

After 12,000 Years of Yesterdays —

Where Will Debert Be after 12 Years of Tomorrows?

The Impact of Mi'kmawey Debert
on the Culture, Economy, and Environment of the Mi'kmaq

By
Elaine Jeffery

A Thesis Submitted to
Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Master of Arts in Atlantic Canada Studies.

July, 2007, Halifax, Nova Scotia

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Your file *Votre référence*
ISBN: 978-0-494-35771-2
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ISBN: 978-0-494-35771-2

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Abstract

After 12,000 Years of Yesterdays – Where will Debert Be After 12 Years of Tomorrows?

By Judith Elaine Jeffery

Near Debert, in central Nova Scotia, lie 12,000-year old archaeological remains. Sophisticated hunters and tool makers utilized the resources of Mother Earth to care for their families in a land only sixty miles from glaciers.

A 1963 excavation uncovered 4,000 stone tools and eleven hearths. This Paleo-Indian, caribou-hunting camp was declared to be one of world-wide importance. The Mi'kmaq commissioned further research on the site and found an additional 1,500 artifacts in 1991.

The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq with a Mi'kmaw Elders' Advisory Council is creating a Cultural Centre to tell the story of the First People. Mi'kmawey Debert has the potential to provide many benefits to the Mi'kmaq and all Nova Scotians through healing, re-establishing culture and language, creating a major tourism generator, and providing employment and education.

Mi'kmawey Debert is a multi-faceted initiative that deserves the support required to make it a reality.

July 18, 2007

Acknowledgement

The author would like to acknowledge the assistance of Dr. Donald Julien ONS, for his assistance in learning some of the history of the Mi'kmaq Nation; about its people and how they lived upon the land called Mi'kma'ki. Also for his generous sharing of strength and wisdom, teaching patience and the ability to understand what is important. I would also like to thank my many colleagues at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq for their assistance in working through the actual beginnings of Mi'kmawey Debert and researching this thesis.

Mi'kmaw Elders Sister Dorothy Moore, Murdena Marshall, Mary Ellen Googoo and Albert Marshall all took the time to speak with me about the project and their perceptions of what Mi'kmawey Debert could mean to their people and to the children of the future. Their insights and support are deeply appreciated.

The archaeological, geological and developmental information could not have been compiled without the kind assistance of the following people: George MacDonald, Bill Reid Foundation; Steven Davis, Saint Mary's University; Rob Ferguson, Parks Canada; David Christianson, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History; Ralph Stea, Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources; Hal Borns, University of Maine; Bob Mott, Canadian Geological Survey and Ken Paul, Parks Canada.

All the members of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Team were part of making the experience of working on the Cultural Centre initiative so satisfying and I would like to thank them for the tremendous support they provided and the opportunities they gave me to learn more about each of their areas of specialization. These members were as follows: Donald Julien, Lynn Knockwood, Mike Cox, Jim Hepworth, PJ Prosper, Shannon Googoo, Mary Mason, Eric Zscheile, Leah Rosenmeier and Tim Bernard.

The ongoing assistance of John Reid and Margaret Harry at Saint Mary's University has been invaluable. Thank you all. Wel'a'lin.

Dedication

**This thesis is dedicated to my children Stephanie and Steven
and to Stephanie's husband Jeff**

**To my sisters and their husbands Sheila and Garry;
Athol and Frank
for their unfailing love and support.**

**Also to my grandchildren Matthew, Zac, Hannah Grace, Abi
and Christi for whom I wish lives
full of fun and learning.**

**And especially to my parents May and Walter Down
who gave me the will to do my best.**

**To my friends for their encouragement, humour and patience
throughout this process and to my friends and colleagues at
The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq for their assistance
and for being so very welcoming**

Wel'a'lin

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1.0 Chapter One

1.1 Introduction

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre refers to a facility that is being planned to tell the story of the First People to live in Nova Scotia almost 12,000 years ago. Many First Nation people believe these early hunters were the ancestors of today's Mi'kmaq Nation. The Mi'kmaq have lived in eastern Canada and the eastern United States for millennia. Whether or not one believes they are directly descended from the First People to live in Mi'kma'ki¹, archaeologists agree that the Mi'kmaq have followed a recognized pattern of nomadic use of the land since long before the coming of the Europeans to North America. The Mi'kmaq of pre-European times used chert similar to that found at Debert. They also fully utilized the resources available on the land such as animals for meat, hides, bone and antler. Wear on tools found at Debert indicates the Paleo-Indian people also utilized these resources.² This could indicate a continuous use of similar materials from the Paleo-Indian period and lead to the proposition of continuous occupation in Atlantic Canada by the Mi'kmaq and their ancestors.

Traditionally, the Mi'kmaq utilized the riches of Mother Earth to sustain life and gain the resources required to make life satisfying. "The wealth of a person or community was measured in terms of four components; spiritual, physical,

¹ Mi'kma'ki refers to the land originally considered home by the Mi'kmaq. It encompasses Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island as well as parts of New Brunswick, Maine and Gaspé Quebec,.

² Stephen A. Davis, *Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1997), pp. 1 – 32.

mental and emotional health.”³ The Mi'kmaq recognize that all things in the world have their own spirit and all things must work in harmony.⁴

Through the past five hundred years, the Mi'kmaq have gradually been forced away from their traditional lifestyle and off their traditional lands by the coming of settlers to eastern Canada. The poor economic conditions of the First Nation people have led to reduced mental, emotional and physical health for the Mi'kmaq. In discussing these issues with James McGrath, Diabetes Coordinator at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, he indicated that these impacts have come in part from diseases such as smallpox and diabetes and in part from poor food as a result of changes in diet away from the customary game and plants to more refined foods. Donald Julien, Executive Director of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, and Sister Dorothy Moore, a member of the Mi'kmawey Debert Elders Advisory Committee, expanded on these statements by McGrath. They point to the lack of prospects to become part of mainstream society due to racism, discrimination,⁵ a loss of language and a loss of generational wisdom resulting from the separation of families with the removal of children to the residential schools⁶ impacting upon the Mi'kmaq of today. These factors have

³ Lindiwe MacDonald, *The Process of Mi'kmaq Community-Based Development: A Case Study of the Bear River Mi'kmaq Npisunewawti'j [Medicine Trail] Project* (Halifax: Dalhousie University, 2000), pp. 1-2.

⁴ Murdena Marshall, “Values, Customs and Traditions of the Mi'kmaq Nation” (Sydney: University College of Cape Breton, 1995), p. 4.

⁵ Donald Julien and Sister Dorothy Moore, interviews with author, (Millbrook First Nation: The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, February 24 - 25, 2005).

⁶ Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths: The Experiences of Mi'kmaw Children at the Indian Residential school at Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia* (Lockport: Roseway Publishing, 1992), pp. 1 – 125.

diluted the ability of Mi'kmaq Elders to pass on their knowledge to the next generations and have weakened the relationship of many Mi'kmaq to their traditional measures of wealth and well-being.

Knowledge of the long traditions of the Mi'kmaq is still held by many Elders. It is passed on to the present generation through stories and activities that keep the values of the people alive. Not all youth have been exposed to traditional knowledge as much was lost from families over the years, particularly for those who were at the Residential School for any length of time. This loss helps explain the need for a facility that will tell the story of the First People in Nova Scotia and their relationship to the Mi'kmaq of today. This will be a story that will help rekindle the pride of a people in their history; a story that will provide a strong background on which to build a foundation from which the Mi'kmaq may move into their future.

The lack of a common foundation impacts on many aspects of current Mi'kmaw activities. For example, the dichotomy of modern developmental efforts shows how different groups of Mi'kmaq are dealing with community and economic development in distinct ways. The Bear River First Nation Medicine Trail was designed with a holistic approach to utilizing the forest and plants to welcome visitors to take pleasure in and understand nature. The Trail offers visitors the opportunity to learn and enjoy. The aim of educating both Native and non-Native visitors has been blended with the need to protect Mother Earth and all she offers. Chief Frank Meuse told the author that this development is not

aimed at being a major economic generator of wealth, but rather it is a community's first step toward attracting visitors and protecting its resources.

By contrast, Millbrook First Nation is moving into more concentrated economic development initiatives such as the Truro Power Centre. This shopping and service project currently houses more than a dozen businesses on land that was clear cut and paved. The trees were removed to make way for business and the businesses have come. Rather than take the slower and more expensive path of keeping some of the trees and building around them, everything was cleared. While this is a much larger economic development initiative than that at Bear River, it was created as purely a business venture without regard to protecting the spirits of the plants and creatures that were already using the land. This is not an acceptance or rejection of either approach, but simply a recognition that different paths can be taken to achieve ones ends.

In central Nova Scotia, not far from the community of Debert, there are ancient archaeological sites. Archaeologists, such as David Christianson who is the Provincial Archaeologist at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History in Halifax, speculate that this area was used as a hunting and gathering camp by the First People to live in what is now Nova Scotia. The Mi'kmaq Nation is developing plans to create a Cultural Centre near the archaeological site to tell the story of the First People. Donald Julien, the Executive Director of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, has been instrumental in driving the project to develop a Cultural Centre. He believes it is critical that the Centre be created by and for the Mi'kmaq first with other considerations like a museum and a tourism

site being secondary. Julien and others on the Mi'kmawey Debert Team⁷ determined that the project would be called Mi'kmawey Debert, meaning "building Debert in the Mi'kmaw way".

The project to develop a Cultural Centre recognizing the 12,000 year old archaeological sites at Debert faces the same economic development challenges as those faced by the two communities mentioned above. The sites at Debert tell the story of the First People to live in Nova Scotia. While only the land, the stone tools and hearth sites remain, they still paint a picture of how the area was first used by humans after the retreat of the ice during the last Ice Age. When the Debert loci were first excavated in 1963-65, they were recognized as one of the most significant archaeological finds in North America.⁸ Now that the Mi'kmaq Nation is preparing to create a facility to share the story with the world, how should that facility come to be? Should it be a cultural centre and healing place for the Mi'kmaq or a tourism site to encourage visitation? Should it be blended into Mother Earth to minimize its impact on the environment while maximizing its ability to inform about the First People; or should it simply be placed upon the land in a clear-cut space to maximize its ability to become economically viable?

This thesis will demonstrate that the Cultural Centre at Debert can become a First Nation icon while respecting the traditional values of the Mi'kmaq. The

⁷ The 'Mi'kmawey Debert Team' refers to the group of people leading the development project for the Cultural Centre. At the time of this writing that includes the Board of Directors, the Elders' Advisory Committee and staff members of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq. The author was privileged to be part of this team for four years.

⁸ Stephen Davis, Chair of Anthropology, Saint Mary's University, interview with author, (Halifax: December 1, 2004).

resources of Mother Earth may be utilized without causing undo harm. As stated by Mi'kmaw Elder Murdena Marshall, "We do not apologize for our needs but accept the interdependence of all things."⁹ The Mi'kmaq can achieve their aims for the Cultural Centre while respecting the need to protect Mother Earth.

1.2 Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are to achieve the following:

- a) Investigate the First People to live in Nova Scotia
 - their arrival,
 - how they lived,
 - how they utilized the environment in which they found themselves.
- b) Discover what steps have been taken to gain knowledge about the Debert and Belmont sites and to protect the places where the First People lived.
- c) Discuss some of the points that should be considered regarding how to develop the proposed Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre so that it is sensitive to the traditional values of the Mi'kmaq while becoming an economically, culturally and environmentally viable facility.
- d) Demonstrate that the Debert / Belmont sites are valuable and culturally significant resources that should be explained to the public through a Cultural Centre designed and operated by the Mi'kmaq First Nation in Nova Scotia and that this Cultural Centre is worthy of the support of

⁹ Marshall, "Values, Customs and Traditions", p. 4.

government, private and charitable sectors to benefit all visitors and in particular the Mi'kmaq and the people of Nova Scotia.

1.3 Significance of Research

Jim Hepworth, Director of Economic Development at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, explained to the author that in some instances, First Nation economic development initiatives have been managed according to the development priorities of non-Natives. The most important factors have been to bring in a project on time and on budget with minimal regard for the cultural or spiritual concerns of the people who would be the recipients of the development. This type of development can be highly efficient. It can allow for new initiatives to be completed with economic efficiency in minimum time. It can also happen that development can ignore factors important to Native peoples such as respecting traditional values, representing oral histories and protecting Mother Earth.

When First Nation projects have been encouraged by central powers like the federal government, it has sometimes occurred that the projects are aimed at achieving some goal of the government with minimal attention being paid to the self-determination of the local community. This has sometimes led to the generally small and economically insecure First Nation communities losing even more of their autonomy, and/or land, and/or opportunity for their own development to what originally seemed to be a positive intervention from

outside.¹⁰ The aim of the Cultural Centre project is that Mi'kmawey Debert would be a project led by the Mi'kmaq and respecting the values of the Mi'kmaq.

This thesis will demonstrate that a facility can be created that can be economically efficient in the short term while allowing for economic and environmental sustainability in the long term without compromising the cultural significance of the sites or the proposed Cultural Centre. In the process of achieving this end, the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre can become a template for other First Nation development that can honour the values of Canada's Native peoples.

1.4 Thesis Organization

Over the thousands of years that have passed since the First People arrived in what is now the Debert area, the land has had many names. The Mi'kma'ki (place where the Mi'kmaq people abide)¹¹ of the Mi'kmaq became the Acadie of the French and then the Nova Scotia of the British.

To avoid confusion, I will use modern place names throughout this paper. The lands traversed will be called New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. What was a dry valley until about 7,000 years ago is now called the Northumberland Strait.¹² The Bay of Fundy of today narrows into what was a sandy plain that is now Cobequid Bay and the Minas Basin.

¹⁰ Bill Sainnawap, Noah Winter, Paul Eprile, *Aneshenēwe Machitawin – Human-Centred Community Development* (Toronto: Participatory Research Group, Health and Welfare, 1991), pp.1 – 33.

¹¹ *Mi'kmaq Past and Present: A Resource Guide* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Education, 1991), Chapter 2, pp. 3-5.

¹² *The Last Billion Years, A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*. (Halifax: The Atlantic Geoscience Society, 2001) p. 193.

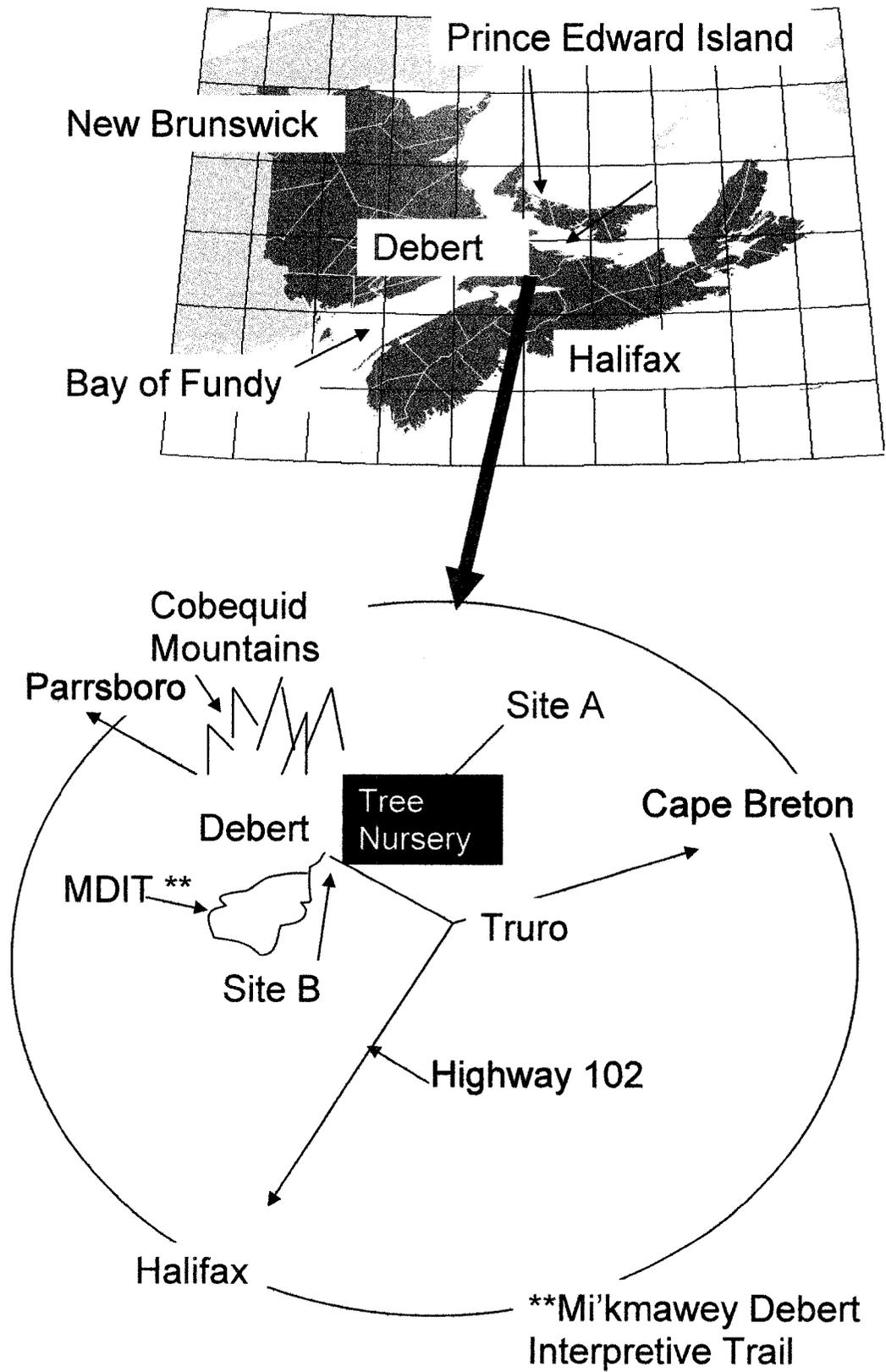


Figure 1 Graphic of Atlantic Canada and the Debert area

Figure 1 above illustrates these locations. The actual archaeological loci are not shown to protect the sites from those who might wish to acquire artifacts for private use.

Spelling has also changed over the years. In particular, Mi'kmaq has gone through a number of variations. The original word was Ni'kmaq, meaning "my kin or my close friends". This term was misinterpreted by the newcomers to North America and eventually became Micmac.¹³ The correct spelling for the noun referring to the singular or the Nation is Mi'kmaq (pronounced Mik i mog). The adjective or plural of Mi'kmaq is Mi'kmaw (pronounced Mik i maw).¹⁴ There may be places where variations in spelling are used due to quotations, but otherwise I will use the modern spellings accepted by Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Nation.

I was privileged to be seconded from Human Resources Development Canada to The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq from 2000 – 2004 to assist in the development of the legal and economic base for the potential Cultural Centre. Many statements are as a result of comments that resulted from personal communications with members of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team, government representatives and members of the Elders' Advisory Council that took place while working toward making the project a reality. I have noted these situations in the text of the document.

¹³ Ruth Holmes Whitehead and Harold McGee, *The Micmac: How their Ancestors Lived Five Hundred Years Ago* (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1983), p. 1.

¹⁴ *Mi'kmaw Resource Guide, Second Edition* (Millbrook First Nation: The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, The Native Council of Nova Scotia and The Union of Nova Scotia Indians, 2003), p. 2.

The incentive to write this thesis came as a result of the commitment I saw from the members of the Mi'kmaq Nation to make the Cultural Centre a reality. The sincere desire to create a place of healing for those who had been driven from their culture through events such as the creation of reservations, centralization, residential schools and ongoing discrimination convinced me this was a project that deserved to come to completion with the support of all sectors of society. In the wish of the Mi'kmaq to share their knowledge of a rich and interesting society, I saw an opportunity to build bridges between cultures and to improve understanding. Finally, with the potential of Mi'kmawey Debert to create new employment and increased tourism revenue for Mi'kmaq and all Nova Scotians, I saw an economic development opportunity that should be supported in all possible ways.

This thesis recounts the initial stages of project development and offers some suggestions to assist in further progress. Much of the information cited in the early sections of the paper is drawn from archaeological records of the various digs and of research that has been done by the individuals and organizations that were involved in the early research of the Debert/Belmont sites. This is supported by discussions with scientists from a variety of fields who have worked on learning more about the project over the past forty years.

The latter sections of the thesis deal primarily with the activities that have taken place in the last six years and what could happen over the next few years until the project becomes a reality. This information was gathered through researching scientific texts, Mi'kmaq historical documentation and cultural studies

from a variety of sources. Information gathered for the final portion of the thesis was obtained through interviews with scientists, members of government and individuals involved with the economic development of Central Nova Scotia around the Colchester County area and for Nova Scotia as a whole.

My mandate at the Mi'kmawey Debert project during the initial stages was to help put the framework in place. At the time of this writing the project continues to move forward into museum design, programming, fund raising and planning for building construction. I am very proud to have been part of this initiative and offer this thesis in support to the Mi'kmawey Debert Team as they continue with this important work.

The thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter One explains the purpose for this thesis and how it is structured and offers a profile of the Mi'kmaq living in Nova Scotia today. Chapter Two provides a discussion on how the First People to live at Debert may have arrived. It investigates alternative theories that are still being discussed by archaeologists regarding potential routes and timing of the arrivals. It also examines how the First People may have lived in the harsh climate that existed immediately following the last ice age.

Chapter Three outlines the excavations that have taken place at the Debert/ Belmont sites and the impact of government interventions in the protection of the sites. Chapter Four considers the importance of a number of factors that could influence the potential development of a Cultural Centre around the archaeological sites and that need to be considered as the project progresses. Chapter Five examines the impacts of the development of a Cultural Centre on

the Mi'kmaq Nation, the surrounding community and Nova Scotia. Chapter Six provides the conclusion to this analysis indicating that the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre would be a valuable addition to the cultural and economic landscape of Nova Scotia and that it should receive the support of all sectors of the economy.

A series of drawings, maps and photographs have been included to provide additional detail to the descriptions. Data specific to several of the discussion points are included as Appendices.

1.5 A Profile of Canada's First Nation People

The United Nations Human Development Index creates a list each year of the most and least desirable countries in which to live. For several years in the early 1990s, Canada was number one on this list. Placement is based on criteria such as life expectancy, adult literacy, school enrolment and economic prosperity. Over the last few years Canada's ranking dropped to third and then to fifth¹⁵. In 2001 comments on the report in the Toronto Star stated, "Last year the country was 11th on the poverty scale and eighth in gender equality. It also came in for criticism for its domestic human rights record, especially in the treatment of aboriginals and minorities."¹⁶

¹⁵ "Human Development Report 2005, United Nations" http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/2005/pdf/HDR05_HDI.pdf (Page 302 of report) (accessed September 11, 2006)

¹⁶ "Human Development Report 2005, United Nations", (accessed September 11, 2006) www.thestar.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=thestar/Layout/Article_Type1&c=Article.../New_07/11/2001

The Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969 began with the following words, "To be an Indian is to be a man, with all the man's needs and abilities. To be an Indian is also to be different. It is to speak different languages, draw different pictures, tell different tales and to rely on a set of values developed in a different world."¹⁷ It continued "To be an Indian is to lack power to act as owner of your own lands, the power to spend your own money, and too often to be an Indian is to be without – without a job, a good house, or running water; without those feelings of dignity and self-confidence that a man must have if he is to walk with his head held high. All have nothing to do with their abilities and capacities."¹⁸ Over hundreds of years the First Nation people of Canada were disenfranchised and rather than freely utilizing the resources of Mother Earth, they were pushed onto reserves and became among the poorest of Canadians.

Despite generalized plans for improving the lot of First Nation people in Canada as explained in "Gathering Strength – Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan", the report verifies that little progress has been made.¹⁹ Supporting the development of a culturally, economically and environmentally sustainable centre at Debert can allow Canada to take one more step on the path of supporting her First Nation people to achieve a more equal status with the rest of her citizens.

¹⁷ *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy 1969* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1969), p. 1.
Also, Indian and Northern Affairs web site (accessed September 11, 2006) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/lib/phi/histlws/cp1969a_e.html#fo

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 1.

¹⁹ *Gathering Strength, Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan.* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1997), pp. 4 – 8.

The following profile of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia illustrates that First Nations people often face more challenges regarding employment and healthy living than other Canadians. According to Statistics Canada and the 2001 Census information, Nova Scotia has a population of 908,007.²⁰ The Mi'kmaq population of registered Mi'kmaq living on and off reserve lands in Nova Scotia according to Indian and Northern Affairs Canada is estimated at 13,498 as of December 31, 2006.²¹ The Mi'kmaq comprise about one and one-half percent of the population of Nova Scotia.²²

While some Mi'kmaq communities have recently begun to make strides in the area of economic development, the progress has been uneven. As Bands have made ventures into commerce, it has brought more revenues into the communities. Many of the funds are being used for infrastructure improvements.

Much emphasis is being placed on special initiatives to encourage young people to stay in school and complete their education. Special programs such as earning a Bachelor's Degree through Distance Education on reserve have been very effective. Other opportunities such as the Mi'kmaq Studies program at Cape Breton University are providing young Mi'kmaq with the ability to learn

²⁰ Statistics Canada Web Site (Statistics Canada, Ottawa: accessed September 11, 2006) <http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=PR&Code1=12&Geo2=PR&Code2=01&Data=Count&SearchText=Nova%20Scotia&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=>

²¹ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada: accessed July 22, 2007) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/at/mp/mp_e.html

²² Statistics Canada Web Site (Statistics Canada, Ottawa: accessed September 11, 2006) http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01ab/metadata/ab_id_prov.cfm?LANG=E&PROV=12&SEARCH=&Province=10&PlaceName= (Compilation of populations for each county. This figure is often under debate as some people do not wish to self identify in a census and some people may identify themselves as native in a Nova Scotia census while they are not Mi'kmaq in origin.)

about their culture and history in a safe environment. The Mi'kmaw Studies Program is also providing a venue where Mi'kmaq can build linkages between traditional knowledge and scientific study. The students gain many of the same skills as in any post-secondary speciality where they learn to research, to write and to discuss. These transferable skills can be applied to a variety of work after they are graduated.

While progress is being made, it is slow. Bill Pictou, the Native Employment Officer at Millbrook First Nation explained during a personal discussion that young Mi'kmaq are gaining some role models for success in the non-Native world from Mi'kmaq who have acquired their education, but the numbers are still small. It is difficult to maintain the motivation to go to school and study when friends are sitting at home drawing welfare – especially if young people become involved with addictive substances. There is a need for young people to see hope in their future and to understand that they come from a proud heritage. Having a venue like Mi'kmawey Debert to offer not only potential employment opportunities but a place to learn about their culture and to gain pride in their heritage is an important aspect of how young Mi'kmaq will view themselves.

Building the capacity of the First Nations people to manage education and economic development on their own will be a long process. Removing systemic barriers and discrimination in the workplace will also be a long process. In the meantime, many Mi'kmaq live below the poverty level in situations where they have little hope of improving their circumstances. Every year, however, more

young people do complete their education and are moving into First Nations governance, Band management, positions within the federal and provincial governments and in the private sector with the help of their improved qualifications and with the support of programs like the Aboriginal Student Employment Program, the First Nation and Inuit Science and Technology Program, the First Nation and Inuit Work Experience Program, the Aboriginal University Recruitment Program, the Aboriginal Awareness Program and the Aboriginal Youth Strategy.²³ These young people will lead the way for an improved life for First Nation peoples on and off reserve.

The Mi'kmaq community closest to the Debert archaeological sites is Millbrook First Nation, located approximately fifteen kilometres from the archaeological loci. Millbrook was the site of one of the Distance Education Bachelor Degree Programs mentioned above. In 2003, twenty-three young people received their degrees after attending regular university classes on the reserve utilizing a semestered system. Completing a three-year degree in two and one-half years proves that the young people were both capable and determined enough to work hard to achieve their credentials. Several had tried university in Halifax, but due to discrimination and a sense of community loss

²³ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website, (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2005). http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/ys/yth6_e.html (accessed September 11, 2006)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website, (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2005). http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/ys/yth2_e.html (accessed September 11, 2006)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Web site, (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2005) http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/ys/yth5_e.html (accessed September 11, 2006)

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website, (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2005). http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ps/edu/index_e.html (accessed September 11, 2006)

were not able to complete their studies. Now these young role models have been graduated. Many of those graduates are still working in the community and some have found employment outside the reserve. While the education was a general Bachelor of Arts Degree, this could pave the way for further study in a wide variety of areas if these individuals should wish to pursue employment with the Cultural Centre.

Even with degrees and a willingness to work, the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia face additional challenges when looking for employment. Like many First Nation individuals in Canada, they face discrimination and systemic barriers that restrict their ability to progress in their chosen careers. Millbrook First Nation is only three kilometres from Truro and an hour's commute to Halifax. The 2001 census figures indicate that the community has an unemployment rate of 18.2 percent compared to the 10.9 percent unemployment rate for Nova Scotia overall and an unemployment rate of 9.9 percent for residents of the town of Truro.²⁴

²⁴ Service Canada website, (Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information community statistics, 2001). Updated 2005/12/14
http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/cp01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CMA&Code1=215__&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Truro&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=01&B1=All&Custom=

Service Canada website, (Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information community statistics, 2001).
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/profil01/cp01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1210003&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Millbrook&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=All&Custom=>

Service Canada website, (Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information community statistics, 2001).
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1209034&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=Halifax&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=All&Custom=>

The average earnings of working people living in Truro in 2001 were \$23,954. This compares to average earnings of \$ 26,632 for Nova Scotia during the same period. In Millbrook, the average earnings were \$16,027.²⁵ This earnings ability reflects the percentage of First Nation people who have completed at least their high school education. For example, in Truro twenty three percent of the population have less than grade twelve. This compares with eighteen percent for Nova Scotia and twenty-nine percent for Millbrook.²⁶ With lower levels of education, one generally earns a lower income and is thus less able to take advantage of employment and other opportunities.

There are few Mi'kmaq speakers who live in the vicinity of the Debert sites. The majority of those Mi'kmaq who still speak the language live in communities on Cape Breton Island. In mainland Nova Scotia the language is spoken principally in some of the smaller communities that have remained somewhat isolated from assimilationist pressures and among older residents who spoke the language when they were young and who did not attend the residential school. Unfortunately, many of these older Mi'kmaq have not passed the

²⁵ Service Canada website, (Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information community statistics, 2001). Updated 2005/12/14
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1210006&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=truro&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=All&Custom=>

Service Canada website, (Statistics Canada, Labour Market Information community statistics, 2001).
<http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1210003&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=millbrook&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=All&Custom=http://www12.statcan.ca/english/Profil01/CP01/Details/Page.cfm?Lang=E&Geo1=CSD&Code1=1210006&Geo2=PR&Code2=12&Data=Count&SearchText=truro&SearchType=Begins&SearchPR=12&B1=All&Custom=>

²⁶ *Ibid.*

language on to their children and grandchildren. To increase the number of Mi'kmaw speakers in both Cape Breton and on the mainland, efforts are being made to re-introduce the language through the on-reserve school system, through the Cape Breton University Mi'kmaw Studies Program and through classes offered to the general population in some of the communities. As will be discussed later in this paper, the Elders and the Management Team for the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre have determined that use of the Mi'kmaw language will be an important part of the cultural structure of the Centre. Having Mi'kmaq who can help others learn the language and who can work in their native language at the Centre so language helps define the Mi'kmaw culture, will be an important aspect of strengthening the healing and cultural pride aspects of the initiative. Linguists suggest language is a key link to the land and that saving indigenous language is needed to help preserve biodiversity and understanding how plants are needed for medications and healing. Heather Johanneson, an International Environmental Sustainability Consultant in Halifax discussed in personal conversations that when a word is lost from a language, its relationships are also lost. When the name for a plant disappears from consciousness, gradually the uses of the plant also disappear and a piece of the culture is lost.

