultures de la paroisse de Saint-Jean Baptiste du port Royal....", RG 1, vol. 26, Public Archives of Nova Scotia [PANS], Halifax.

region adjacent to the Piziquid River [Avon River].<sup>25</sup> This helped to maintain social stability despite the unsettling effects of European diseases and conflict with New England during the late 17th and early 18th centuries.

The individuals involved in the events of 25 and 26 August 1726 came from separate but related communities. James and Philippe Meuse and John Missel were Mi'kmaq, while Guedry and his son were of mixed blood. James and Philippe Meuse, who along with the Guedrys had tied Philip Sachimus to the masthead, were residents of Mirligueche. Both James and Philippe were the grandsons of the Sieur d'Entremont, a nobleman who had emigrated from France in 1651. One of d'Entremont's sons, Philippe d'Azit, afterwards known as Philippe Meuse, married a Mi'kmaq woman around 1678 and soon after moved to Mirligueche.<sup>26</sup> The 1708 census indicates that d'Azit and his wife had at least nine children, including James and Philippe. According to the census, James would have been 38 years old and Philippe 23 in 1726.<sup>27</sup> Despite his French heritage, Philippe d'Azit and family lived among the Mi'kmaq and his children were raised as members of that community.<sup>28</sup>

The case of the other Mi'kmaq prisoner, John Missel, illustrated a characteristic feature of early 18th-century Mi'kmaq society. In his deposition, Missel stated that "he formerly lived at Sechenecto [Chignecto], that two Years ago he lived at Menis [Minas], and this Summer, viz. about a Month ago he came from Menis to Malegash [Mirligueche] where he was when Mr. Doty's Sloop arrive [d?] in that Harbor".<sup>29</sup> Though the court record does not give Missel's age, he was likely young and unmarried. As Marshall Sahlins has argued, in fishing and hunting societies where food resources are abundant, young people are not engaged in subsistence activities on a full-time basis and this provides them with time to visit friends and relatives in other villages.<sup>30</sup> In Mi'kmaq society, men married approximately four to five years later than women.<sup>31</sup> Young men moved freely throughout Acadia, visiting

25 On the Argimeau family: *Registre de l'état-civil Nouvelle Ecosse, Acadie et Gaspésie, 1679-1686*, MG 9, B8, 1, p. 19, NAC; C.O. 217, vol. 5, 3-4, 4 June 1726; "Names of the Indian Chiefs Inhabiting the Coast of Acadie" [1761], in *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, first series, v. 10 (Boston, 1809), p. 116. On the Necoute family: "Recensement des Sauvages de l'île Royale et de la péninsule de l'acadie...." [1722], C11B, vol. 6, fo. 77, AC; "Tribe of Nocout", 20 December 1763, Isaac Deschamps Papers, p. 22, vol. 258, MG1, PANS.

26 The principal work on disease in Mi'kmaq society has been done by Virginia Miller, "Aboriginal Micmac Population: A Review of the Evidence", *Ethnohistory*, 23 (1976), pp. 117-29 and "The Decline of Nova Scotia Micmac Population, A.D. 1600-1850", *Culture*, II (1982), pp. 107-20. A critical review of the debate on disease is in Ralph Pastore, "Native History in the Atlantic Region During the Colonial Period", *Acadiensis*, XX, 1 (Autumn 1990), pp. 207-12.

27 Bona Arsenault, *Histoire et Généalogie des Acadiens*, t. 4 (Québec, 1978), pp. 1593-94.

28 This is shown by the 1708 census which records both Mi'kmaq and métis settlements at Mirligueche and lists Philippe d'Azit's family as part of the Mi'kmaq community. Moreover, Micmac and not French was the principal language of communication within d'Azit's family, as suggested by the fact that the Meuse brothers' depositions were taken in Micmac. Finally, all references in French correspondence refer to the "Indians" who were hung in Boston. See Saint-Ovide à Armstrong, 3 novembre 1727, vol. 38, fo. 203v, C.O. 217.

29 *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 28.

30 Marshall Sahlins, *Stone-Age Economics* (New York, 1972), p. 53.

31 Wicken, "Encounters with Tall Sails", Chapter 2. These figures are only approximate ones



relatives as well as joining raiding expeditions against New England during times of war. In their discussions with Saint-Ovide during the early 1720s, Mi'kmaq chiefs suggested that these youths at times acted independently of their elders in establishing trading alliances with the English.<sup>32</sup> With no direct family responsibilities and brimming with youthful confidence, these young men were eager to demonstrate their abilities and earn the approval of elders and companions as well as the notice of young unmarried women. Missel's inclusion within the group which hijacked Doty's vessel indicates the flexible character of Mi'kmaq society during the warm weather months, when young people and families moved from village to village. His presence also suggests the part that such young unattached men may have played in altercations with fishermen.

