

# “To Hold It In My Hand”



By

Madeline Augustine, Christopher Turnbull, Patricia Allen and Pamela Ward

NEW BRUNSWICK MANUSCRIPTS IN ARCHAEOLOGY 43

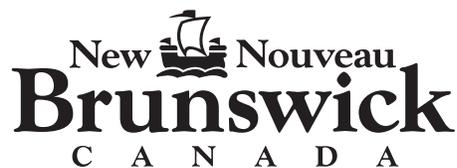
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Department of Wellness, Culture and Sport

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© Madeline Augustine, Christopher Turnbull, Patricia Allen,  
Pamela Ward and the Province of New Brunswick

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## Dedication

As authors of this booklet we would like to acknowledge the many contributions of Joseph Augustine and to dedicate this work to his memory. Without Joseph Augustine, Metepenagiag's past would never have met its present.



Joe Augustine (1911-1995).

## Introduction

The Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation (formerly known as Red Bank) is located at the junction of the Little Southwest Miramichi and the Northwest Miramichi Rivers in northeastern New Brunswick, Canada. This booklet provides a brief summary of the projects and relationships that have developed between two New Brunswick archaeologists, Christopher Turnbull and Patricia Allen, and the Metepenagiag community. Metepenagiag perspectives are given by Madeline Augustine and Pam Ward, individuals who have been inspired by their heritage to play significant roles in the overall development of their community. This booklet will provide four separate perspectives on the joint endeavors and partnerships between the Mi'kmaq and archaeologists.

A mutual story begins in 1972 when the late Joseph Michael Augustine, then a Councilor and former Chief of Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq First Nation, decided it was time to explore a childhood memory. Mr. Augustine's discovery and reporting of a 2500 year old burial mound, sacred to the Mi'kmaq, halted a menacing gravel mining operation and introduced his community to archaeology. While the mound was being explored (1975-1977) Mr. Augustine found the Oxbow, a deeply stratified archaeological site. Oxbow excavations (1978-1984) revealed the site was an intensively and continuously occupied 3000 year old fishing village. Working together for the past thirty years, the community and the two archaeologists have grown and changed, each being as influenced by one as the other. Archaeological surveys located over 60 additional pre-contact Metepenagiag sites. Other field projects were initiated. Site reports, academic publications, films, public literature, exhibits and other community based heritage projects have been accomplished. Both the Augustine Mound and the Oxbow site have been declared National Historic Sites for Canada. The community is currently developing a major cultural tourism attraction - *Metepenagiag Heritage Park* - to preserve and present Metepenagiag's outstanding cultural history.

It started with one man. Joseph Michael Augustine was born in Big Cove, New Brunswick in 1911. When he was a small boy his family moved to Red Bank,



Joe Augustine (1975).

now Metepenagiag. Growing up in Metepenagiag Joe spoke the Mi'kmaq language and learned many things about his heritage from his father John. As a teenager Joe worked on log drives on the Restigouche River. A bit later he married Mary Metallic from the Mi'kmaq community at Listuguj. Joe brought his bride back to Metepenagiag to live

and raise their family. Over the years Joe provided for Mary and their eight children by hunting, fishing, trapping, gardening and guiding on the Miramichi River. He was a master basket maker and sold many kinds of ash baskets to supplement the family income.

Joseph Michael "Joe-Mike" Augustine was a community leader. He was Chief of the Metepenagiag Nation for two terms, 1952-1954 and 1956-1958, and Councilor from 1960-1964 and again from 1966 to 1972. In 1987 he received a *Certificate of Excellence* from the Hudson's Bay Company. That year Joe was judged to have harvested and prepared the highest quality beaver pelts of any trapper in Canada. In 1988 Joseph M. Augustine was awarded New Brunswick's *Minister's Award for Heritage* in recognition of his discovery of the Augustine Mound and the Oxbow National Historic Sites.

In his hospital room just hours before his passing in 1995, Joseph viewed excerpts from the documentary movie *Metepenagiag: Village of Thirty Centuries* (1996). He was moved by the Metepenagiag scenery and by the story, a story dedicated to his lifetime commitment to his community, his culture and his heritage.