Compared to the non-Native population across Canada and in Nova Scotia, the Mi'kmaq have higher rates of early school leaving, higher rates of unemployment, higher rates of dependence on welfare and higher rates of suicide.²⁷ While economic development and education are two paths to help

reduce these numbers, assisting the people to rebuild pride in their Mi'kmaw heritage and culture through a Centre like Mi'kmawey Debert, will also go a long way toward improving the general physical and mental health of the communities. After hundreds of years of fighting attempts at annihilation and assimilation, much healing needs to take place. Creating a Centre that will have special areas and programming in support of healing will not only assist those who attend, but those who lead the projects. As the climate becomes more favourable for the Mi'kmaq to assume an equal role in Nova Scotia's society, Mi'kmawey Debert could become a strong instrument to assist with that transformation.

²⁷ Indian and Northern Affairs Canada website (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Ottawa, Ontario, 2005). Updated 2004/4/23
http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/gs/soci_e.html

2.0 Chapter Two

2.1 Setting the Stage - Debert 12,000 Years Ago

The caribou were back! A hunter stood near the junction of two mountain passes. Passes that would allow the approaching herd to continue north past the glacier or east across the large dry valley²⁸ now called the Northumberland Strait. It was about 12,000 years before modern time and the herd was moving along the coast of the Bay of Fundy toward the heights of the Cobequid Mountains. There was time for the hunter to prepare since with the low vegetation and the vantage point of the mountains the herd could be seen while still far away. The hunt would begin soon.

The First People to live in what would become Atlantic Canada had returned once again to this special place in the mountains. There were broad plains where they could construct their shelters and build their hearths. This was a good place to make tools from the stone gathered along their trek to the hunting grounds, while they waited for the caribou to arrive. There were places along the Fundy Shore where they could gather the stones that would fracture along straight planes to leave a sharp edge. These rocks could be formed into points, knives, scrapers and awls capable of piercing and working the tough hide

²⁸ Rob Ferguson, Archaeologist, Parks Canada, interview with author, (Halifax: September 12, 2002).

of the caribou. And, the caribou provided the People with many of the essentials of their life.



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Figure 2 A Paleo-Indian hunter wearing antlers to confuse his prey.
Figure copyright Royal Ontario Museum, reproduced with permission.

The place where the hunter waited is now known as Debert. It is a small village in the Cobequid Mountains near Truro in central Nova Scotia. The caribou would continue their migration. But first, they must pass the hunters who waited where the caribou would be congested by the passes and easier to hunt.

²⁹ James Bradley, *Origins and Ancestors, Investigating New England's Paleo-Indians*. (Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology, Andover, 1998), p. 19.

2.2 How Did the First People Get to Debert?

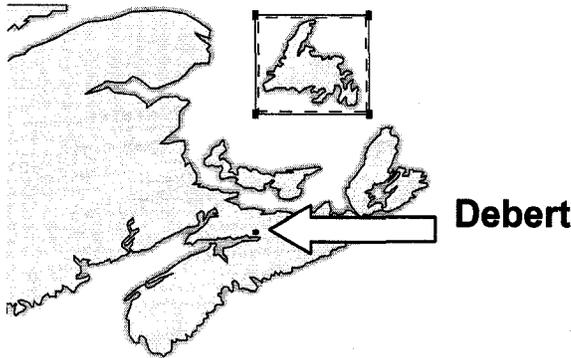


Figure 3 Debert's location in Nova Scotia

There are several theories about how the First People came to North America and to Debert. For many years, the accepted scientific theory was that people crossed the land bridge at Beringia between Siberia and Alaska. This was thought to have happened while much of the northern hemisphere was covered with ice. The volumes of ice in the glaciers lowered the water level and left a narrow isthmus where people and animals could cross. The migration was thought to have continued south through valleys between the Pacific and Rocky Mountains, or along what is now a submerged route just off the coast of British Columbia.³⁰

Some scientists believed that this migration would have taken place during a warming trend approximately 12,000 to 10,000 years ago. They supported this theory by pointing to the discoveries of similar stone tools made by the early people found across North America. Since the tool type was first discovered

³⁰ Stephen Davis, *Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq*, (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 1997), pp. 1 - 3.

near Clovis in New Mexico, Clovis is the name used to describe these types of points. Clovis sites have been found across the south western United States, in the Midwest, in New England and in the Canadian Maritimes. This similarity in finds might indicate a common ancestry and supports the concept of the movement of early people across the continent.³¹

It seems an amazing feat to be able to walk across a continent carrying all your belongings and stopping to hunt and gather the foods needed to maintain a family. When asked if accomplishing this migration in less than a thousand years seemed plausible, Stephen Davis, Chair of Anthropology at Saint Mary's University said, "Yes!" Davis believes it is in the nature of human beings to look beyond the next hill, to look beyond the horizon. In his opinion, traversing the continent could be accomplished in less than one thousand years.³²

Stephen Davis believes the ancestors of the first North Americans came from Beringia, perhaps from the Dyukhtai people who inhabited Siberia approximately 14,000 years ago. The climate of Siberia was extremely cold in winter with short, hot summers. Hunters in this area would have travelled extensively in search of game and would have been prepared to follow that game into the new territory opened up by the land bridge. As the glaciers began to melt, sea levels would have risen blocking off the people in what is now Alaska and the Yukon from returning to Siberia.

³¹ *The Last Billion Years: A Geological History of the Maritime Provinces of Canada*, (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing, 2001), p. 192.

Elaine Dewar, *Bones: Discovering the First Americans*, (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2001) pp. 132 – 134.

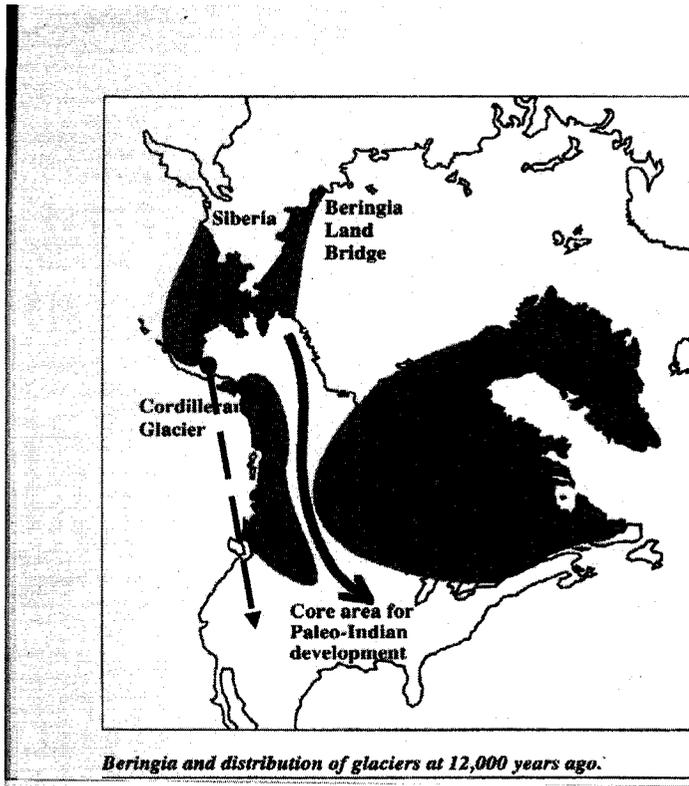
³² Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

This same melting of the glaciers would have opened up passages to provide access to the south and movement across North America would have begun.³³ It would have been necessary to travel south for a considerable distance before turning east due to the wall of ice. Once the people did follow the animals south, however, their passage would have been much easier. Many would have stayed and settled across the southern United States, but others would have continued on to see what lay beyond the horizon. This southerly and then easterly travel is supported by the location of finds of Clovis materials across the continent.

Ralph Stea, a paleo-geologist at the Nova Scotia Department of Natural Resources, has done extensive work on the movement of glaciers. In the following graphic, Stea illustrates the possible open corridor that would have existed through the mountains of what is now British Columbia. There is also a growing body of evidence that there was another corridor along the Pacific Coast that is now under water.³⁴

³³ Stephen Davis, *Peoples of the Maritimes: Mi'kmaq* (Tantallon: Four East Publications, 1991), p. 1–12.

³⁴ George MacDonald, "The Debert Site: Retrospective". Presentation at the "Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference", Debert, Nova Scotia, October 19 - 21, 2005.



While not shown on the original map, an alternative route may have existed off the west coast of British Columbia along the Queen Charlotte Islands. These raised land masses would have been above sea level. (shown dashed)

At the “Ta’n Wetapesi’k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference” held at the Debert Hospitality Centre October 19 - 21, 2005, George MacDonald explained that recent work in removing core samples off the coast of the Queen Charlotte Islands has revealed Paleo-Indian artifacts dating back to between 14,000 and 12,000 years ago. These discoveries are still being interpreted, but lend credence to the theory that the First People in North America came from Siberia.

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³⁵ R.R. Stea, and R.J. Mott, “Younger Dryas glacial advance in the southern Gulf of St. Lawrence, Canada: analogue for ice inception?” *Boreas*, Issue: 34(3), (Anchorage: 1995), pp. 345-362.

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Even so, the theory based on the migration from Beringia, leaves many questions unresolved. David Keenlyside, Curator at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Ottawa discussed this with members of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team in February 2002. As further archaeological evidence has been uncovered, it appears that there may have been people in the southern United States and in Central and South America from 65,000 to 30,000 years ago. Radio-carbon testing is becoming more accurate since it was first developed in the 1950s and as the geological body of evidence grows, even parts of the site at Debert are thought to be between 14,000 to 12,000 years old rather than closer to 10,000 years old. The traditional knowledge held by many of the Native Peoples of the Americas is that they are indigenous to the land. They have always lived on this land. They did not come from Siberia, Europe, Africa or anywhere else. They are not descended from Adam and Eve. They are not The Lost Tribe of Israel. This has always been their home.

Weapons are also an interesting way of trying to determine how the migrations may have progressed. As mentioned earlier, the similarity of Clovis points across the United States and into north-eastern Canada lends credence to the premise that they were made by people of similar origins. Another theory around weapons supports the idea of people coming from Europe along the southern lip of the glacier. The stone points of the Solutreans people of France from over 20,000 years ago are similar to the Clovis points found in North America. Dennis Stanford, Chair of Anthropology at the Smithsonian thinks the

lack of Clovis point finds in Siberia and Alaska makes it more likely that the ancestors of the North American Paleo-Indians came from Europe.³⁶

There are legends and traditional tribal knowledge that have been passed down through generations of Mi'kmaw people regarding their history. These legends are more than stories. They are life lessons and can include information about where and when to hunt; what areas are best for gathering certain plants; and where to look for chert. There are also legends that demonstrate that the Mi'kmaq have been in Nova Scotia for a very long time. One of these legends is about how Glooscap found Summer and brought her to battle Winter, eventually bringing an end to the long cold in the north and having the four seasons created as the two spirits battled for supremacy over Mi'kma'ki.

It is significant that one legend, told by William Asikinack of the Department of Indian Studies at the Saskatchewan Indian Federated College in Regina, advances the theory that the First Nation peoples have been in North America for a very long time. It demonstrates that in addition to the legends of the Mi'kmaq held in Nova Scotia, the stories of the early times have spread across the continent to be known by people thousands of miles away. The more times the phrase "long ago" was repeated, the older the story is considered to be.

"Long ago and long ago and long ago and long ago, the People, as a single nation (nin-wa-windwidji-da-ki-wema, we are of the same land), lived along the eastern shores of the great salt water. At that time, the people had a spirit protector called Glooscap. Glooscap did many things,

³⁶ Elaine Dewar, *Bones, Discovering the First Americans*, (Toronto: Vintage Canada, Random House, 2001), p. 133.

and brought many things to the People. Glooscapi brought the plant-beings, the various animal beings, and the swimmers who were placed on the land to help the People survive and live a good life. The People had lived for many generations in this land. Then a strange thing started to happen.

The People thought that Glooscapi was the one who had caused this strange thing to happen. Of course, the People were right – Glooscapi and Ki-weyd-de nonk Mmnid-doo (Spirit of the North) had got into an argument about who was the stronger spirit. Ki-weyd-de-nook Mmnid-doo to show his strength began to make it cold in the land of the People. The thing we call sook-po (snow) began to come to the land. The snow came and did not stop. As the snow got deeper and deeper (ish-pi-koon-ka) and ice began to walk on the land, the plant-beings stopped returning for each cycle and the animals-beings left the country. The People finally had to leave too. The People went je-wyd-nonk ina-ka-kie-a (southward) along the edge of the salt water with Glooscapi following behind to protect them from the Spirit of the North.

The People went far to the south and lived there for many generations. Glooscapi, their friend and spiritual protector, made friends with Je-weyd-nonk Mmnid-doo to aid him in an attempt to overpower Ki-weyd-de nonk Mmnid-doo. The three spirits did battle for several generations until finally Glooscapi and Je-weyd-nonk Mmnid-doo began to push Ki-weyd-de nonk

Mmnid-doo from the original lands of the People and back into ki-weyd-de-nonk (the northlands).

As the battle continued, the spirits found that they could only carry on for a certain amount of time because even spirits become tired. So sometimes Je-weyd-nonk Mmnid-doo was the winner and would reign in the land of the People and for almost an equal amount of time Ki-weyd-de-nonk Mmnid-doo would reign over the land of the People. When each of these spirits was coming into their time to reign, there were certain signs that the People learned to understand. When it was the turn of Je-weyd-nonk Mmnid-doo to reign, Je-weyd-ni-nod-in (the South Wind) would bring warmth and the return of the plant beings. When Ki-weyd-de-nonk Mmnid-doo had its turn to rule then Ki-weyd-din-nod-in (the North Wind) would come and all the plant beings would go to sleep. Thus it was that the four seasons, spring, summer, fall and winter arrived in the original land of the People." ³⁷

Asikinack has stated that he heard this story, traditional to the Anishinabe people (the Ojibwa who now live around the Great Lakes and on the Great Plains) as a child. He believes that this story makes it clear his ancestors were living on the eastern shore of the Atlantic before the beginnings of at least the last Ice Age. Asikinack surmises that the First People to live in North America may not have crossed from Asia as the Bering Strait Theory stipulates. If that is

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 210 – 212.

the case, then they were here for much longer than modern science has suggested.”³⁸

While the recent work in the Queen Charlotte Islands and by paleogeologists in Nova Scotia seems to indicate the Beringia theory has the strongest body of evidence behind it, the solution as to which theory regarding the peopling of the Americas may be correct is still in the hands of the Elders, archaeologists, geologists and DNA experts. The purpose of this paper is not to determine how the First People got to Debert. It begins after their arrival and proceeds on the premise that the First People in Nova Scotia lived at Debert about 12,000 years ago. They visited the site on a regular basis over many years to hunt caribou for food, clothing, shelter and tools.

George MacDonald, who led the initial excavations at Debert from 1963 to 1965, agrees that there is a strong role to be played by the traditional oral histories in interpreting early history. MacDonald said that when he first began work on the site, 10,000 years ago seemed like such a long time that he believed there could be no relevance to today. As he has worked with First Nation people all over the world, he has changed this view and now thinks there are many oral histories that are based in actual events. Examples of this are the ‘flood stories’. As Europeans began their colonization of other parts of the world and spread the story of Christianity, they believed the flood stories were merely spin-offs from the bible. It has become obvious to anthropological researchers that the stories

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 212.

go back long before biblical times to the Ice Age and have different facts than the story told from European interpretations of the bible.³⁹

2.3 The Environment

What was Debert like during the time of the First People? What was the climate like? What resources were there to support the First People to live in this land?

As seen on the following drawings of the retreat of the glaciers, by 21,000 years ago, there were ice-free stretches of land off the coast of Nova Scotia. The huge glaciers held much of earth's water. Sea levels were much lower than today. The massive weight of the ice pushed down on the centre of the continent as the weight of a body would depress the centre of a feather mattress. At the same time, the edges of the continent rose up along the borders of the glaciers making the change in sea level even more dramatic.⁴⁰

The edges of the shoreline, where the ice had retreated, allowed points of higher elevation to emerge from beneath the seas. These high points now make up areas such as Georges Bank, Gaspereau and Sable Island. They provided the first habitat for plants to re-establish. With the plants came birds and eventually animals as a continuous rim of open shore emerged from beneath the ice. Core samples taken from lakes, bogs and near-ocean shore environments indicate that by 14,000 years ago sedges, grass, balsam fir, spruce, pine, birch

³⁹ MacDonald, "The Debert Site: Retrospective".

⁴⁰ John Shaw, (presentation to the Mi'kmawey Debert Board of Directors, Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Millbrook First Nation, 2002).

and alder already largely covered Nova Scotia.⁴¹ The density of each of these species fluctuated over time with climatic changes, but there was ample forage for large herds of grazing animals and for many other mammals, birds and fish – enough resources to sustain human habitation.

While vegetation was spreading and only small, isolated glaciers remained in the Maritimes by around 12,000 years ago, this situation was not to last. The Younger Dryas period, approximately 10,500 to 10,000 years ago, was a time when temperatures once again dropped dramatically. Vegetation diminished and many species of animals across North America disappeared including the very large creatures like the mastodon, the woolly mammoth, the sabre-toothed cat and the bear-sized giant beaver.⁴²

Hal Borns of the University of Maine Climate Change Institute proposed that the First People came to Debert after the Younger Dryas. The climate had warmed once again and, “by the time of the first occupation of the Debert site all of the continental ice had dissipated from northern Nova Scotia and that a Valdres age ice cap, the margin of which was considerably less than 60 miles away to the south-west, occupied the Cobequid Mountains.”⁴³ (The Valdres period was the last major advance of ice across the central portion of North America over Lake Superior and the Canadian Shield. Remnants of this ‘old ice’

⁴¹ *The Last Billion Years*, p. 189.

⁴² *Ibid*, pp. 192-193.

⁴³ George MacDonald, *Anthropology papers – Debert: a Paleo-Indian site in Central Nova Scotia*, (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, Queen's Printer, 1962), pp. 12-14.

remained into later periods.)⁴⁴ Archaeologists are not yet sure if people were visiting Debert during the Younger Dryas period, but most think they did not.⁴⁵ Assuming visitation stopped, archaeologists do not know if the people who followed the herds before the Younger Dryas were the same ones who returned as the climate warmed.

The withdrawal of first the continental ice and then the local ice caps brought a rapid warming trend resulting in a proliferation of plants and animals. This current warming period has lasted since approximately 10,000 years ago to the present day. With the retreat of the continental ice and the land once again warming to support the trees, herbs and grasses necessary for both animals and humans, the First People who had utilized the resource at Debert prior to the Younger Dryas period might have returned or new people could have migrated into the area and found their way to this rich land. An ice-free area would have been an important consideration for people who depended on the riches of the land and the regular migrations of animals to meet the needs for the food and shelter that would allow them to survive the bitter winter seasons. Added to the positive climate and sustenance conditions was the excellent vantage point for hunting. Debert was a prime location.

Often, when one thinks of the glaciers moving across North America, one tends to envision ice moving south across the continent and then retreating back to the north thousands of years later. This was not always the case. In fact, ice moved in many directions from land peaks to lowlands – especially along

⁴⁴ Earl Rook, (accessed September 6, 2006) <http://www.rook.org/earl/bwca/lists/glossary/v.html>

⁴⁵ The Last Billion Years, p. 192.

shorelines. This concept began the presentation made by Ralph Stea at the "Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference" held at the Debert Hospitality Centre October 19 - 21, 2005. The conference brought together scientists from many disciplines to discuss the sites at Debert and to explain the importance of items to be considered for the proposed development.

The retreat of the ice sheets is illustrated in the following graphic representations:

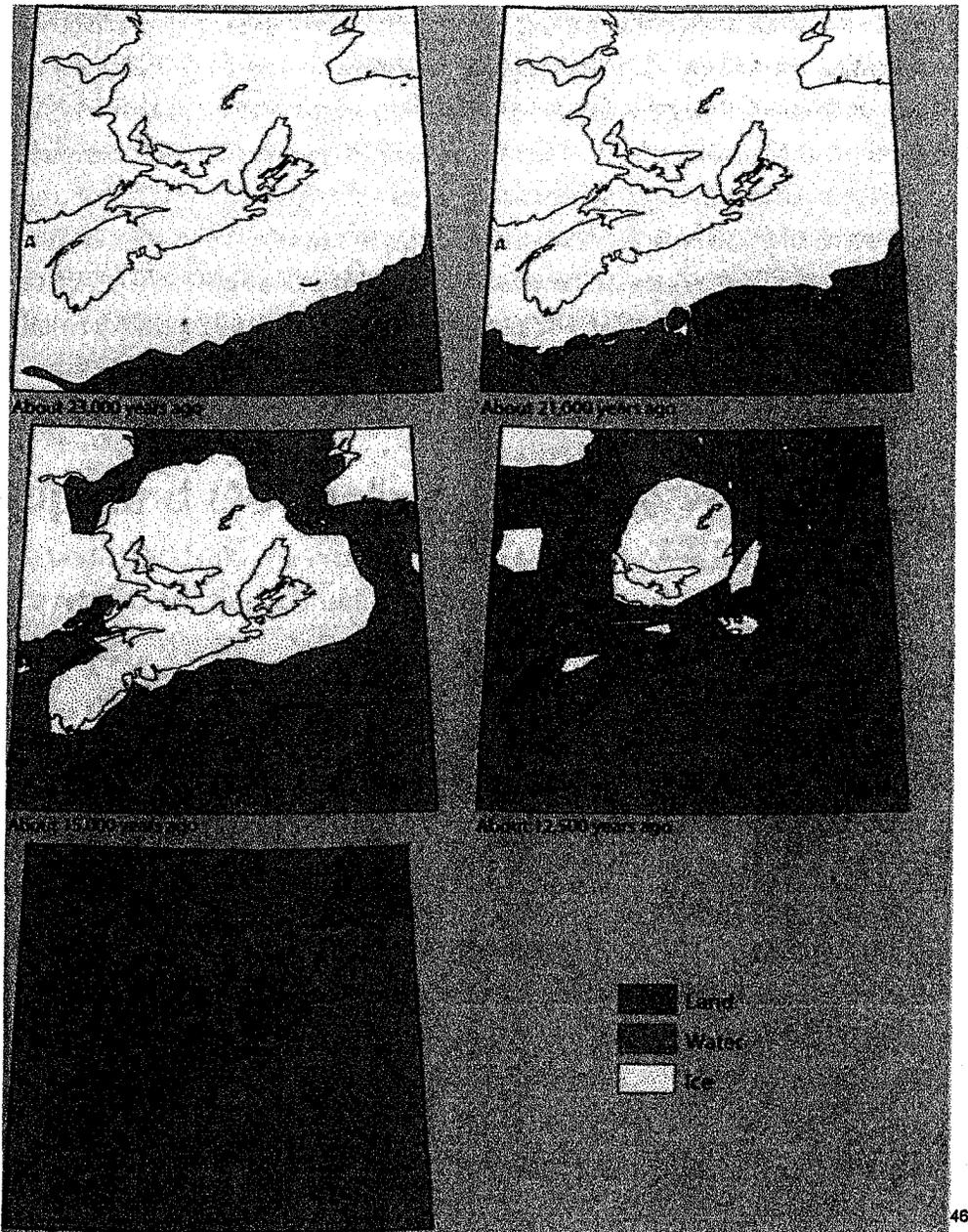


Figure 4 Withdrawal of the Continental Glacier

Figure copyright Atlantic Geoscience Society, reproduced with permission.

As the ice melted around the Debert area, water would have drained north into the Bay of Fundy and south through the Shubenacadie Valley, the lake

⁴⁶ *The Last Billion Years*, p. 190.

system leading to Halifax Harbour and into the Musquodoboit River Valley. In the Shubenacadie Valley, near the Wildlife Park, sands and clays have been laid down in patterns indicating that there was a large lake in the Valley – likely from about 11,800 to 10,900 years ago. At this time, ice would have blocked the

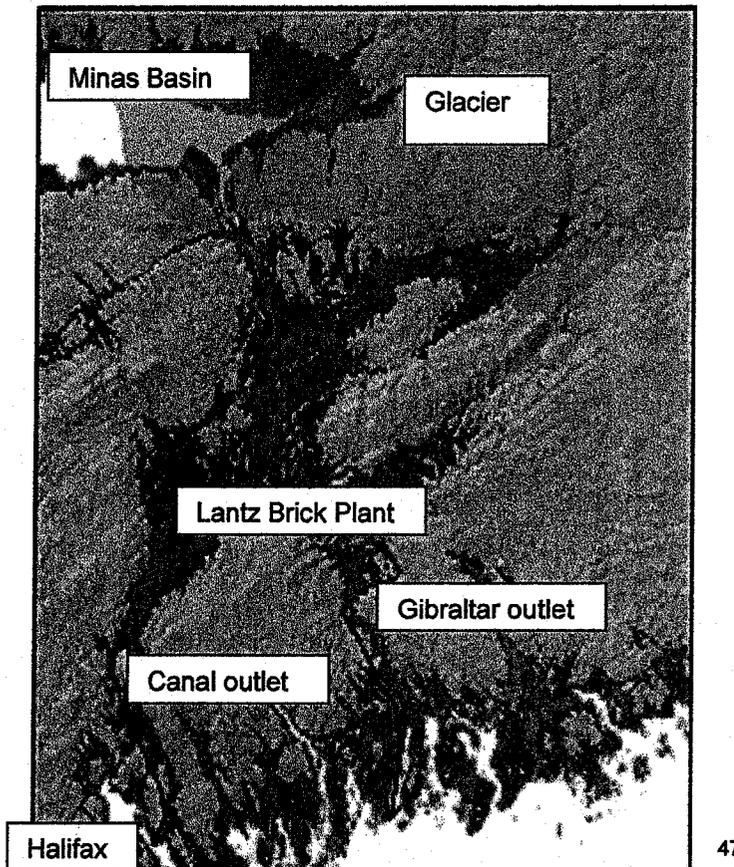


Figure 5 Glacier lake outflow.

This graphic of the Shubenacadie glacier lake outflow illustrates the drainage patterns of the glacier melt that once covered the whole Shubenacadie Valley area. Copyright Ralph Stea, reproduced with permission.

mouth of the Valley and the level of the lake would have been up to thirty metres in depth. With this work, Stea believes that the Debert area would have been utilized by the First People approximately from 11,000 to 10,600.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Stea and Mott, pp. 345 - 362.

Hal Borns believes the Paleo-Indian people would have thrived during the cooler Younger Dryas period. Borns was part of the original team that investigated Debert during the 1960s. He has continued researching the Debert/Belmont sites and has also worked around the Bull Brook and Vail sites in Maine. Bull Brook was the first major Paleo-Indian site discovered in the north eastern part of the continent and Debert was the second. It is likely that the people from these sites had common backgrounds and may even have traded with each other.⁴⁹

Using information found in Maine and New Brunswick, there are indications that woolly mammoth were present around 12,000 years ago. This supports the concept that there was a variety of game in addition to caribou. While core samples taken from Folly Lake near the Debert site have been inconclusive, they do show pollen samples indicating spruce and pine were present during this period and there was spruce charcoal found in the hearth sites at Debert.

Borns explained that the edges of glaciers were, in fact, rich areas in which to live. The glaciers were storehouses for pollens and seeds. They pushed topsoil ahead of them and this made a fertile place for plants to grow. Where there was vegetation, there would have been animals and the people would have followed the animals. Another reason the edge of the glaciers would have made a good home for the Paleo-Indian people would have been the

⁴⁸ Stea, Ralph. "Recent Palaeogeography at Debert and Belmont". (Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference, Debert, October 19 - 21, 2005).

⁴⁹ Harold Borns, "The Debert Site: Retrospective".

actions of the caribou. Both from ancient stories and modern observations in Canada's north, researchers have learned that caribou are surrounded by midges and flies in the early spring as the weather warms. To reduce the biting of the flies, especially around their eyes, caribou tend to migrate closer to the snow and ice in summer. This makes the air cooler and reduces the flying insects that pester the animals. The herding of the caribou close to the ice would have provided good hunting for the First People.⁵⁰

2.4 The Resources

The land at Debert was an important aspect of why the site was chosen as a recurring stopping place for the First People. Debert, wrote George MacDonald, "lies on a gently sloping plain which flanks the north shore of Cobequid Bay, an extension of the Minas Basin . . . To the north the plain is bounded by the Cobequid Mountains, a narrow, low range with peaks averaging 500 feet but rarely exceeding 1,000 feet in elevation. Foothills stretch from the Cobequids to a point less than two miles north of the site . . . Dissecting this plain are numerous small rivers draining the highlands; to the west of the site is the Debert River and to the east, the Chiganois."⁵¹

This environment would have provided an excellent location for the First People to wait for the caribou. When first occupied, the land at Debert was permafrost to a depth of about 16 feet. Melting in the spring would have

⁵⁰ MacDonald, "The Debert Site: Retrospective".

⁵¹ MacDonald, *Anthropology papers*, pp. 3 - 6.

produced boggy land, as the permafrost would only have melted over the top two feet of the surface. The slight slope would allow this area to drain quickly and provide a dry base for camps.⁵²

The swamps and bogs gradually drained and the land supported an increasing animal population. With water levels being lower than today and with a vantage point in the mountains looking over a large vegetated plain, Debert would have been an ideal hunting camp.⁵³ Stephen Davis commented that when he was working on excavating the Belmont I and II sites from 1989 to 1991, the area had been cleared by the Department of Natural Resources for further development of the Tree Breeding Nursery. With the trees removed, as they would have been 12,000 years ago, there was a clear view down the river valleys where the caribou would have travelled.⁵⁴

While later sections will go into more detail regarding the making and use of stone tools, it is important to realize now that the stone tools found at Debert are the major items left to tell the story of human life 12,000 years ago. Investigations have determined that many of the stones used to make both tools and weapons were carried to Debert as chunks of rock that would be refined once the people reached their hunting camps. Reserves of similar stones are still found along the Bay of Fundy Shore. This confirms the early availability of the resource. Since only certain types of stones would fracture along the straight

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁴ Stephen Davis, "The Belmont Sites: Discovery". (Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference, Debert, October 19 - 21, 2005).

planes required to leave a serviceable, sharp edge, having a ready supply of raw material would have been an added attraction to the Debert area.⁵⁵

2.5 The Diet of the First People

The acidic soils of Atlantic Canada have left little evidence of the lives of the First People to live on this part of the continent. Potential artifacts of bone, hide and antler from the Paleo-Indian period disappeared back into the soil long ago. The stone tools and living spaces of those early residents tell us only part of the story, but by adding the knowledge about Debert to that collected from other Paleo-Indian sites in North America, a more detailed picture begins to emerge.