Guedry père and his son were identified by the Admiralty Court as "Frenchmen". Most people of European descent inhabiting Nova Scotia lived adjacent to the Bay of Fundy, farming the rich marshlands located there and exporting livestock to Massachusetts and Île Royale. A census compiled in 1737 recorded 6,958 Acadians living along the Bay.<sup>33</sup> Europeans had also settled along the Eastern Coast, including lands adjacent to the La Heve and Petite Rivers, located to the west of Mirligueche. First settled in the 1620s and 1630s,<sup>34</sup> these communities remained small. The 1687 census indicated only 11 people while a 1748 memorial estimated 12 families of European descent living in the region,<sup>35</sup> although these figures likely understated the actual population.<sup>36</sup> Settlers were principally engaged in fishing, hunting and trading with neighbouring Mi'kmaq villages.<sup>37</sup> Garden crops were raised but, as the 1687 census indicates, cultivated land totalled only 2.5 arpents at the settlements located at La Heve and Mirligueche.<sup>38</sup> The rich marshlands did provide excellent fodder for livestock, and like the Acadian settlers located along the Bay of Fundy, inhabitants of this region exported their surplus cattle to Louisbourg. Anchoring close by to

calculated from the 1708 nominal census of the Mi'kmaq population.

32 During the 1720s, in response to questions by Saint-Ovide regarding friendly relations established between the Mi'kmaq and the English, Mi'kmaq elders and chiefs blamed the young men either because they had no "brains" or because they wanted to trade with the New Englanders. This may appear as a convenient excuse meant to assuage Saint-Ovide. However, remarks regarding generational differences keep appearing in the record. Conseil de la marine, 11 mars 1727, C11B, vol. 9, fo. 10, AC; Saint-Ovide au ministre, 20 décembre 1727, C11B, vol. 9, fo. 65v, AC; Saint-Ovide au ministre, 14 décembre 1732, C11B, vol. 11, p. 255, AC.

33 G1466, #28, AC.

34 Rameau de Saint-Père, *Une colonie féodale en Amérique, L'Acadie (1604-1881)*, t. 1 (Paris 1889), pp. 75-80.

35 Gargas Census [1687]; "Sur L'Acadie" [1748], C110, vol. 10, AC.

36 For example, the 1686 census records 114 people of European descent living outside the Bay of Fundy settlements: C11D, vol. 10, AC. Raymond Roy estimates that the actual population was 150: Raymond Roy, "La croissance démographique en Acadie de 1671 à 1763", M.A. thesis, Université de Montréal, 1975, p. 43.

37 "Sur L'Acadie" [1748]. For example, on 26 September 1721, an English vessel landed at the settlement at Pubnico. The English officer reported that "the young men were gone a hunting and only the old pommoncoup [sic] left". Armstrong, Mascarene and Southack to Philips, 30 September 1721, 61.A 013.9 99, Belknap Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston.

38 Gargas Census [1687], p. 155.

Doty's vessel on 25 August 1726, for instance, was a vessel from Louisbourg seeking to purchase cattle from local residents.<sup>39</sup>

Intermarriage occurred extensively between men of European descent and Mi'kmaq women from Mirligueche and other villages.<sup>40</sup> Settlers of European origin were isolated both physically and spiritually from the Acadian settlements located along the Bay of Fundy, and they followed a rhythm of life that coincided closely with that of their Mi'kmaq neighbours. Consequently, there were economic and physical reasons why intermarriage between the two communities occurred. Their close relationship is illustrated in the 1708 marriage of Jean Baptiste Guedry (père) to the eldest daughter of Philippe d'Azit,<sup>41</sup> Madelaine Meuse, who gave birth to at least two children, Jean Baptiste fils, born during the autumn of 1712, and Paul at a date which is not specified.<sup>42</sup> With her mother and two sisters living not far distant, Madelaine and her children moved back and forth between her own home and the Mi'kmaq habitations. As Madelaine's sons grew older, they likely spent an increasing number of hours with their uncles, James and Philippe Meuse, learning to hunt and to fish. These familial and social relationships between the Guedrys and Meuses help account for the presence of members from both families at Mirligueche on 25 August 1726.

### *New England Fishermen*

The third group of individuals involved in the events of August 1726 were New England fishermen. Unlike the Meuses and the Guedrys, the fishermen were migrants. Though fish were caught in coastal waters and rivers, the major focus of the fishery were the Sable Island, Canso and La Heve banks located 15 to 40 miles from the mainland, as well as the Cape Sable and Cape Sambrough banks, situated closer to shore.<sup>43</sup> Although Europeans had been fishing off Nova Scotia's coasts from the 16th century, New England's participation began only in the 1660s. As fish became an important export item for the fledgling colonies, the number of fishermen increased.<sup>44</sup> Figures regarding this annual migration were not kept, although there are clearance records between 1721 and 1741 for vessels entering Canso harbour,

39 *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 13.

