

(textual description of)

Puppet Performances

for “Sense of Place, Emergence, and Participation”
within workshop of:

Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative (CEPI)
7 October 2004; Wagmatcook, NS



Workshop #2: Wagmatcook, Cape Breton

“Sense of Place, Emergence, and Participation”

IN CONJUNCTION WITH CIHR-IAPH FUNDED, COMMUNITY-BASED, PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH PROJECT:

**Integrative Health & Healing:
mental health - ecosystem relationships**



Puppet Presentations of Mi'kmaq Legends

- **How Rabbit Got His Long Ears and**
- **How Bull Frog Was Conquered**

by: **Mi'kmaq Students in UCCB's Integrative Science course MSIT 101**

The afternoon of the first day of the workshop began with puppet enactments by students enrolled in UCCB's Integrative Science first year course MSIT 101. UCCB's Integrative Science program brings together Aboriginal and Western scientific knowledges for the purposes of post-secondary science education, research projects involving science, and applications in communities involving science (<http://www.integrativescience.ca>).

How Rabbit Got His Long Ears

The story revolves around the importance of the sun (Na'ku'set) for life on earth, as found in the day-to-day lives of forest animals. Rabbit creates considerable anxiety that quickly spreads to encompass the entire community of animals when he starts a joke that the sun will cease to shine. As a result, Rabbit has his ears "pulled long" as a reminder of his inappropriate, inconsiderate audaciousness (ki'kaja'sit).



How Bullfrog Was Conquered

The story revolves around the hoarding of a vital natural resource (water), the resolution of this greed, and the roles animals can play to remind us of our spiritual responsibilities towards each other. It features "clean water" (waqmapua'q ... the flowing is clean) and "dirty water" (mejikapua'q ... the flowing is dirty) within the larger understanding that water is essential for life (samqwan npisunapu ... water medicine; ikn namakwemkeway ... divine gift). The story emphasizes the understanding that individual human greed must be overcome by actions at the community level, and Bullfrog's wrinkles serve to remind the people what happens to those whose personal wants are out of balance with the needs of the community.



The puppets used to enact the Mi'kmaq legends were made by young people who used natural materials such as bark, moss, twigs, and leaves that are easily picked up in local forests. Natural materials were chosen to help re-establish connections with the land and thus help young people begin to sense and nourish their understandings of the bio-spiritual relationships within Traditional Knowledge. This hope for the youth is the theme behind the Integrative Health and Healing (IHH) research project that involves various university and Mi'kmaq community partners. The IHH project is funded by the Institute of Aboriginal Peoples= Health, within the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR-IAPH).

Sense of Place, Emergence and Participation: Like the stories of many Aboriginal and Indigenous peoples, Mi'kmaq legends feature intimate understandings of the peoples' natural environment, i.e. their "sense of place, emergence, and participation" in a specific ecological context. These understandings are woven via story into the rich, living knowledge system (Traditional Knowledge) that interconnects the human generations with diverse animate and inanimate forms sharing the land, water, and air. Via the puppet shows, we wish to suggest that this strength within Traditional Knowledge needs to be more fully acknowledged by society in general. Furthermore, it should be embraced as we seek ways to connect the mathematical language and empirical-analytic-objective

methodological strengths of Western Science with the broader questions of human health, environmental planning, and ecosystem stewardship.

Gifts that non-human animals offer human animals: In both Mi'kmaq legends, a physical aspect of the main character (Rabbit's long ears, Bullfrog's wrinkles) becomes a reminder to humans that their communal happiness, health, and longevity necessitate movement in consciousness from individual to collective ... and, ultimately, to "we are all one". Thus, the stories involve a symbolism, a gift, or "via me, remember this message" from an animal to humans. Often, the animal referent has multi-vocality or "many voices", as well as multi-valency or "many gifts"; thus, the stories are complex and rich. For example, Bullfrog further serves to remind us that, just as frogs undergo metamorphosis from tadpole to adult, an individual human's consciousness over the course of time must change towards more advanced wisdom. In order for efforts such as CEPI to succeed we must bear in mind these ideas of evolving wisdom.

Mi'kmaq words or phrases for some of the key concepts above are: nestu'et (individual consciousness); nestua'tijik (collective consciousness); nkte'ji'k ("we are all one"); keknuaqnasit kulaman mikuite'tew (symbolism, gift, or "via me, remember this message"); pikwelkl wsitunual (referent animal's multi-vocality or "many voices"); pikwelkl iknmakwemkl (referent animal's multi-valency or "many gifts"); nikwet (growing); and nsituo'qn (more advanced wisdom).

Why puppet shows? Environmental management and stewardship projects frequently call for non-native scientists and government organizations to involve Traditional Knowledge (aka TK, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Aboriginal Knowledge/Science, Indigenous Knowledge/Science, Native Knowledge/Science) in planning, consultation, and implementation phases. This often presents a challenge for those individuals who are familiar mainly or only with "western" or "Eurocentric" methodologies and knowledge systems, especially when science is envisioned as being only objective, empirical, and analytic and, moreover, when this science is accorded the lead role in the conception and evolution of the projects. Traditional Knowledge, unlike this vision of Western Science, embraces a wholistic approach in that it considers the cognitive, physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects of humans. The puppet enactments of the two Mi'kmaq legends were presented in an effort to bring to the audience at the CEPI Workshop some initial exposure to the very important issue of "embracing both the subjective and the objective re collaborative environmental planning", or "how to connect head and heart knowledges among different cultures". This issue will likely become critical to the success of CEPI as it begins to draw upon the strengths within both Traditional Knowledge and Western Science, as we begin to walk our collaborative path towards environmental planning and management for improving and guarding the health of the Bras d'Or Lakes and its watershed. The fact that puppetry appeals to humans of all ages and can thus be used to educate in a way that is joyful and easily understood was very apparent at the Workshop. Furthermore, puppetry enables such a Workshop to comfortably expand its agenda to include voices, participants, and ages not generally featured i.e. the "youth component" that the Elders keep telling the planners is essential in order for CEPI to succeed. Indeed, the laughter of the small children who came specially to the Workshop to view the puppet show melted the hearts of all in the audience; may their laughter continue to remind us of the importance of including such life-affirming, inter-generational aspects within our on-going, overall efforts.