Waguespack and Surovell published a study in the *Journal of American Antiquity* that investigated the possible diet of the first North Americans. They speculated regarding the hunting methods and food choices of the Paleo-Indian people. From the types of spear points found at Debert and other ancient sites, archaeologists have postulated that the Paleo-Indians hunted primarily big game. Very big game such as mastodons, mammoths and giant beavers (the size of today's black bears) would have been occasional targets. Caribou were much more plentiful, however, and were likely the primary source of both meat and hides. Considering the type of large spear points and bifacial (sharpened on both sides of the stone) edges on points, the early hunters would likely have pursued large mammals and lived primarily on a diet based on protein.

⁵⁵ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

The techniques for hunting large game would be relatively stable as people moved through many environments in their trek across a continent. If one were to project big game populations based on today's animal population densities, it is reasonable to presume that there were fewer large animals than small animals relative to the general population of mammals. At the same time, there were also fewer hunters so they could afford to selectively hunt the limited large game. While one successful hunt would provide a travelling family group with meat for a considerable time thus reducing the need to hunt on a daily basis, the availability of the targets had to be taken into consideration.⁵⁶

Another theory regarding the hunting patterns of the First People is that they were generalists who hunted and gathered whatever opportunity put in their path. This premise was tempered by the recognition that in a cold climate, the energy expended to hunt or gather food needed to be less than the energy that would be gained through consumption. Therefore, the strongest hunters would not spend their efforts hunting rabbits – unless one was foolish enough to cross their path when they had a spear in their hand. Rather the hunters would pursue larger animals such as caribou, elk, deer and moose on a regular basis and the very large game would be a welcome addition to their diet when the chance arose. At the same time, the weaker hunters – likely women, children and the

⁵⁶ Nicole M. Waguespack and Todd A Surovell, "Clovis hunting strategies, or how to make out on plentiful resources", *American Antiquity*, Volume 68, Number 2, Society for American Archaeology, (Washington: April 2003), pp. 333-352.

elderly – would be responsible for gathering plants to supplement the diet and also for fishing and trapping small animals.⁵⁷

James Bradley from the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology supports this premise in his book *Origins and Ancestors: Investigating New England's Paleo Indians*. Bradley explains the types of weapons found at early sites in the northern United States, not far from Debert, and suggests that the diverse types of weapons indicate an equally diverse spectrum of food sources such as caribou, mammoth, beaver, hare and fox as well as birds and fish.

Birds and fish from fresh and salt water would have been a valuable source of food for the First People. Marshes provided homes for a multitude of birds, their eggs and many edible small reptiles. Both fresh and salt water provided fish ranging up to the size of giant sturgeon. The Ice Age was a time when many animals were bigger than in modern times. This applied to walrus, seals and other creatures that were hunted on land and sea. The hunters were able to provide a rich variety of food, furs, ivory, antler and bone to meet the needs of their people.⁵⁸ The archaeological site at Debert is located in a setting that would have supported either of the theories outlined above. The mountain passes channelled migrating herds of caribou to make them easier to hunt. While caribou were not the largest game of the period, they were still substantial animals and they were readily available at known times of the year.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 336 - 346.

⁵⁸ James Bradley, *Origins and Ancestors: Investigating New England's Paleo Indians*, (Andover: Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology, 1997) pp. 12-13.

In discussing the merits of the Debert site with Rob Ferguson of Parks Canada in March of 2002, he explained that living with the land on well-drained soils with streams nearby and being sheltered from the cold north winds by the mountains, would have offered a prime location to the First People. Natural passes to direct caribou and make hunting easier as well as access to fresh and salt water for fish and sea birds provided a diet rich in the proteins needed to live in a cold climate. A fertile plain covered with many plants provided foods for animals and people as well as medicinal plants. Known types of siliceous stones that could be gathered while en route to Debert and fashioned into weapons and tools while waiting for the herds were an important resource. All of these factors were aspects of what made Debert important to the First People. To have all of these elements in one location would have been a rare find. Few sites would have been as ideally suited to the lifestyle of the First People to live in Nova Scotia. Debert is the benchmark for archaeological work in Atlantic Canada. It provides proof that people lived in this part of the world 12,000 years ago.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

3.0 Chapter Three

3.1 Finding Debert - Discovery of the Site in 1948

E.S. (Ernie) Eaton and his wife discovered the site at Debert in 1948 when they were picking blueberries. Eaton was an amateur archaeologist working at the Truro Agricultural College who recognized the pieces of stone tools he found to be very old. He did not do anything about his discovery at the time, but in 1955 Eaton told R.S. MacNeish of the National Museum of Canada about his finds. MacNeish determined that the artifacts found by the Eatons were indeed very old and recorded the information about this early site in Nova Scotia. The artifacts passed from the Eatons to another Nova Scotia collector, W.A. Dennis and eventually came to the attention of J.S. Erskine, the Provincial Archaeologist. Erskine undertook a surface investigation of the site and discovered nineteen additional artifacts. As more specimens were found and more interest generated, word of the loci at Debert reached D.S. Byers who was the Director of the R.S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology.¹ With the support of the National Museum of Canada, the R.S. Peabody Foundation for Archaeology, the National Science Foundation and the Nova Scotia Museum of Science a major excavation was planned for 1963 and 1964.²

¹ MacDonald, *Anthropology papers*, pp. 1-3.

² *Ibid.*, p. iii.

3.2 The 1963 to 1965 Excavations

George MacDonald, then a graduate student, oversaw excavations at Debert from 1963 to 1965. MacDonald admits he was nervous about accepting the challenge of excavating Debert. Most sites tend to have only a few artifacts and to give up a job to take on the project was a risk. It turned out to be a risk well worth the effort.³ What he found led to the Debert site being recognized as one of the oldest and most important archaeological finds on the eastern seaboard of North America.⁴ What George MacDonald discovered was proof that people had lived at Debert 12,000 years ago.

MacDonald discovered a wealth of material scattered over twenty acres. He located eleven hearth sites, a variety of stone tools and flakes and a picture of what life might have been like for the First People to live in Nova Scotia. There had been considerable damage done to the site over the years. The Mi'kmaq, who had lived in Mi'kma'ki for millennia, would have had only limited impact as they were a nomadic people who did not disturb the earth much beneath the surface. The early Europeans farmed the land and caused some disturbance in isolated areas. The settlers uprooted trees and dug into the soil to plant their crops. The technology of the times did not encourage deep penetration into the ground, however, and damage was still slight.

³ MacDonald, "The Debert Site: Retrospective".

⁴ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

Far greater damage occurred when the land around Debert was used as a major military base during the Second World War. Part of the archaeological site was bulldozed in 1943 to create spaces for military buildings. This base became the training and dispersal point for Canadian soldiers en route to World War II in Europe. Before the end of the war, Debert was the largest base in Canada with thousands of men and tonnes of machinery and equipment passing over the land. In some areas, the damage caused by the development of the base at Debert was minimal but the central part of the site was destroyed to create a parking lot in 1948. It must be remembered, however, that at this time, no one was aware that the base was located atop an ancient habitation site.⁵

Some of those who had the most serious impacts upon the site were also the smallest. When MacDonald pursued his investigations at Debert, he determined that "burrowing insects, particularly ants, must also be taken into account where the time factor is so great . . . ants were at present moving soil material to the surface at a rate sufficient to cover the entire surface to a depth of one inch every two hundred years. . . The effect of this action on the alteration of artifact locations and attitudes has never been studied, but it can be considered analogous to frost action on soil particles, which has been demonstrated to move cobbles vertically as much as two feet by particle replacement."⁶ MacDonald determined that due to the action of small creatures

⁵ Nova Scotia Museum web site 1996 – 2000.
<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/arch/sites/debert/debert.htm>
and
Various exhibits in the Debert Military Museum, CFS Debert, 2000 – 2004.

⁶ MacDonald, *Anthropology Papers – Debert*. pp. 18-19.

upon the soil, the location of artifacts might not have been the same relative to each other as when originally laid down. Where pits and hearths, were built into the sand, the disturbance of the artifacts relative to one another is minor.⁷

3.3 Reconstructing Life from the Excavations

All these factors must be taken into account as a reconstruction of life at Debert is attempted. From the eleven hearth sites, George MacDonald gained some idea of how the people may have organized their community. The majority of the hearths were scattered along a central ridge. What cannot be determined, and may never be confirmed is whether these hearths indicate a large gathering that came to Debert a few times, or whether smaller, family bands used the location repeatedly over generations.⁸ Radio-carbon dating was done on fourteen samples from the hearth sites. When eleven of the fourteen samples were added together and then divided, they gave an average of 10,600 years plus or minus 45 years Before Present (BP) Researchers were unsure if there may have been contamination in these samples. The extreme range was from 11,251 to 10,338 B.P.⁹ While the limited sampling cannot be considered concrete proof, the spread of samples over a period of 900 years lends credence to speculation that the site was used repeatedly during the seasonal caribou migration.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁸ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

⁹ MacDonald. *Anthropology Papers – Debert.* p. 53.

What else did the people do at Debert besides hunt caribou? It appears they undertook a variety of tasks and that some of these tasks were quite specialized. MacDonald determined that tool making was a major industry for the people of Debert. He identified four general classes of tools: tools for killing and butchering; tools for preparation of food and fuel; tools for processing raw materials for clothing and shelter and finally, tools for making more tools.¹⁰ The tools found at Debert were made primarily of two different types of chalcedony. There are no chalcedony deposits at Debert, so the stones must have been carried with the travellers as they made their way to camp to wait for the caribou. Chalcedony can be found in several locations along the shores of the Minas Basin.¹¹ Taking the effort to carry rock indicates the appreciation the early toolmakers had for the quality of their raw material.

The artifacts found at Debert from the first type of chalcedony range in colour from translucent through milky to pink and mauve. The second type tends to be mostly greenish brown. The stone tools found were very sophisticated and made with highly skilled techniques. The silicon character of chalcedony allows it to break off long, straight flakes that are very sharp. These tools have been compared to stone tools from other Paleo-Indian sites in North America. Through modern experimentation as well as the historical comparisons, the uses for many of the tools have been determined.¹² When a sharp edge is used

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 32.

repeatedly for a specific purpose, the blade will wear in particular ways that can be identified under a microscope. The artifacts found by MacDonald indicated that some were killing and butchering tools while others were used as drills, knives and scrapers. The most common artifact types were end scrapers, making up almost fifty percent of the tools found. These scrapers, with other skin-working tools formed the major functional category, followed by bone, and woodworking and finally killing and butchering tools.¹³

Use of the skin-working tools is an indication that the hides of the caribou and other prey played an important role in the lives of the people. The need for sharp tools was as important for making clothing as for gathering food. 12,000 years ago, the mean temperature was likely below zero degrees with winters being much colder than today's conditions. Active ice caps were only sixty miles away near Amherst. The First People to live in Nova Scotia would have needed warm, tailored clothing to be able to withstand the severe climate. The hide working tools such as side scrapers, end scrapers and awls would have been used to clean the skins and make the clothing that allowed the people to survive.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

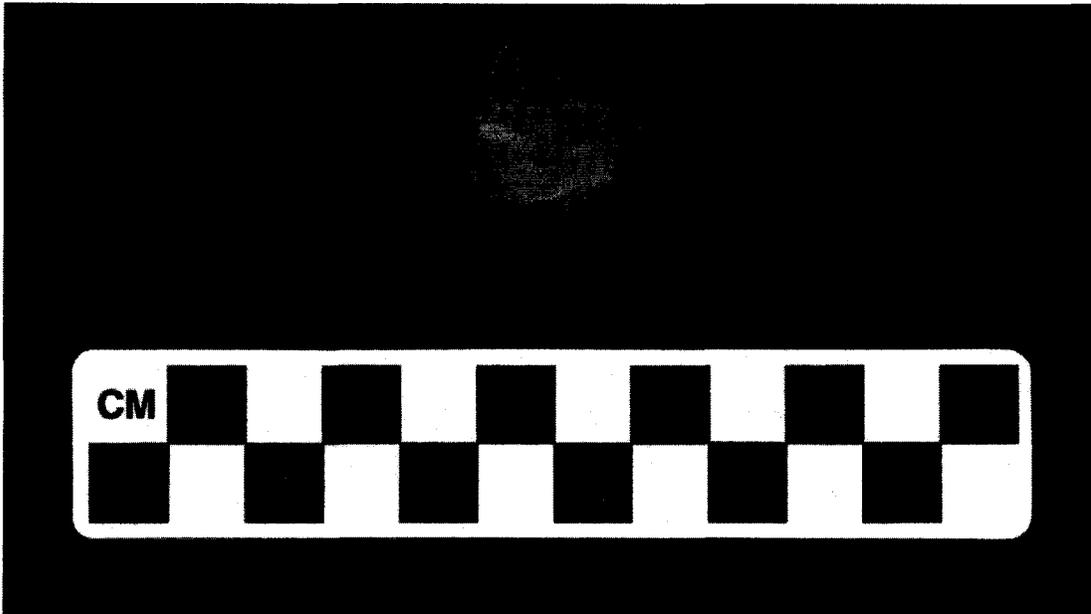


Figure 6 Scraper found at Debert. Photo held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

This scraper was found during the surface inspection of the original Debert site by the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History in November 2001. The land was flattened to remove a motor cross racetrack that had been constructed over the original site. The activity took place under the direction of David Christianson, Provincial Archaeologist. Christianson explained that the scraper would have been used by the early people visiting the area. This tool has a design unique to the Debert location with the curved surface leading up to the point at the top of the scraper. The lightly sharpened left-hand side of the tool would have been used to separate hide from tissue. The curved surface, with its sharp cutting edge, would sever ligaments and tendons without damaging the hide. Even after more than 12,000 years, the blade is still sharp.



Figure 7 A New Find. Donald Julien and David Christlanson inspect a scraper found in November 2001. Photo held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

The distribution of tools across the site also tells a story. In one hearth, there were many more flakes than finished products. This could have been a knapping hearth - a main tool-making site. It is normal in Paleo-Indian sites to find approximately one finished tool for every five pieces of detritus removed from the stone cores. This formula worked for the finds at Debert – and later at Belmont. Other hearths showed many more side and end scrapers in situ rather than flakes. MacDonald speculates that these hearths would have been used primarily for working hides or making other tools.¹⁴ “The selection by Indians of lithic raw material for artifacts was never a random process. The technological complexity of fluted point manufacture demanded that the artisan be familiar with

¹⁴ MacDonald, *Anthropology Papers – Debert*. pp. 30 – 52.

the properties of his material; this could best be achieved by limiting the variety of materials used. From the total range of siliceous materials available in any area, they invariably restricted themselves to but a few.”¹⁵

The tool-making hearth also revealed indications of large fires. Some of the tools found at Debert show evidence of being heated before they were worked. Heating improves the flaking properties of siliceous materials such as chalcedony as it realigns the crystalline structures within the stone. This heating of the raw rock was done at the tempering hearth.¹⁶ These were not careless individuals who hit rocks together to try and get a sharp edge. Their techniques were sophisticated and their knowledge of working the stone matched their knowledge of how to utilize other gifts of Mother Earth.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹⁶ MacDonald, George. “The Debert Site: Retrospective”.

12365 spurred scrapers



12146 biface knife

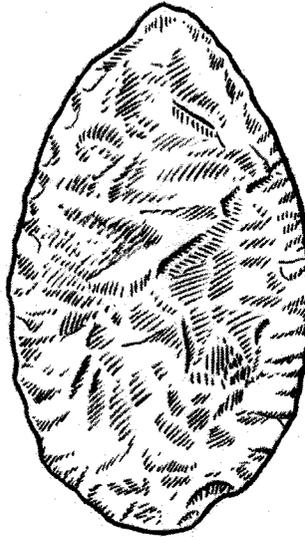


Figure 8 Stone tools. Drawings created by Michael Martin of Millbrook First Nation in 2003. Renditions of artefacts found at Debert taken from George MacDonald's documentation of the first archaeological dig. Drawings held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

Other tools were made from different stones although chalcedony was the most prominent. The second most common stone used was rhyolite. Rhyolite did not produce high-quality tools, as it did not fracture along clean sharp lines. It was not intended as a sharp, cutting tool. Rhyolite was used as a percussion instrument. It would have been used to make rough tools such as hammer stones, anvils, choppers and crushers.¹⁷ The two types of material were mixed

¹⁷ MacDonald. *Anthropology Papers – Debert*. p. 62.

across the area indicating both were in use at the same time.¹⁸ Since rhyolite is more common and thus more easily found, it would have been employed for tools that had limited use and that could be discarded with little concern.

Stone was not the only material used to make tools. Antler, bone and ivory also had their uses. When making stone tools, there is a role to play in using a hammer stone with its unyielding strength. There is also a stage in the finishing of a blade or point when the toolmaker may wish to flake off only small sections without causing other surfaces to change what has already been created. The softer consistency of bone, ivory or antler cause less percussive damage and provide the artisan with more control of the process.¹⁹ Tools used to shape wood for spear shafts; to shape delicate bone needles for sewing and to shape bone and antler into hafts for knives, a scraper and even cutting firewood were plentiful in the artifacts found at Debert.²⁰ Artifacts also found at Debert were stone tools that had been repaired. Mixed with both the flakes and new tools, were examples of points that were shorter and smaller. These tools had been retouched showing that the people used their tools as much as possible before they were discarded. A broken point for large game could be re-sharpened into a smaller point for smaller animals or shaped into scraper.²¹

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 60.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²¹ MacDonald, "The Debert Site: Retrospective".

MacDonald noted that over ninety percent of the tools found at Debert were for enriching the material culture of the people rather than directly sustaining them in terms of food and fuel.²² These tools would have permitted the people to make their clothes and decorate them. They would also have had the ability to haft handles made of wood, ivory, bone or antler to their blades to make use easier, safer and more precise. There have been no finds of beads or jewellery at Debert, but from comparing the tools found at the site, to other Paleo-Indian locations in North America, there is reason to suspect that the people living at Debert had both the ability and the materials to create ornamentation for their possessions.²³

In addition to the tools, specimens of mineral pigments were found in some of the hearth sites. Over two hundred specimens of mineral pigments were found. One, polyrolusite, is a soft grey-black mineral that is not found locally. Like the chalcedony, it was likely transported from the Minas Basin.²⁴ Was this pigment used for decoration of clothing, shelters or weapons? As yet, it is impossible to tell, but it opens one more avenue for important research into the lives of the First People to live in this land.

²² MacDonald. *Anthropology Papers – Debert*. p. 111.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 52.

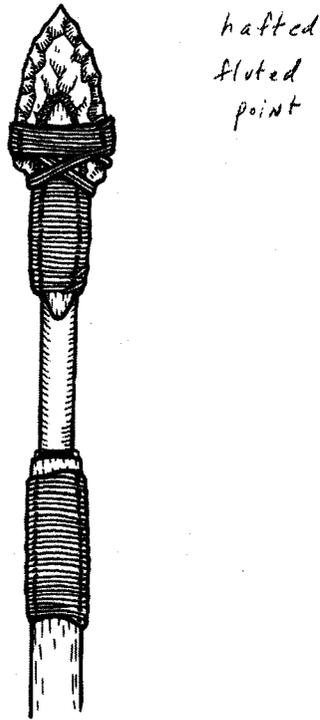


Figure 9 Drawing created by Michael Martin, Millbrook First Nation, in 2003. Rendition taken from George MacDonald's documentation demonstrating how a point would have been hafted to a spear. Drawing held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

Thus much was learned from the excavations done by George MacDonald and his team. They proved that people lived in Nova Scotia 12,000 years ago. They also demonstrated through an analysis of the artifacts found at Debert that these people had skills and abilities that allowed them to lead productive and complex lives in extreme climatic conditions. These were not unskilled individuals scrounging for food. Rather they were people who had sophisticated knowledge of their environment and hunting techniques and who had the ability to enrich their lives beyond subsistence. MacDonald also showed that whether they came in large numbers over only a few seasons or in smaller numbers over a long period, the First People visited this place many times. Perhaps one of the

most important messages from what MacDonald and his team learned was that we have only begun to unravel the story of these early hunters. There is much still to discover. The lives of these early residents of Nova Scotia can enrich our knowledge of our own lives today.

Debert is an important part of the history of Nova Scotia. It also provides a powerful base of information for those Mi'kmaq who believe the First People were their ancestors so they can continue to build on the pride of a people who have endured in this place for millennium. As Tim Bernard, Director of History and Culture at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, stated at the Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference, "As Mi'kmaq we respect the knowledge of the past and we are dedicated to learning more about our people L'nu'k".²⁵

²⁵ Tim Bernard, Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference, (Debert: October 19 – 21, 2005).



Figure 10 Representation of a Paleo-Indian camp. Drawing done by Ivan Kocsis and held by the Royal Ontario Museum, reproduced with permission. ²⁶

3.4 The 1991 Excavation

The archaeological site at Debert sat untouched and unprotected after the completion of the excavations in 1965 until 1972. The only people who used the site were residents of the Debert area. In late summer, the fields covered with large expanses of blueberries attracted many visitors to harvest the fruit. Others who used the fields holding the Paleo-Indian sites were those riding all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motor cross bikes. Over the years, they wore down trails,

²⁶ Bradley. *Origins and Ancestors*. p. 25.

built jumps and tore up the earth with their races. The land was also used as a dump site for garbage, old appliances and wrecked cars.

At this time in Debert's history, it had no protection through legislation and many people were not aware of the past stories that lay beneath the sand. The Mi'kmaq were becoming very concerned about damage to the site and with the support of Stephen Davis, Chair of Anthropology at Saint Mary's University in Halifax, they determined that further excavations and steps toward protection should be undertaken.

Davis first became aware of the archaeological sites at Debert in the late 1960s while a graduate student (shortly after the 1963-1965 excavations). The site "was being touted as the most important archaeological site in Eastern Canada".²⁷ In the early 1970s, Parks Canada determined that the location should be proclaimed a National Historic Site. During this period, Brian Preston, the Provincial Archaeologist, was working to delineate the loci at Debert, to help determine how much land should be preserved when Debert became a National Historic Site in 1972. As this work was taking place in 1971, the National Museum was using shovels and backhoes to dig trenches and determine where the actual loci were situated. This work was being done in the treed areas, outside the habitation sites to ensure that more artifacts were not found beyond the boundaries that were being set for protection of the site.

When asked about the impact of disturbing the soil in such a dramatic way – using backhoes – Davis said that when you consider the length of time that had passed since the depositional history, you have to recognize that the story is not

²⁷ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

well understood. The effects from insects, animals, deforestation, erosion, wind blows and other activity have impacted the site. This means that if the finds have already been displaced and moved from the locations where they were laid down, much of the interpretive data has already been lost. If the artifacts are not sitting in relation to other materials that were deposited during the same period, only minor damage is likely to occur by doing exploratory digs with a backhoe. This follows through from the statements made by MacDonald in his paper regarding the 1960s excavations.²⁸

George MacDonald recorded that these impacts are one of the major detriments to understanding the cultural history of Debert. Stephen Davis explained that this was critical to the work he did in the 1990s. You must have the resources in place to be able to excavate properly and with due attention to detail. "Anybody can go dig holes in the ground; you might as well take a backhoe. You can take a backhoe and find all the artifacts you want, but unless you understand the depositional history, you're not going to be able to interpret them."²⁹

Following through from this stand, the Mi'kmaq have agreed that the disposition of artifacts is very important. While there was a time when using a backhoe might have been acceptable, this is no longer the case. The artifacts were left behind by the ancestors. Until artifacts are discovered, no one knows what lies in relation to artifacts that might have already been located. Relating

²⁸ *ibid.*

²⁹ *ibid.*

back to the traditional values mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the Mi'kmaq believe everything that throws a shadow has a spirit. If the artifacts are found in a certain way, that needs to be respected. All future excavations at the Debert – Belmont sites will be undertaken with an understanding of Mi'kmaw values and respect for the ancestors.³⁰

Debert was named a National Historic Site in 1972. The Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act was passed in 1980 to put Special Places like Debert under the protection of the Nova Scotia Museum. To arrange for specific protection of the Debert loci, the Province of Nova Scotia established a buffer zone of 650 acres within the Debert Air Industrial Park. As the Park began to grow, the Province reclaimed 520 acres of the buffer zone around the site to develop as a Tree Breeding Nursery. This reduced the buffer to just 130 acres, but the Nova Scotia Museum reached an agreement with the Tree Breeding Nursery, managed by the Nova Scotia Department of Lands and Forests, to have an archaeologist check the land any time the Nursery decided to open up a new section.³¹

In November of 1989, Brian Preston invited Stephen Davis to visit the site with him to investigate the new five-acre section that had been cleared to expand the Nursery for new plantings in the spring. The two men met with the Manager of the Tree Breeding Nursery and went out to the location of the new section. To

³⁰ Julien, Donald. Discussion with author, July 18, 2007.

³¹ Davis, Stephen. "Two Concentrations of Paleo-Indian Occupations in the Far Northeast". *Journal of American Archaeology, The Earliest Americans*, Number 3, (Instituto Panamericano de Geografia E Historia, June 1991), pp. 31-56.

illustrate the archaeological richness of the area around Debert, Davis told the following story. "We stopped. Brian got out on the left side; I got out on the right side. Brian was in the ditch within minutes with a big smile on his face and had the first artifact. We spent Friday there and came back on Saturday and recovered two or three hundred specimens. And, this is a new site, by the way. This eventually became called Belmont I".³²

The Tree Breeding Nursery planned to burn off the site to prepare it for planting in the spring. The layer of carbon laid down through a burn would have contaminated the site and any future carbon-based finds would have been very difficult to verify. Through the efforts of the Nova Scotia Museum and Stephen Davis, the Tree Breeding Nursery was not permitted to move forward with the burn. The province had invested significant resources into preparing the hundreds of acres around Belmont I for future nursery activities, so it became necessary for further research that would provide more detailed information regarding the habitation sites. Once the information was gathered, the Tree Breeding Nursery staff continued with planting the site, but in controlled areas.

In 1990, Davis worked with a crew of archaeologists and graduate students at Debert through the spring and summer. By the time they had finished work for the season, they had discovered five more sites around the Belmont area. This expanded on the work done by George MacDonald and reasserted Debert's importance in the Paleo-Indian history of Eastern Canada. Davis compared the artifacts at the new Belmont sites looking at the way the

³² Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

tools were worked, the proportion of detritus to finished points and the types of materials used. He concluded that without a doubt, the Belmont and Debert sites linked the same people and were from the same period. In 1965, Debert was considered one of the most important archaeological sites in eastern North America. After the 1990 – 1991 excavations, it had added five new loci and many more artifacts. Debert is one of the major Paleo-Indian sites in the history of the world.³³

Most of the artifacts were found in areas where stumpage had been removed in preparation for the Nursery. The Nursery practice had been to cut the existing trees and leave them for a season to allow the roots to rot. Staff would then use a tractor to pull the stumps out of the ground. This type of action would not only pull up the roots, but all the soil clinging around them. The artifacts that were located and charted in 1990, therefore, were primarily surface finds that had been removed from their places under the earth. The investigations confirmed six sites spread over approximately 20,000 square metres. The loci were named Belmont I, Belmont I (A), Belmont II, Belmont II (A), the Hunter Road Site and Debert.

When asked if there should be further excavations or if the site should be left undisturbed, Davis said he thought there should be some limited excavations but they had to be well planned, well executed and well financed. "It is pointless to go and just dig holes in the ground"³⁴. In 1991, the Nova Scotia Museum

³³ Stephen Davis, "The Belmont Sites: Discovery".

³⁴ Stephen Davis, interview with author, December 1, 2004.

called for a Research Tender across North America for expressions of interest in excavating the site. Dr. Davis was the successful scientist awarded the contract to do this work through his outline of a plan for investigating several of the sites and in particular, Belmont II. The Nova Scotia Museum and Saint Mary's University provided the resources to allow the dig to continue for about two weeks.

Davis directed the team as the lead archaeologist. Gordon Brewster, a soil scientist from the Agricultural College in Truro, examined the natural events that took place that helped form the land. Brewster illustrated that the soil found at Debert today was not there 12,000 years ago. The ortstein soils found now take over two thousand years to develop. When the First People were at Debert, the ice had just retreated and only a minimal layer of sand covered the site.³⁵ Ralph Stea was the geologist for the team. Stea was able to develop a baseline geomorphology. This was significant because it allowed the team to understand landforms existing today as well as what may have occurred over 12,000 or more years of transformation.

Another key member of the team was Robert Mott from the Geological Survey of Canada who was working in the area and joined the team with several of his students. One of these students, Monique Frappier, focused on determining the vegetational history of the area. To conduct her study, Ms. Frappier took a core sample from Little Dyke Lake. By driving a hollow tube into

³⁵ Gordon Brewster, "Commentary on the Pedoarchaeology of the Debert-Belmont Sites, Nova Scotia, Canada". Ta'n Wetapesi'k: Understanding From Where We Come Conference, Debert, October 19 - 21, 2005.

the bottom of the lake and then analysing the material from the excavation, Ms. Frappier obtained a core sample containing a complete vegetational history of that part of the province going back almost 13,000 years.³⁶

One of the most important aspects of the work done in 1991 was to develop baseline information that would allow future scientists to create a strategy for exploring and learning about the Debert site. This information would point out what was known, what were the gaps, what sorts of questions should be asked to expand existing knowledge and who would be the strongest individuals to continue work on the site. While more testing is required, the work done from 1990 and 1991 combined with the information from MacDonald's work from 1963 to 1965, has created an outline of what the Debert area may have looked like when the First People lived in Nova Scotia.

The test site at Belmont II was different from the work that had been done in 1963 to 1965. A bulldozer had disturbed the area when a service road had been constructed by CN Rail to provide access to the tracks and a bridge located behind the site. The work done by CN had impacted on Belmont II and Belmont II (A). At Belmont II, the bulldozer did a 'push up' taking material off the main road and pushing the soil and site material up onto the side of a hill. Since this section had already been disturbed, it was selected to be the primary test area.

Through this testing, Stephen Davis and his team were able to determine the extent of the damage that was done by the bulldozer and were able to test an undisturbed deposit. The dig discovered several hundred artifacts.

³⁶ Monique Frappier, *Late-glacial, fine-resolution pollen and sediment analyses of Little Dyke Lake sediments, Central Nova Scotia*. (Ottawa: National Library of Canada, 1996).

Approximately two thirds of them were disturbed and the remaining artifacts were from the intact site. Investigations of this material confirmed that the sites at Debert and Belmont were definitely related and that the same groups of people had been living at both locations.³⁷

During the 1990 and 1991 excavations, the Mi'kmaq were not involved in the management of the site. Donald Julien and Peter Christmas from The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq were aware of the work being done and visited the site to be informed about the finds, but only as observers. The responsibility for maintaining communications with the First Nations regarding archaeology falls to the Nova Scotia Museum. The Museum also holds the authority to implement and monitor activities under the Special Places Protection Act.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

12135 - wedges



12138 end scrapers

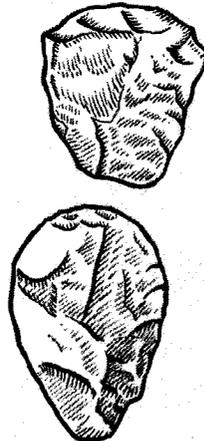


Figure 11 Wedges and scrapers drawn by Michael Martin. They demonstrate, with the drawings shown earlier, the diversity of tools used by the First People. Drawing held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

3.5 Government Activity Regarding Debert Between 1965 and 2000

Through personal discussions with Donald Julien during the author's tenure with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and as a member of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team from 2000 to 2004, it became clear that the Mi'kmaq had long been interested in preserving the site, but did not have the resources to move that protection forward. Following the excavations in 1991, the Mi'kmaq, particularly through The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, took a more direct interest in protecting the site and also in making their people aware of the importance of the finds. This was a slow process involving many discussions

among the administration of The Confederacy, among Elders and among citizens of the various Mi'kmaw communities. For many years there had been thoughts of creating some type of cultural centre near Debert, but the ideas had not moved beyond discussions and the concept stage.

