

## “History of Halifax” - A Mi’kmaq perspective

Written by Michael William McDonald “Sipekne’katik First Nations”

Halifax is known to Mi’kmaq as Chebucto “*Kjipuktuk*”<sup>1</sup> or “Great Harbour”. Since time immemorial a number of Mi’kmaq Clans held permanent villages in Kijipuktuk. The Mi’kmaq of Kijipuktuk took advantage of the coves in the Harbour since they offered protection from the elements, a place to beach canoes, and a constant supply of fresh water from the streams flowing down from one of many lakes nearby.<sup>2</sup> There was also a wide diversity of marine life in this area that provided food all year round, especially large marine mammals such as grey seals, Harbour seals and even Atlantic Walruses were plentiful.<sup>3</sup>

Mi’kmaq territory was split into 7 Districts. The seven Districts we known as: Kespukwitk, Sipeknékatik, Eskíkewaḡ, Unamáḡik, Piktuk aḡq Epekwitk, Sikniktewaḡ, and Kespékewaḡ. Kijipuktuk was located in the Sipekne’katik District. The District of Sipekne’katik in English is translated to the "ground nut place" or “place of the ground nut". The word for ground nut in Mi’kmaq is “Sipekne”.

Mi’kmaq lived in family groups comprised of a number of families that were usually connected by kinship.<sup>4</sup>

These groups would make up a Clan and each Clan was represented by elders and a local *Sakamow* (chief).<sup>5</sup>

Local Clans were interconnected through kinship ties and blood relations. These interconnected Clans all shared a specific territory known as a District.<sup>6</sup> Each District held boundaries that were expected to be maintained by the Chiefs of each Clan with the assistance of war captains. Each District also had a head *Sakamow* known as a “*Nikanus*” or District Chief, and all seven Districts was represented by one “*Kji’saqmaw*” or Grand Chief.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> French wrote it as Chebucto, for the Mi’kmaq word “*Kjipuktuk*” which means great harbour.

<sup>2</sup> Ingalls, Sharon and Wayne. “*Sweet Suburb: A History of Prince’s Lodge, Birch Cove and Rockingham*”. Glen Margaret Pub, Publishing, 2010, 1st Edition, 1st Printing 2010 at p 11.

<sup>3</sup> Hoffman, Bernard, “*Historical Ethnography of the Micmac of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries*”, PhD dissertation, Berkley: University of California, 1955 at 533. The district Sipekne’katik, "ground nut place" consisted of the modern day counties of Colchester, Hants, Kings, Halifax and Lunenburg.

<sup>4</sup> Nietfeld, P K L 1981 “*Determinants of Aboriginal Micmac Political Structure.*” Albuquerque, New Mexico: Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Anthropology, University of New Mexico at p 466.

<sup>5</sup> Wicken, William C., Thesis: *Encounter with Tall Sails and Tall Tales: Mi’kmaq Society, 1500-1760*, McGill University, 1994 at p 131.

<sup>6</sup> *Saqamawutis* for the area of the District Chief. or when speaking to another Mi’kmaq in stating which district you are from, you would use the word *Kmitkinu* or *L’nu wutan* as to describe the district of your village is in, *Maqamigal*, which mean lands, territories.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, Virginia P., “*Social and political complexity on the East Coast: the Micmac Case*”, Ron Nash, ed, *The Evolution of Maritime Cultures on the Northeast and Northwest Coasts of America*, Vancouver: Simon Fraser University, 1983, Dept of Anthropology Publication no 11 at p 47.

The District Chief was appointed by all the chiefs and elders from each clan in his district. This District Chief was always a Chief that had won many victories against enemies of the Mi'kmaq. He was also a shaman who did ceremonies like fasting and sweats, and he would have carried a pipe which he earned through ceremony. To earn the right to carry a pipe you would first have to fast for 4 days and night with no food nor water. At end of the fourth day you would be pierced thru your chest with bone attached to sinew rope and strung up to a tree and pulled off the ground and held off your feet until the bone ripped thru your skin. Through this process it is believed that you die and enter the spirit world and only thru suffering and pain are you able to be pulled back out of the spirit world to this world and thus bringing with you the knowledge and teachings of all those who have gone before you. Only then did you earn the right to carry the pipe. You would repeat this process for four years in a row to earn the right to pour the water on the rocks in a sweat lodge ceremony.

