

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Interviews

The first step that the MGC team considered for the development of this MEKS was the interview process that needed to be undertaken with various Mi'kmaq individuals. An initial list of Mi'kmaq individuals who may be potential holders of Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge was developed by the team as the target group to be interviewed. Numerous interviews were undertaken with individuals from the surrounding Mi'kmaq community of Eskasoni, although most of the individuals who were chosen to be interviewed resided in Membertou, as this community has the closest proximity to the study area. All of the interviews that were held followed interview procedures that have been established by the MGC team as culturally appropriate. Individuals were shown maps of the study area and asked various questions regarding their Mi'kmaq use activities, including where they undertook their activities, when they did such, and what type of resource they utilized. As well, when permission was granted, interviews were audio recorded. These audio recordings assisted with the data accuracy checks and allowed for a comparison of audio data with the information documented on the maps, providing further assurance to the accuracy of the information gathered.

3.2 Literature and Archival Research

For the purposes of this Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge Study, various archival documents and published works were reviewed for information regarding the past or present Mi'kmaq occupation of the study area. Documents which were reviewed included census records, colonial government records and published books. A complete listing of the documents that were referenced are outlined within *Sources Cited*.

3.3 Field Sampling

Three site visits were undertaken by the MEKS coordinator and a Mi'kmaq Ecological Knowledge holder from the Mi'kmaq community of Membertou. These visits were undertaken so as to familiarize the ecological knowledge holder with the areas within the study area that would be developed. As well, this provided an opportunity for further identification of specific plant resources key to Mi'kmaq Traditional Use activities that may be located within the study area.



4.0 MI'KMAQ LAND, WATER AND RESOURCE, USE

4.1 Overview

The Mi'kmaq Land, Water and Resource information is a component of the MEKS which identifies several crucial components to Mi'kmaq interaction with the study area.

First, within the Historical Review, information is provided regarding Mi'kmaq land occupation of the area in question. This provides the project with an understanding of how or when Mi'kmaq would have been occupying the land. This also can provide information which may flag the company as to whether there are areas that may be more prone for burial sites, based on past occupations.



Secondly, the study focus is on Mi'kmaq resource use of the area, both from the recent past and presently, recent past being defined as that within living memory. The type of use defined includes spiritual use, and sustenance use, such as fishing, hunting or medicinal gathering activities. This information is significant to all involved as it allows a thorough understanding of Mi'kmaq use of the land and resources and will allow a further understanding of the potential effects of the project on the Mi'kmaq people.

The third component focus is on what we call Mi'kmaq Significant Species. This section also focuses on Mi'kmaq land and resource use, however, an analysis is undertaken of the resource to ascertain whether it is a species that may be extremely significant to Mi'kmaq use alone and whether or not its' loss would be unrecoverable and would prevent Mi'kmaq use in the future. This component is significant to the study as it provides further ecological information, which is held by the Mi'kmaq, which provides a more complete and thorough ecological and environmental understanding of the project on the study area.

4.2 Limitations

Although it is the intention of this study to be as complete and thorough as possible, because of the dependence of the project on numerous factors, there is always the possibility that some information may be overlooked. This may include further information being made available from Mi'kmaq individuals, as some individuals who were contacted were unavailable for an interview.

With regards to archival information, although the written resources utilized for this study were significant, there still exists the fact that further information may be located regarding the Mi'kmaq people within the study area.

Due to the smaller size of the Study Area; a 3 kilometre long and 1 ½ kilometre wide area, it was possible for a team member and a Mi'kmaq elder to walk the entire study area. This allowed a more thorough documentation of the various plant resources growing throughout the study area.

4.3 Historical Review Findings

A historical review of the study area was undertaken by Membertou's Research Department to identify the past relationship that Mi'kmaq may have had with the land and resources located here. Literature sources that were reviewed included both primary and secondary sources.

Presently, there are no established Mi'kmaq First Nation reserves located within the study area, reserves being defined as lands that have been set aside for the use and benefit of Indians under the Federal Legislation of the *Indian Act*.

With regards to the historical use of the study area by the Mi'kmaq people, the team consulted various archival sources from the Public Archives and secondary writings as well to ascertain the Mi'kmaq presence in the area. However, very little information was found to exist with regards to written documentation referencing the Mi'kmaq peoples' presence within the study area. If the Mi'kmaq people did have a permanent community here historically, then the written records regarding such was not located by the team during the historical review of the project.