During this time, both the federal and provincial governments had taken initial steps to protect the archaeological sites. While the official steps toward protection took place, they were largely paper exercises. Although the Debert archaeological discovery was designated a National Historic Site in 1972 and fell under the authority of the Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act after 1989, it was not safeguarded until The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq began to demand protection in 2000. The use of the land and the destruction of part of the site during World War II are not at issue. The importance of the area had not yet been discovered. No one knew what lay beneath the ground when they decided to build a parking lot for the base. That was not the case while the land was being used as a dumping ground and a race track. Neither the federal or provincial governments took any physical actions to protect the site even once legislation was in place.

When the Mi'kmaq established a program to investigate the protection available to the sites and how the story of the first people to live in Nova Scotia should be told, interest was generated with many different organizations that saw the potential for partnerships. A Board of Directors and an Elders' Advisory Council were formed to help direct the progress of development plans. Discussions in which the author participated between 1999 and 2004 created

early ideas around development. These ideas included a complex that could potentially hold a museum, a cultural centre, a place of healing, an archive of Mi'kmaw documents, a convention area with restaurant and meeting facilities and a House of Laws that could become the seat of Mi'kmaq tribal management. Over time, these ideas have been refined and steps taken toward development, but the articulation of the vision became an impetus to hasten protection and investigate how this could best be accomplished.

3.5.1 The Federal Government – Parks Canada

Today, both the federal and provincial governments are attempting to take steps to rectify the lack of protection at the site over the past several decades in efforts to prepare the way for future development that will reflect the Mi'kmaw dream. Rob Ferguson, an archaeologist at Parks Canada, explained during this process in 2002 that through Parks Canada one of the requirements for a site to become a location subject to specific heritage development attention by the federal government is for a Commemorative Integrity Statement (CIS) to be developed. This had not been done for Debert prior to 2002. To support the Mi'kmaq in their endeavours to move forward with development, Parks Canada began creating the CIS for Debert in late 2002. The parties invited to sanction the CIS included the Minister of Parks Canada on behalf of the Crown; the Board of National Historic Sites; the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture represented by the Nova Scotia Museum and the Mi'kmaq Nation.

Commemorative Integrity describes the health and wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when it is not under threat and when the importance and values of the site are clearly understood by the public. Parks Canada prepares a CIS for special sites across the country to help ensure they are developed in ways that will allow people of today to enjoy them while protecting special places for future generations. The statement provides a guide, or management plan, that assists in maintaining the integrity of protection over time as various managers may come and go.

The guide also provides a background document that can be used by funding agencies to ensure they are moving forward in a manner that has been carefully considered and approved by all parties concerned with protecting a special place. In addition to providing a guide to funders, the CIS can also act as the basis for marketing plans and the development of tourism proposals. Without a clear direction, marketing and tourism activities can sometimes take on a life of their own and the CIS keeps plans in tune with the overall strategy for a site.³⁸

When the Debert CIS document was begun, the integrity of the site was still under some threat from the local ATV users, but the problem was largely in hand. The Mi'kmawey Debert Team worked in partnership with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and the Department of Natural Resources at the Tree Breeding Nursery to have regular patrols take place at the site. The busiest time was on the weekends when both casual and organized motor cross and ATV users made use of the racetrack. The RCMP visited the site on

³⁸ "Debert Paleo-Indian Site, National Historic Site of Canada Commemorative Integrity Statement", (Halifax: Parks Canada, 2004), pp. 1-2.

Saturdays and Sundays over the course of the summers of 2001 and 2002 and explained to users that the site was private land, it was a National Historic Site and that it was a Nova Scotia Protected Place. This meant that the spot had special significance that should not be disturbed. As an extra incentive to stay away, the RCMP informed users that for them to use the site could mean a one thousand dollar fine. For the race organizers who were bringing vehicles up from Halifax, the fine could be a maximum of ten thousand dollars. To the credit of those individuals riding on the site, members of the RCMP Detachment at Bible Hill informed The Confederacy that they did not have to warn off the same people twice. Most were not aware there was anything special about the land near Debert and were happy to stay away once they had been told. Archaeologists from the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History demolished the racetrack. Members of the Mi'kmawey Debert team and officers from Natural Resources made regular checks on the site to ensure there was no resurgence in usage. Had new activity been noted, the RCMP was ready to step up their patrols once again.

The Parks Canada Archaeological Heritage Policy Framework states that:

As heritage protection is an essential element in the affirmation of our Canadian identity, and as our archaeological heritage is a source of inspiration and knowledge, it is the policy of the Government of Canada to protect and manage archaeological resources.³⁹

³⁹ Archaeological Heritage Policy Framework, (Ottawa: Department of Canadian Heritage, 1990).

Although the statement indicates heritage protection is an affirmation of “. . . identity as well as a source of inspiration and knowledge”, heritage was not given paramount importance when the CIS for Debert was drafted. Parks Canada was asked to consider the relationship of the today’s Mi’kmaq to the people who lived in Nova Scotia 12,000 years ago as a point of primary importance when commemorating the heritage site. The Mi’kmaq believe that this relationship, extending over thousands of years, should be one of the prime reasons for making the loci near Debert a National Heritage Site. While some of the officers working with the Department in Nova Scotia agreed that this information would reflect the importance placed on the site by the people who draw their heritage from this land, officials in Ottawa at the Parks Canada national headquarters were not willing to adjust the phrasing in their Commemorative Integrity Statement to reflect the feelings and wishes of the Mi’kmaq Nation. Through 2002, members of the Mi’kmawey Debert Team (including the author) made strenuous efforts through a series of meetings between Parks Canada – Atlantic and The Confederacy of Mainland Mi’kmaq to work together to build a policy that would accommodate all the issues at stake.

However, the basic wording of the CIS was seen to be inflexible in the eyes of the policy makers in Ottawa. Agreement could not be reached to indicate that the issue of Mi’kmaq occupation of the land over thousands of years was a prime reason for the designation of the Debert loci as a National Historic Site. Parks Canada determined that it was because Debert was an archaeological site that it

would be recognized and did not link the site to the Mi'kmaq of today as a point of primary importance. This led to the CIS being completed without the Mi'kmaq Nation being signatories to the statement. Considering Parks Canada's statement that "heritage protection is an essential element in the affirmation of our Canadian identity", it is unfortunate that the heritage of the Mi'kmaq was only considered to be of secondary importance by Parks Canada in the formatting of the CIS for Debert.

Parks Canada, like other government departments is mandated to work with the First Nations. They have a legal and fiduciary responsibility under many different pieces of legislation to assist Canada's First Nation peoples to assume a place in Canadian society where they have equal responsibilities and benefits from being citizens as do all others who are citizens of the country. While the mandate is in place, there is still a long way to go to have the personal and systemic barriers within a bureaucracy as large as the Canadian government become truly responsive to the needs of its First Nation people and to implement policy using the true spirit rather than just the letter of the law.⁴⁰

3.5.2 The Provincial Government – The Nova Scotia Museum

The Province of Nova Scotia through the Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act states that its purpose is to "provide for the preservation, protection, regulation, exploration, excavation, acquisition and study of archaeological and historical remains and palaeontological sites which are

⁴⁰ Ken Paul, Policy Advisor, Parks Canada at the School of Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University, Presentation "Ways of Knowing", (Halifax: March 7, 2006).

considered important parts of the natural or human heritage of the Province".⁴¹

The Special Places Protection Act also contains a provision to, "promote understanding and appreciation among the people of the Province of the scientific, educational and cultural values represented by the establishment of special places."⁴²

Why then was one of the oldest sites on the Eastern Seaboard of North America left to be used as a dumping ground for garbage and for use as a motor cross track for over twenty years after it was designated as a Special Place? Many of those who used the site did not know what lay beneath the surface. They may not have realized how taking a truck with a blade on the front onto the unmarked sandy plain to create the jumps and hollows of a race track could destroy archaeological history that had lain undisturbed for thousands of years. Why didn't they know? Where were the bodies designated to protect this special place?

The Debert Paleo-Indian site is located approximately ninety minutes from Halifax. There are no Nova Scotia Museum installations near the site. While the responsibility for overseeing the Special Places Protection Act falls to the Nova Scotia Museum, managing Crown Land held by the Province is the mandate of the Department of Transportation and Public Works. The site is located adjacent to lands used for the Department of Natural Resources Tree Breeding Nursery

⁴¹ "Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act", Legislative Assembly of the Province of Nova Scotia, Queen's Printer, (Halifax: 1989), p.1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

and is considered to be within the holdings of the Department of Natural Resources.

The Nova Scotia Museum does not own nor control the land. Nor has it had staff available near Debert to protect the site. Occasionally through the 1980s and 1990s, the Museum erected signs stating 'No Trespassing', but since museum staff could not be on hand to supervise the location, they did not wish to promote the information that Debert was an archaeological site for fear of having treasure hunters searching for artifacts and in the process, destroying valuable information. So, after a while, they did nothing thinking it would be better not to advertise what lay under the soil than to make people aware and open the site to potential unauthorized excavations when there were no resources available to protect the site.

David Christianson, the Provincial Archaeologist with the Nova Scotia Museum, explained that the responsibilities of various provincial government departments made the process of protecting the site very complex. The Department of Transportation and Public Works has the role of landowner on behalf of the Province, but has no mandate to protect archaeological sites. The Department of Natural Resources at the Tree Breeding Nursery has the responsibility for undertaking forestry research not for protecting the archaeological site. Thus, the Province of Nova Scotia gave no formal protection to Debert.

Natural Resources does indirectly protect the loci in that they are contained within the Nursery property boundaries and whenever possible

personnel keep an informal eye on activities. Several of the directors of the Nursery have been knowledgeable about the archaeological history at Debert and have reported finds of artifacts or disturbance to their colleagues at the Museum or to The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq through their First Nation Forestry associations. Some of these finds came to light through work done on the nursery land such as putting in roads or digging over fields to establish new plantations. Both this type of activity and the action of the roots of so many trees have compromised the integrity of the Debert site.

The archaeological loci at Debert have gained new champions in the area. As the author worked with the Mi'kmawey Debert Team and began going out into the community explaining the importance of the site to the County Council, the Chamber of Commerce, the Colchester Regional Development Agency (CoRDA) and local groups in 2002. Area residents largely decided they wanted to see this special part of their community protected. Some residents recognized the importance of a site so ancient and complex. Others respected the feelings of the Mi'kmaq that this was a camping and hunting location used by their ancestors 12,000 years ago. Still others anticipated potential economic spin-offs for the community when the Mi'kmaq successfully developed a Cultural Centre. One of the biggest reason ATV users are staying away, however, is the special initiative described earlier to bring in a bulldozer and level the track thus removing the attraction of a well-known racing location.



Figure 12 Bulldozer used in November 2002 to flatten the motor cross track and remove the attraction of the site. Picture held by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

In addition to removing the attraction of the racetrack, the decision was made through discussions between The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, the Mi'kmawey Debert Team and the Nova Scotia Museum that the only way to prevent further destruction of the sites was to have a presence in the immediate area and to lobby government to enforce the protections that had been placed on the area. The question was to decide how this was to be done.

4.0 Chapter 4

4.1 The Concept of a Cultural Centre Begins – After Twelve Years of Tomorrows

Moving forward with the concept of creating a structure to manage the project and the resources to allow the idea of a Cultural Centre to grow would require significant resources. While The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq agreed to manage the project and take the lead in its development, Mi'kmawey Debert was only one of the many initiatives that fell under its umbrella. It was necessary to determine how to move the project forward effectively. This would be a major initiative and it needed a solid concept based on knowledge of the desires of the Mi'kmaq and the abilities of the economy and the environment to support the project.

“The need to care for and protect the Debert site has been a concern for as long as I can remember”, Donald Julien said. In Julien's view, the Mi'kmaq Nation needs to take steps to protect the site, to foster academic study of the archaeological loci and to encourage governments to take action to protect Debert from further depredations and destruction.¹ As stated in the Guiding Principles and Primary Purpose of the Mi'kmawey Debert Programmatic Statement, “As Mi'kmaq, we are descended from the people who have come

¹ Interview with Donald Julien, Executive Director of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and Chair of the Mi'kmawey Debert Board of Directors, (Millbrook First Nation: January 27, 2005).

before us in Mi'kma'ki. As Mi'kmaq, we respect knowledge of the past and are dedicated to learning more about our people, L'nuk" ²

After years of discussing the importance of the Debert archaeological site in general terms, Julien, accompanied by the author, took the issue of repatriating the Debert site to the Mi'kmaq Nation to the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs. He proposed protecting the site and developing a Cultural Centre to commemorate the lives of the First People to live in Nova Scotia, whom he believes to be the ancestors of today's Mi'kmaq. The Chiefs responded with a resolution passed unanimously on August 1, 1999. The resolution placed the authority and support of the Chiefs behind the initiative and gave The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) authority to investigate how the Cultural Centre could become a reality. This authority from all the Nova Scotia Chiefs has been a major strength of the project.

The idea of building some sort of Mi'kmaw museum near the site had been discussed for some time, but this would be a major undertaking. There were considerations about who owned the land, how would the Mi'kmaq establish a controlling presence and how would those using the site for motorized recreation be convinced to leave. It would also be important to discover what sort of infrastructure would be required to move the ideas of protecting the sites and creating a museum forward and who would fund the initiative.

Julien began his planning by discussing the matter with the Economic Development and Culture and Heritage Committees of the Mi'kmaq * Nova

² "Mi'kmawey Debert Programmatic Statement", The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, (Millbrook First Nation: April 2004), p. 6.

Scotia * Canada Tripartite Forum. (The Forum is a tri-lateral organization with representatives of the three levels of government working together for the betterment of all.) Presentations were made to both groups by Elaine Jeffery and Mary Mason during 1999 and 2000; with the result that there were mandates given to The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq from both Tripartite Committees to move forward with plans to create a Cultural Centre and to develop a policy for protecting the site. After discussions with staff at The Confederacy and with the agreement of the Chiefs, the project was given the name "Mi'kmawey Debert" meaning 'developing Debert in the Mi'kmaw way'.

By bringing the federal and provincial governments into the undertaking through the Tripartite Forum, in addition to the Chiefs, this involved all three levels of government in supporting the project. This recognition of the importance of the Debert/Belmont sites by the three levels of government gave concrete evidence that the potential to make Mi'kmawey Debert a gathering place in the new millennium was becoming as important today as the sites had once been to the First People thousands of years ago.

The first federal government department to come onside in a practical way was Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) now Service Canada. At the time, the Department was heavily focused on Community Economic Development and capacity building. Creating a Cultural Centre like Mi'kmawey Debert would provide an opportunity to encourage economic development, employment and training opportunities for Natives and non-Natives. There would be requirements for project management and support staff immediately. Over

the longer term, there was the goal of hiring Mi'kmaw individuals as planners, programmers, interpreters, archaeologists and support staff as well as food service and maintenance personnel within the facility. To begin developing Mi'kmaw expertise in the early stages would ensure a cadre of people ready to assume positions at the Cultural Centre when the time was right.³

The initial support from HRDC came in the form of the secondment of Elaine Jeffery from HRDC to The Confederacy in July of 2000 to manage the development of the project under the direction of CMM. This action was supported by contributions from CMM involving office space, technical expertise and extensive knowledge of the work that had been done to date.

Following closely upon the support given by HRDC was a grant from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to provide assistance in conducting initial investigations into how the project should proceed and in hiring a Mi'kmaw individual to work with Jeffery throughout the process of developing the infrastructure. The successful candidate would gain the expertise to eventually assume these duties. The person hired for this position after a highly competitive interview process was Shannon Googoo. Googoo is a resident of Millbrook First Nation who was originally from Membertou First Nation. As Googoo explains, she comes from a family with a strong appreciation of their Mi'kmaw heritage and a desire to see their people strong and contributing members of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Shannon Googoo became the support person to the Board of Directors; she travelled with Department of Tourism and Culture Best Practices Missions

³ Interviews with Howard Green, Regional Director, Human Resources Development Canada, Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Spring 2000.

and attended tourism conferences. Over the past few years, Googoo has moved into a lead role on the Mi'kmawey Debert development team.

4.2 First Steps

Initially, it was necessary for the newly formed Mi'kmawey Debert Team to learn about what would be involved in the development of a cultural centre. What did the Mi'kmaq want to see as the end result? What would the impact be on the Mi'kmaq First Nation community? Would there be support from the larger community surrounding Debert? Was the basic concept sound and could it garner the necessary support to take it through to a successful conclusion? This initial assessment is generally considered as part of the 'entry phase' of an economic development process.⁴ The Team members began by planning a campaign to take information about the concept into the local community. It would be beneficial to have the local residents and their political leaders aware of the project and supportive of the general idea before moving any further. This was also time to solidify the knowledge regarding the proposed cultural centre with the federal and provincial government representatives who would ultimately be asked to support many of the funding requests. Government programs shift on a regular basis, but there are general areas of support that can be accessed across departments. For planning purposes, it is helpful to keep government departments and others one hopes to have as future partners informed regarding ongoing developments.

⁴ Healthy Communities: The Process: A Guide for volunteers, community leaders, elected officials and health professionals who want to build healthy communities, Community Action Pack, Environment Canada, (Ottawa: 1998), pp. 5 - 11.

The next step was to create a legal entity that would allow Mi'kmawey Debert to enter into contracts and agreements as development progressed. The project was registered as a not-for-profit corporation under the Societies Act of the Province of Nova Scotia. The registration required that the Society have a charter and by-laws as well as a Board of Directors. While sounding like a simple process, this was the beginning of setting the standards by which Mi'kmawey Debert would operate.

What was important to the Mi'kmaq Nation as the project progressed? This is not an easily answered question. As with any other group of people, the Mi'kmaq have a variety of opinions on any given topic. In the Mi'kmaw way, the management team worked toward consensus as decisions needed to be made. Not only did this make the progress more strongly supported, but also it respected traditional Mi'kmaw methods of decision-making.

It was decided through discussions among staff at The Confederacy involved in legal issues, land claims, economic development, history and culture that Mi'kmawey Debert would be a facility for the Mi'kmaq Nation in all of Nova Scotia, not just one Band or community. Telling the story of the Mi'kmaq People, in the Mi'kmaw way, would guide the development of Mi'kmawey Debert. To ensure this would be the case, the Board of Directors formed to direct the project was comprised solely of Mi'kmaq individuals. Those who participated on the first Board of Directors included: Don Julien, Chair; Lynn Knockwood, Vice Chair and Comptroller; PJ Prosper, Secretary and Legal Advisor; Jim Hepworth, Economic Development and Tim Bernard, Communications. These were all individuals

who held positions of respect within their community. Their skills in their various fields were proven and their participation in the project helped legitimize the activities undertaken to communicate the concept beyond the Confederacy walls.⁵

There were plans for Mi'kmaw youth under nineteen to be involved, but they would be non-voting members, as they could not legally enter into contracts. From the beginning, it was recognized that the youth have much to offer and as the future leaders of the next generation, their voices should be heard in the development of the project. The largest difficulty in involving the youth was to be able to have them involved with meetings. Since the youth were largely in school, it was not appropriate to have them miss classes to attend Board meetings. In addition, if youth from around the province were to be included, there would be costs for travel and accommodation. It would also be important to ensure the young people would be adequately cared for and chaperoned. As these are major obstacles and as there have not been sufficient funds to allow for the travel of young people and chaperons, there have not yet been any youth placed on the Board.

A next major decision was to consider the membership of the organization. Again, putting the Mi'kmaw people first was a priority. It was determined that the elected representatives of the Mi'kmaq would be the best suited to act as leaders of the project, so the Chiefs of the six mainland Bands were named as the members of the Society. Since this group is also the Board

⁵ Healthy Communities: The Process, pp. 13 – 17.

of Directors for The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, they already meet on a monthly basis and have been able to add support to the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative to their agenda. Presentations are made regularly to the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs that includes all thirteen Bands. In this way, the elected leaders of all the Mi'kmaw communities are able to stay involved with the project. They can also bring the concerns and suggestions of their communities to the attention of the Mi'kmawey Debert Board of Directors and relay information back to the residents of their Bands.

Mi'kmawey Debert has recognized and respected traditional paths in Mi'kmaw leadership. While there is a duly authorized Board of Directors following the regulations of the Registry of Joint Stocks, every bit as important in the day-to-day running of the project is the input of the Elders. An Elders' Advisory Council was formed in 2002 that would meet on a monthly basis to manage the development of the concepts that would guide the project. It has been important that traditional knowledge be respected; that oral histories be incorporated; and that the philosophies of the Mi'kmaq Nation be seen as being part of the foundation of Mi'kmawey Debert.

"The members of the Council are a highly respected group of educators, linguists and historians working with people toward health and well-being. They include Elsie J. Basque (Saulnierville), Sarah Francis (Pictou Landing First Nation), Mary Ellen Googoo (Membertou First Nation), Judy Bernard Julian (Paqn'tkek First Nation), Theresa Isaac Julien (Millbrook First Nation), Doug Knockwood (Indian Brook First Nation), Murdena Marshall (Eskasoni First

Nation), Sister Dorothy Moore (Membertou First Nation), and Viola Robinson (Acadia First Nation). They represent Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia.⁶ Other Mi'kmaq participants on the Elders' Advisory Council were Don Julien, Tim Bernard and Shannon Googoo.

This dedicated group is highly respected within the Mi'kmaq Nation. As Elders, their ideas are carefully considered and their advice sought by other members of the community. The Elders provide integrity, moral support, a knowledge base, an understanding of youth, the Mi'kmaw language and expertise in discussing issues such as use of the land and protection of the language.⁷ The fact that these people have come together to help create a direction for the future of Mi'kmawey Debert and to act as ambassadors for the initiative in their communities provides strength within the Mi'kmaw communities and provides a credibility among non-Natives due to their strong credentials in law, education, governance and traditional knowledge.⁸

4.3 The Importance of Deciding How the Story should be Told

Mi'kmawey Debert was developed to be an organization that would tell the story of the First People in a way that was respectful to and reflective of the people whose ancestors had lived in Nova Scotia for millennia. At times, this approach led to disagreement between the scientific theories based around

⁶ "Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting with our Past". (Millbrook First Nation: Fall 2004), p. 5.

⁷ Comments from Mi'kmawey Debert Conference, Group F, (Debert: March 21 – 22, 1999).

⁸ Discussions with Mi'kmawey Debert Board of Directors and government representatives 2002 – 2004.

archaeology and anthropology and the traditional knowledge held by the Mi'kmaq. Through ongoing meetings planning the future of the Cultural Centre, the Elders, the Board of Directors and members of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team reiterated that while they respect the science behind researching the site, they also respect and value the traditional knowledge passed down over generations. Mi'kmawey Debert will become a blending of the two.

This dichotomy was emphasized during the first international conference held to discuss the future of the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative. The conference, developed by Elaine Jeffery, was sponsored by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq with the support of funding from INAC. It brought together First Nation and non-Native people from across Canada. It included those with expertise in museum development; interpretation; building partnerships between communities and government; officials from all levels of government and community members. The conference was divided into workshops for discussion regarding how the project should progress and what points were particularly important for cultural, economic and environmental sustainability.

Participants acknowledged that since the future direction had not yet been set, it was difficult to determine specific steps in development, however, general principles could be outlined. For example, it would be important to mediate the impacts of tourism against the values and traditions of the Mi'kmaq and it would be important that all Mi'kmaq, especially youth feel ownership of the place.⁹ Mi'kmawey Debert must be respectful to the Mi'kmaw people showing an

⁹ Mi'kmawey Debert Conference Notes, (Debert: March 21 – 22, 1999).

understanding of the customs of the Mi'kmaq and an acknowledgement of the relationship between the past and the present.¹⁰ As a Cultural Centre, Mi'kmawey Debert can offer a venue to invite non-Natives into the village. If the story is told with sensitivity to the culture of the Mi'kmaq, it can tell of where the Mi'kmaq began and where they are today. It can complete the circle.¹¹

Donald Julien explained to the Mi'kmawey Debert Team that many people do not appreciate how oral histories truly work. The Mi'kmaw language is so rich and so based on using descriptions that when you hear an Elder tell a story, you can “see” what they are saying. You can't do that in the same way with the written word. This concept was expanded upon by Ken Paul, a Mi'kmaq Policy Advisor with Parks Canada. Paul said that he remembers Elders telling him stories as a child. The same stories would be told over and over. Eventually the children would learn the stories and would also learn the actions and expressions that accompanied the tales. This mimicry is also passed on with the oral histories and supplements the language to tell a story more rounded than that which is written.¹²

One of the discussion groups at the Conference indicated that human and professional development, as well as building the capacity of First Nation people to run the centre, were major goals of the project and not just things that need to be considered. As Mi'kmawey Debert progresses, it can offer a vision for the

¹⁰ Comments from Group C, Mi'kmawey Debert Conference, (Debert: March 21 – 22, 1999).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² Ken Paul, “Ways of Knowing”.

future to Mi'kmaq youth.¹³ The Mi'kmaq have been in Nova Scotia for a long time without the tools to validate the importance of their use of the land and the significance of their people outside the oral histories that have not always been acknowledged in academic and government circles. Mi'kmawey Debert can be one means to research and tell the stories of the Mi'kmaq connection to the land. It can help rebuild the pride in nation and culture for the next generation. While activities at Debert today cannot bring back the physical world of the First People, it can re-establish the spirituality of the space.¹⁴ Mi'kmawey Debert can introduce visitors to new ways of knowing.¹⁵

4.4 The Importance of Sharing

One important early decision was that Mi'kmawey Debert would be developed on traditional land, not land that had been set aside as a reserve by the federal government of Canada. The reserve system was formalized in the mid-nineteenth century. Prior to this, the Mi'kmaq had lived all across Nova Scotia through the thousands of years before Europeans arrived on the shores of North America and for an additional two hundred years after colonists arrived. The reserves created artificial boundaries that restricted the movement of these traditionally nomadic people.

¹³ Comments from Group J, Mi'kmawey Debert Conference, (Debert: March 21 – 22, 1999).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ Comment from Group B, Mi'kmawey Debert Conference, (Debert: March 21 – 22, 1999).

Debert is not a reserve site. The plan is that the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will be developed where the ancestors hunted and worked, not within some artificial boundary away from the site. Since this is Crown land owned by the Province of Nova Scotia and under restrictive legislation – National Historic Site and Special Places Protection Act – negotiations are taking place between The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, the federal and the provincial governments to arrange access to the land. These negotiations are long and involved. At the time of this writing, the development of a Land Management Plan is not complete. Discussions are still in process so will not be referenced further in this paper as it would be inappropriate to comment before decisions are made.

While the work around developing the legal entity that was to become Mi'kmawey Debert was taking place, initial attempts to research programming and to educate Nova Scotians about Mi'kmawey Debert were underway. The Board of Directors decided that one place where they could provide wide exposure to open minds would be to develop an instructional package and have Mi'kmaw representatives visit the elementary schools. Visiting the schools would accomplish several aims. It would allow the Cross Cultural Facilitators to develop presentations that would entertain and inform students and teachers. They would be able to provide information about Mi'kmaw people and their heritage to youngsters before ideas around discrimination and difference could become too ingrained. And, they could test delivery methods for passing on

information that would provide background for the Cultural Centre once it began to develop its programming.

In April 2001, April Hiltz and Janice Sack were hired with support from INAC to develop an educational program that would take the story of Mi'kmawey Debert and of Mi'kmaw culture and heritage into the elementary schools on mainland Nova Scotia. Hiltz and Sack worked with the research department at CMM and with members of The Confederacy staff to create presentations that were interactive and fun for the students. From 2001 until 2004, they visited over 34,000 students from grades Primary to Nine. Through their efforts, many children learned more about the Mi'kmaq of yesterday and today. Through openness, crafts and humour the Cross Cultural Facilitators were able to lead the children to a new understanding of the Mi'kmaw culture.¹⁶

Over time the role of these two Facilitators continued to evolve so that they were providing input to the development plans for Mi'kmawey Debert. They discussed the best ways to offer programming, what worked for different age groups to hold visitors' interest and what would be reasonable staffing requirements to deal with the projected numbers coming to the Cultural Centre. This was the next step in developing Mi'kmaw capacity to maintain the Cultural Centre once it becomes a reality.

Leah Rosenmeier acts as the interpretive support specialist for the Cross Cultural Facilitators and also fulfills the secretariat role for the Elders' Advisory Council. Rosenmeier joined the Mi'kmawey Debert Team from the Robert S.

¹⁶ Cross Cultural Training Records, The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, (Millbrook First Nation: 2002 – 2004).

Peabody Museum of Archaeology in Andover. Her extensive background in archaeology, anthropology and museum structure provides guidance in the technical aspects of developing the Cultural Centre concepts. She has been a key driver in translating the Elders' dreams and ideas for Mi'kmawey Debert into the Programmatic Statement that will guide the development of the Cultural Centre.

Early in the development process, it was determined that while the Mi'kmaq were willing and happy to share their story, they would not sell their culture. The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will be a place where Mi'kmaq can feel at home and where those who visit might be educated about the history and culture of a proud, sophisticated people while reflecting on how the First People were much like themselves in many ways, even though they lived in a different time.

4.5 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert in Mi'kmaw History and Culture

"As Mi'kmaq, we are descended from the people who have come before us in Mi'kma'ki."¹⁷

Statement by the Elders' Advisory Council

It is difficult to imagine 12,000 years of history. It is awesome to think that the history of your People, L'nu'k, reaches back through millennia. For many generations, the Mi'kmaq lived in Nova Scotia enjoying the gifts of Mother Earth as they moved around the province following the seasonal rounds of hunting, fishing and gathering. They gained all they needed to survive, make tools, craft

¹⁷ *Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting with Our Past*, p. 5.

their clothing and shelters and feed their families from the land. When Europeans came to the new world, the Mi'kmaq (and other First Nation peoples in other parts of the country) helped the newcomers survive those first winters.

Within a relatively short time, those who came from far away started to imprint their lifestyles on the land. They began "clearing the forest and civilizing the wilderness"¹⁸. The new settlers to North America initially shared the land with the Indians but as farms and villages developed, often along the same waterways traditionally used by the Mi'kmaq, "the landscape . . . was so transformed that the Indians' earlier way of interacting with their environment became impossible".¹⁹ The Mi'kmaq no longer had free access to the land that had been theirs through all memory. William Cronon pointed out in his book Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England that Europeans believed that if they settled and worked the land, they were entitled to own that land as a result of their labours. If the 'Indians' were not interested in working the land, they deserved not to have access to the resources and the benefits.²⁰ Cronon also discusses comments by Marshall Sahlins who proposed, "Wants may be 'easily satisfied' either by producing much or desiring little." While the Europeans tended toward the first viewpoint, the Mi'kmaq and most indigenous peoples of the world tended to the second.²¹

¹⁸ William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists and the Ecology of New England*. Hill and Wang, (New York: 1983), p. 5.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

²¹ Thomas Morton, quoted in Cronon, 1983, p. 80.