*“When my father was a young boy...”*

Madeline Augustine – Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Elder, President of *Metepenagiag Heritage Park* and eldest daughter of the late Joseph Augustine

When my father was a young boy of ten, his father took him to all kinds of different places. There were two places in particular that he remembered the most. They were the Castor Brook and the Sugary. Each time they went there they would pass by a mound where they would stop and make a pot of tea. Grandfather called this place a ceremonial ground. He would always tell my father the story of how the Indians of long ago used to dance around this mound. The mound was about thirty feet in diameter and three feet high. He told him about one Indian with a drum and how he would sit in the middle and others would dance around the mound. This story was passed down to my Grandfather by word of mouth from generation to generation for 3000 years. This story stayed in the back of my father's mind. Fifty years later he would come to realize how important these stories his father had told him were.

In 1971 while reading a National Geographic magazine, my father noticed a story about an Indian man from the United States who had dug into a mound and discovered a burial ground. Father thought about the place across the river and, being the inquisitive and curious man he was, got his axe and shovel and headed to the mound that would later be named after him.

Upon arriving home he told me that he had found something very important. He placed some newspapers on the table and carefully took the bundle out of his pack. The first thing that I noticed was a five inch spear sticking out of the birch bark wrapping. Father then took a little sharp knife and he started piercing the bundle and then we saw what appeared to be gold!

“Dad we are rich”, I said to my father. Turned out the *gold* was merely copper shavings from all the copper rings and beads in the bundle. However, it was then that I realized the importance of what my father had discovered. The next morning my father and I went



Madeline Augustine at the Wilson site (1975).

very early to the mound. I saw where he had dug a small hole. He started digging again in that same spot only this time he didn't uncover artifacts, he uncovered human bones. I told father to stop digging. This was a very serious matter and we had to get archaeologists to come and see this and his other findings.

I wondered where we were going to find an archaeologist. I didn't know if there was one in the province, but if there was such a person he would likely be in Fredericton. Fredericton is the capital of New Brunswick. If not, someone in Fredericton could surely help us.

My brother-in-law was attending the University of New Brunswick at the time. The University was in Fredericton. So, father and I headed to Fredericton with his findings. My brother-in-law told us that we should go to see Professor Paul Morrissy, an anthropologist at Saint Thomas University.

Professor Morrissy told father that what he had found was very significant and that the archaeologist, Dr. Chris Turnbull was away at the moment but he would definitely tell him about this when he returned. Not long after our trip to Fredericton, Dr. Chris Turnbull arrived in Red Bank. Father took him directly to the Mound. After examining it, Dr. Turnbull covered it up and went to speak to the then Chief Donald Ward. After their meeting the ball started rolling and in 1975, after all the red tape and paperwork, the excavating began. How exciting!

My interest in our history was the main reason for my excitement. I had always wanted to work with archaeologists so I told my father that I would give anything to be able to be part of the excavation. But, since I did not have a university degree, I thought that I would not be eligible. Father wrote a letter to Dr. Turnbull on my behalf and to my surprise Dr. Turnbull agreed that I would work with him along with my brother Howard and my friend Yvonne Paul.



Joe Augustine and Yvonne (Paul) Ward Meunier (1975).

In 1996, after three long years in production, a movie *-Metepenagaig: the Village of Thirty Centuries-* was released. The movie had been coordinated by my nephew Noah Augustine. It is a forty-eight minute long documentary and its main focus is Metepenagiag, its people and my father's discovery of the scared burial ground. His discovery of the 3000 year old Oxbow site is also featured in the movie.

Today I am very happy to see how far we have come since 1972. I have worked side by side with my father since his discoveries at the Augustine Mound and the Oxbow sites. Throughout the excavations and until the time of his passing in 1996, we both dreamed that someday there would be a museum to display all the artifacts that had been found, and that Metepenagiag would be known for its rich culture and heritage. Now, some thirty years later, these dreams are becoming a reality.

*"I will never forget the day I first met Joe Augustine..."*

Dr. Chris Turnbull – Retired New Brunswick Provincial Archaeologist (1970-2002)



Joe Augustine and Chris Turnbull (1986).

I will never forget the day I first meet Joe Augustine in the office of Paul Morrissy at St. Thomas University. Joe had brought in a big box filled with weird looking artifacts from a burial site he had just found across the river from his home. Having recently arrived in New Brunswick from western Canadian field research in 1970, this material was completely new to me: large spear points, knives, copper beads, organics, and a stone smoking pipe. The next Saturday I made my first visit to Red Bank with two graduate students. Joe took us over to the site; we drove in on an old woods road along the high bank across from the Oxbow. I could see Joe's diggings in the centre of a low earthen mound. The following year, with Joe's permission, we back-filled his excavations while discussions began about the future of the site.

