



The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794-1928: The King v. Gabriel Sylliboy

William C. Wicken

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In 1927, Gabriel Sylliboy, the Grand Chief of the Mi'kmaw of Atlantic Canada, was charged with trapping muskrats out of season. At appeal in July 1928, Sylliboy and five other men recalled conversations with parents, grandparents, and community members to explain how they understood a treaty their people had signed with the British in 1752. Using this testimony as a starting point, William Wicken traces Mi'kmaw memories of the treaty, arguing that as colonization altered Mi'kmaw society, community interpretations of the treaty changed as well.

The Sylliboy case was part of a broader debate within Canada about Aboriginal peoples' legal status within Confederation. In using the 1752 treaty to try and establish a legal identity separate from that of other Nova Scotians, Mi'kmaw leaders contested federal and provincial attempts to force their assimilation into Anglo-Canadian society. Integrating matters of governance and legality with an exploration of historical memory, *The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History* offers a nuanced understanding of how and why individuals and communities recall the past.

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