40 This argument relates solely to inhabitants of European descent living outside of the Bay of Fundy Acadian settlements.

41 According to the 1708 census, Jean Baptiste Guedry was married to a woman named Madelaine Meuse, aged 14. Though she was not indicated as being Mi'kmaq, during the course of his trial in Boston Jean Baptiste stated that James and Philippe Meuse were his brothers-in-law. I have interpreted this to mean that Madelaine was the sister of James and Philippe. See *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 14. On Anne Meuse, see Arsenault, *Histoire et Généalogie des Acadiens*, t. 4, pp. 1597-8.

42 At his trial in October 1726, Guedry père said that "his Son is but Fourteen this Fall": *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 13.

43 David Flemming, *The Canso Islands: An 18th Century Fishing Station* (Ottawa, Parks Canada Manuscript Report # 308, 1977), p. 26.

44 Daniel Vickers, "Maritime Labor in Colonial Massachusetts: A Case Study of the Essex County Cod Fishery and the Whaling Industry of Nantucket, 1630-1775", Ph.D. thesis, Princeton University, 1981, pp. 47, 195-6.

where the fish were dried. In 1726 695 men in 129 vessels entered Canso.<sup>45</sup> This figure does not include men who fished on the banks and transported their catch directly to Massachusetts for drying.<sup>46</sup>

As the number of vessels increased after 1660, so too did contacts with Eastern Coast Mi'kmaq. This occurred for a number of reasons. Fishermen sailed into harbour because of rough seas or because their vessels needed repair.<sup>47</sup> Heavy seas were an omnipresent part of a fisherman's life, making it all the more necessary to find a safe harbour to cast anchor. This is graphically illustrated in the death registers for the fishing port of Gloucester, which record 33 men drowned at sea off the eastern coast of Nova Scotia between 1716 and 1738, 17 of whom died in October 1716 when four vessels were "lost at sea on their return voyage from Cape Sable".<sup>48</sup>

Local inhabitants also provided fishermen with fresh meat and water.<sup>49</sup> By the 1730s most New England fishermen were at sea from ten to 30 days at a time, with their diet consisting of "salt pork, wormy biscuit, and stale or stinking water".<sup>50</sup> A shore visit was likely a welcome occasion, providing an opportunity to set two feet on the ground and to trade with Mi'kmaq and métis inhabitants living along the coast. As Doty testified before the court in 1726, he had stopped at Mirligueche to obtain water and provisions before setting out to fish on the Sable Island banks.<sup>51</sup>

There were several reasons for the Mi'kmaq to be suspicious of the fishermen. As a people who depended principally upon marine resources, the Mi'kmaq were unhappy with the increase of vessels frequenting the coast during the early 18th century. In 1715 and again in 1720, Mi'kmaq chiefs told the governor of Île Royale of their displeasure at the number of New Englanders fishing along the coast.<sup>52</sup> In

45 Vol. 5, ff. 6-7, C.O. 217. On the fishery see Flemming, *The Canso Islands*.

46 For example, in 1699, the Governor of Acadia, Joseph de Robinau de Villebon related meeting a New England fisherman who was making his second trip to Nova Scotia. "Mémoire sur la pêche au côtes de l'Acadie et la manière de la faire", 27 octobre 1699, in Harold Innis, ed., *Select Documents in Canadian Economic History* (Toronto, 1929), pp. 52-3.

47 Instances of vessels running aground along the coastline can be found in "Certificate of William Palfrey", 18 January 1697, Suffolk County Court Files, File 3407, #10, MSA, and #12, "Certificate of John Poules", 18 January 1697; Addington to de Villebon, 2 June 1702, vol. 2, p. 596, MSA; *Boston Newsletter*, 23 September 1706, 21 July 1712; *New England Weekly Journal*, 6 October 1729, 5 April 1731, 9 December 1735.

48 *Vital Records of Gloucester, Massachusetts to the End of the Year 1849*, v. III (Salem 1924). These records, however, may not provide the full number of individuals lost at sea due to the uneven character in which the cause of death was listed. This is illustrated by the fact that even though death records for Beverley, Ipswich, Marblehead and Salem were also examined, few other cases of fishermen drowning were found. Other records, however, indicate that significant numbers of men were drowned. On 2 October 1718, for example, the *Boston Newsletter* carried the following letter written four days earlier from Piscataqua: "Arrived here in a Ship...John Ridge from Newfoundland who says it has been a very Temptuous Time there, that about Forty Fishermen have been drowned".