Another factor entered into the picture during the spring of 1973. A good portion of the terrace that

Joe had taken me over to get to the site the previous September, had just disappeared into an expanding gravel pit owned by the First Nation. Since Red Bank is located at the confluence of two rivers (the Little Southwest and Northwest), there have been tremendous fluvial deposits made of high-grade aggregates. Gravel pits dot the region. Gravel test holes were perilously close to the mound itself! Without Joe's discovery, the whole area would have gone within a few short years as much archaeological material already had.

Colonialism, repression of indigenous societies, rural poverty, cultural assimilation: those concepts didn't mean a lot to a young graduate student new to being a civil servant who stepped into the middle of a five hundred-year-old struggle for survival and justice. Because land claims have not been settled in Atlantic Canada, these struggles are essentially unfinished business on behalf of Canada. I was working for one of Her Majesty's Governments—albeit a provincial government. I would soon learn that survival skills among Aboriginal leaders included learning how not to be “handled” by government employees. But, we needed to follow procedures and negotiate agreements. We needed to strike a partnership and work together.

Bureaucracy had a habit of flitting civil servants in and out of First Nations. I think my first test was one of dedication. I had to simply keep at it until the community realized I was not going to go away. I'm not demanding; I'm not loud; I don't talk a lot, but I am persistent. Initially the reaction to me at the Band Hall was basically mutterings about the “bone-digger's back”, each time I'd show up for a meeting or drop in. It took three years before there was a certain level of comfort. What began as a discussion with the Metepenagiag Chiefs and Councils over the wish to excavate a single site in 1973 was to turn into the first of many years of joint effort over Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Heritage.

In my job with the Province of New Brunswick I was free to develop the New Brunswick archaeology program as I saw fit. This even allowed us to work outside provincial jurisdiction on “federal” lands

and develop face-to-face relations with First Nations' communities. Rather than having to deal with huge, seemingly insoluble issues we could deal effectively with local control over local resources and build-up a series of working relationships with First Nations.

In 1974, I got tacit agreement to proceed, funded by a contract from the (then) National Museum of Canada's Archaeological Survey of Canada. However, the artifacts were to be turned over to the National Museum in Ottawa as a part of the contract. I could not sign: I don't even remember if I brought this up with the Chief as I found it so unrealistic. I refused the contract.

In 1975, I applied through the University of New Brunswick for a Canada Council Research Grant to excavate the Augustine Mound. Then Chief Donald Ward had agreed to take a chance on our doing the work and said yes. This necessitated getting a permit



*Metepenagiag New Brunswick's Oldest Village project: Chris Turnbull (left), Anthony Haddad (center), Stephen Paul (left), Pat Allen (seated).*

from Indian Affairs to trespass on Indian Land supported by a Band Council Resolution on behalf of the Metepenagiag community. I believe this was the first ever Permit issued in Canada for archaeological research on Indian Land. One condition was that the human remains were to be re-interred in the Mound. This was a clear and unequivocal statement of Red Bank's ownership over its archaeological heritage. I agreed.

The excavation crew was a mix from the community and from students at the University of New Brunswick and St. Thomas University. We functioned steadily over the next two summers, during some of the hottest weather I remember. It was in 1977 that Joe Augustine found the Oxbow site, a site just as important as Augustine for its own reasons. To fund work on this site we got a Canada Works grant that also funded the Red Bank History project. This project allowed us to do some oral history, record photos and material culture. Looking back, one of my major regrets is that we did not do more ethno-history in parallel with archaeology.

The question of what to do with the cultural materials from the community had been an issue since Joe's discoveries. Tied to ownership were issues

of curatorship, conservation, research and respect. I remember the day in 1975 when the idea of a museum at Red Bank to house and display the Metepenagiag archaeological treasures came to mind and the chosen vehicle was Parks Canada. The first proposal was written in 1976 as a result of the nomination of the Augustine Mound to the National Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada. The application and approval of National Historic Site status for the Augustine Mound was a pivotal event, because it brought Parks Canada into the picture and, because the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada made a strong recommendation to interpret the site to all Canadians. This was re-enforced a few years later with the successful application for the Oxbow site.

