

British Politics and Treaty Making

The 1726 treaty has been analysed as an oral text written in an alphabetic form. In examining the treaty's oral meanings, two strategies have been employed. First, an emphasis has been placed on how the Mi'kmaq delegates would have interpreted the treaty's articles – an approach complicated by the fact that neither English nor French was widely spoken or understood in Mi'kmaq villages. The problems posed by these cultural hurdles have been addressed by exploring the historical context in which the treaty was created to understand how its English terms would have been understood by the Mi'kmaq. This analysis suggests that British and Mi'kmaq delegates did not share a common understanding of phrases such as 'lawfully to be made' and 'make our submission to his Majesty in as ample a manner as they had formally done to his Most Christian King,' since they understood their historical relationships to these concepts differently. Second, this chapter continues the analysis by examining the British individuals who signed the treaty. I contend that an analysis of the economic and social interests of Nova Scotia officials suggests that they interpreted the treaty in a manner that explicitly recognized that the Mi'kmaq were independent of British law.

In 1726 both Lawrence Armstrong, the lieutenant-governor of British Nova Scotia, and John Doucett, the lieutenant-governor of Annapolis Royal, were representatives of King George in Nova Scotia. As officers of the Crown, they were also responsible for negotiating the ratification of the Boston treaty with the Mi'kmaq. Armstrong was absent from Annapolis in June 1726, but Doucett was not, and as the most senior official in Nova Scotia after Armstrong, it was he who oversaw the ratification of the treaty.