More information: Further exploration of Aboriginal storytelling and Mi'kmaq legends can be found online at <http://www.horizonzero.ca/textsite/tell.php?is=17&file=8&tlang=0> (HorizonZero Issue 17: TELL: aboriginal story in digital media).

place

Puppet Performance
(university science students)

**Mi'kmaq Legend:
How Rabbit Got
His Long Ears**

**... lived relationships
with Grandfather Sun**



participation

Puppet Performance
(university science students)

Mi'kmaq Legend:
How Bullfrog Was Conquered

... dealing with greed
to live our sacred trust



**Bras d'Or Collaborative Environmental Planning Initiative
Wagmatcook Workshop Agenda
October 7-8, 2004**

Thursday - October 7

- 9:00 **Registration**
- 9:45 **Opening Prayer and Sweetgrass Ceremony**
Albert Marshall – Elder, Eskasoni First Nation
Sylvia Denny – Elder, Eskasoni First Nation
George Paul – Public Relations – Eskasoni Fish and Wildlife Commission
- 10:15 **Opening Comments**
Chief Terry Paul – Membertou First Nation
Albert Marshall - Elder Eskasoni First Nation
Laurie Suitor - Director of Collaborative Planning – Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources
- 10:45 **Integrative Knowledge**
Integrative Health and Healing - Dr. Cheryl Bartlett
Tier 1 Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science and Professor of Biology,
University College of Cape Breton
- The Medicine Wheel – Ken Paul – Parks Canada**
- 11:15 **Nutrition Break**
- 11:30 **Introduction to the Workshop Program and Format**
John Hugh Edwards – Facilitator – St. Francis Xavier University Extension Department
- 11:40 **Working Together - Exploring Current Collaborative Initiatives:**
- Sustainable Communities Initiative (SCI) - Wayne Bona - Provincial Co-Chair
- Pitu'paq – Sharon Carter – Bras d'Or Lakes Coordinator
 NS Department of Environment and Labour
- Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR) – Charlie Dennis – Executive
 Director
- Science for the Integrated Management of the Bras d'Or Lakes (SIMBOL)
 Gary Bugden - Senior Physical Oceanographer, Fisheries and Oceans Canada.
- 12:30 **Lunch**
- 1:30 **Building the Future: Imagining a Healthy Bras d'Or**
- Puppet Performance of the Mi'kmaq legends of “How Bullfrog Was Conquered” and
“How Rabbit Got His Long Ears” – as performed by Students from the First Year Class
(MS&T 101) of the Integrative Science Program at UCCB: Steve Fraser, Mary Johnson,
Marilyn Julian, Nancy Marshall, Selena Marshall, Amanda Poulette, Mel Ryan,
Da'Trice Sims, Elena Simon, Kerrie Anne Sylliboy, and Terrence Sylliboy, with
Instructors Nadine Lefort, Stephanie Bernard and Chantelle Cormier.

- Small Group Work Sessions - participants will develop a vision for the future of the Bras d'Or in relation to the Medicine Wheel.
- In plenary the work of each group will be combined into a large Medicine Wheel which will represent and reflect the work and ideas of all workshop participants.

3:00 **Nutrition Break**

3:30 **Building Our Knowledge**

State of the Bras d'Or Report – Shelley Denny – Senior Biologist and Science Program Manager - Eskasoni Fish & Wildlife Commission (EFWC)

This plenary session provides an overview of current information with presentations on:

- Water Quality - Cheryl Berube – Water Quality Coordinator – Lab Technician EFWC
- Land Development
Rick McCready – Planner – Cape Breton Regional Municipality
Pat Bates – Chair of the Bras d'Or Stewardship Society
- Invasive Species – Kara Paul – Biologist - EFWC
- Forestry - Mark MacPhail – Manager Forestry Division, UINR

4:30 **Reflection**

In this plenary session participants will have the opportunity to reflect on the present condition of the Bras d'Or.

5:00 **Closing Prayer** – Albert Marshall

6:00 **Dinner**

Entertainment – Andrew “Mooney” Francis (Fiddle) and Vincent Joe (Keyboard)

Friday - October 8

9:00 **Opening Prayer** – Albert Marshall - Elder

9:15 **Reflection on Day 1**

Participants will be asked to reflect on the first day of the workshop. In particular people will be asked to focus on the gap between the vision they created of the future and the present conditions

10:00 **Where the Work Is**

Participants will begin to identify key areas in which action will be required to fill the gap between the present conditions and our vision for the future:

- A review of previous work which suggested priorities for planning including the recommendations of the October 2003 collaborative planning workshop, results from the Sustainable Communities Initiatives community meetings, and State of the Bras d'Or session.
- Small group work sessions