Parks Canada began work with Metepenagiag in the late 1970s: holding meetings, putting together briefs, drawing up preliminary plans, and supporting the research, including the technical report on Augustine Mound and funding for the McKinley site research (Turnbull 1986) at the British Museum of Mankind. Archaeological Services New Brunswick opened a temporary exhibition in the community for two summers under agreement with Parks Canada that a future interpretation center would be forthcoming.



Madeline Augustine at the Oxbow Site (1978).

Unfortunately, Park Canada's demand, an unwavering one at the time, was that the land—Mi'kmaq reserve land—surrounding the Augustine Mound be transferred to their ownership. They would develop the site, but they had to *own* the land base. Such a paternalistic approach was unacceptable to Metepenagiag and created a lasting impression that is just now melting away. The agreement with Parks Canada fell into disarray.

Between the late 1970s and the late 1990s was a time of great turmoil over archaeology with the Aboriginal community in New Brunswick. While Augustine Research went into hibernation largely because of this political climate, Metepenagiag was in the eye of this hurricane because of our willing acceptance of Metepenagiag control over Metepenagiag affairs. The increasing friction between the Native community and archaeology was also a pale reflection of the increasing frictional issues of the place of Native societies within Canadian society.

For archaeology however, it was a question of how to uncouple the discussion from archaeologists and couple it to the Native experience bound up in the making of those artifacts and sites. It required that archaeologists step back far enough to realize that in this time and in this place, the most important aspect of their work is with the community itself. Furthermore, it gets to the essence of archaeology's social contribution in the Canadian context—it culturally strengthens communities. Strong communities are a fundamental prerequisite to finding equitable and lasting living arrangements. That is why the development currently underway at Metepenagiag will be about the people of the three thousand-year-old village of Metepenagiag, not about the Augustine Mound or the Oxbow site *per se*.

Metepenagiag recovered from the Parks Canada impasse of the early 1980s. We had to wait for Canada to change, to embrace its Aboriginal reality before Metepenagiag could be seriously considered once again. Parks Canada did change, particularly at the operations level and fully participated in many undertakings. New Brunswick also began to change. A number of initiatives were undertaken with Parks Canada, Archaeological Services New Brunswick, and Metepenagiag Mi'kmaq Nation that kept the relationship alive during these last twenty years. Some of these initiatives have included: static and traveling

exhibitions, reburial, booklet, movie/video, provincial recognition for Joe Augustine's contribution to New Brunswick heritage, brochures, Park Canada studies on Aboriginal themes, a new development proposal, a feasibility study and business plan.

Since the project started from within the First Nations community and control has remained with that community, a new kind of relationship has developed in which archaeology functions as a part of the living history and culture of the community of Metepenagiag. There are ups and downs, but we have found some space to work together in spite of the "insoluble" bigger issues that surround us all in Canada.

*"I'd better work from this perspective."*

Patricia M. Allen – Provincial Archaeologist/Manager,  
Archaeological Services Unit, Heritage Branch, Wellness  
Culture and Sport

I first came to Metepenagiag as part of Chris Turnbull's Augustine Mound excavation team. An experienced field hand with past supervisory experience, in those early years I was occasionally put *in-charge* of related Red Bank archaeological surveys, salvage and testing projects. I got to know the Mi'kmaq people, their river and their land. I developed multiple Metepenagiag relationships, some work related, some not. For myself, this entire Metepenagiag



Toni Paul, Mitchell Site (1978).

experience, has enriched my personal life and guided my professional development.

In 1975 Metepenagiag had youth summer work projects available. However, cutting bush and painting fences was neither challenging nor rewarding for bright young minds. With the discoveries of Mr. Augustine an archaeology domino effect took hold. The Augustine Mound excavation led to surveys that led to testing projects which in turn led to more excavations, all of which created some interesting jobs.

Both Mi'kmaq students and mature learners easily latched onto field and laboratory archaeological techniques. By 1979, Metepenagiag had more archaeologically skilled hands than existed in the entirety of the rest of our province. University students joining the projects were frequently taught field techniques by experienced Metepenagiag people. Meanwhile, combing the land and drawing on Mr. Augustine's lifetime of knowledge, we soon discovered that Metepenagiag was totally covered with Mi'kmaq archaeological sites; so many in fact, that in certain places it was difficult to determine where one site began and another ended.