The territory of local *Sakamow* seems to have been coextensive with the area occupied by the inhabitants of a single village.<sup>8</sup> There were three Clan Sakamows in Kijipuktuk with a population thought to be around 400 to 600 Mi'kmaq's by the early to middle 1700's. Considering anthropological evidence in other areas and the plentiful food supply in Kijipuktuk the population was probably in the 2000 range. Along the southeastern bank of the St. Croix River in St. Croix, Hants County there is evidence there was a large permanent Mi'kmaq village that supported well over 500 and possible 1000 Mi'kmaq's at any given time.<sup>9</sup> The main source of food on this river was Eel and Gaspereau. Considering the large amount of fish and marine life in Kijipuktuk the Mi'kmaq population would have been much larger at the time of contact. During the 1500's it was common knowledge among fishing vessels to avoid entering Kijipuktuk because the Mi'kmaq would attack any outsiders entering the basin. In his memoirs Monsieur Samuel De Champlain wrote that he avoided going near Kijipuktuk even though he identifies it on his maps as Baye Saine or Healthy Harbour.<sup>10</sup> The islands located at the mouth of the Harbour were known to the French as Les Mortes (The Death) where a number of French Sailors were killed by

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Halwas, Sara. 2006. MA Archaeology, entitled: "*Where the Wild Things Grow: A Palaeoethnobotanical Study of Late Woodland Plant Use at Clam Cove*", Nova Scotia.

<sup>10</sup> Champlain, Samuel de. (2013). pp. 114-5. *Voyages of Samuel de Champlain: 1604-1618*. London: Forgotten Books. (Original work published 1907).

the Mi'kmaq of Kjiptuk. Any ship entering would be met by over 400 warriors in canoes who would immediately attack the unexpected ships. Many of the ships that entered Kjiptuk during the late 1500's and early 1600's were never seen again. By the mid-1600's European sailors and fisherman avoided Kjiptuk all together. So the exact number of Mi'kmaq in Kjiptuk during these early years is unknown.

The area of downtown Halifax up to Point Pleasant Park was known to the Mi'kmaq as "*Amntu'kati*"<sup>11</sup>, which in English means, "spirit place" or "the place of spirits".<sup>12</sup> This is also the place where Mi'kmaq believed the Great Spirit Fire sat whose sparks gave birth to the 7 original families of the Mi'kmaq people. This is told in the seventh level of creation in the Mi'kmaq Creation Story.<sup>13</sup> In the seventh and last level of creation it is told of how the Mi'kmaq came to be and at the time of their creation and they were divided into 7 families which later became the 7 districts of Mi'kmaq'ik. Every year since time immemorial the Mi'kmaq from all over Mi'kmaq'ik would come and gathered at "*Amntu'kati*" for 7 days after the first full moon during "*Tquoluiku*," "the frog croaking month" in the spring.<sup>14</sup> The Mi'kmaq would come to this ceremony to celebrate the creation of the Mi'kmaq people. This is why the Mi'kmaq protected Kjiptuk so fiercely.

With the increase of European fishing boats anchoring along the shore lines of Mi'kmaq'ik, contact with Mi'kmaq increased. These early contacts had a devastated consequence on Mi'kmaq population since the Mi'kmaq had no initial immunities to the diseases brought to them by early contact.<sup>15</sup> As a result of these early contacts the Mi'kmaq numbers in Kjiptuk slowly decreases and they could no longer protect *Amntu'kati* like they once did.

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<sup>11</sup> *Amntu'kati*, which is a spirit place or the place of spirits, on the other side of Point Pleasant park there is a small cove that is protected by the rough seas, it is *Wejkwetukwaqn* which means to come to a legend, or where the legend comes from, it is the place where Mi'kmaq Legendary Warrior *Amntu'* resides at his Lodge and Guards the Eastern Door to protect the *Lnu'k*, the people from any dangers that come from the open sea.