Mi'kmawey Debert can offer the venue to tell about the way the Mi'kmaq lived before the advent of the European settlers to North America. There is the opportunity to discuss traditional uses of the land and how the animals that were hunted were utilized for food, clothing and tools. The Cultural Centre can explain the complex social and political structures that regulated the lives of people who shared land and resources and how history and traditions were passed on from one generation to the next through stories and legends. The stories of the Aboriginal people were not carried forward by the new settlers to the land. The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will help share those stories so that Mi'kmaq and non-Natives of today can learn about the lives of the First People of the past and of the Mi'kmaq of today.

Some written histories of the Mi'kmaq are available in papers of the early Jesuit priests as well as the early French and British settlers and military leaders. These sources were not always accurate from the perspective of the First Nations. Letters to colonial governors and trading companies contained the biases of those penning the words. The European experience, naturally enough, coloured the perspectives of these early writers. Those the Europeans saw as savages were rather a people with highly developed political, social and religious structures. Since the Mi'kmaw way was different, it was not recognized by many of the early settlers and governments. Since the traditional Mi'kmaw land was needed to provide space for more people to settle, the heritage of the Native peoples was brushed aside and the land taken by the newcomers. This did not change through the next four centuries following the arrival of the Europeans. It

was still not changing during the last century to any great degree, as even reserve lands were often not protected from non-Mi'kmaq intervention.²²

4. 6 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert in Education and Learning

Sister Dorothy Moore explained that, "In school, I did not learn about my people. There was no mention that the Mi'kmaq were the first people to live on this land."²³ As a highly respected Elder, Sister Dorothy has dedicated her life to education. She is committed to seeing all Mi'kmaq people learn about their history, culture and language.

While professional historians make every effort to interpret the past even-handedly, in the schools where Mi'kmaw and non-Native children obtained their education the amount of curriculum based on the Mi'kmaq was very limited. The Mi'kmaq grew up thinking their people were not valued by the non-Native society and in that situation; it is difficult to value yourself. A national study conducted in 2002, indicated that the educational system still has a long way to go in providing enlightenment to youth across Canada about its First Nations peoples. Of the 519 first-year college and university students tested, two thirds could not remember discussing Native issues in elementary or high school. Eighty percent said they didn't learn enough about Aboriginal peoples to equip them to be responsible citizens.²⁴ If the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre can link its

²² Interview with Donald Julien, Chair, Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, Millbrook First Nation, January 28, 2005.

²³ Interview with Sister Dorothy Moore, (Millbrook First Nation: January 27, 2005).

²⁴ *Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting with Our Past*. p. 10.

programming to the provincial curriculum and can begin to address this lack of knowledge among non-Native peoples, then its importance would be assured. But, it offers so much more.

Mi'kmawey Debert offers a way to foster the rebirth of cultural pride and to honour feelings that will help new generations of Mi'kmaw youth move forward beyond welfare and dependence and into leadership positions within both the Native and non-Native communities. In support of this aim, the Mi'kmawey Debert Team is building strong links with the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey. This is a learning project for Mi'kmaw youth funded through the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

The Traditional Ways Project is an intergenerational Mi'kmaq summer camp for natural science, culture, and healing. The project strives to counteract the sense of powerlessness and loss of cultural identity which have haunted the survivors of the residential school, and to redirect the ongoing impact of cultural invalidation upon Mi'kmaq youth. The project aims to empower residential school survivors to help restore the balance for others, to increase youth awareness of the place of Mi'kmaq traditions in the realm of natural science, and to catalyze ongoing bonding in the relationship between Mi'kmaq youth and Elders.²⁵

This type of initiative is a natural link to the values of Mi'kmawey Debert. It supports the steps forward needed to help strengthen the skills and abilities of the Mi'kmaq into modern society.

²⁵ Aboriginal Healing Foundation web site. Copyright 1999 – 2005, Aboriginal Healing Foundation. http://www.ahf.ca/fp/e_pull_project.php?id=432.00®ion=Nova%20Scotia

Mi'kmawey Debert can also provide a venue to link Mi'kmaw youth to the new technology available through the world of computers. Projects like 'GrassRoots' provide opportunities for children in grades from Primary to Twelve to learn to access and utilize the internet.²⁶ The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq is already well advanced in its FirstNet project that began through the Smart Communities initiative of Industry Canada. The author worked with Jim Hepworth and other members of EDON in 2005 to submit the original proposal for FirstNet to Industry Canada. When the proposal was not accepted as the winner among other applications from Nova Scotia, the Confederacy continued work on its own to develop this important project. Mi'kmawey Debert can provide support to both The Confederacy and the youth by incorporating the ability for Mi'kmaq to access information about their history and Cultural Centre programs through the use of technology. This is just one more example of how Mi'kmawey Debert can link the history of the Mi'kmaq of yesterday to the modern world of today.

When asked about the importance of placing Mi'kmawey Debert near the ancient archaeological sites at Debert, Sister Dorothy responded as follows:

When the Elders' Advisory Council first met, Don [Julien] took us out to Debert. When I stood on that land, I had shivers go through me. I felt a connection right away. I was connected to it. . . . It was a combination of being on the land and the intellectual knowledge of the

²⁶ Industry Canada web site Updated 2003-01-28
<http://www.schoolnet.ca/grassroots/e/home/about/index.asp>

history of our ancestors. . . . Our ancestors, whoever they were, their spirits were right there. The shivers were right through me. I've come home.²⁷

4.7 The Importance of Sharing the Mi'kmaw Culture and Educating Visitors

The Mi'kmawey Debert Elders, working with the staff and Board of Directors of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre have developed three main themes for the interpretive components of the Cultural Centre. These are: 'Sharing Our Stories', 'Protecting Our Past' and 'Exploring Our Histories'. Each of these components has been developed to focus on one major aspect of Mi'kmaw history and culture.

Through ***Sharing Our Stories***, visitors to the Cultural Centre will be invited to learn more about the First People to live in Nova Scotia and also about the link the Mi'kmaq of today feel toward their ancestors. As stated by Theresa Isaac Julien, "I am, my people were and I will be".²⁸ The Elders working on the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative believe their ancestors have lived in Nova Scotia for almost 12,000 years and they wish to share this story with other members of the Mi'kmaw community, students, teachers, scientific professionals and with other visitors to Mi'kmawey Debert. This portion of the interpretation will demonstrate that the Mi'kmaw link to the land has been continuous for millennia and that the people have a right to be proud of their long and distinguished history.

²⁷ Interview with Sister Dorothy Moore, January 27, 2005.

²⁸ *Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting With Our Past*, p. 7.

Through ***Protecting Our Past*** issues that led to the passion for protecting the site initially come into focus. So much damage has already been done. To prevent further damage, the Mi'kmaq should have control of the land and the authority to stop future disturbances on the site. They must have the ability to protect the past and develop ways to preserve traditional knowledge. Mi'kmawey Debert can provide opportunities to initiate discussion regarding the history of the Mi'kmaq over millennia and to foster pride in the coming generations. This protection is critical not only at Debert, but all over Nova Scotia where Mi'kmaw sites are being damaged by man and nature.²⁹

There have been a number of agreements and pieces of legislation that can assist the Mi'kmaq in protecting their history such as the following:

- ✓ the declaration of Debert as a National Historic Site,³⁰
- ✓ the enactment of the Nova Scotia Special Places Protection Act,³¹
- ✓ the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Mi'kmaq Grand Council, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs, the Nova Scotia Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and Parks Canada,³²

²⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 13 – 17.

³⁰ Parks Canada Web Site Updated 2005-02-22 http://www.pc.gc.ca/apps/lhn-hs/det_E.asp?qSID=0266&oqName=Debert+Palaeo%2DIndian+Site&oqfName=Site+pal%E9o+autochtone+Debert

³¹ Nova Scotia Museum Web Site Updated 1996
<http://museum.gov.ns.ca/places/debert/debert.htm>

³² Memorandum of Understanding between the Mi'kmaq Sante' Mawio'mi, the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs, the Nova Scotia Museum, the Canadian Museum of Civilization and Parks Canada, (Halifax: December 1, 1999).

- ✓ the Commemorative Integrity Statement from Parks Canada,³³ (even recognizing its limitations in not acknowledging the connection between the First People and the Mi'kmaq of today), and
- ✓ the document currently under development that will become a Management Plan for the Debert/Belmont Archaeological Sites between the Province of Nova Scotia under the direction of the Nova Scotia Museum and The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.³⁴

All of these documents encourage cooperation between the three levels of government. Through the development of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre even to its current level in 2006, this cooperation is solidifying. As important, the documents designed to offer protection, although they were largely ignored for the past twenty plus years, are now being examined to determine how the parties should move forward together. David Christianson of the Nova Scotia Museum and Rob Ferguson of Parks Canada agree that through the increased awareness of the importance of the sites and through the formalization of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre as a legal entity, the Mi'kmaq have progressed in the protection of the Debert/Belmont sites and this has led to government organizations also re-evaluating the significance of other historic, pre-contact sites around Nova Scotia. As Mi'kmawey Debert continues to grow, it will provide the resources and expertise to support any of the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq

³³ Commemorative Integrity Statement, Parks Canada, (Ottawa: March 2003).

³⁴ Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Board of Directors, 2005.

Bands wishing assistance in creating their own facilities or in repatriating Mi'kmaq artifacts from around the world.

Daniel Paul, a Mi'kmaw historian and author, addressed the Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia (TIANS) in November 2003 as the Key Note Speaker at their annual Tourism Conference. He told the audience that the Mi'kmaq were the first tourism operators in Canada. They traded goods to early fishermen and explorers that have since travelled to all parts of the world. The Elders' Advisory Council is committed to assisting communities across Nova Scotia and even other First Nation communities to regain their artifacts. As opportunities arise to repatriate more of these articles, Mi'kmawey Debert can be there to help.

Another important role that can be assisted by Mi'kmawey Debert is the need to protect the intellectual property held within the Mi'kmaw collective memory. Many scholars are undertaking research regarding Mi'kmaw history and culture. The knowledge gleaned during the course of this research must be retained under the intellectual property of the Mi'kmaq Nation and accessed through ethical research practices. The Mi'kmaq Sante' Mawio'mi (Grand Council) developed Mi'kmaq Research Principles and Protocols to assist in this endeavour. The Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch operated through the Mi'kmaq Studies program at Cape Breton University holds the responsibility of reviewing proposed research and giving or withholding consent to undertake studies. The research principles and protocols will protect the integrity and cultural knowledge of the Mi'kmaq. These principles and protocols are intended to guide research and

studies in a manner that would guarantee that the right of ownership rests with the various Mi'kmaw communities.³⁵

The Mi'kmaq research principles and protocols committee developed standards so that Mi'kmaw people might be informed of research being undertaken regarding their people, their land and their heritage. It is important to know what benefits and costs are involved and where benefits will be granted. In the past, researchers have come into many Mi'kmaw (and other First Nation) communities and requested information on a variety of topics. Generously people shared information sometimes freely and sometimes for minimal compensation only to discover later that the information had been used and even patented by the researchers. Eric Zscheile, Legal Council for The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, explained in 2003 when this situation was discussed with the EAC that some of the most lucrative examples of this practice related to information regarding herbal medicines. On occasion, this information was converted into modern medications and sold on the open market with no recognition or percentage of the profit going to the people who had carried the information through generations.

The Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch will help ensure that the Mi'kmaq are treated fairly and ethically in their participation in any research and have an opportunity to benefit from research conducted. The guidelines used by the Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch were established because the Mi'kmaq contend they are the best guardians and interpreters of their culture. The Mi'kmaq link their knowledge,

³⁵ Cape Breton University Web Site Mi'kmaw Research Principles and Protocols, Santé Mawio'Mi'kma'ki. Updated 1999. <http://mrc.uccb.ns.ca/prinpro.html>

culture, and arts to their traditional lands and heritage. They, therefore, have the right and obligation to exercise control to protect their cultural and intellectual properties and knowledge. Following with the traditional values of the Mi'kmaq, the people believe that knowledge is collectively owned and must be collectively guarded so that the Mi'kmaq maintain intellectual property rights over their own community knowledge. As the philosophy of Mi'kmawey Debert from the beginning of its development has been that the knowledge gained through researching the Debert/Belmont sites and all other research projects will belong to all Mi'kmaq, this supports the aims of the Ethics Watch.

Through *Exploring Our Histories*, the Mi'kmaq hope to support research and learning about the Mi'kma'ki of the distant past - the time when the First People lived in Nova Scotia taking advantage of all the resources offered by Mother Earth. To understand more of how the First People utilized the land, it is important to meld modern sciences with traditional learning. Work has been done by many of the scientists who have been involved with Debert since the MacDonald excavation as well as others who have been attracted to the sites. Their combined expertise is providing information that is linking clues relating the soils, with ice movement, with weather trends and with the plants and animals that shared the land. The Elders are beginning to research how the traditional knowledge compares to what they are learning about the stories told in science.

As the staff at the Cultural Centre learn more about the First People and about the loci at Debert, they will share information through the exhibits in Mi'kmawey Debert. They will also share information with Mi'kmaw communities

for their interpretive centres and with museums across the province that now have only minimal information regarding the Mi'kmaq. Conducting research using ethical processes and sharing information to enhance understanding by creating exhibits and interpreting stories will round out the three major program areas for the Cultural Centre.³⁶

4.8 The Importance of Archaeology at Mi'kmawey Debert

An important aspect of Mi'kmawey Debert for the planning team is to gather more knowledge about the early peoples. There is already a significant body of archaeological material available. While undertaking further excavations may happen one day, there is already a wealth of material that still needs additional analysis. Over 5,000 artifacts have been removed from the Debert/Belmont sites. Artifacts found by E.S. Eaton, George MacDonald, Stephen Davis and other smaller finds related to investigating and protecting the sites are held primarily in the Canadian Museum of Civilization. A few hundred artifacts are located in the Robert S. Peabody Museum of Archaeology; several dozen are located at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History and The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq holds less than ten.³⁷

Once a secure facility with appropriate climate and security controls is available, most of these artifacts are expected to be repatriated to the Mi'kmaq

³⁶ *Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting With Our Past*, pp. 18 – 21.

³⁷ Mi'kmawey Debert records, The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, 2005.

Nation. The Nova Scotia Museum has already made this commitment.³⁸ The possibility has been discussed with the Canadian Museum of Civilization during meetings with David Keenlyside and Stephen Augustine in 2002, although no commitment has yet been requested or received. The Mi'kmaq determined it would be better to move forward with the Cultural Centre and formalize their request to the Canadian Museum of Civilization once they were approaching the time when a proper facility would be available.

Having the artifacts in Nova Scotia, in a Mi'kmaw facility would provide an exciting opportunity for study by Native and non-Native researchers alike. There are scientific techniques that could be employed to learn more about those First People even using only the evidence of the existing stone tools. The way the tools were made and the techniques used can tell more about the expertise of the toolmakers. It already appears that highly-skilled artisans made some of the tools, while other tools were rougher in form indicating they were not made by someone skilled in the trade. Would this point toward a learner new to the skill, or perhaps a member of the community making a simple repair to an existing tool that had been chipped or broken? Blood residue on some of the points could be tested. If frequency of the samples showed the blood came most often from a mastodon, a caribou or a rabbit, it could give indications of the prey favoured by the First People. As this knowledge base grows and more is learned about the First People to live in Nova Scotia, more of the history of the Mi'kmaq will be

³⁸ David Christianson, Provincial Archaeologist, Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History, (Halifax: 2003).

revealed and more of the sense of where they came from will become a part of the Mi'kmaw identity.³⁹

4.9 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert to the Mi'kmaw Language

Many Mi'kmaq have lost the ability to speak their language. The majority of Mi'kmaw speakers currently reside in the communities located on Cape Breton Island. Many of those who still have a strong command of Mi'kmaq are older and remember speaking Mi'kmaq at home with their parents. While many of those on the mainland have some words in Mi'kmaq, few are fluent.⁴⁰ The reason that so many more mainland Mi'kmaq have lost their language is that many children from 1929 to 1965 were taken from their homes around mainland Nova Scotia and sent to the Residential School in Shubenacadie.

At the School, children were forbidden to speak their native language. The parents were told that, speaking Mi'kmaw was not permitted in the school because it held children back in the classroom in reading, pronouncing and writing English."⁴¹ Since many children spent seven or eight years at the school and were not permitted to speak Mi'kmaw under pain of severe punishment, it was not uncommon to have children return home unable to converse with their grandparents and even their parents.

³⁹ Interview with Stephen Davis, February 2005.

⁴⁰ Interview with Sister Dorothy Moore, February 27, 2005.

⁴¹ Isabelle Knockwood, *Out of the Depths*, p. 26.

The most enduring and unyielding law was the one that forbade the speaking of Mi'kmaw even during play. . . Mi'kmaw was the only language understood by nearly all the students when they first came to school. . . By the time they were discharged, most of the students had lost their language.⁴²

Language is a cornerstone of culture. By losing their language, Mi'kmaw children lost so much more than just a way of conversation. They lost part of their identity. When people stop using words in their own language to describe a familiar item, they gradually lose the descriptive understanding of that item. For example, a medicinal plant may be described by the colour, the shape of its leaves and when it can be found or its healing properties. By losing that descriptive understanding, gradually people lose the ability to find the plant. As they stop using the plant they cannot find, gradually its uses recede from memory. In a very short period of time, the accumulated knowledge regarding that plant that took thousands of years to grow can disappear.

In an effort to try and regain more of their culture and language, the Mi'kmaq are making efforts to reintroduce the language. "The Mi'kmaw/Miigmao community recognizes the need to reclaim and strengthen its language – in homes, in communities and in schools. It is only through the pervasive use of the language that it will continue to live . . . The uniqueness of a culture's world view is explored through communication in a variety of modes including art, music and literature. The inclusion of Mi'kmaw consciousness and identity as an organizing

⁴² Ibid., p. 96.

strand of the Mi'kmaw/Miigmao worldview . . . Learning experiences and interactions should immerse students in real communication situations, both within the classroom and in broader contexts."⁴³

Sister Dorothy Moore stated that keeping the Mi'kmaw language alive was critical to maintaining the identity of the Mi'kmaq as a people. She hopes that Debert can help perpetuate a real story of real people in the past in Canada.

If Debert can be a vehicle in the preservation of our language, it will have accomplished a lot. We talk about how critical it is to protect our language and who we are as a people. The language has to be a key. People who don't have the language realize there is a big part missing in their life. If you don't have the language, how do you express yourself as a Mi'kmaq?⁴⁴

While training in Mi'kmaw community schools and through Mi'kmaw organizations is a good step, Sister Dorothy believes the language has to be in the home to be maintained. "Perhaps we could develop a program where an Elder adopts a family and goes into the home to spend a few hours each week with the whole family."⁴⁵

As part of this drive to protect the language, Sister Dorothy believes that those who work at the Cultural Centre, once it opens its doors, should all be able to speak their language. There may have to be language classes to help prepare

⁴³ *Mi'kmawey Debert: Connecting with our Past*, p. 8.

⁴⁴ Interview with Sister Dorothy Moore, February 2005.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

those who welcome guests to the Cultural Centre, the visitor guides and all other staff from the administrators to the cleaners, but the language must be alive and heard throughout the facility.

Perhaps Debert can be the language centre to ensure the language is preserved. One of the requirements to work at Debert should be that you have to be bi-lingual. I hope the soul, the spirit of Debert, is the language. Everything else spreads out from that like the spokes of a wheel: the culture, the history, the storytelling – they all come from the language.⁴⁶

Donald Julien confirmed Sister Dorothy's feelings about the importance of language when he talked about how oral histories can be used to interpret the stories of the First People to live in Nova Scotia. He said,

It can be difficult to know what is accurate when you hear the legends and oral histories passed down in English. But, Mi'kmaq is so descriptive a language that when you hear the stories told in the language, you can sense the words and see how things happened. Then it is easier to see what the stories are really telling.⁴⁷

Strengthening the language and using it to interpret the histories to those who speak the language will help make those stories real. Having the knowledge to transcribe the stories as accurately as possible will also help bring the tales alive for non-Mi'kmaq speaking visitors to Mi'kmawey Debert.

⁴⁶ Interview with Sister Dorothy Moore, February 2005.

⁴⁷ Interview with Donald Julien, February 2005.

“Remember brothers and sisters: The greater part of our spirituality is embedded in our language. That is why it was attacked with such vigour.”⁴⁸

4.10 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert to Mi'kmaw Tourism

Mi'kmaw tourism is growing. It is becoming an engine leading economic development for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Recently, Cultural Centres have been developed in Wagmatcook and Bear River First Nations. These Bands have been leaders in visualizing means to share their culture as well as bringing employment and income into their communities. While these two centres were being created, the Economic Development Officers' Network (EDON) commissioned a study to investigate other possible tourism opportunities across Nova Scotia. The study, which evolved into a strategic plan, was completed in May of 2002. One of the key findings in the study was that while tourism is a significant part of Nova Scotia's economy coming second only to forestry in revenue generation, the Mi'kmaq have barely begun to take advantage of the opportunity which tourism development presents.⁴⁹

It is curious that there have been so few efforts to encourage First Nation tourism in Nova Scotia. Studies have indicated a strong interest in Canada, the United States and Europe regarding all types of Aboriginal tourism. The Aboriginal Tourism Canada Strategic Plan 2003, 'Growing Canada's Aboriginal

⁴⁸ Bernie Francis, *Out of the Depths*, opening statement.

⁴⁹ *Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Tourism Strategic Plan*, Atlantic Community Economic Development Institute (Halifax: 2002), p. 3.

Tourism' stated that, "In 2001, international travelers brought \$13.1 billion into the Canadian economy, while Canadians traveling within the country injected \$17.2 billion." ⁵⁰

The Bands in Wagmatcook and Bear River First Nations funded their projects primarily with support from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. Other departments, who have a mandate for economic and tourism development did not demonstrate any significant interest in supporting Mi'kmaw tourism-based initiatives until just the past few years. Part of this lack of interest stems from the fact that the Mi'kmaq themselves had not yet created tourism products to market. Lacking the expertise and background in this field, it has been an uphill struggle to find their way through the many complications of determining what types of products would be appropriate – not only to visitors but for the communities. Mi'kmawey Debert is playing a significant role in assisting the economic development arms of various Bands to gain more understanding of how to move these projects forward.

An effort from the provincial Department of Tourism and Culture in recent years has assisted Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq in gaining a perspective regarding how other Bands across the country have initiated tourism products in their communities. The Aboriginal Tourism Best Practices Missions have allowed several people from across the province, and from across Canada to participate in visits to established Aboriginal tourism sites. Mi'kmawey Debert is also breaking new ground in moving from the traditional stories museum visitors

⁶⁶ *The Aboriginal Tourism Canada Strategic Plan 2003, Growing Canada's Aboriginal Tourism*, Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada, (Ottawa: 2003), p. 3.

expect to see dealing with historic life among First Nations peoples in post-contact times. The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will look back to the very first part of human occupation on the Eastern Seaboard of North America.

As Mi'kmawey Debert continues to develop and ultimately becomes a Centre offering cultural programming for Mi'kmaq, other First Nation people and non-Natives, it will increase the tourism aspect of its profile. Tourism is a growing element of employment in many areas of the world. Consistently in Canada from 1996 to 2003, approximately 28 percent of employment can be directly related to tourism-based activities in rural areas of the country. This number is as high as 54 percent in urban areas.⁵¹ In fact, on a percentage basis, all four Atlantic Provinces led the country in tourism employment growth surpassing overall employment growth.⁵² This situation offers tremendous potential for future Mi'kmaw employment opportunities.

Statistics Canada studies indicate that the growth potential in rural areas of Atlantic Canada is very high. Since little work has been done in the small communities, they have considerable scope for development. The rural communities are also already showing a trend for trying to develop their individual identities for the visitor market.⁵³ This potential would hold true for the many small, rural First Nation communities that have different stories that can be developed for each area. This model supports the concept outlined in the

⁵¹ "Rural and Small Town Canada Analysis Bulletin, Volume 5, Number 8, Catalogue Number 21-006-XIE", Statistics Canada, (Ottawa: 2004), p. 6.

⁵² *Ibid.* p. 8.

⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 12.

Mi'kmaq Tourism Strategic Plan. The impact of creating a venue where many Mi'kmaq can work in their own culture and promote learning about their people could have a tremendous impact on the communities.

One community that is taking advantage of its tourism potential with a non-museum approach is Membertou First Nation. Membertou has recently completed a world-class convention facility within the community. It features a large room for plenary sessions, break-off rooms, an outstanding dining room and a gift shop. The décor is polished and yet there are Mi'kmaq touches throughout the building in features like the eight-pointed star in the lobby and the Mi'kmaq crafts and art in the gift shop. The staff at the centre is almost entirely Mi'kmaq. Gaining skills at the centre on the reserve will help prepare the local Mi'kmaq staff to continue working in the First Nation community or to move into a non-Native venue.

It is reasonable to also relate sustainable environmental development to tourism when looking at the potential clustering of tourism venues in and around Debert as a Tourism Destination Area. In 2005, as has happened during other recent times, gas prices in Nova Scotia escalated dramatically. Tourism operators in Nova Scotia reported that revenues and visitation were down from the previous year and one of the primary reasons given by the traveling public was the price of fuel. While it is true that visitors from outside Nova Scotia bring a huge influx of dollars into the province every year, it is also a fact that local tourism (Atlantic Canada) is a major portion of the market.⁵⁴ Approximately

⁵⁴ Nova Scotia Visitor Information Centre Statistics, 2003, See Appendix D.

thirty-five percent of visitors are from Nova Scotia and an additional ten to fifteen percent are from the rest of Atlantic Canada – comprising almost fifty percent of Nova Scotia's tourists.⁵⁵ Clustering attractions along either a Mi'kmaq or a Pre-history Tourism Trail so that Nova Scotians can visit several sites during a short vacation and use limited gasoline resources can only benefit tourism, the economy and the environment.⁵⁶

An additional draw for the First Nation communities as they develop their tourism initiatives is the opportunity to highlight traditional Mi'kmaw foods. "The food and beverage industry represents the largest share of tourism employment accounting for about one-third across Canada."⁵⁷ Many people have never tasted eel, moose, porcupine or caribou. While people may not want to make these foods part of their everyday diet, often tourists find tasting new foods part of the visitor experience. For a First Nation community to be able to provide information about hunting techniques and how by products of the animals were created and utilized would be an interesting addition to a tourism site. For example, following the concept of the First People that no part of the animal is wasted, the communities could highlight how the meat of a porcupine is eaten in stew while the quills are cleaned and used to make ornamentation on baskets and clothing and the fine bones can be filed and drilled to make needles.

⁵⁵ Nova Scotia Visitor Exit Survey 2004 (Full Report) page 6, Nova Scotia Tourism Culture and Heritage / Tourism Insights Web Page Updated 2005.
<http://www.gov.ns.ca/dtc/pubs/insights/AbsPage.aspx?siteid=1&lang=1&id=6>

⁵⁶ McGhie, E., Batongbacal, J., Newbould, A. Xu, Z., Qin, R. "Debert Eco-Industrial Park: The Road Forward", School for Resource and Environmental Studies, Dalhousie University, (Halifax: April 2005), p 33 – 36.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

4.11 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert to the Environment

Mi'kmaw Elder Albert Marshall, from Eskasoni First Nation, stressed that he believes the Mi'kmaq need to have balance between economics and culture. He said that while it is fine that some groups are striving for economic sustainability, "we cannot forget who we are as Mi'kmaq"⁵⁸.

Mr. Marshall continued by explaining that as the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative progresses, it will deface the natural world. It is necessary to think about how we balance development with the natural world so that when we stand before the Creator we will be able to say that we did not compromise the ability of future generations to live in this world. Human capital is not generally part of economic equations today. If Mi'kmawey Debert is to truly reflect who the Mi'kmaq are as a People, we have to ensure the human capital and the natural world are considered as much as the economics.⁵⁹

Marshall points out an important aspect in the planning of Mi'kmawey Debert. While he is not a member of the Elders' Advisory Council or a member of the Board of Directors of Mi'kmawey Debert, he is a respected Mi'kmaw Elder who is concerned about the betterment of his people. He feels the connection of his people to the land and is committed to hold developments to as high a standard as possible. This commitment to maintaining a high standard of

⁵⁸ Phone conversation with Mr. Albert Marshall, January 21, 2005.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

excellence for the project and for the people that is held by many Elders will help ensure the integrity of the Cultural Centre for all Mi'kmaq.

Mr. Marshall's comments were echoed by remarks made by Ken Paul during a presentation to the Dalhousie University School of Resources and Environmental Studies. Paul explained that while many First Nation people now have hard-core science degrees to explain why certain environmental actions should or should not be taken, the people who practice traditional knowledge say it is not what you know, but what you do and how you do it that is important.⁶⁰ Paul stated that many First Nation communities are willing to work with others from outside the communities and share their knowledge. He also said that while many people are still learning to deal with outside systems, they need to recognize that they are responsible for their decisions and that these decisions will have ramifications for many years.⁶¹ At this point Mi'kmawey Debert still has the option to incorporate the most modern environmental science to support the traditional principles of the Mi'kmaq in creating a facility that will preserve Mother Earth for the generations to come while utilizing her resources today. They can do the things that respect the culture of their people and in the process reap environmental and economic benefits for the Cultural Centre.

One of the principles of the Cultural Centre from the earliest stages of planning was that Mi'kmawey Debert will respect Mother Earth. The Mi'kmaq are concerned with the future of their youth – up to the seventh generation – and of protecting the land, water and air that will provide sustenance for all living

⁶⁰ Ken Paul, "Ways of Knowing".

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

creatures. In this regard, the Colchester Regional Development Agency (CoRDA) is in complete accord with the Mi'kmaq. CoRDA has recently undertaken an environmental study prior to launching new growth plans for the Debert Air Industrial Park, that borders the archaeological sites, as an eco-industrial centre. Issues like using renewable energy sources, cascading energy and maximizing cogeneration are as important for the future sustainability of the Industrial Park as they are for enhanced sustainability and reduced long-term costs for Mi'kmawey Debert. The same principles applied to energy are also applicable to water and waste management. Designing buildings and infrastructure in the old ways is no longer a viable alternative.⁶²

This is a particularly good time to consider all aspects of environmental planning in the construction of a new building. While the government of Canada has not placed the emphasis on protecting the environment that was hoped for by many after signing the initial Kyoto Protocol, the 2005 budget did put an unusually high priority on the environment. The three billion dollars allocated to environmental spending is the largest amount in history to be set aside in Canada for protecting the earth.⁶³ While there has been a change of government and government direction since 2005, the Conservative Government has stressed its commitment to a “made in Canada process” and is supporting protecting the environment in new ways.

⁶² McGhie, E., Batongbacal, J., Newbould, A. Xu, Z., Qin, R., pp. 16 -20.

⁶³ “Grits toward green; Environment gets unusually high priority”. The Chronicle Herald, (Halifax: February 24, 2005), p. 1.