Over the years the archaeology work led to other cultural heritage based projects and to public awareness

initiatives that made Metepenagiag known regionally and nationally. All of the projects were approached as partnerships between archaeology and Metepenagiag. Money was always a problem but we did what we did with what we had or, with what we could find. We made use of every grant and employment program possible. If, as provincial employees we, the archaeologists, were not able to apply for specific monies due to jurisdictional regulations, the First Nation would apply. Regardless of where the money originated, Metepenagiag people were up front participating in and driving the discovery, recovery, recording and presentation of their heritage.

I supervised my first field project in the Metepenagaig area in the spring of 1975. I was conducting salvage excavations at a large pre-contact village site located opposite Red Bank on the Northwest Miramichi River. My crew included several Mi'kmaq workers. At the Wilson site, my view of archaeology changed forever. I realized that the history we were digging up belonged to Madeline, to Howard and to Yvonne. It belonged to their families and to their community. It belonged to their Mi'kmaq ancestors. If I was going to be an archaeologist perhaps I'd better work from this perspective. Later that same summer I was asked by the community to write one page on Metepenagiag



Metepenagiag archaeology and exhibit team (1979).

history because the community was hosting the New Brunswick Indian Summer Games. This was my first experience in promoting *Metepenagiag* heritage.

In 1978 and 1979 I directed work at the Oxbow site, a Mi'kmaq riverside village, incredibly rich and deeply stratified. Radio-carbon dates revealed that this village had been the home of the Metepengaig Mi'kmaq for nearly the last 3000 years. The excavations proceeded with community crews of twenty or more. Crew members alternated between doing field work and guiding visitors around an archaeology Exhibit that we had mounted in a Red Bank school classroom.

In 1983 still more sites were identified and tested. During a 1984 season at Oxbow there was incredible community interest in what we were finding. People were not interested in reading a thick archaeological document of charts and tables, they just wanted to know what life was like in the past. I drafted a short article on what had been discovered, made a few copies and passed them along to the then Metepenagiag school principal and to other Miramichi region teachers. But my efforts to find funding to print the little community history booklet were unsuccessful for several years.

In the early 1990s the federal government, through the Department of Canadian Heritage, was sponsoring an *Access to Archaeology* program. I inquired on behalf of the community. The Metepenagiag booklet project was eligible! The community could apply. Chief Michael Ward signed the grant application. Together Councilor Anthony Haddad and I found various community members and teachers to review and edit the text. The monies arrived and we hired a Mi'kmaq artist, a photographer and a reputable publishing firm. Fine quality paper was donated by a local mill. Six months later we had 2000 copies of a glossy little booklet entitled *Metepenagiag: New Brunswick's Oldest Village* (Allen 1991).

The *Metepenagiag* book-launch turned into a community pride celebration. The grant allowed us to send free copies to all First Nations communities across Canada and to New Brunswick public and school libraries. The book's artwork, by the late Roger Simon, was impressive. One of his paintings was made into a poster. Others have since been used in various Red Bank related media presentations including films and web sites.

A few months before the booklet was printed, another opportunity to publicly announce the archaeological discoveries at Metepenagiag presented itself. New Brunswick is the only officially bi-lingual province in Canada and a third of our residents claim French as their first language. Government services, including education are provided in both languages. Larger regional centers have combined French schools and cultural facilities. At Miramichi City, only fifteen miles from Metepenagiag, there is the French Center, Carrefour Beausoleil. This Center houses a fine gallery called GALERIE ARTcadienne.



Delbert Ward (left) and Terry Tenass at the Oxbow Site (1984).

GALERIE ARTcadienne had an unexpected opening in its 1992 winter schedule. Could Red Bank and Archaeological Services mount an exhibit of their archaeological findings for a three week period? Very quickly a rather remarkable photo and artifact exhibit came together. "*Objects From Our Miramichi Native Past*" was presented in French and English. It filled the GALERIE ARTcadienne and the overall statement was impressive. The exhibit opened with a Mi'kmaq prayer, a sweet grass ceremony and words of welcome from Chief Michael Ward, the provincial Minister for Heritage and the Director of the Center. On the coldest night in January 1992, French, English and Mi'kmaq were warmed by the sweet grass and by the spiritual aura surrounding the artifacts. Over its three week showing, "*Objects From Our Miramichi*



Todd Ward (left) and Darren Augustine at the Oxbow Site (1984).