<sup>12</sup> Byrd Awalt speaks of this in his essay from multiple sources, including oral, however Byrd Mi'kmaq was slightly off. Don (Byrd) Awalt "*The Mi'kmaq and Point Pleasant Park An Historical Essay in Progress*," Halifax, NS at p 2. Available on line: [http://www.pointpleasantpark.ca/site-ppp/competitionwebsite/ppp.isl.ca/media/documents/Historical\\_MikmaqandPPPAwalt2004.pdf](http://www.pointpleasantpark.ca/site-ppp/competitionwebsite/ppp.isl.ca/media/documents/Historical_MikmaqandPPPAwalt2004.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Augustine, Stephen; "Mi'kmaq Knowledge in the Mi'kmaq Creation Story: Lasting Words and Deeds," April 8, 1977. The Creation story share to this writer by Isabell Shay Knockwood during the 1980's which gave slight variances to the story.

<sup>14</sup> Akins, Thomas B. "History of Halifax City"; Murdoch, Beamish. "History of Nova Scotia or Acadie, in 3 Volumes"; Raddall, Thomas H. "*Halifax, Warden of the North*."

<sup>15</sup> Bourque, Bruce J, *Twelve Thousand Years, American Indians in Maine*, University of Nebraska Press, 2001.

In 1746, the Mi'kmaq of "Kjipuktuk" along with hundreds of warriors from the Sipekne'katik District and neighboring District's along with over a dozen Chief's waited for Duc d'Anville fleet of over 70 ships bringing supplies of arms, ammunition, along with over a 1000 soldiers to fight the English.<sup>16</sup> Before departing France some of the crewmen on those ships had been infected by European Borne Viruses and illness. Fueled by the crowded, unsanitary conditions, along with poor food, and polluted water on the ships, many died on route from a deadly combination of scurvy, typhus, and typhoid.<sup>17</sup> By the time 40 ships of the original 70 arrived a large number had perished. The Mi'kmaq of "Kjipuktuk" and the warriors of Sipekne'katik were expecting ammunition and supplies but instead they were greeted by an armada of death and destruction. Hundreds of Mi'kmaq's died in "Kjipuktuk", oral traditional accounts state the numbers of Mi'kmaq deaths were well over 1000. They were buried along with over 1000 French sailors and soldiers in two mass graves.<sup>18</sup> The ones that survived spread the deadly combination of scurvy, typhus, and typhoid all across Mi'kma'kik, which ended up killing over one-third the entire Mi'kmaq population.<sup>19</sup>

Mi'kmaq oral tradition records the catastrophe that decimated their numbers. Many died on their traditional camping grounds, where they were quickly buried. The Mi'kmaq called the disease "the black measles," even naming one of their camping areas "Iktuk'maqtawe'g'aluso'l", the "place of the black measles."<sup>20</sup> Before the arrival of English settlers, the Mi'kmaq camped in the sheltered coves around "Kjipuktuk" Bedford Basin. One such cove, Birch Cove was used as a semi-permanent camp by four or five families. As a base for resource extraction, Birch Cove was perfectly situated and the upper cove an ideal camp site.

The Mi'kmaq people were well organized with highly complex social and political structure and prepared to defend their District at any cost. If Duc d'Anville fleet never brought with them an armada of deadly disease

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<sup>16</sup> Clowes, *History of the Royal Navy*, 3: 116-117; Douglas, 'Nova Scotia and the Royal Navy', 116-130; Graham, *Empire of the North Atlantic*, 132-134; Jenkins, *History of the French Navy*, 113-114.

<sup>17</sup> James Pritchard. "Anatomy of a Naval Disaster: The 1746 French Expedition to North America." Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995 at p 143.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Chandler Haliburton, in Ruth Holmes Whitehead, *The Old Man Told Us: Excerpts from Micmac History, 1500-1950* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1991) at 108 [**Old Man Told Us**].