Part of the planning of the Cultural Centre infrastructure needs to be concentrated on environmental considerations. While other First Nation projects may be moving forward without special importance being placed on environmental concerns, Mi'kmawey Debert is presenting itself to the world as a symbol of Mi'kmaw history and culture. To ignore environmental issues would be to ignore an important part of Mi'kmaw culture. Traditional First Nation spirituality believed that everything that cast a shadow had a spirit. These spirits need to be respected and considered to keep the cycles of the earth in balance.⁶⁴ At the beginning, with a clean sheet for planning is when the environmental protections should be incorporated into the facility design.

While the members of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team are not environmental engineers, sufficient background knowledge regarding funding programs is available to put forward a number of suggestions to the planning consultants regarding the direction that should be taken when designing the building. Part of this work was done when Environmental Sustainability Consultant Heather Johannesen and a team of environmental specialists including Frank Cruikshank from Environment Canada presented various options to the Mi'kmawey Debert Board of Directors and staff and a number of potential funding partners in 2002. There are specialists working in Nova Scotia with the knowledge of earth energy, water and solar power, wind power, waste water management, emissions reduction, biomass systems and many other options that can provide the necessary expertise to add to the planning of the building's systems. There is

⁶⁴ Murdena Marshall, "Values, Customs and Traditions of the Mi'kmaq Nation", p. 4.

significant funding available from Environment Canada and from the Department of Natural Resources to assist in the construction of new facilities if protecting the environment and reducing climate change are built into the specifications.

These are not aspects of the Cultural Centre to be ignored. For example, earth energy can reduce energy costs by up to seventy-five percent of fossil fuel energy costs and they provide that reduction every year. The Truro Facility for Women Offenders, just fifteen kilometers from Debert is an excellent example of how earth energy can be employed. Planning the placement of the building relative to the sun; the location of windows and doors to take advantage of ambient breezes; the types of materials to be used in construction and the planting of conifers to provide shade and wind breaks can all impact on energy costs. Since ongoing operating costs are a major concern for any not-for-profit organization, the elimination of a major portion of these costs through energy reduction is a critical issue for sustainability.

There are many simple things that can be incorporated when planning the environmental steps in building the cultural centre facility. Regardless of which site is selected for the eventual construction, the designers need to consider the orientation of the building so that it faces south to provide maximum opportunity to utilize solar power. It is important to ensure that sufficient insulation is placed not only in the ceiling, but in the walls and the floor. Windows that can help regulate temperature can reduce ongoing heating and cooling costs. Placing windows and doors so that the facility can take advantage of ambient wind to

assist with cooling in the summer will reduce ongoing costs. While some parts of the building will need to be climate controlled to protect artifacts, this does not need to apply to all spaces. There are many techniques now available to reduce operating costs if they are implemented at the beginning. Once the building is put in place it is too late to go back and make changes.⁶⁵ Renovations are almost always expensive and sometimes impractical due to costs or impacts of the structure. The time to plan for energy efficiency is now.

There are a number of approaches that are exterior to the facility that can also have long-term impacts on the economic sustainability of the Cultural Centre. It is now possible to have small-scale wind turbines that could provide all or at least part of the remaining power required for the facility. In working with CoRDA, Nova Scotia Business Inc. and the Debert Air Industrial Park, Mi'kmawey Debert could become the leader in adaptive energy options for the area. And, energy is not the only area of environmental concern. In a project of this size, dealing with waste of all types will be a serious concern. What processes can be put in place to minimize the use of solvents for cleaning? What types of washroom facilities can be used such as compostable toilets that will reduce waste emissions and protect the environment? What types of energy saving devices such as lights that turn off if there is no movement in a room or reduced flow water taps in washrooms can be installed? The options are available to make Mi'kmawey Debert not only an environmental leader, but more

⁶⁵ Heather Johannesen, Environmental Sustainability Consultant, (Halifax: 2006).

economically sustainable. But, environmental considerations must be part of the initial plan.

Public Works and Government Services Canada completed a new Government of Canada building in Charlottetown in 2004. This building is a model of environmental efficiency and the federal departments involved - Environment Canada and Public Works are prepared to share this knowledge. Both departments have been contacted by the author. They are supportive of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre initiative and prepared to share the expertise of their departments to assist in the development of the project's environmental plan. When the architects and planners for the new facility begin their preparation drawings, there is considerable support available to take steps that will protect the environment without compromising building design.

For example, Environment Canada has a number of initiatives underway that can be used to support the development of the Mi'kmawey Debert infrastructure. Some of these are outlined below:

Project Title	Acceptable Initiatives	Maximum amount	Submission deadlines
EcoAction Community Funding Program ⁶⁶	* Climate Change - projects reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions * Clean Water - projects diverting and reducing substances that negatively affect water quality and on the	\$100,000 <u>per project</u> (at least 50 percent of the project value must come from other	February 1st & October 1st annually

⁶⁶ Environment Canada web site, Updated 2005/5/16
<http://www.ns.ec.gc.ca/community/funding.html>

	conservation of water resources * Clean Air - projects reducing air emissions that contribute to smog and air toxics issues	than the federal government)	
Technology Early Action Measures (TEAM) ⁶⁷	Supports projects designed to develop technologies that mitigate greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and that sustain economic and social development.	Varies according to proposal	Continuous intake
Renewable Energy Deployment Initiative (REDI) ⁶⁸	Industry clients are eligible for the REDI rebate when they install qualifying heating or biomass systems -solar air or solar water heating systems 25% of project cost -biomass combustion systems 15% of project cost	until Mar. 31, 2006, 10% of project cost Apr. 1, 2006-Mar. 31, 2007)	Ongoing through to March 2007 – being considered for extension
The Renewable Energy Technologies Program ⁶⁹	Provides cost-sharing and technical assistance in support of technology development and field trials. Available to private sector companies, universities, utilities, trade associations, other federal and provincial departments, research institutes and international organizations such as the International Energy Agency.	Varies depending upon program	Ongoing intakes

⁶⁷ Environment Canada Web site, Updated 2004/12/20
http://climatechange.gc.ca/english/team_2004/approach.asp#co

⁶⁸ Natural Resources web site, Updated 2004/4/222005/9/30
<http://www2.nrcan.gc.ca/es/erb/erb/english/View.asp?x=455&oid=1026>

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

While the federal and provincial governments adjust programming regularly to meet changing needs, departments like Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada and a number of others will be offering a range of programs that support the aims of reducing global warming and slowing climate change. The programs currently in place can offer hundreds of thousands of dollars in subsidies in support of new construction, or improvements to existing construction. While these particular programs may change, others will take likely their place. Acquiring substantial financial assistance through this venue will aid in alleviating initial construction costs for the Cultural Centre and will ultimately reduce ongoing operating costs thus easing the requirements for continuous government funding support.⁷⁰ Showcasing how the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre utilized sustainable practices in building a state-of-the-art facility while protecting the traditional principles of the past can also generate another exhibit to entertain and educate visitors to the site.

To investigate the best combination of approaches for the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre, the designers need to take an integrated approach to environmental design. One person's opinion is not enough. To maximize the savings and minimize ongoing operating costs, all aspects of the building need to be considered. While one consultant may be an expert on earth energy, they may have limited knowledge of solar power. While another may be very

⁷⁰ Environment Canada web site, updated 2004/12/20
http://climatechange.gc.ca/english/team_2004/approach.asp#co.

Natural Resources web site, Updated 2006/01/04.
<http://oee.nrcan.gc.ca/english/index.cfm>

knowledgeable regarding waste water treatment, they may not have background information regarding reducing food wastes from the restaurant or paper waste from the administrative section. Creating a design charrette is one way to develop a comprehensive plan that will examine all aspects of sustainability for Mi'kmawey Debert. The charrette is developed prior to a shovel ever being put in the ground. In fact, it would be wise to develop a charrette for both of the proposed sites to see if there are significant differences that could amount to substantial savings.

4.12 The Importance of Mi'kmawey Debert to Employment Development and Capacity Building

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre began with the dream of building a facility where Mi'kmaq could come to this special location and feel it was a place of healing. It would be a place where they could be linked to their ancestors and learn about the history of their people. An important part of what would make Mi'kmawey Debert a welcoming and comfortable place for Mi'kmaq, would be to have it staffed by Mi'kmaw personnel. If this Centre is to offer restful, secure spots where Mi'kmaw visitors feel at home, they need to be surrounded by people who share their culture.

While there is currently a high unemployment rate among many Mi'kmaq living both on and off reserve, there is also the reality that many of those currently unemployed do not have the skills or formal education to move into employment where they would be working with the Mi'kmaq and non-Native public, handling administration and finance, speaking to visitors in the Mi'kmaw

language and working with the scientific community to continue the research and interpretation that will enhance the Centre's program over the coming years. Now, during the planning stages, is when the Board of Directors and staff of Mi'kmawey Debert need to begin working with Mi'kmaw governance organizations to prepare for an all Mi'kmaw staff when the Cultural Centre is preparing to and then ready to open its doors.

The actual construction of the facility may offer an opportunity to provide training and renewed cultural strength to Mi'kmaq who have found themselves in conflict with the law. The Correctional Services of Canada have several programs that offer employability and skills training to offenders in federal custody. One of these programs is in the construction trades. CORCAN operates their employability programs much like a business so offenders become familiar with the requirements of maintaining sustainable employment once they are released from custody. The hope of this program is that there will be fewer occasions of individuals re-offending and returning to prison if they are able to secure employment and take care of their needs without returning to criminal activity.⁷¹

Offenders receive training in the correctional institution and CORCAN may also be able to provide components of the building structure, such as pre-fabricated ceiling joists or custom portions of the building from the workshops staffed by the offenders. It is also possible that offenders who are ready to be

⁷¹ CORCAN Employment Skills Training at Work web site. Updated 2005/5/25
http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/corcan/home_e.shtml
http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/corcan/whatwedo_e.shtml Updated 2005/12/13

released could find employment with construction crews that are building the facility. This would offer an excellent opportunity for Mi'kmaq who have lost their direction to gain exposure to their rich heritage while becoming gainfully employed.

Other training opportunities exist in areas such as textiles, manufacturing and maintenance. Again, offenders who are still within the correctional system could help produce backdrops and material for displays or even build skills toward future employment in the maintenance unit or other areas of the new Cultural Centre. In addition to providing a much needed boost to Mi'kmaq who need assistance re-integrating into society, the materials offered through CORCAN are less expensive than those procured from private contractors thus offering savings to the building portion of the project.

A mixture of work done by private industry and public support to Canadians in need provides a worthwhile social contribution from Mi'kmawey Debert to both the Native and non-native communities. It also provides an excellent link between Mi'kmaw communities and the Restorative Justice Program that helps those who have done harm to make restitution. As Tracy Osmond, a Programs Officer with Corrections Canada said, "What better place to help bring people back to an awareness of their heritage and a pride in themselves than at Mi'kmawey Debert?"⁷²

As the building reaches completion and approaches the time when it is ready to open its doors, it will need to hire staff. Long before this time, an

⁷² *Ibid.* and

Tracy Osmond, Programs Officer, Corrections Canada, (Dartmouth: 2006).

analysis of what positions will be needed is required. While recognizing that the planning for the facility is still underway and features may change, generalizations can be created that will provide the initial information needed for staffing the Cultural Centre. A list of some of the potential positions, duties and the skills or competencies that will be necessary to complete the duties are shown in Appendix E.

Core competencies are the basic skills an individual will need to successfully complete their work. This does not mean a person must necessarily have documentation from a recognized institution of learning. Many may have gained the necessary skill levels through their life experiences. The Prior Learning Assessment model (PLAR) is being used extensively in Nova Scotia and other parts of North America to acknowledge the abilities individuals have acquired outside the school system. It is a process for granting credit in a secondary or post-secondary program through an assessment to determine what you know and can do, no matter where or how you gained your knowledge and skills. While different organizations have various ways of representing the competencies required for their particular activities, many are based on models similar to the compilation of several approaches that will be used in this analysis.

One approach is to have competencies separated into the following general areas: communication skills, having a client focus, being receptive to changing and learning, demonstrating judgement, having a solid knowledge of the organization, expressing initiative, maintaining a positive attitude, utilizing thinking and reasoning skills, ensuring an understanding of the technology used

by the organization, and having the ability to work effectively with others. While most positions require some elements of each of the competencies, those of primary importance to the tasks will be the ones highlighted on the chart in Appendix E.⁷³

Core competencies are those needed by all members of the staff regardless of their position. These include the ability to respond to any general questions regarding the Centre, to work with others and to have a solid understanding of the vision, mandate and goals of the organization. Mi'kmawey Debert would also want all staff to have the basics of integrity, strong standards of conduct, a good work ethic and honesty.

Group competencies are skills that would be common to a number of people performing similar work such as, all interpreters would need to know the story surrounding the artifacts that will be presented to visitors. They would need to have good communication skills and they would have to be able to handle a variety of questions from visitors who were both well and not-so-well intentioned.

Task competencies are those abilities that apply to one particular person's duties. For example, only the maintenance personnel would need detailed knowledge of the cleaning supplies required for each shift and only the person

⁷³ *Suggested Competencies for Effective Leadership in Organizations*. Free Management Library: Copyright 1997–2007, Authenticity Consulting, LLC.
http://www.managementhelp.org/ldr_dev/cmptncy/cmptncy.htm and

Specifying Job and Role Competencies. Free Management Library: Copyright 1997–2007, Authenticity Consulting, LLC.
<http://www.managementhelp.org/staffing/specify/cmptncys/cmptncys.htm> and

Competencies and Preparing for Interview. Lloyds TSB Careers, Copyright Lloyds TBS 2005.
<http://www.lloydstsbjobs.com/competencies.asp>

working on a particular shift would need to be conversant with their schedule for a given period.

While some of the positions noted in Appendix E to staff Mi'kmawey Debert might be phased in and some may be combined, all will likely be required in some combination at some point in the future. The staff of the Cultural Centre will be large and varied. The duties will require a range of skills and knowledge. It is important that the Cultural Centre begin planning for when these positions will need to be filled. They will wish to ensure there are Mi'kmaw individuals with, or acquiring, the skills preparing to fill the various positions now.

Many of the skill sets will likely require post secondary or customized training. While Mi'kmawey Debert does not have the resources to fund this type of developmental training at this point, it can make Mi'kmaw individuals aware of potential employment and give people the opportunity to prepare. Fortunately, preparing for any of the positions mentioned above in Appendix E will develop competencies that will be highly transferable to work in other organizations. If people, particularly unemployed youth, begin to prepare now, they will be in a position to move into jobs at Mi'kmawey Debert when the Centre is ready to open. If all those who prepare are not hired at Mi'kmawey Debert, the skills they will have gained will give them the ability to find sustainable employment in other locations and to polish their skills so that they might eventually move on to work at Mi'kmawey Debert.

An example of the increasing demand for First Nation workers was obvious at the Workforce Connex Conference held in Membertou First Nation in

June of 2006. This conference, sponsored by the Aboriginal Human Resource Sector Council, was a first attempt for Nova Scotia to bring together Mi'kmaw employment agencies and members of the Human Resource Sector Councils. The Sector Councils are not-for-profit organizations comprised of industry members representing the trades and technology fields. Sector Councils are provincial organizations but some also have national branches. At the Workforce Connex conference, organizers from across Canada began building bridges between the employment and hiring organizations. In addition, the participants were given the opportunity to listen to two young people talk about how they had completed their post secondary education and were now employed in excellent positions. These young spokespersons were articulate, intelligent and convincing as they discussed how moving into careers in the trades offered them positive, well paid positions that allowed them to express their creativity and commitment to work. The Tourism Industry Association of Nova Scotia is a Sector Council that focuses on building tourism opportunities and preparing new entrants to assume positions in the industry. They can become a powerful partner for Mi'kmawey Debert. More linkages will be developed at the "Connecting with the Aboriginal Workforce Conference" in November 2006.⁷⁴

Appendix F is a second listing of all the positions noted above. In this chart, the positions are linked to possible training needs and institutions. With this type of background knowledge, individuals wishing future work at Mi'kmawey Debert could be directed into paths that meet their particular interests. Again, it would

⁷⁴ Kelly Liondsay, Aboriginal Human Resource Sector Council and Corrie Robley, Nova Scotia Automobile Sector Council. (Dartmouth: Service Canada, May 2006).

be necessary to ensure people are aware that gaining training is not a guarantee of placement with the Cultural Centre, but that the skills acquired can be used in other areas as well.

Since all positions have not yet been identified, or the particular competencies delineated for each position, this list is only intended to be an example. Also, there are a variety of means for acquiring training both within and outside Nova Scotia. The list does illustrate the variety of skills, however, and the range of potential training alternatives. There is every possibility that Mi'kmaqwey Debert will wish to train many of its own personnel in particular ways to meet their specific needs.

The Nova Scotia Community College has an extensive Customized Training Division led by Charles Frencheville at the Akerley Campus in Dartmouth. The Customized Training group is prepared to work with employers to develop programs that will address specific training needs and to hold courses either at one of their campus locations or off site at an employer's location.⁷⁵ The University of Cape Breton could also be a key partner in developing course material. With their Integrated Science program and the language base in the Faculty of Mi'kmaq Studies, they could help develop and deliver training through on-site or distance means.⁷⁶ Since most Mi'kmaq communities now offer Mi'kmaq Language Training as part of their regular school curriculum, it would be

⁷⁵ Charles Frencheville, Director of Customized Training, (Dartmouth: Nova Scotia Community College, January 2006).

⁷⁶ University of Cape Breton Web site
http://www.capebretonu.ca/capebretonu_main/asp/major_centres_default.asp?id=mikmaq_college_institute and
http://www.capebretonu.ca/capebretonu_main/asp/programs_default.asp?id=integrative_science

a small step to expand these classes to evening or distance training for adults. The ongoing steps of Mi'kmawey Debert to encourage the use of Mi'kmaq within the facility could have a beneficial spin-off across the province.

Depending upon a potential candidate's personal situation, there could be funding available through Band Training Officers, Service Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, Heritage Canada, Tourism Culture and Heritage or the Department of Social Services to attend courses. The development of the courses could be supported through funding from the Department of Education and from several of the organizations listed above.⁷⁷ There are a variety of positions that do not require formal graduation from Grade 12 or a university degree. Choosing to support Mi'kmaw individuals by applying their prior skills or assisting them to attend customized training courses can help move First Nation persons from unwanted unemployment toward becoming more fully participating members of their community.

Mi'kmawey Debert also needs to consider what it can offer on a personal front to those people it hopes to attract. What can it do to encourage people to want to become involved with the organization? Factors like providing an opportunity to work within their own culture and to learn and use their own language could be strong draws to some people. It may not be enough, however, to keep those people with the centre over long periods. Recruiting and training are expensive. Once they have found the people they want to hire, successful organizations create an environment that will encourage those

⁷⁷ Bill Pictou, Employment Officer, (Millbrook First Nation: 2005).

workers to stay for extended periods. A personnel policy that focuses on how people are oriented to the facility, how staff are encouraged to express themselves and seek advancement, and how training is delivered are all strong motivators. The lack of such a policy can be a strong de-motivator. A feeling of self-determination and the ability to use initiative and creativity can often keep personnel involved and committed to an organization even if it does not offer the best salaries in the field.⁷⁸

A strength of the existing Mi'kmawey Debert Team is that it is structured to lead by example. The strengths of the Board of Directors and the Elders in creating a supportive environment and in encouraging staff to take initiative have laid the groundwork for strong, enthusiastic personalities to blend into a constructive team.⁷⁹ Mi'kmawey Debert is not run by a single executive telling its subordinates how to do their jobs. Rather, it is managed by consensus, with the senior members of the Team prepared to provide guidance and discuss ideas until a workable solution is decided.⁸⁰

While it may seem premature to think about succession planning when the initial staff planning has not yet been completed, this is another essential part of any human resource strategy. Succession planning is designed to ensure the continued effective performance of an organization by making provisions for the development and replacement of key people over time. Succession planning

⁷⁸ Aneshenēwe Machítawín, pp. 25 – 26.

⁷⁹ Don Julien, Millbrook First Nation: February 27, 2005.

⁸⁰ Stephen Covey, *Principle-Centred Leadership*, (Toronto: Simon & Schuster, 1984, pp. 119 – 129.

helps an organization determine where it could find replacement staff and if there are training programs that could be developed to prepare existing staff to move into new positions at a more senior level once they have gained a certain level of expertise in their current work. In today's environment of an aging workforce, an aging population, changes in market forces due to global competition, health services reform, and numerous other factors, a successful organization needs to look at where its staff will be in the future, not just where they are today. Succession planning is a process, not just an event. It should be built into all successful human resource plans.⁸¹

This is a complex issue as the organization needs to investigate not only the factors listed above, but also what changes are projected for the organization in the future. If senior staff will originally be older individuals with significant levels of experience to help the Cultural Centre to a strong start, who will replace these persons when they retire? How will new staff be integrated into the organization? What will be the impact of technology? What will be the availability of trained staff to replace those currently hired? There are a number of groups that can assist Mi'kmawey Debert in planning for human resource succession including the community college and universities, the local Regional Development Agency and private consultants.

⁸¹ Presentation by Jennifer O'Quinn, Development Officer, Halifax Regional Development Agency, (Halifax: June 26, 2005).

4.13 The Importance of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail

The first major public initiative of Mi'kmawey Debert was to construct an interpretive trail. The aim of the trail was to provide a venue where people could begin to learn about the history of the First People to live in Nova Scotia and to create a centrepiece for articles, fund raising, communications to other groups and a feeling of getting started.

The first thing to be decided if The Confederacy were going to build a trail was where it should be. The Mi'kmawey Debert Team investigated maps of the area close to the archaeological sites to see if there were properties available. While the Tree Breeding Nursery was considered briefly, the Department of Natural Resources was not anxious to have the public walking through its nursery and the area was not particularly attractive with the seed plantation shaped trees. The author's discussions with Alton Hudson of First Nation Forestry during the winter of 2001 and the spring of 2002 identified one piece of land that seemed ideal: a treed watershed area surrounding Galloping Brook from where it crossed the highway just below the original Debert site to where it linked into McElmon's Pond was generally fairly level, not too wet and accessible for the workers and equipment to create a trail.

This property was owned by Nova Scotia Business Inc. as part of the property it managed at the Debert Air Industrial Park. There had been plans developed in the late 1980s to fill parts of the Industrial Park with residential and commercial complexes. At that time, the watershed area had been considered

for a potential golf course.⁸² The area around the Industrial Park has seen some growth over the years, but nothing approaching the initial plans. The watershed was still vacant and contained a mixture of fifty-year old plantation pines as well as the newer natural reforestation that had taken place over the years. It is a pretty place and would provide a varied geographic environment for a trail to ensure interest for hikers.

Nova Scotia Business Inc. was approached through George Reid at the Department of Economic Development with a proposal that the land be turned over to the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre. Since the Department was still hopeful that the area around Debert would expand its commercial development, it was not prepared to turn over the property – especially at no profit to the Province. The next approach was to request that the Cultural Centre could hold a long-term lease for the watershed area. The lease would be for one dollar and be renegotiated every ten years. While it was not ideal for Mi'kmawey Debert to invest considerable funds and effort in developing a trail on land they did not own, research indicated the land could likely be held for some time. Environmental protection rules are much stricter today than they were twenty-five years ago when the golf course concept was planned. To build a golf course now and have the chemicals flow into an open brook that feeds a provincial game sanctuary was not considered to be a likely occurrence.⁸³

⁸² Interview with George Reid, Nova Scotia Business Inc., (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Economic Development, May 25, 2005).

⁸³ *Ibid.*

With a tentative agreement in place, the next step was to map out exactly where the trail would be located. To accomplish this, the assistance of First Nation Forestry was essential. Bill McKay and Alton Hudson led the research and mapping segment of the work. Both were experienced foresters. They travelled the land, noted types of vegetation and the location of stream crossings. They recorded the high and low elevations that would require bridges, walkways and stairs and then prepared a plan. The trail was designed to cover a distance of 7.5 kilometres. Bill MacKay explained that the exact placement of the trail was determined through GPS (Global Positioning System) mapping so that the land services at Nova Scotia Business Inc. would have a definite understanding of the location of the trail. The idea was to design the trail in two phases. It would have the first phase extending 4.4 kilometres completed in 2003 and then the second phase would be expanded as additional funding became available.

Funding for the trail was acquired in several ways. There was a grant from Indian and Northern Affairs to cover part of the cost. In addition, a fund raising appeal was made to the Primate's World Relief Development Fund (PWRDF) in Toronto. The PWRDF is an agency of the Canadian Anglican Church that supports development, relief, refugees, and justice around the world. While many of the PWRDF projects are funded outside Canada, José Zaraté, Coordinator of the Canadian Development Program: Indigenous Communities of the PWRDF, said he was so impressed by the work being done by the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia that the foundation supported the development of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail over several years. The Fund recognized the efforts to

create a place of healing and learning. Zaraté acknowledge the work of the Mi'kmaq to honour the First People to live in Nova Scotia and the PWRDF desired to support the Mi'kmaq of today as these efforts exemplified the work the Fund was doing to strive for justice and peace and to respect the dignity of every human being.⁸⁴ After extensive discussions with José Zárata, the PWRDF determined that supporting the creation of a Cultural Centre to tell the story of the first indigenous people to live in Nova Scotia was an excellent cause. The first phase of that support would be associated with construction of the trail, while ongoing financial contributions would assist as Mi'kmawey Debert began communicating the story.



Figure 13 A section of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail.

⁸⁴ Primate's World Relief Development Fund web site
<http://www.pwrdf.org/who-we-are/>

Trunks of small trees that were removed to create the trail are used to make railings, steps and small bridges. Any materials that could not be recycled in this way were piled into ravines to provide natural nesting and living sites for small animals and plants. Photo courtesy of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

Two Mi'kmaw foresters, Jim Johnson and Steve (Flash) Julien, were hired by First Nation Forestry to manage the physical construction of the trail. They worked from the summer of 2002 through the winter and into the spring and summer of 2003 to complete the trail. They fought through brush, bugs, snow and ice and created a beautiful walking trail that will be enjoyed for many years. They also covered the trail with wood chip to help solidify the base and create a firm walking surface that would not get muddy or wet during storms. The wood chip was donated by three local lumber companies that supported the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative by transporting truckloads of chip to the trail so that it could be spread.

For Johnson and Julien, the pride in their work was obvious. Steps up hills and bridges over ravines and waterways were built to last. Rather than removing trees to make way for the paths, paths wound around trees. As much as possible, natural products from the forest were used to make railings and sitting areas where walkers could rest and enjoy nature. Scrub that was cleared was piled in depressions to form natural incubator spaces for bugs and small animals.⁸⁵ As the first step toward developing the Cultural Centre, the Interpretive Trail was a quality creation of which the Mi'kmaq could be proud.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*



Figure 14 A sitting area and talking circle along the trail created by using the trunks of fallen trees.

The ground is covered with wood chip donated by local mills. This natural material keeps the ground from getting muddy and will gradually melt back into Mother Earth as the years go by. Picture courtesy of The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission

4.14 Benefits of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail for the Community

Considerable work has been done in Canada and the United States in an attempt to determine the social and economic benefits of building trails. The benefits can be wide spread and can vary considerably. "There is ample evidence that trails not only enable Canadians to live actively in a healthier environment, but also that trails most often economically benefit both adjacent landowners and the local business community. Everyone wins!"⁸⁶

The trail at Debert is already proving to be a positive benefit to the local area. It is difficult to make accurate estimates of the number of trail users if an organization cannot have someone at the trailhead to count visitors over a period

¹¹² "The Economic Benefits of Trails", (Go For Green, An Active Living & Environmental Program, Ottawa: Environment Canada, 2000), p. 1.

of time. Instead, what is often done is to take spot checks at various times of the day and on different days of the week.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Team conducted these checks over the first summer that the trail was open. Even before the finishing touches had been completed, the trail was in daily use. This was especially noticeable around the lunch hour. Many walkers were employed in the Industrial Park and used the trail to get fresh air and exercise in the middle of the day. Local residents, many of them retired, used the trail in the morning. Families and individuals hiked the trail in the late afternoons and early evenings. The trail was used every day. Often on weekends, the parking lot was almost full. This meant that at least twenty people were using the trail at one time.

A rough calculation might determine that 35 people walked the trail Monday through Friday and 100 people walked the trail Saturday and Sunday. That would mean about 375 people hiked the trail each week. Since the weather is excellent for walking from April to November (if you don't mind a few bugs) – a period of eight months – that would be 375×8 or 3,000 people during the spring summer and fall. It was observed that many people also used the trail during the winter as there were cars in the parking lot on nice days, but since the trail was not cleared of snow and was too rugged for cross country skiing; many people stopped walking during the snowy season. Taking these numbers as a base, the physical and healthy impact of 3,000 people walking the trail each year is excellent. And, that was the very first year. Ongoing trail monitoring has indicated that the number of users had grown each year. Since there are no

other trails in the immediate vicinity of Debert and since the most popular physical activity of Canadians is walking – about 84 percent of those surveyed by Go for Green – it is easy to see why the trail is so popular.⁸⁷

Trail users often spend money at local area businesses and with enough new business activity this can translate into new jobs. Since Debert is a small community, there are few service industries so there is not the infrastructure yet to feel the impact of the trail in the immediate area. The closest restaurant is Tim Horton's, about one kilometre down the highway. It could well be that economic impacts are also being felt in Masstown and Truro, but no work has been done as yet to determine these results. Information from other trail areas has demonstrated the value of the trails in their communities. For example, 70 percent of all trail users on the Bruce Trail spent money on non-durable goods during their visit. Of those expenditures, an average of \$60.99 was spent per group. At the Overmountain National Historic Site trail, users spent \$49.05 per person per day on average. Nova Scotian hiking tourists spend about \$210 per day per party of which about \$130 occurs beyond the thirty-minute range of the trail.⁸⁸ None of this spending takes into account the benefits to shoe and clothing businesses that sell the gear wanted by hikers to allow them to enjoy their sport with a maximum of comfort.

Another benefit of trails is to increase the value of adjacent land. This is particularly true for industrial land. "In New Brunswick, the increase in land

⁸⁷ The Economic Benefits of Trails, p. 2.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

values adjacent to the Provincial Trail System equates to an increase in property taxes collect by the Provincial Government of approximately \$100,000 per year based on the purchase price and land improvements to develop the network.”⁸⁹ Obviously, the single trail at Debert has not had results of this scope, but it does demonstrate the impact trails can have on land values.

Since a healthier work force also benefits employers, marketing the Debert Air Industrial Park as having a groomed, walking trail that takes about forty-five minutes to hike is a benefit employers can offer their staff. A healthier workforce means less absenteeism and thus increased productivity for an employer. The health benefits go beyond business, however, and into the general community. Trails are easily accessed and they are generally free of charge – as is the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail. By walking regularly, people improve their overall fitness. This contributes to enhanced physical and psychological fitness. Improved fitness levels are proven to result in major health benefits and a decline in health care costs.⁹⁰ Not only do the individuals who use the trail benefit, but everyone benefits from a reduced need to access medical services and reduced demands on the health care system.

A further social benefit of trails is that they can encourage communities to come together. This can happen on a casual basis as people meet on the trail and stop to chat, thus getting to know their neighbours and others in their

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ *A Market and Economic Rationale for the Development of a Trails System in Halifax Regional Municipality*, (Halifax Regional Development Agency Trails Committee, Halifax: August 1997), p. 3.

community. It can also happen when problems occur and help is needed and offered without asking. Such an occurrence took place shortly before the trail opening. In August of 2003, the signs marking the trail were all in place. The welcoming sign stood just behind the parking lot at the entrance to the trail. One night, at the beginning of November 2003, a young man from the community committed an act of racism and vandalism. Using a heavy tar such as would coat the undercarriage of a car; he scrawled, "WAGON BURNERS" across the welcome sign at the entrance to the trail.

