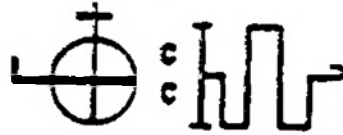
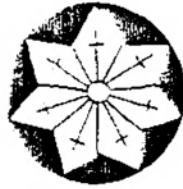


doCip



SANTE' MAWI'OMI wjit MIKMAQ  
MICMAC GRAND COUNCIL

KEPTIN JOHN JOE SARK - EPEKWITK

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sub-Commission on Prevention of  
Discrimination and Protection of Minorities  
Working Group on Indigenous Populations  
Ninth session  
22 July - 2 August 1991

*Submitted by:*

*John Joe Sark  
Captain of the Micmac  
Grand Council.*

WGIP 91/NAM-CAN/9



later the Canadian Government, continued the policy of destroying the language and culture of our people. Our great Canadian government set up residential schools where Mikmaq and other First Nation children were sent. These children were taken from their home at an early age of about four years old and put into these schools, which were run by different sects of Christian churches. The Mikmaq in the maritime provinces of Canada were sent to such a school in Shubenacadie, Nova Scotia. This school was barbaric and strict. The Mikmaq children were forced into a life of enforced rigid discipline. If they spoke their Mikmaq language or performed their sacred ceremonies, they were beaten until their little hands bled. If they threw up their food or wet the bed, the teacher would rub their faces into their vomit or urine.

These actions practiced against the Mikmaq people was an act of cultural genocide. If it was done to anyone other than the Indigenous people of Canada, they would be called war crimes.

As Mikmaq people, we must be given the opportunity to take charge of our cultural heritage, and we must be the ones who interpret our cultural property. The government of Canada should be encouraged by this committee to provide funding to establish museums in their interpretative centre that will properly display our Mikmaq history and artifacts.

Canada should also be requested to set up training courses so that Parks Canada and other provincial governments can hire Mikmaq youth who have dropped out of school. Their training would include revisiting known archeological sites in Mikmaq territory, under the direction of Parks Canada's archeologist. These young people would be trained to do archeological excavation. They will also be taught how to catalogue and interpret artifacts pertaining to our culture. Students will be required to take classes in Mikmaq history and language. They will also be taught how to build display cases needed for exhibition at Parks Canada's Interpretive Centre. This training will give them the opportunity and qualifications to act as guides, not only for Parks Canada but for the provincial government as well.

Because of the educational system in Canada, the dominant culture does not appreciate the rich cultural heritage of the Mikmaq.

For instance, in Prince Edward Island, Canada, where I was born, if you visited Province House before 1987, you would be invited to view an audio visual presentation concerning the Fathers of Confederation. In this particular presentation, prepared by Parks Canada, the Mikmaq and other First Nations people are depicted as 'heathens and infidels.' This type of portrayal of the Mikmaq people is an insult, not only to the First Nation, but to all Canadians as well. This is the sort

of image of the Mikmaq and other First Nations people that has given rise to the attitude in Canada that enabled the federal and provincial government to practice cultural genocide against us.

A high school in Charlottetown, PEI, has called themselves the Redmen. We requested the high school to drop its name symbol and mascot because they were being offensive to the Mikmaq nation. The students and some of the staff at this school couldn't see how the name, symbol and mascot were offensive to the Mikmaq. They have a symbol of a Indigenous person chasing other mascots with a spear. Their mascot was a non-aboriginal person dressed as a aboriginal person who painted himself for war and shouted and danced around yelling, 'Redmen on the Warpath.

The early Europeans who came to our territory called us Redmen because our people rubbed red ochre on the bodies of the deceased as a burial rite. We believe that our burial rites are sacred and should not be made fun of by other cultures.

The Mikmaq did not appreciate being depicted as savages by this school. We let the school know how we felt.... As an educational institution, we told them that they shouldn't be perpetuating negative stereotypes of our people. Most mascots are animals. The use of the Redmen name and symbol brings us down to the level of animals. Mikmaqs don't want to be anyone's symbols. We trust that this committee may be able to

encourage government across the world to stamp out this type of institutional racism. Institutional racism is found in the interpretation of history, an interpretation that is uncritically transmitted in the educational system. Such is the case regarding Mikmaq and other First Nation history. Historically, the Europeans categorized themselves as the 'civilized' and the Indigenous people as uncivilized or 'savages.' The underlying assumption was that as 'savages' the Indigenous people could not be as developed or ordered as the Europeans, and from this there has come a cluster of ideas, images, and words that has set the Mikmaq and other Indigenous people apart as inferior. This has to be corrected so that our respective culture can show their own rich cultural heritages.

The Mikmaq and other Indigenous people of the world should be given the opportunity to interpret their respective cultural heritage, artifacts, etc.

The Mikmaq, like all Indigenous people all over the world, want their artifacts repatriated. They want the bones of their ancestors sent back to their people for reburial so that their ancestral remains may be placed with dignity into the bosom of Mother Earth.

To shed more light on the attitudes of the dominant society believing that the Mikmaq culture was inferior to the Euro-Canadian culture. I wish to tell you about a recent repatriation in which I was involved in on P.E.I.

In 1959, a Mr. Joe MacDonald and his cousin from Watertown, Mass. U.S.A., were walking on the beach when they discovered a human skull sticking out of the sand. Mr. MacDonald called the R.C.M.P. feeling that this was a recent death. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police called Dr. John H. Maloney to come to the scene. They discovered about 8 skeletal remains of ancient Mikmaq people were uncovered. In April of this year, the farmer, who originally found these bones, told a member of the Scotchfort Mikmaq community that he had discovered these bones more than three decades ago. I was contacted. I visited the farmer, Mr. Joe MacDonald, and he told me about the idea that these remains might not have been properly buried.

These remains were taken home by Dr. John H. Maloney who was also a amateur archaeologist and that is where they remained until 1970. In the early 1970s, Dr. Maloney allowed his daughter to take these remains to Memorial University so that she could receive credits to her studies on archaeology.

When these remains were removed, the Mikmaq were not informed or consulted. Permission to remove these remains were not requested from the Mikmaq chief of P.E.I. Also, permission to transfer these remains out of province to Memorial University in Newfoundland was not requested from the Mikmaq of P.E.I.

On my first contact with Parks Canada concerning these remains, they told me that it would take about three years

to get these remains repatriated. I told them that I wanted these remains repatriated as soon as possible, or else I would go to Newfoundland and bring any ancestors remains home myself.

We received the remains of our ancestors on May 10, 1991. The ancient remains of our ancestors were returned to the bosom of Mother Earth with respect and dignity

my brothers and sisters, the United Nations must strongly recommend to her member nations, that our First Nations be given the opportunity to access U.N. Conventions in regard to Cultural properties to repatriate Cultural artifacts and human remains that rightfully belong to them. We must have direct access to those Conventions, and be allowed to use them, because our respective Countries are reluctant to recognize our respective Cultures.