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Ingalls, Sharon and Wayne. "Sweet Suburb: A History of Prince's Lodge, Birch Cove and Rockingham". Glen Margaret Pub, Publishing, 2010, 1st Edition, 1st Printing 2010 at 14 [**Sweet Suburb**].

and illness to “*Kjipuktuk*” in 1746, Cornwallis would have never been able to settle there, only 3 years later. Especially considering as previously noted, this area was highly sacred to the Mi’kmaq of Sipekne’katik<sup>21</sup> The English first settled in Halifax on June 14, 1749.<sup>22</sup> This enraged the Mi’kmaq. The spot where they built their settlement was sacred land to the Mi’kmaq. On August 14, 1749, Cornwallis called for a meeting with the Mi’kmaq and neighboring Tribes.<sup>23</sup> It was crucial for the English to sign a Treaty with the Mi’kmaq especially with the Mi’kmaq of Cape Sable Island. The English needed a treaty to end the hostilities in Annapolis Royal and the constant attacks at English settlements in Maine and New England.<sup>24</sup> However, Mi’kmaq of Sipekne’katik refuse to come to this meeting, instead the Chiefs and Elders of Sipekne’katik drafted a letter to Cornwallis expressing their anger over the English settlement in Kijipuktuk, and in doing so the Mi’kmaq were asserting their rights to their lands.<sup>25</sup>

The letter in part to Cornwallis stated: *"The place where you are, where you are building dwellings, where you are now building a fort, where you want, as it were, to enthrone yourself, this land of which you wish to make yourself now absolute master, this land belongs to me. I have come from it as certainly as the grass, it is the very place of my birth and of my dwelling, this land belongs to me the Mi'kmaq (Lnuk), yes I swear, it is God (Niskam) who has given it to me to be my country forever ... Show me where the Mi'kmaq (Lnuk) will lodge? You drive me out; where do you want me to take refuge? You have taken almost all this land in all its extent. Nothing remains to me except Kchibouktouk (Kjipuktuk). You envy me even this morsel...Your residence at Port Royal does not cause me great anger because you see that I have left you there at peace for a long time, but now you force me to speak out by the great theft you have perpetrated against me."*<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Halifax Peninsula where , if you follow the Halifax Peninsula around it comes to a small cove that is protected by the rough seas what is now referred to has the Armdale Rotary, it is called *Wejkwe'tukwaqn* which means “to come to a legend”, or “where the legend comes from”, it is the place where our Legendary Warrior *Amntu'* resides at his Lodge (*Amntu'apsi'kan* or “Sprit Lodge”) and guards the Eastern Door to protect the *Lnu'k*, “the people” from any dangers that come from the open sea.

<sup>22</sup> Akins, Thomas Beamish, “*History of Halifax City, Collections of the Nova Scotia Historical Society for the years 1892-1894*”, v.8, Halifax: Morning Herald Printing and Publishing, 1895.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> : O’neill, Dianne, curator, *At the Great Harbour: 250 Years on the Halifax Waterfront*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1995 [**Great Harbour**].

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> A. J. B. Johnston, *Endgame 1758: The Promise, the Glory and the Despair of Louisbourg’s Last Decade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007 at p 24.

Cornwallis refuse to accept the Mi'kmaq claims to Kijipuktuk, so the Halifax settlement remained. In September, less than a month after Cornwallis received the letter, the Mi'kmaq started attacking the settlement of Halifax.<sup>27</sup> These attacks on the Halifax settlement was clear message to Cornwallis that this land belong to the Mi'kmaq of Sipekne'katik. Even more so, the Mi'kmaq had already previously warned the English in 1720, that they will attack anyone who settled in their land without their consent.

On October of 1720, three Chiefs, including District Chief of Sipekne'katik, met with the French in Les Minas. The Chief's included Chief of Pisiguit, Minas, and Shubenacadie. The Chiefs requested the French to draft a letter for them and have it sent to Governor Richard Phillips stationed at the English Garrison in Annapolis. The letter was a warning to the English to stay in Annapolis and stay out Mi'kmaq lands in Sipekne'katik. The contents of the letter in part stated: "*We believe Niskum "God" gave us these lands. However, we see you want to drive us from the place where you are living (Annapolis), and you threaten to reduce us to your servitude.....we are our own masters and not subordinate to anyone....we do not want English living in our lands (District of Sipekne'katik). The land we hold only from God. We will dispute with all men who want to live here without our consent*".<sup>28</sup>"