The Confederacy received calls immediately from the community to let them know what had happened. The RCMP were on the scene and discovered there had also been another act of vandalism a few kilometres down the road. The Confederacy was in contact with the firm that built and installed the signs right away. Before the company could even arrange to come up to clean the signs, one of the trail's neighbours from the Industrial Park was on the scene and had the chemicals on hand to clean the sign without damaging the finish. This was an act of neighbours offering their services quickly and without any desire for compensation, to right a wrong. The RCMP caught the perpetrator of the acts of vandalism. The community had banded together to the mutual benefit of all. In discussing the damage to the sign with a reporter from The Daily News, Chief Lawrence Paul confirmed that this was the selfish act of one person. The community was not involved except in trying to rectify the problem. Besides, said Chief Paul, the vandal just showed this young man's personal ignorance – there were no wagon trains in Nova Scotia.

Finally, trails can enhance the tourism experience encouraging more visitors to come to an area. By spending time walking a trail, this lengthens the stay for visitors making it more likely they will stay in the area to purchase a meal or even stay overnight. The Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail has a unique story to tell so it is able to attract visitors interested in learning more about the First Nation experience in Nova Scotia. Even before the Cultural Centre becomes a reality, the trail is paving the way to attracting tourists and acting as a communications vehicle to promote the efforts of the Mi'kmaq in sharing their history and culture with visitors to the area.

The preceding analysis demonstrates that trails can be of significant value to communities. In some communities these benefits have been quite large and immediate. In other communities the benefits have been slower to come and less noticeable. The Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail is one of the second types of trail experience primarily because of the small population and limited number of businesses in the immediate area. As other aspects of the Cultural Centre are developed and as occupation of the Industrial Park continues to grow, all of these results can be expected to grow as well.

5.0 Chapter Five

5.1 The Development of Mi'kmawey Debert from 2000 Onward

“The need to care for and protect the Debert site has been a concern for as long as I can remember”, Donald Julien said.¹ It has been this belief that has driven Julien to encourage the Mi'kmaq Nation to take steps to protect the site. He has also worked to foster academic study of the site and to encourage governments to take action to protect Debert from further depredations and destruction. As stated in the Guiding Principles and Primary Purpose of the Mi'kmawey Debert Programmatic Statement, *“As Mi'kmaq, we are descended from the people who have come before us in Mi'kma'ki. As Mi'kmaq, we respect knowledge of the past and are dedicated to learning more about our people, L'nuk”*.²

Mi'kmawey Debert has goals of sharing the stories of the past and in the process protecting that past while serving the healing and cultural needs of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia today. Many of the cultural and educational aspects of the Centre will provide little income to help maintain the facility. The economic sustainability must come largely from other sources and be incorporated into the initial planning through initiatives such as reducing ongoing operational costs through environmental sustainability. The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre has recognized this in its feasibility study. It recognizes that there are other

¹ Interview with Donald Julien,(Millbrook First Nation: February 27, 2005).

² “Mi'kmawey Debert Programmatic Statement” (Millbrook First Nation: The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, April 2004), p. 6.

avenues that must be considered to help the Cultural Centre achieve cultural, economic and environmental sustainability. A next step will be to investigate some of these ideas in more depth and offer potential means of raising some of the required shortfall between revenues and operating costs.

5.2 Acquiring the land

Two primary sites have been selected as potential locations for the Cultural Centre. Site A, located in the Department of Natural Resources Tree Breeding Nursery, has the advantage of elevation. This would allow visitors to experience the view plain that the First People would have had down the river valleys to watch for the arrival of the caribou.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Team has determined that Site B is located closer to the walking trail and has the advantage of a more treed and natural looking setting although the terrain today does not resemble that of 12,000 years ago. Being close to the trail removes the necessity for people to drive between the Cultural Centre and the trail. Since Site B is located at a lower elevation it would not be able to offer the view planes of site A. Both sites have roughly equal advantages regarding access to transportation routes, services and land suitable for building.

As mentioned in the feasibility study, there is a need to continue negotiations with the Province of Nova Scotia regarding access to the location in the Tree Breeding Nursery for Site A. Since Site A is located within the boundaries of the Tree Breeding Nursery, it would necessitate the removal of

some of the existing seed trees to allow for construction. The Province has indicated that this land is a valuable resource. It is true that the government has invested years of research into developing particular qualities in its seed trees. It is also true that the Department of Natural Resources has not had the funding to adequately care for the Nursery over the past few years as evidenced by the reduced staff and the lack of personnel available to trim and maintain the trees in a manner that supports seed collection. While the base stock is in place, the value of the Tree Breeding Nursery is decreasing with every season in which the maintenance of the trees is neglected.³

Also, since the Mi'kmawey Debert complex would require only a small portion of the land within the Nursery, only a limited part of the Nursery resource would be lost should the land around Site A be turned over to the Mi'kmaq Nation for Mi'kmawey Debert. Since tourism and outdoor experiential adventure now match the revenues of forestry – with much less environmental degradation - at approximately one billion dollars per year, the province may be convinced to put its efforts more into developing its people and its culture than into providing seeds to the forestry industry. This would allow the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq to continue with the development of the Management Plan for land in Nova Scotia and specifically to identify the Special Place within the Tree Breeding Nursery to become property held by the Mi'kmaq Nation. If this were to take place, the land could be transferred at no cost to Mi'kmawey Debert.

³ Interview with Harold Frame, Department of Natural Resources at the Tree Breeding Nursery and with Alton Hudson, First Nation Forestry, (Debert: July 17, 2002).

If gaining permission to use the land designated as Site A is not possible, there is another option with the treed land near the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail trailhead - Site B. Although, the plantation trees that currently cover Site B were planted after World War II as a make-work project for returning troops and do not represent the landscape that would have existed 12,000 years ago,⁴ they do offer a pleasant setting in which today's visitors would feel comfortable. The current picture of the treed land could be used as a contrast to how the land would have looked when the First People hunted at Debert.

In an interview with Joann Fewer, Executive Director of the Colchester Regional Development Agency (CoRDA), Fewer indicated that CoRDA is very interested in supporting Mi'kmawey Debert in any ways possible.

I see Debert as a key tourism driver. I have also learned about the need to preserve and protect the archaeological sites as well as promoting the tourism perspective. In my opinion, the most significant tourism Star Generator in the Colchester area, when it happens, will be Mi'kmawey Debert. Of anything we are working on like the Tatamagouche Creamery Square, the Marigold Centre in downtown Truro, the Interpretation Centre in Economy, they're all part of a bigger picture, but Mi'kmawey Debert stands alone, there is no question about that. It is already recognized at the provincial level.⁵

Fewer went on to comment that,

⁴ Interview with George Reid, May 25, 2005.

⁵ Interview with Joann Fewer, Executive Director of the Colchester Regional Development Agency, (Truro: June 26, 2005).

Both of the places being considered by The Confederacy as potential sites for the Cultural Centre are within the provincial content of land at this time. However, we would be delighted, wherever the final decision is made, to see if we can help find ways to see that the land can be acquired by them [the Mi'kmaq Nation]. . . . We have some lands and if we could help by transferring some for this project, we'd be more than happy to be supporting in any way.⁶

5.3 Enhancing the Infrastructure

CoRDA offers a strong partnership to Mi'kmawey Debert. It has economic development management control over a large part of Colchester County now. If CoRDA is successful in acquiring the Industrial Park lands from the Province, this will place it in an excellent position to assist Mi'kmawey Debert in many ways.⁷ Acquiring the land is just one aspect of developing the Centre. The Mi'kmawey Debert Team has been aware for several years that the infrastructure surrounding Debert is not sufficient to handle the requirements of a large number of new visitors coming into the area. In fact, the water supply and waste water systems are operating at close to capacity now and the roads will need to be improved to accommodate the additional expected traffic. Nova Scotia has plans to improve the infrastructure of all of its Industrial Parks, but this work has been delayed by limitations such as funding and competing priorities.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Thus far, while the Debert Industrial Park is on the list for upgrades, there have been other needs dealt with by the Department of Economic Development. Once firm plans to develop Mi'kmawey Debert are in place and there are indications that financing will be available to ensure this development can move forward, the Province will move the Debert Industrial Park up on the list to co-operate in preparing the park for the large influx of visitors.⁸ These upgrades will include improved road access and upgrades to the water and sewer plants. This would be a positive step for the existing park as well as for Mi'kmawey Debert. Currently there is no capacity to allow for new business development or for expansions among the existing businesses utilizing the park. Approval of the feasibility plan and acquisition of the resources to build the Cultural Centre will benefit Colchester County in this and a number of other ways.⁹

5.4 Increased Visitor Traffic

Colchester County and the Fundy Shore have a number of attractions that currently bring visitors to the area. The viewing areas for the highest tides in the world highlight these attractions. Other highlights include the Cape d'Or Lighthouse beyond Advocate Harbour and the fossil cliffs around Parrsboro and Joggins. The many villages on the Fundy Shore offer a variety of tourism activities. While enjoyable, these areas each offer only small attractions. There are a number of Bed and Breakfast establishments in the area where tourists can

⁸ Interview with George Reid, May 25, 2005.

⁹ *Ibid.*

stay while enjoying the local attractions. Truro is a major town with a selection of offerings for accommodations and restaurants that can act as a base for visitors to tour all of the sites noted above and it is only fifteen minutes from Debert.¹⁰

Within 20 kilometres of Debert there is the site of the first Acadian church at Masstown and the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail. Debert is also home to the 'Diefenbunker' (a bomb shelter built during the Cold War to provide a safe environment from which to run the government in case of a nuclear attack) and a locally-run Military Museum. The provincially operated nature preserve at McElmon's Pond offers wildlife viewing and picnic sites near the water. One could add to this the potential to open part of the Tree Breeding Nursery to visitors with displays regarding sustainable forestry. Stewiacke and Shubenacadie have golf courses and Mastodon Ridge to attract tourists. In the northern section there are the Anne Murray Centre and the Miners' Museum in Springhill and the Blueberry Information Centre in Oxford.¹¹

What the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage would like to promote on the Colchester area, in addition to all these small venues, are a few large attractions. The Government of Nova Scotia has planned for a 100% increase in tourism revenues by 2010. They plan to accomplish this aim "by encouraging the growth, quality, competitiveness and sustainability of product development in Nova Scotia's tourism sector."¹² The Department of Tourism,

¹⁰ Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage web site, Province of Nova Scotia, Updated 2005 http://novascotia.com/en/home/aboutnovascotia/uniquely_novascotia/bay_of_fundy/default.aspx

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Nova Scotia Tourism Product Development Plan", Nova Scotia Tourism Partnership Council, (Halifax: November 2001), p. 1.

Culture and Heritage is placing more emphasis on product development, marketing and partnerships as essential elements of the Tourism Strategy. The Department's Cultural Activities Program states, "The presence of cultural activities in our communities contributes significantly to our well-being and enriches the experiences of visitors to our province."¹³ The culture sector, which is one of the fastest growing sectors in Nova Scotia, "as measured by the contribution to the GDP, was estimated at almost \$1.2 billion in 2001, with some 28,000 direct and indirect jobs depending on culture activities".¹⁴ The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre initiative is uniquely placed to support and be supported by the tourism strategy.

Through the Tourism Partnership Council, an industry-driven organization supporting tourism, this vision has been translated into plans. The aim of these plans is to focus on creating two or three Star Generators and at least four Tourism Destination Areas in Nova Scotia.

The concept behind Star Generators is to produce products that are indigenous to Nova Scotia and that have market demand. The Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage is concentrating on the premise that Nova Scotia has the potential to increase visitation by building Star Generators. The aim is to focus on unique products that represent Nova Scotia's many cultures. These

¹³ "Cultural Activities Program" (Halifax: Nova Scotia Tourism and Culture, 2003), p. 1.

¹⁴ Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage web site, Province of Nova Scotia, Updated 2005 <http://www.gov.ns.ca/dtc/culture/default.asp>

could include attractions such as an Aboriginal, Gaelic or Acadian tourism facility, a large-scale aquarium or a new convention centre.¹⁵

Star Generator tourism sites need to demonstrate that they have the potential to generate 600,000 - 750,000 visitors annually with a high percentage of out of province visitation.¹⁶ This is a major shift since currently the Visitor Exit Surveys undertaken by the Province indicate that approximately fifty-five percent of visitors come from Atlantic Canada.¹⁷ The Star Generator type of operation would generally need to be open on a year-round basis and would need to be recognized as being a world-class site to attract visitors from across the globe.

Rather than enhancing existing facilities to meet the criteria of becoming a Star Generator, although that is a possibility, Nova Scotia is hoping to create new facilities that can gain recognition as tourism icons. This is a major challenge. To generate new visitation to the province and to blend with cultural and environmental demands will be no simple task. Creating a world-class facility takes considerable planning and expertise. Expertise that is not readily available in Nova Scotia. It also requires a community or organization that is willing to take on creating a project of massive scope. This is not opening a small, community museum in an old farmhouse. This is moving into big business with the necessary commitment to stay the course once you begin.

¹⁵ "Star Generator Vision", (Halifax: Tourism Partnership Council, 2003) See Appendix B

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Becky Mason, p. 2.

To create such a Star Generator, the organization or community will need significant amounts of government support. This would likely come from the federal, provincial and municipal governments and in the case of Mi'kmawey Debert, would involve Band support as well. The province is also looking for such projects to attract significant private sector investment to help ensure long-term financial stability. To attract this type of investment from government and the private sector, the new tourism product will require a long-term business plan outlining how it will present its programs, how it will interpret the experience and how it will provide high standards of visitor services.¹⁸ Considering that the closest Nova Scotia has at this time to a Star Generator is Fortress Louisbourg, there is much work to be done.

What can be developed that would attract people to visit Nova Scotia to see things they could not visit at home or in other locations? A theme park with rides for the kids? A zoo? A marine attraction featuring Nova Scotia's strong ties to the sea? None of these facilities lend themselves easily to Nova Scotia's climate when considering a year-round attraction. Could a Cultural Centre explaining a Paleo-Indian site dating back almost 12,000 years that delivers an experiential, educational and enjoyable learning opportunity while providing an entertaining place to experience a culture that has survived and progressed over millennium be the answer? The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre offers a prime opportunity to become a Star Generator.

¹⁸ "Star Generator Vision", See Appendix B

Mi'kmawey Debert does not plan to accommodate the number of people outlined in the Star Generator criteria. It does, however, have the opportunity to plan its attractions to encourage a particular type of visitor. With the changing demographics of the visiting public, a larger percentage of the population are interested in learning-style vacations. They wish to learn about history, to experience another culture and to take away an appreciation of the environment surrounding the spots visited. A single, specifically targeted, high-end tourist can spend more than a casual family of four during their visit. Maximizing the financial impact of each tourist is as important to tourism as increasing the volume of visitors – and it involves less impact on the environment as well as fewer demands on infrastructure.

Proof of this visitor interest in learning-style vacations can be found in a review of the Canadian Tourism Commission's information. The largest growth in tourism trends in Canada is in the following areas: experiential and learning travel; cultural travel, adventure tourism and ecotourism; ½ day to 1-day experiences; and standalone or layered products with other experiences.¹⁹

These findings are reinforced during Visitor Exit Surveys undertaken by the Province of Nova Scotia. Recent surveys demonstrate that the following are the top ten activities visitors enjoyed during their stay in Nova Scotia:

General sightseeing - 72% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert

Leisure walking/hiking – 55% – available at Mi'kmawey Debert

¹⁹ "Economic Impacts of Aboriginal Tourism in Canada", (Ottawa: Aboriginal Tourism Team Canada, 2003).

Visiting friends and relatives – 55%

Shopping (i.e. Crafts, antiques) – 51% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert

Visiting craft shops/studios – 45% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert

Visiting a national/provincial historic site – 36% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert

Nature observation – 34% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert

Beach exploring/beachcombing – 31%

Visiting museums – 28% - available at Mi'kmawey Debert ²⁰

The proposed plan for the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre seems to match the needs and requirements of a very large percentage of Nova Scotia's visitors.

The museum aspect of the Cultural Centre will provide a history of Nova Scotia reaching back through millennia. It will expose visitors to the experience of coming to know how people lived at the time of the last ice age. They will discover these people were not so different from people today in many ways. Even when the land was covered with new growth and the glaciers were less than sixty miles to the north, people still had to have homes, feed their children and use tools to provide a standard of living that allowed them to thrive in a harsh climate. Eventual development of viewing planes and recreations of landscapes will help create an understanding of the environment. Activities that make Mi'kmawey Debert a special place for Mi'kmaw people will also create an environment that will promote understanding and enhanced knowledge of the Mi'kmaq for visitors. This will make the Centre particularly appealing to those wanting to satisfy the growing interest in indigenous culture and art.

²⁰ 2000 Nova Scotia Visitor Exit Survey Report", (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Tourism and Culture, 2000), pp. 23-58.

Another strategic direction that is being developed by the Department of Tourism Culture and Heritage is the Tourism Destination Area. As a Tourism Destination Area, the Fundy Shore with its variety of attractions, including Mi'kmawey Debert, would be well placed to support the provincial tourism strategy. The aim of Tourism Destination Area products is to enhance the development of at least four geographic areas in Nova Scotia that have existing infrastructure and that can each generate 300,000 - 600,000 visitors over the next ten years.²¹ While the Fundy Shore currently does not possess several of the criteria for the Tourism Destination Indicators, Mi'kmawey Debert could assist with providing the environment that would encourage this development.

Tourism Destination Areas are not expected to generate as many visitors as the Star Generators and the number of attractions to accomplish the aim is larger placing less demand on each facility or product. They are expected to possess a competitive advantage over other destinations that offer unique and appealing tourism destinations within Nova Scotia. Like Star Generators, the Tourism Destination Areas are to be designed to attract new visitors to the province rather than relying so heavily on Atlantic Canada's local tourists. Again like Star Generators, the Tourism Destination Areas are expected to develop into year-round attractions. Extending the shoulder seasons of the tourist visitation times beyond spring, summer and fall is a major goal of the sector.²²

²¹ Tourism Partnership Council, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage, Fall 2001).

²² *Ibid.*

There are some basic infrastructure requirements of the Tourism Destination Areas. These would be items that will allow them to accommodate and provide services for visitors. For example, each Area should have the capacity to offer hotel, motel or bed and breakfast accommodations that would provide a minimum 200 rooms - 50% of which are Canada Select rated 3-Star or higher.²³ Currently this would be a shortfall for the Fundy Shore outside Truro and Digby. The Tourism Destination Area should also be able to offer meeting and convention facilities with associated restaurant and dining facilities. This is again available in Digby and Truro, but not in other sections of the Shore. As noted earlier in the thesis, there are a number of diverse attractions and activities reflective of the communities' uniqueness. At this time, some merchants along the Fundy Shore are interested in seeing further development, but significant support of community and industry leaders including the local municipality is also required when organizations submit applications to the Province. The Tourism Destination Areas are required to offer high-quality visitor support facilities and services. As with any other large-scale business development, a Tourism Destination Area must bring its partners together and create a long-term development plan that outlines potential tourism development, marketing, research, human resources, and partnerships.²⁴

Colchester County holds a cluster of diverse activities with the potential for each to be enhanced. With a minimal financial outlay, Nova Scotia could

²³ "Key Geographic Area Vision", (Halifax: Tourism Partnership Council, 2003). See Appendix C.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

develop enough interest in the area around Debert to hold visitors over for several days. Provide this level of entertainment and recreation activity and there would be reason to have additional accommodation and food services established. In the interim, while vacancy levels in Truro are generally low, the existing infrastructure could support activity at Debert until a case for new facilities has been proven. This approach is more supportive of the Tourism Destination Area vision as it enhances a number of attractions to create an area that will entice visitors. When the Star Generator of Mi'kmawey Debert is added, Colchester County becomes a very attractive tourism locale.²⁵

To test the theory that the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre would in fact bring more tourists and thus more revenues to the Debert area, Becky Mason was hired by the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre to undertake an Economic Impact Study.²⁶ Mason draws her expertise from both her academic qualifications and from several years of working with the Halifax Regional Development Agency prior to entering private practice. In her analysis, Mason considered the increase in tourism that could be expected from placing a major tourism generator in the area. She then projected expenditures by those tourists based on historical data that is available from the provincial government.

One of the significant sets of information found in her analysis is the following:

²⁵ Interview with Bill Hay, Owner, Mastodon Ridge Interpretive Centre, (Truro: May 26, 2006).

²⁶ Becky Mason, "Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Analysis of Resulting Economic Impacts".

The Study Process has developed projections for:

- * Current Tourism Revenues based on existing visitation and private sector activity
- * Year 1 of operation of Mi'kmawey Cultural Centre
- * Year 5 of Centre Operation which reflects longer visits in the area, increased private sector activity and higher visitation

YEAR	Estimated #	Est. Daily Exp	Tourism Revenue	Employment Created		Tax Revenue	
	of Visiting Parties	in Community	in Community	Direct/ Indirect	FTE*	Fed.	Prov.
2003	168,000	\$71.50	\$2,933,325	88	29	\$193,599	\$219,999
2005	181,636	\$78.50	\$4,076,609	122	41	\$269,056	\$305,746
2008	208,338	\$98.50	\$6,208,869	186	62	\$409,785	\$465,665

* FTE = Full-time equivalent positions²⁷

"In addition to just attracting visitors, the government of Nova Scotia wishes to attract at least fifty percent of the tourists to Star Generators and Tourism Destination Areas from outside the province so that new money is brought into the economy."²⁸

A review of the places of origin for visitors to the Glenholme/Masstown Visitor information Centre in 2003 shows that over eighty-six percent of the visitors are from outside the province. Again, provincial expenditure and expertise dedicated in this area would support the aims of the Tourism Partnership Council. (Glenholme and Masstown are within ten kilometres of Debert.)²⁹

²⁷ Becky Mason, "Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Analysis", p. 2.

²⁸ Key Geographic Area Vision.

²⁹ Becky Mason, "Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Analysis", p. 4.

The report goes on to state that every \$100,000 in tourism revenues generates three direct or indirect jobs or one full-time equivalent position in Nova Scotia. This means that every \$100,000 in tourism revenues generates \$39,000 in payroll for the provincial government to utilize as part of the tax base equating to approximately \$6,600 in Federal Sales Tax and \$7,500 in Provincial Sales Tax.³⁰

While the years attached to the chart above are no longer applicable since they were used as base figures only for the analysis that was completed in 2003, the financial projections could only be expected to rise with the passage of time as costs continue to increase. The province wishes to create Star Generators and Tourism Destination Areas. Committing support to the development of the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre would be an excellent way in which to move forward with that agenda.

5.5 Marketing

CoRDA is working with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage and with the Central Nova Tourism Association (CNTA) to build a long-term tourism strategy for Colchester County. The highest tides are already a key draw, an icon, and famous across Canada and around the world. The pre-history sites at Joggins and Parrsboro form the base for creating another draw for the tourist looking for a learning vacation. Initial discussions have taken place

³⁰ *Ibid.* p. 3.

around the concept of creating a Pre-History Trail for Nova Scotia. This is something that can be developed now and expanded upon as Mi'kmawey Debert continues to grow. Nova Scotia can already offer visitors the chance to see fossils at the Joggins Fossil Centre, dinosaur skeletons in Parrsboro at the Fundy Geological Museum, dinosaur tracks fossilized in sand at the Brule Dinosaur Museum and mammoth hunting depictions at Mastodon Ridge in Stewiacke as well as the extensive early collections at the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History.³¹

Bill Hay, owner of Mastodon Ridge and a Fundy Shore business leader, is interested in enhancing Mastodon Ridge to provide more information on the mastodon finds in central Nova Scotia and the history of the most recent Ice Age. He would also like to see the Fundy Shore developed as a Tourism Destination Area. Mr. Hay is working with other businesses, not-for-profit organizations, the Regional Development Agency and local government to try and create interest in developing an application to the provincial government to designate the Fundy Shore area as a Tourism Destination Area.³² Currently the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail tells a little bit of the story of the early people to complement tales of the forming of Nova Scotia and the first animals to wander its shores, but as Mi'kmawey Debert becomes a reality and adds information about the people and animals that lived in this area after the retreat of the last Ice Age, attractions in the area will bring visitors through a period of over 265 million years.

³¹ Interview with Bill Hay and Ken Adams, Director Fundy Geological Museum (Fall 2003) and Interview with Joann Fewer (Spring 2005).

³² Interview with Bill Hay.

Nothing has been done as yet to market the idea of a pre-history trail.

While the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre is still in the developmental phase, the Interpretive Trail is open to the public. With the information panel illustrating the retreat of the ice developed by Ralph Stea and with the panels depicting early life drawn by Dozay Christmas in consultation with the Mi'kmawey Debert Team, hikers could learn more about the time just after the last Ice Age. A pre-history trail would provide a vehicle to begin promotion of the Cultural Centre now. Even before the first shovel of earth is removed for the facility, the foundation for promoting Mi'kmawey Debert can begin to form by marketing ideas with partners. Stories of the giant beaver and other super-sized creatures like dire wolves and sabre toothed cats will capture people's imagination and will bring them back to see more once the Centre is complete.

This same principle of early marketing can be done around the idea of a Mi'kmaw Tourism Trail. Again, this idea has been talked about for a number of years, but it has not yet been put into place. Opportunities abound to promote the culture, strength, history and modern business acumen of the Mi'kmaq. Within Nova Scotia there are now cultural centres at Bear River and Wagmatcook. Millbrook has recently completed its information centre. At the time of this writing and discussions are underway in other communities. The new convention centre in Membertou is a tribute to what can be done in a modern business perspective and as Mi'kmawey Debert continues to develop, it will fill in

more of the history of the past. Again, because the trail is already a reality, it provides the opportunity for Mi'kmawey Debert to begin marketing.³³

Because the foundations of a Mi'kmaw History Trail are already in place, they provide the opportunity for Mi'kmawey Debert to begin marketing now. Linking with other facilities in Nova Scotia and tying into relationships that already exist makes promoting a Mi'kmaw History Trail not only possible today, but a step that could strengthen the positions of all the other organizations as well. Since promoting a Mi'kmaw Tourism Trail and/or a Nova Scotia Pre-History Trail would involve many partners, it would also mean costs could be distributed amongst those partners. To begin marketing now would take a major collaborative effort from the partners, but only a minimal outlay of cash.

Building a name takes time. Combining that name with other tourism and cultural features also takes time. This is not something that needs to wait until the planning is finalized and the building is under construction. Getting the name out now will ease the way for future growth. Letting people know that the Cultural Centre will be in place in a few years will help them plan their first visit, or their return, to Nova Scotia. At the same time, early promotion accomplishes the aim of making people in Nova Scotia, across Canada and around the world more aware of the importance of respecting the legacy and the future of the Mi'kmaq.

Mi'kmawey Debert can also be a link to broaden the scope of Mi'kmaw Tourism across Atlantic Canada by linking to centres like Metepenagiag (Red Bank), The Aboriginal Heritage Garden (Eel River Bar) and the Madawaska Maliseet aquaculture project in New Brunswick. There is also potential to link to

³³ Interview with Jim Hepworth, January 27, 2005.

Lennox Island in Prince Edward Island.³⁴ Each site on the Mi'kmaw Tourism Trail would offer something different. Between the Pre-History Trail and the Mi'kmaq Tourism Trail, both Star Generator and Tourism Destination Area status could be achieved through the participation of Mi'kmawey Debert. Being able to demonstrate this type of provincial impact to the Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage would allow Mi'kmawey Debert to present a case to the government of Nova Scotia that it deserves substantial and sustainable economic support.

5.6 Strengthening Communities

Beyond the tourism perspective, there is the ongoing relationship of Mi'kmawey Debert with its neighbours. When the idea of a Cultural Centre and an interpretive trail were first proposed, there was concern among Debert area residents. Rumours abounded about what plans were being made that might impact on *their* lives. Would the Mi'kmaq want to come into the Debert area and reclaim land? Would the Mi'kmaq want to take over properties currently owned by other citizens? Would there be huge number of tourists creating traffic jams and invading the privacy of the residents? Could a quiet, rural community build connections to a vibrant tourism site? The unknown caused uneasiness.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Team made a concerted effort to go into the community and talk, not just to the politicians, but also to the local groups who needed to understand what was being planned. Sessions were held for church groups and community organizations. These were groups who would be able to

³⁴ Interviews with Pam Ward Levi, Economic Development Officer, (Metepenagiag First Nation: 2002 – 2003) and Tim Dedam, Economic Development Officer, (Eel River Bar First Nation: 2001 – 2002), and Charles Sack, Chief, (Lennox Island First Nation: 2003).

spread the word about what was really proposed for the protection of the archaeological sites and the development of a Cultural Centre. As word spread, excitement about the idea grew. People living around the Debert area see the potential for Mi'kmawey Debert to be a partner in improving their community and the economic strength of the whole area.

When one considers the impact of increased tourism visitation on a small rural community the numbers of visitors, jobs created and increased revenues take on an enhanced significance. In general terms, tourism economic impacts are influenced by three factors: the number of visitors, the length of stay and the spending opportunities.³⁵ While there are currently only a few small operations in Debert and the surrounding area, each of these could benefit from increased visitation thus providing more jobs and more income for the area that could be spent directly in the communities rather than leaving the area because there was not the infrastructure available locally. Residents can see potential for tourism spin-offs in opportunities for themselves and their children to work in the area either directly in tourism-related activities or in related businesses that support the community. While tourism is currently seen as a seasonal occupation, Mi'kmawey Debert is planning to run a year-round operation. Even if tourism remains largely seasonal for some time to come, a seasonal job is better than no job at all.³⁶

³⁵ Becky Mason, 2002.

³⁶ *Ibid.* and Interview with Joann Fewer, February 2005.

One place where this can be seen now – even before construction of a Cultural Centre has begun is in the turn over of the Colchester Park Development Society lands to CoRDA. This property comprises much of the old Canadian Forces Base Debert including the married quarters. CoRDA has been marketing these properties for private sale. One of their marketing points is the significance of the archaeological sites and the proximity of the Mi'kmawey Debert Interpretive Trail. The Trail offers a complement to healthy living and the connection to a place that has been a part of Nova Scotia's history for millennium presents an image of security and permanence for families considering moving into the district.³⁷

The residents of the Debert area have come to see the potential benefits of Mi'kmawey Debert and their concerns about the future development have changed to approval. The Mi'kmaq through the Mi'kmawey Debert Team and The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq have reassured the community that they do not want to stop commercial or residential development but simply to ensure that land is tested for archaeological significance before any new building begins. When Joann Fewer discusses the future of the Debert community she states, "We don't see the archaeological significance as a threat; we see it as an asset."³⁸

Robert Ogilvie, the Curator of Special Places for the Nova Scotia Department of Tourism Culture and Heritage echoes this sentiment. Ogilvie

³⁷ Interview with Joann Fewer, February 2005.

³⁸ Joann Fewer, February 2005.

