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Canada

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Building Birch Bark Canoes

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May 29, 2018

Communities Conservation and Livelihoods Conference

Kejimikujik

National Park and National
Historic Site





Overview



Birch bark canoe project in Kejimikujik

- Traditional harvest
- Reconciliation and rights
- Community involvement

The perspective from a Mi'kmaw birch bark canoe builder

- Traditional knowledge
- Respect and conservation
- Teaching youth and re-connecting culture



A Mi'kmaq Cultural Landscape

Kejimikujik is a special place

- A place that holds historical, cultural, and spiritual significance for the Mi'kmaq of NS
- Designated as a cultural landscape to honour and celebrate the presence of the Mi'kmaq since time immemorial
- The only national park in Canada that is also a national historic site
- Petroglyphs, canoe routes, portages, artifacts, encampments, burial sites
- Strong contemporary connection





Working Towards Reconciliation

The Government of Canada has a strong mandate to seek reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples.

- Implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee
- Honour the rights within the Peace and Friendship Treaties

The presence of the Mi'kmaq on the land in Kejimikujik is essential to reconciliation and the exercise of rights.

- Traditional practices and traditional harvest is part of the land





White Birch Bark Harvesting

Masqwi is an important tree for the Mi'kmaq

Bark for canoes, wigwams, pots, baskets

Collaborative management of traditional harvest

- Inventory of trees with Mi'kmaq of NS
- Assessment of resource
- Predictive model

Two Eyed Seeing Approach with traditional knowledge and science

Conservation ethic from both perspectives





The Birch Bark Canoe

- It is of this land
- Historical and present Mi'kmaw significance
- Birch bark canoe making is an important traditional knowledge that has been largely lost





The Birch Bark Canoe Project

Project between Parks Canada and Todd to build canoes in Kejimikujik

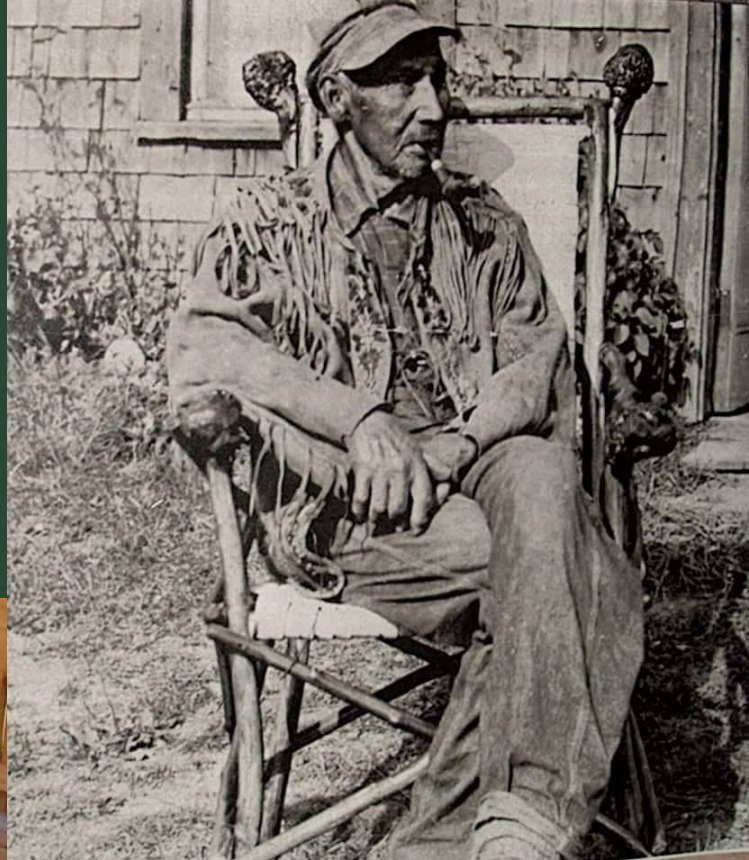
- Traditional knowledge that is place-based
- Community engagement, knowledge transfer, and youth engagement (Bear River and Pictou Landing First Nations)
- Skill development with youth and communities
- Demonstrations and workshops with the public
- Canoes will go back to communities





A Mi'kmaw Canoe Builder's Perspective

- Strong family connection to the canoe builders of this place
- Teaching youth, elders, Mi'kmaw communities and the public





Knowledge Holder as Master Canoe Builder

The traditional ways of harvesting bark and making canoes





Reviving an Art

Celebrating
Mi'kmaw
canoe making
in local
communities,
nationally, and
internationally





The Importance of Stewardship

- Spirit of conservation for harvesting materials
- Mi'kmaw respect and traditional knowledge of how the forest works and of caring for the resource
- Mi'kmaw concept of *Netukulimk*
- Shared ethic of conservation with Parks Canada





Sharing the Craft

Building capacity with individuals and communities.

Skill development:

- Traditional harvesting
- Canoe making
- Appreciation for cultural traditions and practices
- Teaching and mentoring
- Tourism and presentation
- Economic benefits





Teaching Traditional Knowledge and Respect

A deep belief and commitment to teaching others about culture, traditional harvest, and conservation through Mi'kmaw canoe building.





Thank you

How might lessons from this example be applied in other contexts globally?