*Native Past*” registered large attendance numbers as French schools from across the province bussed in students. Young Acadians, proud of their own distinctive heritage, were introduced to their Mi’kmaq neighbours in a new light. While not text heavy, the selected photos and artifacts spoke eloquently of a unique, vibrant and spiritually rich Mi’kmaq culture. In retrospect, I regret that the *Objects* exhibit was not produced in all three languages. A few years later, our next Metepenagiag exhibit was produced in three languages.

In 1997 New Brunswick’s Regional Development Corporation, a government agency, partnered with the Canadian government to sponsor projects in Aboriginal Economic Development. In a bizarre arrangement, Aboriginal groups could not directly access this funding. With Metepenagiag community efforts underway to develop a major cultural heritage tourism product, Metepenagiag was anxious to produce a traveling exhibit. It could promote Metepenagiag heritage and simultaneously provide the community with a sampler product that could be used to offer visitors a taste of the potential of *Metepenagiag Heritage Park*. Archaeological Services could apply for the funds but we had to demonstrate a substantial monetary contribution. Provincial money was tight. I stripped another exhibit of its content, put a price tag on the good quality recycled hardware and

offered it as our monetary contribution to the Metepenagiag exhibit application. The application was approved. With their own aboriginal tourism product, this economic development project would represent the first step for Metepenagiag into the mainstream tourism industry.

A community elders group guided the exhibit content. A storyline was drafted. Metepenagiag elders translated the text and recorded the same in Mi’kmaq. A design was produced that fit our recycled hardware. On June 28th, 1997 the late Chief Michael Augustine unveiled “*Metepenagiag: Where Spirits Live*”, an art and artifact exhibition celebrating Metepenagiag’s past and present.

This exhibit traveled to over a dozen northeastern venues and was visited by people of all ages and from all walks of life. The exhibit was finally installed at Metepenagiag as the community’s first cultural heritage tourism product.



Exhibit guides l to r: Brenda Ward, Madeline Augustine and Ina Augustine (1979).

More recently our Archaeological Services efforts have been driven by the desire to help Metepenagiag fulfill its dream of *Metepenagiag Heritage Park*. Archaeological Services will continue to participate in and push for the support and recognition of Metepenagiag heritage. The sites researched by Chris Turnbull and I, in partnership with the people of Metepenagiag, have added much to the understanding

of the past history of the Miramichi region and the far northeast. But the work has gone beyond the basic academic advancement of knowledge. The approaches taken to different projects over the years have always had valued-added components. Often projects were specifically focused to offer information to encourage broader public understanding and cultural awareness. In some cases, the archaeologists were mere participants in Metepenagiag driven initiatives but, we meshed well. When the *Metepenagaig Heritage Park* facility opens in 2007, it will have an environmentally controlled artifact storage space and an archaeology lab for resident or visiting researchers. New partnerships will develop and Metepenagiag's past will continue to play a role in it's future.

### *Met – a – where and Arch – a – what?*

Pamela Ward –Executive Director, Metepenagiag Heritage Park

I was seventeen and had just graduated from high school. My summer job was to work alongside provincial archaeologists and other youth from my community at the Oxbow site. I was excited to be on the “pit” crew, the nickname given to all of the summer excavation groups because of the gravel pits that surround the area of The Augustine Mound and the Oxbow National Historic Sites. Finally, it was my turn to find some artifacts and be able to brag about the coolest summer job when I went away to college in the fall. 1984 would be the last summer of major excavations in our community. The excavations at Augustine Mound and Oxbow began in 1975. Reflecting back now on the history of partnership between community and archaeology, working on these excavations provided an opportunity for my learning and growth as a youth, and as a Mi'kmaq community member from Metepenagiag. In my view the partnership to undertake the archaeological excavations was between: the Elder who shared the knowledge handed down to him about these special places in an effort to protect and preserve, the leadership of my community who had enough vision to learn more about our heritage and, the provincial government seeking to fulfill their mandate regarding cultural resources.