49 For example, M. de Ramezay et Bégon au ministre, 13 octobre 1715, C11A, vol. 35, fo. 13, AC; "The Journal of a Captive, 1745-1748", in Isabel M. Calder, ed., *Colonial Captivities, Marches and Journeys* (New York, 1935), pp. 10-11.

50 Vickers, "Maritime Labor in Colonial Massachusetts", p. 203.

51 *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 8.

52 C11B, 1, 8 novembre 1715, AC; "Discours fait aux Sauvage du Canada par M. De Saint-Ovide Gouverneur de l'île royale au Sujet des mouvements du Gouverneur Anglois de l'Acadie avec les

August 1720, the Mi'kmaq and their Wabanaki allies attacked New Englanders fishing at Canso. A letter written by an Englishman described what the natives had told the fishermen: "The Indians spoke very good French, and told the English they only came for the Merchandize and such things as would suit them on shoar [sic]; for the Land was theirs, and they would not suffer any English to live upon it, as for the Vessels and Fish they would not meddle with either".<sup>53</sup>

Hostility towards the fishermen was accentuated by the changing character of social relationships between the two groups. From the 1660s onwards, some fishermen had established shore camps along the Eastern Coast to dry fish, suggesting that an accommodation had been reached with neighbouring Mi'kmaq bands.<sup>54</sup> As war between New England and New France engulfed the region from 1689 to 1710, these camps were abandoned and were not reoccupied after peace had been established. At the same time, the hard physical labour of the offshore fishery, coupled with a surplus labour supply in New England, led vessel owners to employ younger and more productive men.<sup>55</sup> This meant that vessels were principally staffed by young fishermen who lacked the experience and self-control that an unexpected encounter with the Mi'kmaq would demand. As well, fishermen coming ashore after two to six weeks out on the banks would have been physically tired, irritable and easily provoked. The result was that social distances between the two groups had increased, making it more difficult to establish personal relationships. When contact did occur, the fishermen were psychologically unprepared to treat with the Mi'kmaq.

Tensions were fuelled by the drinking which often characterized meetings between fishermen and the Mi'kmaq. Recent research has shown that fishing vessels carried on average enough alcohol to supply each crew member with six ounces of rum and a quart of cider daily.<sup>56</sup> Because fishermen had little to offer Mi'kmaq encountered in inshore waters, alcohol and tobacco became an important medium with which to establish friendship and to trade for fresh foods and other provisions.<sup>57</sup> As the court record shows, alcohol consumption was an important aspect of social interactions between the fishermen and Eastern Coast inhabitants as well as between the Mi'kmaq and métis residents.<sup>58</sup> Mi'kmaq chiefs and elders often complained to French and English authorities of the harmful effects that the trade in liquor had upon their people. In October 1715, for example, the Mirligueche Mi'kmaq told Peter Cappon, a representative of the Massachusetts government, "that ye Fishermen

Réponses que les Sauvages y ont faites" [1720], MG18, E29, Charlevoix Papers, NAC.

53 *Boston Newsletter*, 19 September 1720.

54 C11D, 2, fo. 55, fo. 56, Jacques de Meulles, 1686, AC.

55 Vickers, "Maritime Labor in Colonial Massachusetts", p. 227.

56 Vickers, "Maritime Labor in Colonial Massachusetts", p. 242. This is based on a vessel of 7 to 8 men going out for four to eight weeks.

57 During the late 17th century, Nicolas Denys, who had been extensively involved in the fish and fur trade since the 1630s, wrote that during the spring fishermen traded tobacco and brandy for the furs of the Mi'kmaq community living near Antigonish. See Nicolas Denys, *The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia)* [1672], translated and edited by William F. Ganong (Toronto, 1908), p. 172. Similarly, the French missionary abbé Gaulin complained in 1713 of New England fishermen who "goe to find 'em [the Mi'kmaq] affair [sic] as their habitations with Brandy and make 'em Drunk as well on Shore as on board their Vessels...": Gaulin to Governor and Council of Massachusetts, 8 July 1713, vol. 51, p. 26, MSA.

58 *The Trials of Five Persons*, pp. 8, 14, 27.

should not make them drink for....strong liquors would make them kill their fathers".<sup>59</sup> As this comment illustrates, it was understood that alcohol served to exacerbate tensions between the two groups and sometimes led to violence.