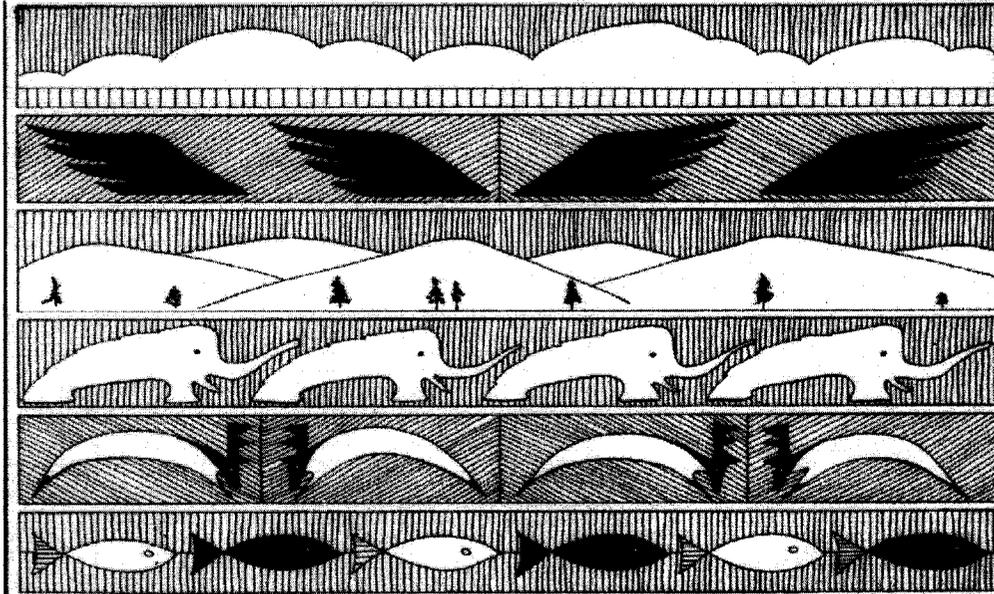
stated that, the site has provincial, national and international significance and is an incredibly significant resource. Like the Clovis site, it could be a world centre for Paleo studies, with great credibility. It is the Number One archaeological site in the province.³⁹

Enriching communities is not limited to the Debert area. While the economic impact is not felt as dramatically in the Mi'kmaw communities, there are spin-offs as a result of the development. Mi'kmaw artists have been commissioned to create drawings to be used in explaining and promoting the project. The spear and stone point drawings done by Michael Martin shown earlier in this thesis are examples of work that is being used to bring the times of the early people of Debert to life.

³⁹ Robert Ogilvie, *Ta'n Wetapeksi'k Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Feasibility Study*, (Prepared for The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq by Leslie H. Patten & Associates, Inc., Reich & Petch Design International, and The Economic Planning Group of Canada: Tourism Consultants, Millbrook First Nation, May 2005), p. 13.

Figure 15 Debert during Paleo-Indian times

The drawing incorporates the fish in the sea, the caribou that offered sustenance to the people, the mastodon representing the large animals of the time and the lightly forested mountains in the Debert area. Over all the birds soared among the clouds. Artist: Mike Martin. Copyright The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.



The drawing above is a further example of the quality of work done by Martin as he illustrates his vision of the creatures that lived in the area and how Debert may have looked over ten thousand years ago. Utilizing the skills of Mi'kmaq artists has several benefits. The project gains excellent artwork created with sensitivity to the land and the people who were the ancestors of today's Mi'kmaq. The artists gain additional exposure for their work and the potential to win additional commissions. The community benefits by having the friends and family of the artists learn more about their early history while watching the artwork develop and recognizing the contributions of artists they know to the project.



Figure 16: The Welcoming Panel at the Mi'kma'wey Debert Interpretive Trail . The panel, created in Mi'kmaq and English, carries a message from the Mi'kmaq Elders inviting visitors to share the culture of the First People as they walk the same land inhabited by Nova Scotia's first residents. The panels encourage hikers to share the culture and learn more about the past. Artist: Dozay Christmas. Copyright The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

The information panels at the Mi'kma'wey Debert Interpretive Trail are the work of Mi'kmaq artist Dozay Christmas. Dozay's work is quite well known within the Mi'kmaq community, but exposure gained through working with the Mi'kma'wey Debert initiative can only enhance her reputation.

A Living Community

the tuknek aq mius tuknek. Ta n koquey wejittasik na'ie' I eknuu tukak'k ta'n
liiw. Pukweik ta n koquey miu keji lasruk kati piley koquey wejittasik
kati miu. Pukweik ta n koquey kisi ankitu tma kip ta'n telo' tleni'k aq wiley ta'n

la witi ketantekank, epile' tasiu mi neknew' I ra paak eykru' tapan ta'n
aq' taw' ankitu tma' k Debertewey witan, wakiw'itak'k ne' to' tleni'k aq
kati miu' tasiu' ta'n iela' tsk' waiqamur ta'n iela' kidiu' miniki' ta'n tel-
k' ta'n eyu' tian'k. Kestie' t'ulian'k, tsa' to' q' w'kw' k' t'atullian'k,
k' k' k' k' k' ekini' tma' t'isat' mijus' i'ka' ta'n koquey neknew' keji- tu' ti)

Life at Debert would be both strange and familiar to people today. Some aspects of community life, very little about others. Having re- put a picture of life together as best they can. Because so much to no puzzle me added all the time, our understanding changes frequent people's lives and how similar they went to those of us who came

While the artifacts from Debert suggest hunting and the related act important, they were only part of people's lives. When the division sophisticated, knowledgeable people. They had an unusual knowle animals with which they lived. They cared for each other, fought on humour in their daily lives. Other people in the community carried experience, which was shared with others.



Figure 17 Panels continue along the Trail.

Further panels provide the opportunity for those enjoying the walk to learn more about the housing, tools, food sources and environment of the First People. Artist: Dozay Christmas. Copyright The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, reproduced with permission.

Not only Mi'kmaw artists will have an opportunity to enhance their skills and reputations through working with Mi'kmawey Debert. Efforts are being made to explain the importance of the project to members of the Mi'kmaw communities. Especially students are being encouraged to participate in advanced educational opportunities that will be utilized in the Mi'kmawey Debert of the future. There will positions for a diverse spectrum of staff. These will include biology, geology, archaeology, anthropology and others. There will also be roles for persons with expertise in administration, exhibit design and maintenance. Many people will be able to find fulfillment assisting with the development of the Mi'kmawey Debert story and having the opportunity to share their culture and language with both Mi'kmaq and non-Native visitors.

6.0 Chapter Six

6.1 Conclusion - Don't Wait to Begin

Creating a Cultural Centre at Debert that will tell the story of the First People to live in Nova Scotia is a dream that deserves to become a reality. There are stories still hidden in the soil around Debert and Belmont. There are stories that have already been excavated but are yet sitting in vaults waiting for the resources to become available to uncover the mysteries they contain. There are stories to be told of the distant past, the more recent history of the Mi'kmaq and of their future that can meld to provide an overview of an ancient people and how they have survived through millennia.

To be able to tell these stories, the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will need support in many areas. The federal, provincial and Mi'kmaq governments have expressed their support for the initiative. Some money from governments has been allocated to assist in moving the project forward and to date the Mi'kmawey Debert Team has expended tremendous energy and effort to bring the project to its current status. Some support has been garnered from local area businesses and from charitable organizations like the Primate's World Relief Development Fund. All of this financial support to the initiative has been greatly appreciated and has allowed the project to progress from a series of ideas into concrete plans. Now, more financial resources will be required to take Mi'kmawey Debert to the next steps.

Serious fund raising is just beginning for the construction phase of Mi'kmawey Debert. This is a major initiative that will impact on all aspects of planning as the Centre progresses. In the spring of 2004, the Mi'kmawey Debert Team approached RBR Consultants to discuss the possibility of this firm taking the lead in the fund raising drive on behalf of Mi'kmawey Debert. There is a role for the Mi'kmawey Debert Team and the Elders Advisory Council as well.

Government representatives in Nova Scotia, and in some cases beyond, are well aware of the plans for Mi'kmawey Debert. They have been waiting to hear that the project is ready to move on to the feasibility and construction phases. Depending upon the specific requests, departments such as Heritage Canada, N.S. Tourism Culture and Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Aboriginal Affairs, the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Nova Scotia Business Inc., Environment Canada, N.S. Economic Development, Natural Resources, Corrections Canada and Service Canada all have programs that can provide support to Mi'kmawey Debert as the project moves into the construction and preparation of the heritage interpretation phase. Discussions that the author has undertaken with staff at ACOA, Economic Development, Service Canada, Environment Canada, Tourism Culture and Heritage, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Heritage Canada stress that contact should be made/maintained now with the various departments that can provide support to the Mi'kmawey Debert initiative to make bureaucrats aware that the project is almost ready to move forward. While many departments have ongoing programs to support a variety of initiatives, it assists them in their planning to know what an

organization's expectations will be early in their budgeting process so they can more appropriately budget their allocations.

While RBR consultants are experts in fund raising they are not necessarily fully knowledgeable regarding federal government programs. Providing the fundraising team with information regarding the various federal, provincial and municipal departments and the potential for those departments to support the initiative as it progresses could be the responsibility of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team and the extremely knowledgeable support team at The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq.

While recognizing this places an additional burden on the already busy Mi'kmawey Debert Team, they are also the ones most knowledgeable about where partnerships can be developed with government. While the fund raising consultants may be tasked with making contacts and determining what programs are applicable, it would be beneficial to have part of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team focused on deciding which departments should be approached when and for what specific causes.

The early people who lived at Debert thousands of years ago were sophisticated in many ways. They had a rich culture that grew in response to the land in which they lived. They faced challenges in finding food, building homes and protecting their families as well as dealing with a harsh and changing climate. As Canadians today, we owe it to ourselves to learn more about these people.

From the earliest days of planning, Mi'kmawey Debert has been managed by consensus. Elders have been involved and linked to their communities; non-Natives through government and community have been involved. The project has raised awareness across Canada and the United States as presentations and papers have been discussed. This is not a project for an isolated group – everyone should be involved. It is part of our global history. Mi'kmawey Debert should be the depository for the artifacts removed from the site. The stone tools removed from Debert should be concentrated in Mi'kma'ki not held in remote museums. The Mi'kmaq and the people of Nova Scotia should have their history at home.

The efforts and quality of the work done to date illustrates Mi'kmawey Debert is not being thrown together on a whim. It is a well thought out initiative that can benefit the culture, healing and economic well being of the Mi'kmaq while having a positive effect on Nova Scotia though enhancing the richness of its cultural awareness and contributing to the strength of its tourism industry and employment.

Having mentioned a number of tasks that would place additional burdens on the staff, the final recommendation in this thesis would be to increase the size of the Mi'kmawey Debert Team. This will have several effects. First, although new staff will require additional support in the early days, they will soon be able to lift some of the burden from the shoulders of the senior staff. Second, Mi'kmaw professionals in fields such as education, marketing and program delivery will have opportunities to begin developing their expertise around the

project needs. Third, additional Mi'kmaw students will be encouraged to see Mi'kmawey Debert as a potential career opportunity as the staff complement grows. Fourth, this will allow programs to be developed and put into place now rather than waiting for the facility to be completed.

Obviously, additional staff will require additional resources. One of the tasks for the fundraising consultants could be to request support for this development phase of the operation. Many organizations are willing to provide specific project funding even if they are not prepared to commit to ongoing program support. If necessary, the steps toward opening the doors of the Cultural Centre can be implemented on a project basis to get them started. While this may not be the ideal, it does provide the opportunity for potential funders to see real time results from the project activities that could encourage additional funding over the long term. It would also provide the opportunity for the Mi'kmawey Debert staff to learn from projects before determining that they should implement permanent programs in a particular manner.

There is still much work to be done before construction starts on the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre. Each year the numbers of Elders who carry knowledge about everything from how to build a birch bark *wikiium*, to preserving meat, to playing *waltes* decreases. Each year the number of young people lost in despair through a lack of knowing who they are and where they come from increases. Colin Bernard, a Councillor from Millbrook First Nation, discussed the roles he sees for Mi'kmawey Debert at a community meeting in October 2004. He spoke about how the Cultural Centre can help restore identity, teaching pride

in the history of the Mi'kmaq to youth. He continued by saying, "Students can't feel pride without knowing who they are. The kids are lost. They are not in an environment where people can understand them."¹

It would be lovely to start everything at once in a shiny new facility that serves all the needs for which it was designed. However, if nothing happens at Debert for another five years until the construction, exhibit design and programming are ready, many of these people will be lost. Healing will not be happening at this special place. Those able to speak the language and share it with the youth will continue to pass on.

Inter-generational transfer of knowledge will be one of the major strengths of Mi'kmawey Debert in the years to come. Bringing Elders and youth together to share life experiences and stories will benefit both groups and the Nation as a whole. Many plans for programming designed especially for the people of the Mi'kmaq Nation are already at the conceptual stage. While not all of these plans can begin in advance of the opening of the Cultural Centre, not all need to wait either. The meeting space at the Debert Hospitality Centre has been used before for Mi'kmawey Debert centred events. There is no reason why it cannot be used during the building stages of the Cultural Centre for ongoing activities, especially for events that link Elders and Youth. While using a non-Mi'kmaq facility may not be the ideal, it can still begin the process of transferring knowledge from one generation to the next.

¹ Colin Bernard, Councillor Millbrook First Nation, Tourism Planning Meeting, Millbrook First Nation: October 2004).

The Elders' Network is a province-wide organization different from the Elders' Advisory Council established for Mi'kmawey Debert. The two groups mirror many similar principles and philosophies even though they were established for different reasons. The Elders Network has developed the following philosophy:

Taking a holistic approach empowers communities as a whole to participate in the healing process. The focus will be our Elders and Youth and bridging the gaps between the generations. This will allow for our Elders to have more active roles within our communities and the way the youth perceive them. Common knowledge allows us to recognize that Elders are the teachers, people who have respect and are well respected. Elders are our advisors, people who have obtained wisdom of traditions and cultural lifestyles. It is with this in mind that we are developing our Mi'kmaq Elders Network.²

Communities have within them the ability to solve their own problems and achieve their dreams if those communities are given the support and respect to allow them to encourage all their members to work together for the well-being of the group.

Recognizing the common threads that bind many Mi'kmaw communities, outreach to Mi'kmaq First Nations across Nova Scotia can also be conducted now. This began on a small scale with the community visits and information sessions that were used to gather input from across the province. It can continue

² The Mi'kmaq Elders Project" website, by the Union of Nova Scotia Indians, 2005. http://www.ahf.ca/fp/e_pull_project.php?id=1986.00®ion=Nova%20Scotia

before the Cultural Centre is complete. It does not matter where events take place, as long as they begin. An important part of the philosophy of Mi'kmawey Debert is to reach out to all the communities so that Mi'kmaq who are not able to travel to the Cultural Centre may still be able to benefit from the programming and services offered by Mi'kmawey Debert. In addition to benefiting the people and their communities, this type of outreach will also provide an opportunity to trial education programming and provide demonstration sites for introducing potential funding partners to the concepts and principles of Mi'kmawey Debert.

Funding and human resource development are linked in many ways and are critical to the long-term success of the initiative. Starting now to build capacity will mean there are people trained to step into positions at Mi'kmawey Debert when the Cultural Centre opens – or before. The “Atlantic Investment Fund: The Second Wave” was announced by ACOA in August 2005. This \$700 billion initiative has a number of programs but key among them are the *Investing in Communities Fund* that aims to build upon the strengths of local communities and the *Investing in People Fund* that will help build the skills of all Nova Scotians. Small to medium sized businesses and not-for-profit groups are encouraged to apply for these funds. There is support to enhance project management, human resource and marketing skills for these organizations.³ All of these areas are important for Mi'kmawey Debert. They can pave the way to bring young people from high school or university into the Team and provide them with the transferable skills that will allow them to become an important part

³ ACOA Economic Development Community Presentation, (Dartmouth Regional Library, Dartmouth: August 31, 2005).

of the future at Mi'kmawey Debert or in other parts of Nova Scotia. Whether Mi'kmaq work at the Cultural Centre or are prepared to take jobs in other venues, both the Mi'kmaq and Canada benefit.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre initiative is an exciting opportunity to enhance community development for the Mi'kmaq Nation in Nova Scotia. It will also offer a venue to help build pride in their culture and heritage in Mi'kmaw youth. The potential tourism activity will assist in creating more prosperity for the Cultural Centre's neighbours in Colchester County as well as helping to sustain the Cultural Centre in its programming for the Mi'kmaq.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Team led by The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq have worked hard and planned carefully. They are taking the time to do things right and are ensuring they have the cooperation and support of the Mi'kmaq as they move forward. The respect for the Elders, for Mother Earth and for the youth who will be the future make this a very special place above and beyond the long history leading back to the First People.

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre will be a valuable resource for the people of the Mi'kmaq Nation as it provides them with a venue to share the story of their history and culture. It will offer a safe, nurturing place where people can share their stories and assist with healing the wounds of the Nation. The Cultural Centre will also provide benefits to the non-Native community through supporting a variety of tourism initiatives and providing the opportunities to enhance cultural tourism in Nova Scotia. Through this increased attraction to visitors from both inside and outside Nova Scotia, Mi'kmawey Debert can bring more revenues into

the local community and into the coffers of the province. This project, telling the story of the First People to live in Nova Scotia has the potential to serve many needs. It is not just a nice place to have. The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre is needed to enrich all who live in Mi'kma'ki.

Agreement on the importance of developing a Cultural Centre to tell the story of the First People to live in Nova Scotia comes from many sources. Comments from participants at the Mi'kmawey Debert Conference held in 1999 helped set the direction for later work. The wisdom of the suggestions can still be seen clearly although six years have passed.

“What makes Debert unique? It has an incredible history and a strong spiritual connection. We have been here a long time. We can't physically bring back the past - but, spiritually, we can bring it back.”⁴

“At Mi'kmawey Debert the Mi'kmaq can lead by example. When people ask about a project talk to them and show it to them. . . Knowledge leads to understanding. Show by doing. . . [Mi'kmawey Debert] is an opportunity for everyone to see and experience the philosophy of the Mi'kmaq.”⁵

⁴ Mi'kmawey Debert International Conference Notes, Debert, March 2000.

⁵ *Ibid.*

“This is a real site. This can't be just an interpretive museum. The site has integrity in and of itself.”⁶

“This is a rich story: the First Peoples on the land after the retreat of the glaciers, the beginning of a new landscape, and the beginning of a new climate. This site has provincial, national and international significance. It is an incredibly significant resource.”⁷

“It [Mi'kmawey Debert] should be a place of being – a living place, they walked and played here.”⁸

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ David Christianson, *Ta'n Wetapeksi'k Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Feasibility Study*, Prepared for The Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq by Leslie H. Patten & Associates, Inc., Reich & Petch Design International, and The Economic Planning Group of Canada: Tourism Consultants, (Millbrook First Nation: May 2005), p. 15.

⁸ *Mi'kmawey Debert Connecting with Our Past*, p. 21.

"I believe in the project because it pinpoints an authentic territory where our ancestors lived, thrived, and survived. Whatever happened to them to leave that area, we don't have an answer to that. I recognize that connection and would like to see us make a monument to the past."⁹

The Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre can be that monument.



The Mi'kmawey Debert logo shows caribou, the primary resource of the First People, moving into the past over a Paleo-Indian spear point. The point is facing forward demonstrating the direction of the Mi'kmaq of today progressing into the future.

⁹ Sister Dorothy Moore, January 2005.

Appendix A

Commemorative Integrity Statement (excerpt from Parks Canada)

Commemorative Integrity describes the health and wholeness of a national historic site. A national historic site possesses commemorative integrity when:

- I. the resources directly related to the reasons for the site's designation as a national historic site are not impaired or under threat; (* see details below)
- II. the reasons for the site's national historic significance are effectively communicated to the public; and
- III. the site's heritage values (including those resources and messages not related to the national significance) are respected by all whose decisions or actions affect the site.

A Commemorative Integrity Statement is prepared for a site:

- I. to focus managers and/or owners on what is most important about a site and to ensure that matters relating to national significance - whether resources or messages - are always the highest management priority;
- II. to ensure that there is a focus on the "whole", and not just the individual resources;
- III. to provide the fundamental document for management planning and preparation of the required documentation (for the National Historic Sites

Cost-Sharing Program), which identifies concrete actions to assist with ensuring commemorative integrity;

- IV. to enunciate a set of heritage values and objectives which can be used in analysing and evaluating the impact of development proposals for a site or nearby property;
- V. to provide the basis for design guidelines for development which may take place within or nearby and have an impact on the national historic site;
- VI. to give direction on heritage messages for marketing plans and programs;
and
to provide the foundation for reporting to Canadians on the state of the national historic sites.”¹⁰

¹⁰ “Debert Paleo-Indian Site, National Historic Site of Canada Commemorative Integrity Statement”. Parks Canada, (Halifax: 2004), pp. 1-2.

Appendix B

Star Generators

"The criteria for a site to be a Star Generator are as follows:

- "* either generate or clearly demonstrate potential to generate 600-750,000 visitors annually with a high percentage (at least 65%) of out of province visitation
- * operates on a year round basis
- * recognized internationally in the caliber of the top Canadian tourism products
- * meant to be a brand new facility built from ground zero that is one of Canada's premier recognizable icons
- * the facility must be architecturally and aesthetically consistent and compatible with the existing landscape
- * clearly demonstrated to be a high-quality facility and to have services in place to meet market demand
- * icon appeal to motivate new and significant visitation of which a high percentage has never been to the province
- * requires significant private sector investment
- * requires long-term financial stability with multi-year commitment of all levels of government
- * established long-term business plan in place, which speaks to the commitment to invest in tourism marketing, research, human resources and partnerships

Depending on the facility, it will:

- * offer a programming/interpretation/educational experience
- * provide a storied or themed experience
- * afford a high standard of visitor services such as: admissions control, guided experiences, visitor support services (physical accessibility; washrooms; foodservices parking / individual / RV / motor coach; merchandising / retail; on-site and directional signage; on-site access; on-site bilingual service; trained / qualified / certified staff)¹¹

¹¹ "Star Generator Vision", Tourism Partnership Council, Department of Tourism, Culture and Heritage,(Halifax, 2003)

Appendix C

The criteria for Tourism Destination Areas are that they have the following characteristics:

- * "either generate or clearly demonstrate potential to generate 300-600,000 visitors with a high percentage (at least 50%) out of province visitation
- * possess a competitive advantage over other destinations which are recognized by our visitors as being an unique/appealing tourism destination within Nova Scotia and has the potential to motivate new and significant visitation to the province
- * have sufficient capacity to service visitors on a year round basis

The Key Geographic Areas should also possess existing tourism infrastructure to meet the following:

- * have a minimum 200 rooms, 50 % of which are Canada Select rated 3 star or higher
- * contain small to medium size meetings and convention type facilities
- * offer a variety of quality restaurant and dining facilities
- * possess a cluster of diverse attractions and activities reflective of the communities uniqueness requires support of community buy-in to enhance the existing tourism infrastructure and driven by industry leaders including support by the local municipality
- * be branded as national/international significance

- * consistently offer high-quality visitor support facilities and services in response to market demands
- * demonstrate the potential to develop packages that extend the season and diversify the product offering by maximizing partnerships with the travel trade:
- * hold an established long-term development/strategic plan which speaks to the commitment to invest in tourism development, marketing, research, human resources, and partnerships.”¹²

¹² “Key Geographic Area Vision”, Tourism Partnership Council, (Halifax: 2003).

Appendix D

“Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Statistics 2003

	TRURO VIC	GLENHOLME/ MASSTOWN VIC
TOTAL VISITORS	17,001	3910
VISITOR ORIGIN BY PERCENTAGE		
Nova Scotia	27.5 %	14.3%
Other Atlantic	4.8%	34.3%
Canada		
Quebec	5.6%	1.7%
Ontario	18%	12.7%
Western Canada	12.3%	18.2%
New England	6.1%	1.9%
United States	19.5%	13.0%
Other Countries	6.0 %	4.0%
TABLE TOTAL	100%	100.%

Becky Mason, “Mi’kmawey Debert Cultural Centre Analysis of Resulting Economic Impacts, Draft. (Halifax: 2002), p. 2.

Appendix E

Potential Positions, Duties and Core Competencies for the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre

Position	Duties	Competencies Core = C, Group = G, Task = T
Executive Director (currently E. D. of CMM)	Chair Board of Directors	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, initiative-T
	Liaise with Chiefs	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, initiative-T
	Ability to build partnerships	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, initiative-T
	Ability to manage team, delegate responsibilities	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, initiative-T
Comptroller (currently Comptroller for C.M.M.)	Manage all financial transactions	Knowledge of the organization-C, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, technical understanding of accounting-T
	Prepare and interpret financial statements	Technical understanding of accounting-T, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, communication-C, working with others-G
	Work with auditors	Technical understanding of accounting-T, judgement-T, thinking and reasoning skills-T, communication-C, working with others-G

Reception (3 for shifts)	Greeting the public	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G
	Taking cash	Technical knowledge to work the cash register/computer-T, judgement-T
	Providing initial information	Knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C
Interpreters General (6 for shifts)	Guiding visitors	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G
	Responding to questions	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G, technical knowledge of the material on display - G
	Assisting with developing displays	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G, technical knowledge of the materials to go on display - G
Interpreters for school & outreach programs (2 – inside & outreach)	Guiding visitors	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G, technical knowledge of the materials to be interpreted-G
	Responding to questions	Communication-C, working with others-C, knowledge of the organization-C, positive attitude-C, judgement-G, technical knowledge of the material on display - G
	Assisting with developing displays and presentations	Knowledge of the organization-G, Initiative-G, technical knowledge of materials to present and equipment-G

Display Designer	Work with scientists and interpreters to develop display concepts	Knowledge of the organization- G , Initiative- G , technical knowledge of materials regarding the displays- G , communication- C , positive attitude- C , judgement- T , work with others- G
(1-2 depending on budget, also use N.S.M. staff)	Develop displays and build exhibits	Technical knowledge of materials regarding the displays- G , judgement- T , technical knowledge of tools and construction practices- T , initiative- T
Library/ Archivist	Cataloguing material	Knowledge of the organization- G , Initiative- G , technical knowledge of materials- G , positive attitude- C , initiative- T
(1 & assistant if possible or student placements)	Researching new materials to add to collection	Technical knowledge of materials- G , positive attitude- C , initiative- T
	Finding reference materials for visitors	Working with people- C , technical knowledge of materials- G , positive attitude- C ,
Chef (2 to allow for shifts)	Preparing foods for final presentation	Technical knowledge of food safety - G , Technical knowledge of food preparation- G , initiative- G , positive attitude- C , positive attitude- C , knowledge of the organization- C
	Ordering supplies	Thinking and reasoning skills- T , Technical knowledge of food preparation- G , initiative- G , positive attitude- C
	Supervising staff	Communication- C , working with others- T , Thinking and reasoning skills- T , Technical knowledge of food preparation- G , Technical knowledge of food safety - G , initiative- T , positive attitude- C
Food Preparation (4 to allow	Preparing foods for presentation	Technical knowledge of food safety - G , Technical knowledge of food preparation- G , initiative-

for shifts)		G, positive attitude-C, knowledge of the organization-C
	Kitchen management, cleaning organization	Technical knowledge of food safety-G, initiative-G, positive attitude-C
Maintenance Supervisor	Supervising staff and planning schedules	Knowledge of the organization-C, working with others-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C, thinking and reasoning skills-T, initiative-T
(2 to allow for shifts)	Ordering supplies	Thinking and reasoning skills-T, communication-C, knowledge of the organization-C,
	Cleaning facility	Technical knowledge of cleaning principles and practices-T, knowledge of the organization-C, working with others-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C
	Arranging for specialized support like plumbers, etc.	Thinking and reasoning skills-T, communication-C, knowledge of the organization-C, technical knowledge of physical plant-T
Maintenance Assistants - Inside	Responding to immediate visitor needs	Knowledge of the organization-C, initiative-C, working with others-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C
(2 to allow for shifts)	Cleaning facility	Technical knowledge of cleaning principles and practices-T, knowledge of the organization-C, working with others-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C
Maintenance Assistants - Outside	Responding to immediate visitor needs	Knowledge of the organization-C, initiative-C, working with others-C, positive attitude-C, communication-C
(2 to allow for shifts)	Caring for the grounds in all weather	Thinking and reasoning skills-T, knowledge of the organization-C, technical knowledge of physical plant as it relates to the grounds-T

Appendix F

Potential Training Institutions or Competencies in Support of Gaining Employment at the Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre

Position	Training Required	Training Institutions or Competencies
Executive Director	Experience dealing with large, complex organizations	Could have appropriate experience without formal post secondary education or in some combination, knowledge of facility
	Experience working with diverse groups of people	Experience in First Nation government, with not-for-profit organizations or with community volunteerism, communication skills, speak Mi'kmaq
	Knowledge of business practices	University degrees in business, management, accounting, public administration, etc. or comparable experience
Comptroller	Manage all financial transactions	University degree in accounting, MBA, CMA, etc., speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Prepare and interpret financial statements	Community College graduation with a diploma in business or accounting with additional experience
	Understand audited statements and be able to maintain computerized financial records	Could have appropriate experience without formal post secondary education
Reception	Good communication skills	Experience dealing with the public, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Good public presentation	Community College Tourism
	Ability to operate a computerized sales and information system	Acquired skills or formal training. Likely some specific training to the M.D. system

Interpreters General	Guiding visitors	Community College Tourism, good communicator, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Responding to questions	Experience in sales or service, knowledge of M.D.
	Assisting with developing displays	Art, history or language skills
Interpreters for school & outreach programs	Guiding visitors	Community College Tourism, good communicator, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Responding to questions	Experience in sales or service, knowledge of M.D.
Display Designers	Assisting with developing displays and presentations	University degree, formal education, museum experience, knowledge of facility
	Work with scientists and interpreters to develop display concepts	Formal education, understanding of scientific information and traditional knowledge, speak Mi'kmaq
Library/ Archivist	Cataloguing material	Degree in Library Science, experience working in a library
	Researching new materials to add to collection	History and research background, cataloguing techniques – university or Community College
	Finding reference materials for visitors	Communication skills, experience working in a library, speak Mi'kmaq
Chef	Preparing foods for final presentation	Community College Certification, comparable experience
	Ordering supplies	Experience in food service sector, formal training, knowledge of requirements
	Supervising staff	Previous experience, communication skills, formal training or sponsored by M.D., speak Mi'kmaq

Food Preparation	Preparing foods for presentation and cooking	Clean, willing to learn, formal training or on-the-job training, speak Mi'kmaq
	Kitchen management, cleaning organization	Clean, WHIMIS, willing to learn, formal training or on-the-job training
Maintenance Supervisor	Supervising staff and planning schedules	Previous experience, communication skills, organized, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Ordering supplies	Previous experience, formal training, knowledge of requirements
	Cleaning facility	WHIMIS, willing to learn, formal training or on-the-job training
	Arranging for specialized support like plumbers, etc.	Communication and planning skills, understanding of systems
Maintenance Assistants - Inside	Responding to immediate visitor needs	Communication skills, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Cleaning facility	WHIMIS, willing to learn, formal training or on-the-job training
Maintenance Assistants - Outside	Responding to immediate visitor needs	Communication skills, speak Mi'kmaq, knowledge of facility
	Cleaning facility	WHIMIS, willing to learn, formal training or on-the-job training

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