After receiving the letter in Annapolis, the English kept entering Sipekne'katik territory. So in keeping with their warning the Mi'kmaq started repeatedly attacking the English. From 1722 to 1726 the Mi'kmaq attacked and destroyed over 100 English ships.<sup>29</sup> After suffering many losses, the lieutenant-Governor of Annapolis, Captain John Doucett, wanted to make peace with the Mi'kmaq so finally a "Peace and Friendship" treaty was signed in 1726.<sup>30</sup>

However, Cornwallis did not heed the warnings nor did the English want to accept Mi'kmaq sovereignty over their sacred lands of Kijipuktuk, so in response to the Mi'kmaq attacks on the Halifax settlement Cornwallis gave the order for all his military under his power, to attack and kill any Mi'kmaq on site.<sup>31</sup> The date of this

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<sup>27</sup> O'Neill, Dianne, curator, *At the Great Harbour: 250 Years on the Halifax Waterfront*, Art Gallery of Nova Scotia, 1995.

<sup>28</sup> A. J. B. Johnston, *Endgame 1758: The Promise, the Glory and the Despair of Louisbourg's Last Decade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007 at p 39 [**Endgame**]). (Pisiguit derived from the Mi'kmaq word *Pesaquid*, meaning "Junction of Waters".)

<sup>29</sup> *The Micmac*, supra note 45, at p 364.

<sup>30</sup> Fergusson, Charles Bruce, *John Doucett*, Dalhousie University, Halifax, 2012, <http://ns1763.ca/bio/7bio-doucett1670.html>.

<sup>31</sup> Akins, Thomas B., *Selections from the Public Documents of the Province of Nova Scotia*, Resolution of the House of Assembly, 1865.

order was October 01, 1749.<sup>32</sup> Cornwallis included a bounty of 10 Guineas for every Mi'kmaq scalp produced to commanding officers at Annapolis, Minas and Halifax.<sup>33</sup>

Skirmishes between the Mi'kmaq of Sipekne'katik and English continued for three years. The Mi'kmaq responded by declaring war on the English. So the Mi'kmaq started launching a series of destructive attacks against Protestant settlers in the Halifax area.<sup>34</sup> Eventually Cornwallis was forced to resign in failure and replaced by Governor Peregrine Thomas Hopson in August 1752. One of his first priorities was to make peace with the Mi'kmaq. Governor Hopson sent messages to the Mi'kmaq of Sipekne'katik that the English wish to make peace and lifted the bounty Cornwallis had out for Mi'kmaq scalps.<sup>35</sup> What is most interesting is the response received by Hopson from the District Chief of Sipekne'katik, Chief Cope. Chief Cope felt that the Mi'kmaq of Sipekne'katik should be compensated for the lands settled in their district. Chief Cope stated: "*the Indians should be paid for the land the English had settled upon in this country.*"<sup>36</sup> These words are clearly demonstrating Mi'kmaq assertion of title, especially when they are asking for compensation. Although the Council did not address Chief Cope's proposal for monetary compensation for the lands settled on by the English, they did recognize the lands still controlled by the Mi'kmaq as their own lands by the words written in the treaty. "*We will not suffer that you be hindered from Hunting, or Fishing in this Country, as you have been used to do, and if you shall think fit to settle your wives and children upon the River Shibenaccadie, no person shall hinder it, nor shall meddle with the lands where you are.*"<sup>37</sup>

Although the Mi'kmaq signed a treaty of Peace and Friendship with the English settlers, Kjiputuk, the Great Harbour will always hold a significant value to the Mi'kmaq people since it truly is Amntu'kati – the place of spirits.

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<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Endgame, supra* note 22, at p 40.

<sup>34</sup> John Mack Faragher, *A Great and Noble Scheme: The Tragic Story of the Expulsion of the French Acadians from their American Homeland* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005) at p 282.

<sup>35</sup> Haliburton, *History of Nova Scotia*, vol. 1, p. 317; Brebner, *New England's Outpost*, p. 186.

<sup>36</sup> Akins, *Public Documents of Nova Scotia*, p. 671. Council Minutes, Halifax, 14 September 1752 at p 671.

<sup>37</sup> Akins, *Public Documents of Nova Scotia*, p. 673. Council Minutes, Halifax, 16 September, 1752 at p 673.

