

Aboriginal Peoples

In Unit 2, you saw how the arrival of European settlers had a big impact on First Nations and Inuit communities. By the mid-1800s, this impact was being very strongly felt in the Atlantic region.

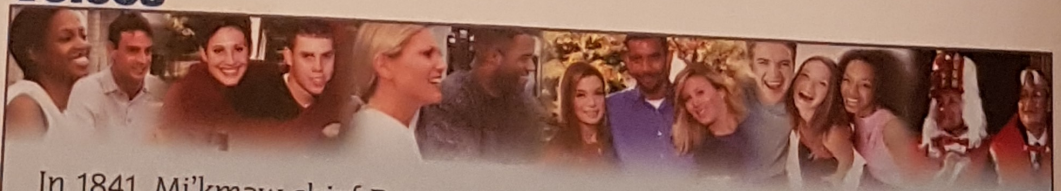
By this same time, there had also been an important political change. The colonial leaders were no longer treating First Nations as separate nations. Instead, they were starting to see Aboriginal peoples as being under the control of the British government. To make matters worse, many settlers and members of the government had *racist* ideas about First Nations, Inuit, and Métis. (Racism is a prejudice based on a person's heritage or skin colour.) These attitudes resulted in discrimination in many situations.

Loss of Land

In Canada West and the Maritime colonies, the arrival of the Loyalists and the British and Irish settlers created a great demand for land. In Canada West, the colonial government made arrangements to take over more First Nations lands. Sometimes this happened through treaties, and sometimes the government bought the land.

In Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick, the colonial governments generally allowed settlers to take whatever land they wanted. When First Nations leaders complained, the governments set aside certain lands only for First Nations use. However, the governments didn't actually stop settlers from taking over these lands. Eventually, First Nations communities were left with only small areas of poor-quality land. By the mid-1800s, most people lived with poverty, and many communities faced starvation.

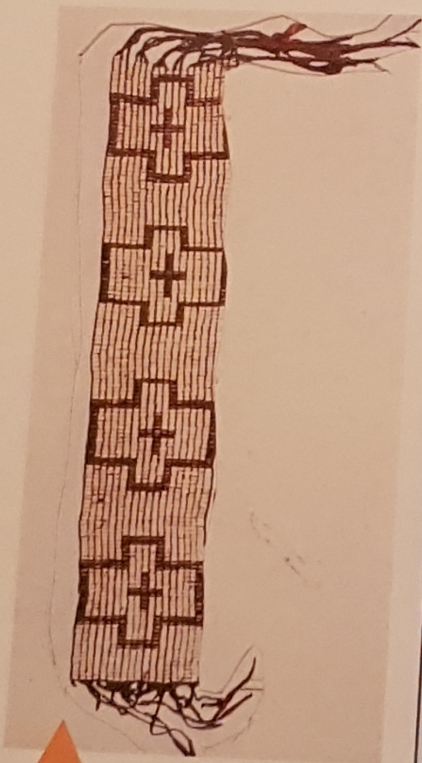
Voices



In 1841, Mi'kmaw chief Paussamigh Pemmeenauweet [BEH-zah-may BEM-muh-NAH-wee-ed] sent this message to the Queen of England.

I cannot cross the great Lake [Atlantic Ocean] to talk to you for my Canoe is too small, and I am old and weak. I cannot look upon you for my eyes not see so far. You cannot hear my voice across the Great Waters. I therefore send this Wampum and paper talk to tell the Queen I am in trouble. My people are in trouble. . . . No hunting Grounds—No Beaver—no Otter . . . poor for ever. . . . All these Woods once ours. Our Fathers possessed them all. . . . White man has taken all that was ours. . . . Let us not perish.

Source: Petition, undated, but stamped "Received 25 January 1841," Colonial Office Series, PRO, London, O.217/179, ff. 406-8.



Wampum is traditionally made from sinew and shell beads. One of its purposes is to record important messages and agreements.