

Re-examining Our Indigenous Roots

Echoes From the Past – Essay # 4



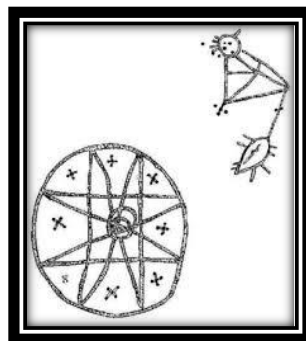
While the community of Hammonds Plains may have officially started in 1786, with the issuing of land grants by the British Governor, there has been an indigenous presence in the area for much of the last thousand years. Our original inhabitants, the Mi' Kmaq First Nations peoples have a most intriguing history in the area.

For hundreds of years before the Hammonds Plains Grants were issued, the Mi' Kmaq called this land their hunting grounds. For many of those years, there was a small group of Mi' Kmaq who wintered around the modern day Pockwock Lake and Big Indian Lake regions and travelled to Bedford Basin during the warmer months to take advantage of the resources of the sea. Unfortunately, tragedy struck in the 1700's when they met up with members of French expeditions and many contracted and subsequently died of various diseases. This ultimately left their numbers in the region greatly reduced. There were references of isolated indigenous peoples still living in the Pockwock Lake area, as late as the 1820's. During much of the 19th and 20th century, the Mi' Kmaq presence in the area was basically non-existent.

After the 1786 lands grants were issued, the new residents gave names with Mi' Kmaq connections to various lakes in the area. The name Pockwock Lake is believed to be derived from 'Paakwaak', a Mi' Kmaq word meaning **'We Must Stop Here, We Can Go No Further'**. Tomahawk Lake, Little Pockwock Lake, Big and Little Indian Lakes are other bodies of water in the area with names deriving from Indigenous roots.

In 1966, the indigenous presence in Hammonds Plains was once again rejuvenated with the Federal Government transfer of lands on Wallace Hill (the area between Hammonds Plains Consolidated School and Yankeetown Road) for First Nations use. The lands were ultimately taken over by the Sipekne'katik First Nations Band, who have recently built a new entertainment center on lands they purchased to supplement the Wallace Hill property. In 2010, Acadia First Nation also purchased land in the community and now operate a convenience store/entertainment center on the Hammonds Plains Road.

The First Nations folks who once roamed free in the region as hunters and gatherers now can add an economic presence to their Hammonds Plains legacy.



Copy of Mi'Kmaq Petroglyphs – Admiral's Cove Park (Bedford Basin)