## **“Legend of the Sweat Lodge”**

The Halifax Peninsula where Point Pleasant Park now sits was known to the Mi'kmaq as Amntu'kati, which in English spirit place or the place of spirits, and Amntu'apsi'kan is the Sprit Lodge, if you follow the Halifax Peninsula around it comes to a small cove that is protected by the rough seas, it is Wejkwetukwaqn which in English means “to come to a legend” or “where the legend comes from”, it is the place where our Legendary Warrior Amntu' resides at his Lodge and Guards the Eastern Door to protect the Lnu'k, the people from any dangers that come from the open sea. The Armdale Rotary derives its name from Amntu” which is pronounced Arm-en-doo.

The Hill that overlooks the Bedford Basin where the Mi'kmaq 8 point star Petroglyph is located was known to the Mi'kmaq as Wejkwapeniaq which in English means "the coming of the Dawn"

it is where Wa'so'q ji'j or as some call him Wasok-gek who is the brother of Amntu, would come and sit upon the hill and wait for the dawn to approach before he continued on his Journey to see his Brother Amntu' at Amntu'apsi'kan.

Wa'so'ql' ji'j means “little heaven” and Amntu' means “the spirit”.

While sitting on the Hill of Wejkwapeniaq admiring the rising sun and the coming of the dawn to start a new day, the great spirit Niskum came down from Wa'so'q (Heaven) to speak Wa'so'ql'ji'j and reminded him that the Lnu'k (The People) of Mi'kma'kik (The Land of the Mi'kmaq) are the keepers of the eastern door and we must always remember that we came from Grandmother Earth and when our time is done on Earth our bodies must go back to Grandmother but our spirits will rise and sit with our ancestors, Ms'it No'kmaq (all our relations) in Wa'soq.

So to honor where we all came from we must go back into the womb of the Grandmother and cleanse ourselves with the Grandmother life giving Blood Samqwan (the water).

So Wa'soql'ji'j asked Glooskap (the son of Grandmother Earth) to gather all the leaders of the 7 Districts of Mi'kma'ki to come to Wejkwapeniaq. After hearing these instructions from Glooskap, the great Chiefs of all 7



Districts along with their greatest leader of them all “the Grand Chief of all 7 Districts came to Wejkwapeniaq to meet with Was'soq'ji'j and his brother Amntu'. While they sat in counsel, Was'soq'ji'j and Amntu shared with the great Chiefs the teachings of the “*Amntu'apsi'kan*” – “the spirit lodge”, and told them that Amntu'apsi'kan represents the womb of our grand mother earth and you shall come and sit in council to cleanse yourself and honor the ancestors who have gone before you and be humble and the spirits will come and give you guidance so you may lead your people in a righteous way.

You shall pray to each of the 4 directions, for each direction there is 7 “*Nu'kuntew*” (lava rock or grandfather stone) since these are the oldest of all stones. There will be 7 Nukuntew's for each of the 7 districts making a total of 28 Nu'kuntew. You shall heat the Nukuntews or grandfather stones till they are red hot. These grandfather stones are our grandfathers, they have no eyes, no ears, no mouth, so the one who pours the water onto them also speaks for them. Each person shall pray out loud so that your prayers may be heard by “*Ms'it No'kmaq*” (all our relations). When your prayers are done you shall end it with Ms'it No'kmaq as a reminder that we are all related and connected to the spirit realm!

So the 7 great chiefs of all 7 districts crawled into the womb along with their greatest leader of them all the Grand Chief of all 7 Districts.

The Grand Chief did as he was instructed by Was'soq'ji'j and his brother Amntu' and poured the water on the hot grandfathers and as the hot steam rose from the grandfathers, the Chief's cleanse them-selves so that their minds may become empty of all things that are bad and harmful. During the ceremony the ones that have gone before them came to the Chief's and gave them the teachings and instructions of our ancestors, all our relations. Ms'it No'kmaq!

At the end of the Amntu'apsi'kan Ceremony Was'soq'ji'j and his brother Amntu' instructed the 7 District Chiefs to take the Amntu'apsi'kan teachings back to each of their districts, where they shall send out 4 of their most spiritual elders to go in all 4 directions and pass the teaching of the Sweat Lodge Ceremony onto others!