Misunderstandings which occurred between fishermen and Mi'kmaq individuals stemmed from the cultural differences between the two peoples. To take just one example, each people had a different understanding of property. Within Mi'kmaq society goods were not privately accumulated but were either given to those most in need or used and then passed on to others. Similarly, food was shared. Generosity was the means by which to express good will towards others, and in demonstrating generosity the giver acquired status within the community.<sup>60</sup> New England fishermen, however, were animated by a different set of values. They received a share of the total number of fish caught. Since these earnings were expected to support fishing families throughout the year, anyone meddling with a vessel's catch or cargo could be suspected of threatening the success of the fishermen's endeavour. This is precisely the threat represented by a group of Mi'kmaq boarding a fishing vessel, inspecting its contents and waiting for an indication of the crew's generosity. When a demonstration of generosity was not forthcoming, and when the Mi'kmaq outnumbered the fishermen, they could be tempted to become more forceful and take what they desired. It is interesting to note that during the early 17th century a Basque fisherman fishing near Canso complained to the Parisian lawyer Marc Lescarbot that the Mi'kmaq regularly came onto his boat, helping themselves to whatever fish they wanted.<sup>61</sup>

### *Politics and War*

Military conflict between New England and the Wabanaki Confederacy increased friction between the fishermen and the Mirligueche Mi'kmaq. The Confederacy consisted of native peoples inhabiting the Atlantic region, namely the Eastern Abenaki, Passamaquoddy and Maliseet peoples.<sup>62</sup> Though allies of the Confederacy, the Mi'kmaq were not formally members of it. War between the Confederacy and New England occurred sporadically between 1690 and 1725, with French colonial officials providing logistical support. Before 1710 the war had been centred almost exclusively along the northern frontier of New England, or southwest of the Penobscot River. With the conquest of Annapolis Royal in 1710, the political configuration of the region changed. By this time, New England's population had grown to more than 115,000 people, with Massachusetts constituting almost half the

59 "A Journal of a Voyage to Cape Britton [sic] on ye King's Account by Mr. Peter Capoon..." [1715], vol. 38A, p. 14, MSA.

60 Pierre Biard, 31 January 1612, in Reuben Thwaites, ed., *Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents [JR]*, vol. 2 (Cleveland, 1896), p. 79; Biard, "Relation of 1616", *JR*, vol. 3, p. 95; Marc Lescarbot, *The History of New France*, edited by William F. Ganong, III (Toronto, 1914), p. 222.

61 Lescarbot, *The History of New France*, II, pp. 362-63.

62 The Eastern Abenaki lived in the what is now the State of Maine, the Passamaquoddy along the Saint Croix River, which divides Maine from the Province of New Brunswick, and the Maliseet along the St. John River. Short descriptions of each of these peoples can be found in Bruce Trigger, ed., *The Handbook of North American Indians*, vol. 15, *The Northeast* (Washington, 1978).

total.<sup>63</sup> A strong merchant class had also emerged, whose vessels transported fish and other products to European markets. The capture of Port Royal had been financed largely by Massachusetts, whose merchants had suffered financial losses from the interruption of trading routes and fishing voyages caused by war.<sup>64</sup> After 1710, as conflict continued to plague the region, the Massachusetts government exerted its economic and military influence in the region.<sup>65</sup> At the same time, France established a garrison at Louisbourg, not only for strategic reasons but also for guarding the valuable French fishery, which had been established both there as well as along the Gaspé peninsula since the late 16th century.<sup>66</sup> In 1718 a New England force under the command of Captain Thomas Smart raided the French fishery at Canso, and two years later a garrison was established there in order to protect New England fishermen. Thereafter the New England fishery was focused principally near Canso, as the protected harbour and favorable position relative to the fishing banks provided an opportune site for fishermen to dry their catch. All of these factors resulted in the Eastern Coast becoming an arena of conflict between the Wabanaki and New England after 1710.

For Mi'kmaq and métis inhabitants of the Eastern Coast, the conflict, at least initially, revealed differences in attitudes towards fishermen. On 1 August 1715 the *Boston Newsletter* reported that a Captain Odoiorn had been held prisoner at Mirligueche by a group of 47 Mi'kmaq:

as soon as Monsieur Laverdure heard of  
the Insult that 47 Indians had done upon  
our Men and Fishing Vessels, he immediately  
express'd his Son to Menis [Minas] with an Account  
of it; whereupon they despatched Capt. Walker  
an Indian of as great power and influence of  
any Sagamore among the Indians; who no sooner  
came among them, than he Rescued the Prisoners  
and Delivered up the Vessels to them; adding  
that whatever Damage the Indians had done to  
the English, there should be satisfaction given.<sup>67</sup>

63 The population of New England included 112,500 whites and 2,600 blacks: John J. McCusker and Russell R. Menard, *The Economy of British North America, 1607-1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), p. 103. The approximate population of Massachusetts was 62,000 people: Douglas Lamar Jones, *Village and Seaport: Migration and Society in Eighteenth Century Massachusetts* (Hanover, Mass., 1981), p. 23.