For many years, I could only listen to my older cousins and friends talk about their experiences on these pit crews. They would tell exciting stories about finding remnants of our Mi'kmaq culture; some that were



Students Joan Peterson (left) and Pam Ward Oxbow Site (1984).

radio carbon dated to be 1000 and 1500 years old. They would also relate stories of our ancient village while digging into the earth just up the road from where our main community is today. Their lingo of the scientific methods of archaeology would interest and impress me. It was clear that they were not only earning a wage from a decent summer job but learning about themselves, what archaeology can tell us of the way our ancestors the Mi'kmaq of Metepenagiag lived many many years ago. Until that summer, I called myself a Native from Red Bank. After that summer, I began to say proudly that “I'm a Mi'kmaq (of the Algonquin language family) from Metepenagiag (traditional name for our community)”. I was inspired to learn more.



Pam Ward (left) with student archaeologist Sandy Glidden-Hachey (1997).

As the youngest daughter of an Indian Chief, I had some understanding of my community and its history, but that summer wearing jeans and a sweatshirt in the blazing heat to protect myself from scratching

bushes on our daily trek to the dig site, I learned a whole lot more about who I was, what I should be proud of and the precious heritage that I was holding in my hand – the heritage and history of my people, the Mi'kmaq. This new understanding that grew over the years would give me a stronger sense of self, confidence and pride to go forth and make a life for myself and become interested in the development of my community.

What I knew growing up was that my father and his fellow Chiefs, like leaders before and after them to present day, would constantly try to improve the conditions of our communities known as reserves. They negotiated with the federal government, as they do today, principally through the Department of Northern and Indian Affairs, to respond to the social, economic, health and basic living needs. They, on a nation to nation basis, faithfully negotiated within the longstanding treaty agreements between governments from generations before.

I remember when it finally clicked for me. One afternoon while standing in a pit so deep I couldn't see out of it, I had some charcoal in my hand from an ancient hearth some 1500 years old. I imagined my ancestors building the fire there to cook their food and keep warm. The archaeologist told me that if I dug a bit more, I might find sturgeon bones. She said a seven foot long sturgeon could provide for the community for a long time. What? I thought the Mi'kmaq lived on salmon because that's what we had for supper the night before. My father later told me that when the rivers changed, the sturgeon didn't come here to spawn

anymore and the salmon began to be the mainstay of the Mi'kmaq. I had a lot to learn. I was holding my heritage and history in my hand, these blackened inconspicuous indicators of a strong nation that once had its own structures for governance, and its own traditional means to deliver social, educational and health services for its people.

I learned that Canada had not lived up to the treaty agreements signed by our ancestors to ensure our well-being and peaceful coexistence together. The years of colonization and assimilation that followed contact with European settlers some 500 years before, had resulted in extreme discrimination, both systemic and racial. There was a dramatic inequity in resource sharing. Ultimately the relegation to miniscule land bases and the lack of resources led to the marginalization of a once proud and thriving people.

Our community leaders over the years have also tried to improve relations with the local non-native community who in my opinion, as a youth, were as unfamiliar with us as we were with them. The history and heritage they knew about us was never written or expressed by us and in most cases, was written from an ethnocentric viewpoint serving to portray us as uncivilized societies. There was no regard for our rich lifeways and the many contributions of our ancestors. We felt we were treated unfairly by their ancestors and they had no true appreciation of our people and our community that was so ancient and enduring. I struggled to understand that they had no reliable mechanisms, institutions or resources to even begin to understand our history and heritage in relation to their



Metepenagiag *Where Spirits Live* exhibit opening (1997), l to r: Metepenagiag Elder Burton Ward, Metepenagiag Elder Madeline Augustine, New Brunswick Minister of Municipalities, Culture and

Housing Ann Breault, Metepenagiag First Nation Chief Michael Augustine, Big Cove Elder Mildred Milliea and Big Cove Elder William John Milliea.

own ancestors settling in this land. In a Grade 8 social studies class in a New Brunswick high school, I had to read out loud for my fellow non-Native students that the Natives were savages. I looked at myself later that day not agreeing with what our course book had said.

With this type of history being taught to young impressionable youth, no wonder the relations between our cultures were strained. I realized that we had to become responsible for our own history and that we must play a lead role in influencing the best way to share it with our neighbors; that we would only respect our ancestors through the preservation, protection and presentation of the history and heritage of the Mi'kmaq of Metepenagiag. We also needed likeminded partners to do this.