## **“The Mi’kmaq Creation Story – the 7<sup>th</sup> level of creation”**

In the Mi’kmaq Creation Story there are 7 levels of creation. In the seventh and last level of creation it is told of how the Mi’kmaq came to be and at the time of their creation they were divided into 7 families which later became the 7 districts of Mi’kmak’ik.<sup>38</sup> The Mi’kmaq Creation Story in part goes as following:

The Creator who sat in Wa’so’q<sup>39</sup>, created the first born, Na’ku’set, “the Sun”. The Creator also sent a bolt of lightning across the sky that created Wskitqamu – “the Earth”. From that same bolt, Glooskap was created out of the dry earth. After being created Glooskap laid upon Wskitqamu, on his back with his feet and hands pointing to the Four Directions. From another bolt of lightning came all living things that walked. Crawled, and swam. The vegetation was also created from this same bolt.

Glooskap watched the living things move about the world freely and wished to have the same freedom. So the creator granted his wish and sent out a third bolt of lightning which allowed Glooskap to stand and move freely on the Earth.

The Creator then sent Nukumi, Glooskap’s grandmother, to teach him how he should live. She was created from a rock transformed into the body of an old woman who became his Elder. Glooskap and Nukumi traveled the Earth. They met his mother, Níkanaptekewísqw, who share the knowledge about the cycles of life and the future. Born from a leaf on a tree, she brought love, wisdom and the colors of the world.

One day Kitpu the eagle spirit came down from Wa'so'q to speak to Glooskap. He told Glooskap that soon He and his grandmother had to leave this world and travel to the west and to the north and there they shall enter the spirit world. As Kitpu spoke to Glooskap the Creator sent down another bolt of lightning which created a blazing fire. Then Kitpu told Glooskap, that the fire created by this final lightning bolt is the Great Spirit Fire. It

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<sup>38</sup> Augustine, Stephen; "Mi'kmaq Knowledge in the Mi'kmaq Creation Story: Lasting Words and Deeds," April 8, 1977. The Creation story share to this writer by Isabell Shay Knockwood during the 1980's which gave slight variances to the story.

<sup>39</sup> Wa'so'q would be similar to what Christians refer to as Heaven and thus translated as such.

sits in in “Amntu'kati” – “the Spirit Place or Place of Spirits” While you journey to the Spirit world, your mother and nephew shall look after the Great Spirit Fire. After 7 winters have passed a spark will fly out of the Great Spirit Fire, and when it hits the earth, a woman will be created. And another spark will fly and another woman will be created, and then another spark will follow, until 7 women are created. And then, over time, more sparks will fall out, and then 7 men will be created. And together these 7 women and 7 men will form into the 7 families of the Mi'kmaq people. The 7 families will then disperse in 7 different directions. Once the 7 families reached their destinations, they would further divide into 7 clans that are related by kinship. Each of the 7 original families and their 7 clans would have their own “Maqamigal -wutan” or “territorial area” for their subsistence, so they would not disturb the other Families.” Each of the 7 Originals families will have a *Nikanus Sakamow* or Head Chief, and each of 7 clans will have their own Sakamow “Chief”. Each of the 7 Nikanus Sakamow will represent all the 7 *Sakamow's* of his family in his *Saqamawutis* – territory of the head Chief and this will be known as his *Kmitkinu* – “District”. And all 7 *Kmitkinu* Nikanus Sakamow's – “District head chief” will be represented by one “*Kji'saqmaw*” or “Grand Chief”. After 7 winters have passed each of the 7 Nikanus of the 7 original families along with their *Kji'saqmaw* would return back to the place of the “Great Spirit Fire” in “Amntu'kati” where they will celebrate for 7 days in song and dance over the creation of the Mi'kmaq people. And each spring following the first, the 7 leaders of the 7 original families will return with their kin back to Amntu'kati after the first full moon of "*Tquoluiku*," “the frog croaking month” and celebrate for 7 days. During these 7 days, all the people will dance, sing and drum in celebration of their continued existence in Mi'kma'kik.