64 In 1698, the Reverend John Higginson of Salem, Massachusetts in part blamed hostilities with the French and Indians for the decline of Salem's fishing and trading vessels. John Higginson to Nathaniel Higginson, 31 August 1698, *The Essex Institute Historical Collections*, vol. 58 (1907), pp. 182-3.

65 See George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations, 1630 to 1784* (Montreal, 1973), pp. 114-18.

66 Of Cape Breton, Vaudreuil wrote: "la perte de la pêche de la morue qui est si utile à la France ... si une fois les Anglois avoient cette île, ils seroient maîtres de la mer de ce côté là": Vaudreuil à le Duc d'Orléans, février 1716, vol. 36, fo. 109v, C11A, AC.

67 *Boston Newsletter*, 1 August 1715. Another account of this incident can be found in *Journal of the*

Laverdure was an alias used by at least four Acadian men during the late 17th century, including Germain Doucet, François LeClair, Pierre Melançon and Claude Guedry. Only the last, however, resided at Mirligueche.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the “son” who was sent overland to Minas to seek assistance from Mi’kmaq there, could only have been Jean Baptiste Guedry. As the incident suggests, some Eastern Coast inhabitants of European descent interceded on behalf of the fishermen in altercations with the Mi’kmaq.<sup>69</sup> In doing so, people such as the Guedrys hoped to protect their communities from attack by New England privateers, who, during the late 17th and early 18th centuries, had raided local settlements.<sup>70</sup> As well, the Guedrys, like other Eastern Coast inhabitants, were traders who sold goods to fishermen as well as fish and furs to New England merchants.<sup>71</sup> War between New England and the Mi’kmaq threatened the trade, and it was in their interest to attempt to maintain peaceful relations between the two groups.

The intensification of the Wabanaki-New England war from 1722 until 1725 increased tensions between fishermen and Mirligueche inhabitants. With the valuable Eastern Coast fishery in jeopardy, the Massachusetts government commissioned a galley ship to protect its fishermen. The commander of the vessel, Joseph Marjory, ranged the Eastern Coast, intercepting Acadian-owned boats and indiscriminately attacking Mi’kmaq people. On 28 July 1723, while anchoring near Mirligueche, Marjory captured seven unnamed individuals, whom in his correspondence he identified as “Indians”. This group consisted of three adult men and four children, one 16 years old, another 10 or 12 years old and “two others about 7 or 8 years old”.<sup>72</sup> Conclusive proof is lacking, but a reading of the subsequent evidence suggests that among the prisoners were Jean Baptiste Guedry’s son, Paul, who would have been about eight years old at this time, and François Meuse, the brother of James and Philippe Meuse. While Paul Guedry was métis by birth, he, like his older brother Jean Baptiste fils, would have spoken Micmac and so his identity could easily have been mistaken by Marjory.

With the ratification of the peace treaty with New England by the Mi’kmaq at Annapolis Royal in June 1726, the Meuse and Guedry families no doubt expected that their sons would be returned. When this did not occur, one available course of action was to seize Doty’s vessel and hold the crew until the New Englanders

*House of Representatives, Massachusetts, 25 July 1715, p. 42.*

- 68 Clarence J. D’Entremont, “Du Nouveau sur les Melanson”, *Les Cahiers de la société historique acadienne* (décembre 1970), p. 363; “Un Recensement de L’Acadie en 1686”, *Bulletin de Recherche Historique*, vol. 38 (1932), p. 723.
- 69 Charles de La Tour of Pubnico in the Cape Sable region also helped to protect fishermen and other trans-Atlantic travellers from the Mi’kmaq as well as providing them with provisions. See Suffolk County Court Files, File 3407, #10, Certificate of William Palfrey and #12, Certificate of John Poules, MSA.
- 70 For example, in April 1705 Captain Jacob Fowle attacked Eastern Coast settlements at Pubnico, Port Razoir and La Heve. He burned six houses and carried to Boston eight “French” prisoners: *Boston Newsletter*, 23 April 1705.
- 71 “Mémoire sur l’état présent de la côte de l’Acadie” [1684], C11D, vol. 1, fo. 181, AC; Jacques de Meulles, “Description de la Heve” [1686], C11D, vol. 2, fo. 56v, AC; H. Leander d’Entremont, *The Baronnie de Pombcoup and the Acadians* (Yarmouth, 1931), p. 36.
- 72 “Declaration of Joseph Marjory”, 18 December 1724, vol. 63, fo. 416, Joseph Marjory to Lt.-Gov. Dummer, 15 August 1723, vol. 38A, fo. 44, MSA.