However, it is known that the Mi'kmaq used the area historically at various times of the year, as there is a reference to such in the 1700's whereby presents were to be provided to the Mi'kmaq, as a part of their annual gift distribution from the French King. It appears that the Mi'kmaq gathered at Port Dauphin to receive their gifts, although it is unclear as to whether this was a routine annual meeting place or not.¹

The Mi'kmaq people also had their own Mi'kmaq names for the areas in and around the study area, which again supports the idea that historically, they would have used the area. Specifically, Clara Dennis, an ethno historian who traveled throughout Nova Scotia in the 1930's,



Photo courtesy of N.S. Museum, Mi'kmaq Encampment, 1871

¹ <http://bd.archivescanadafrance.org/>

states through her own research that the Mi'kmaq referred to Glace Bay as *Wosekusegwon*, which was known as Home of Glory,² although her source is uncertain. Nonetheless, we also know that Father Pacifique undertook extensive research on the Mi'kmaq language, including Mi'kmaq place names, throughout the late 1800's. He states in his writings that the Mi'kmaq called Glace Bay; *Asikeskuank*, which meant Bright Sheet of Water.³ As well, Cape Morien was known as *Kespi Wksekewanek*, meaning Far East.⁴

Today, the Membertou First Nation is the Mi'kmaq community that has the closest proximity to the study area as it is approximately 28 kilometers from Donkin. Membertou First Nation is located in the City of Sydney, off of Alexandra Street, and has a population of over 1000 people. This community has only been at its present location since 1927, at which time the residents were forcibly removed from their community on King's Road, located on the shores of the Sydney Harbor. We know that the Mi'kmaq had resided at the Kings Road Community for hundreds of years prior, living off the plentiful resources found in the Sydney Harbor and surrounding lands. Because of the Membertou First Nations' proximity to the study area, it is primarily the residents of Membertou that currently use the study area, although some use is also demonstrated by Mi'kmaq from surrounding areas. This will be discussed further in the Traditional Use Findings.

Other Mi'kmaq communities that also surround the study area, but are located much farther, include the Eskasoni First Nation, which is located approximately 65 kilometers from Donkin, and Po'tlotek First Nation, which is located 90 kilometers from Donkin.

4.4 Mi'kmaq Traditional Use Findings

Mi'kmaq Traditional Use data was gathered on the proposed project area within the Donkin coal mine site, which is approximately 3 kilometers long and 1 ½ kilometers wide. However, in order to ensure that the data gathered for this study was thorough, this MEKS also included Mi'kmaq land and resource use within a 10 kilometer radius surrounding the Donkin project areas. Because Mi'kmaq traditional activities can sometimes cover a broad area, such as that which occurs in hunting, fishing or trapping areas, this allowed our data to analyze such information in its entirety, allowing for a more accurate reflection of Mi'kmaq traditional use activities.

With regards to the data for this MEKS, two sources of data were utilized by the study team which allowed us to identify the various traditional use activities, resources and areas that are used by the Mi'kmaq people.

² Clara Dennis, "Cape Breton Over", Toronto: Ryerson Press, 1942, p.97.

³ Father Pacifique, "Micmac Place Names",

⁴ Ibid.

The first set of data that was utilized for the Mi'kmaq Traditional Use Findings was the interviews that were undertaken by our team members with Mi'kmaq ecological knowledge holders from the surrounding Mi'kmaq communities. As well, Mi'kmaq traditional use interviews that had been undertaken previously for the Aboriginal Title Project were also considered. This data not only provided further information regarding Mi'kmaq Use in the study area, but when considered in the scope of our most recent interviews, the data together provided further accuracy and consistency to those areas and resources which the Mi'kmaq utilize for traditional use.

From all the data gathered, it is evident that Mi'kmaq traditional use activities are undertaken throughout the study area and the surrounding vicinity, both currently and in the past.

The primary traditional use activity that occurs within the study area is that which involves food resources, be it gathering, hunting or fishing. There are also noted areas within the study area that Mi'kmaq frequent when gathering medicinal and/or spiritual plant resources.

Food/Sustenance – Fishing

Fishing is a primary traditional use activity which the Mi'kmaq people continue to undertake in the Donkin study area and the surrounding vicinity. Based on the data findings, **Lobster, Jakej**, is one of the most significant traditional use activities that is presently pursued here by the Mi'kmaq people. The most



significant area that **Jakej** is fished is in the coastal waters surrounding **Big Glace Bay**, around **Whelan Point**, up to **MacRae Point** and through to **Schooner Pond**. This area is frequently fished by various First Nation Mi'kmaq bands in pursuit of their commercial fishery activities. As well, some of the data gathered also suggested that this area is utilized for individual food fishery lobster fishing as well.

Another significant area where **Lobster, Jakej**, is fished is the **Glac Bay** area. It appears that this area is also heavily used by the Mi'kmaq people for both commercial and individual food fishing activities.

The coastal waters surrounding **Donkin** are also utilized by the Mi'kmaq for **Lobster, Jakej** and again it appears that this is also a significant area with both commercial and food fishery activities occurring throughout this area. Lobster