

Chapter Eight

The Founding of Halifax: Re-interpreting the 1726 Treaty

On 12 February 1755, Paul Laurent met with members of the Nova Scotia Council in Halifax. Laurent had been delegated by Mi'kmaq community leaders to speak to the council regarding a proposed peace.¹ Though the Mi'kmaq and the British still considered the 1726 treaty to be the basis of their friendship, by 1755 the nature of their relationship had changed. The British were no longer a negligible presence in Nova Scotia. New settlements had been made at Halifax in 1749, and at Lunenburg in 1753, and new forts had been built: Fort Lawrence in 1750, and Fort Edward in 1751. Though the 1726 treaty had been renewed in 1749 and 1752, not all Mi'kmaq communities had signed, wary of Great Britain's long-term intentions in Mi'kma'ki. Convincingly, the Mi'kmaq pointed to the new settlements and forts that the British had built without their approval. Paul Laurent wanted to renegotiate the 1726 treaty so as to safeguard Mi'kmaq fishing and hunting grounds against the enlarged British presence.

On 12 February, Paul Laurent presented the council with a written text outlining the terms of a proposed peace. This proposal suggested that a tract of land, encompassing much of the northern section of mainland Mi'kma'ki, be set aside for the exclusive use of the Mi'kmaq. The council minutes describe the scope of the area: "That they should have a tract of Land given them for Fishing, Shooting and Hunting, which Tract should extend from Bay of Verte along the Coast to Canso, from thence along the Eastern Coast up to a Place within three Leagues of the new Eastern Settlement; from thence in a right Line to the Indian Mass-house on the Chibenacadie River, from thence to the Head of Minas Bason, from thence to the western part of Cobequid, and from thence to Beaubassin including the English Fort at Chignecto, which