released their kin. In his deposition, Guedry père is recorded as saying that “they designed to take what English vessels they could, notwithstanding the Peace, by way of Reprizals, by Reason the Examinant’s Son Paul, and his Brother-in-Law Francis Mews were detained by the English”.<sup>73</sup> Philippe Meuse made reference to the “Indian Prisoners”, but he did not specify whether he had any relation to them. His brother, James, however, had told Samuel Doty that “there was Peace Proclaimed between the English and Indians; but the said Mews said he never would make Peace with the English for the Governour of Boston kept his Brother, and he would Burn the Sloop and keep the Goods till his Brother was sent home”.<sup>74</sup>

The Mi'kmaq defendants in 1726 also said that they were unsure whether a peace had been signed. In his deposition, John Missel is recorded as saying that he heard from some Indians that there was peace but that others said “they wondered ..if there was Peace, [as] they [the English] did not bring the Indian Prisoners from Boston”.<sup>75</sup> Testimony by Guedry père and both James and Philippe Meuse suggests that they, too, were unsure whether there was peace. Guedry père told the court that “the French at Louisbourg told the Indians Peace made with the English would not continue long”.<sup>76</sup> This is confirmed by James Meuse, who said that a month earlier he had been at Minas:

there were near two hundred Indians with the French Fryar [sic], who came together to say Prayers...the french told the Indians that there was no peace then, and bid the Indians, if they met any English Men, to take them. Since which time he hath been at Menis [Minas] twice from Malegash, [Mirligueche] where he had been at times about thirteen days, and most of the French at Menis ...told him there was no Peace, and that the Indians might take the English Vessels as they did formerly. But at the same time some few of the french there, told him that there was Peace.<sup>77</sup>

The only time they were directly questioned by the Admiralty judges, both James and Philippe Meuse testified that they had known of the peace negotiations occurring at Annapolis Royal and had been in the company of people who had signed the treaty. The Meuse brothers did not indicate, however, whether the treaty had been discussed.<sup>78</sup> Given this contradictory evidence, it is not possible to determine what each of the defendants knew of the peace. Expectations about the release of previously captured local inhabitants seem reasonable, however, even if we may suspect that the prisoners deliberately misrepresented their knowledge of the

73 *The Trials of Five Persons*, p. 14. Guedry père also stated that he had been advised by the vessel from Île Royale harbouring at Mirigueche that seizing an English boat “would be the best way in order to get his Son paul from the English, to take and keep one of their Vessels till they got him out of their Hands...”: *ibid.*, p.13.

74 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 22.

75 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

76 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

77 *Ibid.*, p. 26.

78 *Ibid.*, p. 30.



ratification process, knowing the consequences which would result if the court found them guilty of piracy.

The prisoners' testimony regarding the contradictory advice offered by Acadian settlers and French officials, however, does reflect political interests within each community. French officials at Louisbourg were not happy with the peace concluded by the Mi'kmaq with the British Crown. During 1726 and 1727, Saint-Ovide's letters referred to the dangers posed by the treaty and his attempts to convince the Mi'kmaq to treat the English as enemies.<sup>79</sup> The governor's instructions from his superiors in France were clear. Writing in March 1727, the Minister of the Marine instructed Saint-Ovide to seize the opportunity occasioned by the Boston hanging to foment disagreements between the Mi'kmaq and the English.<sup>80</sup>

The political situation in the Acadian settlements at Minas is less clear. Traditionally, historians have emphasized how between 1713 and 1748 Acadians steered a neutral position between the imperial ambitions of the French and English governments.<sup>81</sup> Though it is recognized that some collaborated with one side or the other,<sup>82</sup> no systematic attempt has been made to examine how widely people championed French interests. There were a number of economic, not to mention cultural, reasons to suppose that a significant portion of the population sought to undermine English influence in the region. As Île Royale's population expanded, it became an important market for Acadian agricultural products.<sup>83</sup> This created closer economic and social ties between individual Acadian traders and Île Royale residents. Significantly, one of the most prosperous Acadian merchants who traded with Île Royale, Nicolas Gauthier, lost most of his property as a result of the financial support he provided to French and Canadian troops during their military expeditions against Nova Scotia in the 1744-48 war.<sup>84</sup> This shows that despite officially adopting a policy of neutrality, cultural and economic ties with the French regime led some Acadian residents to actively undermine the English government of

79 Conseil de la Marine, "Sur les Sauvages", 11 mars 1727, C11B, vol. 9, fo. 9v, AC; Saint-Ovide au ministre, 20 décembre 1727, C11B, vol. 9, fo. 64, AC.

80 Conseil de la Marine, 14 février 1728, "Extrait de la lettre Ecrite à Saint-Ovide de 10 juin 1727", C11B, vol. 10, fo. 5-5v, AC.

81 Carl Brasseaux, *The Founding of New Acadia* (Baton Rouge, 1987), pp. 13-15; John Brebner, *New England's Outpost: Acadia Before the Conquest of Canada* (New York, 1927); Naomi Griffiths, "The Golden Age: Acadian Life, 1713-1748", *Histoire sociale/Social History*, vol. 17, no. 33 (1984), p. 24; John G. Reid, *Six Crucial Decades: Times of Change in the History of the Maritimes* (Halifax, 1987), p. 30.

