

## *Chapter Four*

# **The Languages of Communication**

We might conclude from the 1726 treaty that the British and Mi'kmaq understood their agreement in the same way. In this chapter I suggest otherwise. The treaty's text is the most complete and reliable source of information regarding the agreement. However, this document alone is insufficient to evaluate its meanings. Nuances exist. Certain English phrases, such as that the Mi'kmaq would not molest 'settlements already made or lawfully to be made,' and that the Mi'kmaq would make their submission to King George 'in as ample a manner as they have formerly done to the Most Christian King,' breed ambiguity rather than clarity. How were phrases like these explained by King George's representative, John Doucett, and by the Acadian Prudent Robichaux, who translated Doucet's words into Mi'kmaq? Did Robichaux's explanations provide the delegates with an unambiguous understanding of 'lawfully to be made,' and of what the British meant by 'submission'?

To answer that question, we need to evaluate how language affected each party's understanding of the treaties signed at Boston and at Annapolis Royal. In this chapter I use the term 'language' in its broadest context to include any means that people and communities use to communicate with one another. I contend that the different languages used by the British and the Wabanaki in 1726 limited their ability to form a perfectly mutual understanding of each article of the treaty.<sup>1</sup>

*Articles of Peace and Agreement: Clause 1, Part 2*

*... by which Agreement it being requir'd tht the Said Articles Shoul'd be ratified with Full Power & Authority by an Unanimous Consent & desire of the Said*