

Forces that shaped the mi'kmaq relations with the europeans

[Life](#), [Relationships](#)



What forces shaped the Mi'kmaq relations with the Europeans? When the early settlers of the Americas arrived on the East coast of what is now Canada, they discovered a people that was remarkably different from their own. First impressions would deem these people as “ uncivilized” (source) “ savages” (source) who lived “ miserable lives” (source). However, as time went on the settlers began to realize just how deeply rooted this Aboriginal culture really was.

The Mi'kmaq lived a simple nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle, able to recognize the stars and changing of the seasons leading them to a variety of different sources of food dependant on the season. Culturally they were a spiritual group, one that believed to live with the earth, not off the earth and practiced ceremonies to show appreciation of what the land gave them. Together they shared this land. Individually they were free to pursue their own life path without restrictions, resulting in several sexual partners, homosexuality, marriages and divorces.

They were a mostly peaceful people, preferring the act of gift giving over warfare which they only resorted to when deemed necessary. To the Mi'kmaq warfare was never used as a way to gain territory like their European counterparts but rather a way to seek revenge for wrongdoings. (paraphrase source) As the early European settlers and the Mi'kmaq people began to become familiar with each other, they found some common grounds in these values and learnt to peacefully coexist with each other creating a positive relationship built on trade, alliance and friendship.

However, as time went on Mi'kmaq values and very means of survival were challenged when settler population increased, warfare between the British and French ended with British officially claiming the territory through several treaties and were eventually backed up by the influx of Loyalist century. When the first French settlers began to arrive to the area the Mi'kmaq were optimistically curious of them. They viewed them as fellow man, as equals, who brought with them gifts of useful utensils, tools, alcohol, and weapons. source) The Mi'kmaq were quick to ceremoniously return the favor to their new friends, sharing with them their knowledge of the land and giving them furs. The Mi'kmaq who roamed over a large territory saw no harm in allowing the small French population of (HOW MANY?) to settle in the Bay of Fundy region. (Wicken print off - 95-96) The similarities and differences between the Mi'kmaq and French people both helped improved relations.

Differentially, the Acadians were sedentary and relied on agriculture and livestock for food, which worked well as the Mi'kmaq were able to continue their nomadic hunting gathering lifestyle undisturbed. Similarly, they shared a commonality in spirituality. Although they believed in different versions they were fascinated by each others beliefs and some Mi'kmaq were actually drawn into Catholicism and baptized(HOW MANY? SOURCE). Trade furthered improved relations as time went on the Mi'kmaq would reach a point of dependency on European goods.

Evidence of improved relations can be seen in intermarriage between the two groups (HOW MANY? SOUCRE) Initially the Mi'kmaq had a much larger population and were never threatened by the settlers, mainly seeing them as

a friend with many benefits economically, culturally, and at times militarily (EVIDENCE OF MI'KMAQ FRENCH FIGHTING TOGETHER IN EARLY SETTLEMENT YEARS) They continued these relations for about a century, with only minor conflicts erupting every now and then, but nothing that would seriously jeopardize their relationship. source). Over that century the French population remained quite low and numbered only about half of that of the Mi'kmaq population. This advantage acted as almost a power in which the Mi'kmaq able to preserve their ways and not give into French pressures to fully convert to Christianity or to living a sedentary agricultural lifestyle. This would all change when the Acadian population began to increase. (NUMBER OF INCREASE AND SOURCE) As the Acadian population increased so did tensions between the Acadians and the Mi'kmaq.

As the population in Acadian grew so did their need for more food. In order to get more food they needed more land that they could use to farm with. The Acadians would take land near the ocean which they could use to fish and also they cleared forests which destroyed the habitats of animals which the Mi'kmaq used to hunt. The Mi'kmaq were therefore forced to look elsewhere for food. There were reports of some Mi'kmaqs who were forced in land looking for food, actually taking livestock from the Acadians.

Threats would go back and forth over this growing tension. The Acadians would report these incidents to their council, but the council wise in noting that the Mi'kmaq were still in a majority choose not to punish them for their actions, preferring to avoid conflict and simply reimbursing the lost goods out of their own pockets. Evidence again can be demonstrated in

intermarriage between the two groups as only one aboriginal woman has been recorded as marrying an Acadian over (time period).

The growing population in British settlements would be seen as alarming for the Mi'kmaq who had a much more negative view of these settlers. Unlike the Acadian settlers a strong relationship had not been formed over the last century. The British were invasive and they shared very little in common with them. - Ramsay Cook argues that the first European settlers were intent to civilize the so called savages through agriculture, technology, religion and language without realizing that these people were already civilized, just in a different way. In the early 18th century, the Mi'kmaq were a semi-nomadic people, who moved around the land freely according to the seasons. This lifestyle allowed them to live independently outside of the French and British quarrels choosing for themselves when to go to war and when to agree to peace. -As conflict between England and France intensified in the 1740s tensions between the Acadian and Mi'kmaq populations grew.