The notion of creating the *Metepenagiag Heritage Park*, was first envisioned by Joe Augustine, the discoverer of the Augustine Mound and Oxbow National Historic Sites. He felt it was important to see the history and heritage that had been handed down to him by his father and grandfather meshed with the information gained from the years of archaeological excavations. He wanted a museum to tell the story of the ancient Mi'kmaq of Metepenagiag.

My predecessor, Joe's grandson had a feasibility study underway when I started work on the *Metepenagiag Heritage Park* project some seven years ago. I had been employed in different areas of community development up to this point. I was well aware of the challenges faced by many First Nations in the areas of job creation, skills acquisition and business development. Metepenagiag was no different. A development officer had to be creative and forward thinking about long term sustainable economic development. Eco-tourism was a viable alternative for us. A book, a movie and other public education resources were produced in partnership with other federal and provincial agencies and departments. Archaeologists were always the lead partners at the table helping to make these things happen with members of our community and others.

Like my ancestors, we have come to know that we need to reach out as a community to those around in peace and friendship so that all may benefit. The relationship between the Canadian government and all Aboriginals in this country is focused on daily on a variety of levels. Aboriginal rights are tried and tested in all courts of the land and a greater relationship will be forged in some way. What way we don't know, given the history, the law and the lawmakers. What



Talking about the future of Metepenagiag's past (1994) l to r: Chris Turnbull, unknown, Vance McNab, Pat Allen, Elder Joseph Augustine,

Metepenagiag First Nation Chief Michael Ward, Councilor Anthony Haddad, Noah Augustine, Conrad Beaubien.

we do know is that we will be living here together for some time to come and we should work together, in partnership.

As my involvement grew in the *Metepenagiag Heritage Park* project, I began to view partnership in a specific way. Being responsible for bringing resources together and as a liaison for my community and other interested stakeholders, our community has been able to strike a number of partnerships that have resulted in various projects and initiatives working toward the creation of the *Metepenagiag Heritage Park*. Constant is the need to balance the western science of archaeology and the stories handed down from generation to generation in the on-going research and information gathering of our heritage and history. Partners at the table who respect the need for the Mi'kmaq story to be told by Mi'kmaq in a Mi'kmaq context have always been welcomed by our community.

Not only as a project manager, but as a mother of two daughters, I see my children work on elementary

and high school projects using cultural resources that came from many years of such partnerships between community and archaeology. They are passing on the knowledge of our heritage and history to their non-Aboriginal school mates and teachers. When explaining to them at an early age, I would simply say that neighbors should know their neighbors in order to be good neighbors. I am very proud each time myself or my children stand in front of a group of people and are able to provide insight and education on the shared history and heritage of the land where we all live today. These are inspiring forums that tell me I'm in the right place doing the right thing with the right people for the right reasons. Coincidentally, it is also in such forums where more partnerships are conceived and pursued. When people have a deeper understanding of something important to them, they naturally want to pursue more knowledge of it and reach out to do it together.

In closing, having several years of experience working in the area of community development and especially



Heritage Park announcement (2005) l to r: Elder Joey Paul, Member of Parliament Charles Hubbard, New Brunswick Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Hon. Brad Green; Hon. Bernard Lord Premier of New Brunswick, Metepenagaig Heritage Park Executive Director Pam Ward,

Metepenagiag First Nation Chief Noah Augustine, Federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Andy Scott, Elder and President of Metepenagiag Heritage Park Madeline Augustine, and Elder George Paul. (Photo courtesy of Metepenagiag Heritage Park).

with the development of a specific community driven initiative - the *Metepenagiag Heritage Park* scheduled to open in Spring of 2007 – partnerships remain fundamental. I have learned that partnerships are made or broken based on the individuals involved in the process. It is the quality of the people involved in these partnerships that make the difference. Sometimes individuals and groups come together from a place of purpose, or they need to carry out a mandate or respond to a situation. However, what affects the process of partnership and takes it to another level is when the people who have been partners by purpose become champions by choice. It is this higher level in the process that not only yields results but builds stronger relationships which can lead to unlimited benefits. It is this type of partnership that has existed within the context of the value of gathering and protecting cultural resources at Metepenagiag for as long as I can remember.

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