82 Jean Daigle, "Acadia 1604-1763, An Historical Synthesis", in *The Acadians of the Maritimes: Thematic Studies* (Moncton, 1982), pp. 34-43.

83 In the period after 1714, English officials at Annapolis Royal complained of the trade. See Archibald M. MacMechan, ed., *Original Minutes of His Majesty's Council at Annapolis Royal, 1720-1739* (Halifax, 1908), pp. 161, 173; and MacMechan, ed., *A Calendar of Two Letter-Books and One Commission Book in the Possession of the Government of Nova Scotia, 1713-1741* (Halifax, 1900), p. 67. An indication of the volume of this trade for the years 1740 and 1742-43 can be found in the only surviving port records for Louisbourg. "Etat des Batiments Venus de l'Acadie...", 1740, F2B, vol. 11, AC; Amirauté de Louisbourg, 1742-3, Série B, vol. 272, Archives Departementales, La Rochelle.

84 Ramezay au ministre, 1747, vol. 89, fo. 124-129v, C11A, AC.

Nova Scotia during periods of war or of political uncertainty. Such was the case in 1726, when some Acadian residents of Minas advised the Mi'kmaq to continue raiding New England fishing vessels.<sup>85</sup>

Finally, the testimony of the three men shows that the ratification of the Boston treaty had not convinced all Mi'kmaq communities that the war had ended. For the Meuse family, the principal point that had emerged from treaty negotiations at Annapolis Royal was that their relatives had not been released. They reasoned, therefore, that war with New England continued.<sup>86</sup> Francois Meuse and Paul Guedry, however, were imprisoned in Boston and were not within the political jurisdiction of Nova Scotia officials. This confusion among the Mirligueche Mi'kmaq regarding the prisoners' fate shows how the political separation of Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, and the geographical distance between the two colonies, created logistical problems in co-ordinating each government's policies towards the Mi'kmaq. Nova Scotia officials could not guarantee that people held captive in Boston would be released. Nor could they control the policies of Massachusetts colonial officials whose actions affected Mi'kmaq-English relations in Nova Scotia and placed the garrison there in jeopardy. This is illustrated in Lieutenant-Governor Lawrence Armstrong's attempt to placate the Mi'kmaq following the hanging of the Meuse brothers and John Missel in November 1726. After learning of the hanging, Armstrong sent into the Mi'kmaq villages some presents and communications telling them that he had no part in what the Boston Council had done to their brothers.<sup>87</sup> In effect, officials at Annapolis Royal admitted they could do little at times but react to the actions of Massachusetts officials.

### *Conclusion*

Unable to determine how and when prisoners were to be released, the Meuse and Guedry families relied upon their own understanding of the 1726 treaty. That understanding, however, was tempered by a distrust of the Massachusetts government. French officials and Acadians played upon this distrust and advised members of the Meuse family that if they wished to see their relatives again, they should hold some fishermen hostage. The Meuse brothers were willing to do so not only because fishermen constituted an economic threat to their fishery, but also because of cultural differences with the fishermen which had created social tensions between them.

The events of 25 and 26 August 1726 occurred principally because of the political upheaval which marked Mi'kmaq relations with New England during the late 17th and early 18th centuries. However, we should not suppose that in the post-1726 period Mi'kmaq relations with New England fishermen were principally

85 C11A, vol. 89, fo. 124-129, AC.

86 A number of prisoners were actually released after the signing but these people had been incarcerated at Annapolis Royal, not Boston. See Archibald MacMechan, ed., *Original Minutes of His Majesty's Executive Council, 1721-1735* (Halifax, 1908), p. 116.

87 "Extrait de la lettre Ecrite à Saint-Ovide le 10 juin 1727", C11B, vol. 10, fo. 5v, AC. The original reads "Envoyant dans leur villages des presents et leur faisant dire qu'il n'avoit aucune pars à ce que le Conseil de Baston avoir fais au leurs frères".

characterized by violence. Occasional altercations occurred, but these were spontaneous acts of violence which in part stemmed from cultural differences between the two groups. These incidents should not disguise the fact that peaceful trading relationships were established. Out of exceptional episodes such as that of August 1726 there emerged a pattern of exchange and partnership between the New England fishermen and the Eastern Coast Mi'kmaq. The memory of those relationships was to play an important role in making possible the settlement of what came to be known as southwestern Nova Scotia by New England fishermen in the post-1760 period. In effect, interaction between the two peoples ultimately removed some of the mutual distrust and anger that had marked their contacts during the early 18th century.