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Sharing the same waters

Fifteen years have passed since the ground-breaking 1999 *Marshall* decision and the Mi'kmaq Lobster Crisis that followed which saw two months of tit-for-tat violence. In this article, we examine how relations among Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers have changed since the decision and its aftermath, and interpret intergroup relations by using Herbert Blumer's group-position theory. The article presents data collected from ethnographic observation and interviews with Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers in a Maritime community. We find that although fishers share the same waters, and have a generally amicable public relationship, many misconceptions and resentments persist.

Keywords: fisheries (or fish), *Marshall* decision, Mi'kmaq, indigenous, Settler, Atlantic Canada

In 1999, the Supreme Court of Canada *Marshall* decision ruled that Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples have the right to hunt and fish in order to maintain a moderate livelihood. Shortly after the decision, Indigenous fishers took to the water after decades of being largely shut out of the commercial fishery. Many Settler fishers felt threatened by greater Mi'kmaq entry into the fishery. This sparked a crisis which gained national attention and was characterised by roughly two months of tit-for-tat violence across the Maritimes.

The crisis ended with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) issuing what have since been termed *Marshall* Agreements with most Indigenous communities in the region, and with the Supreme Court issuing a clarification which limited the scope of the decision, making it an empty shell of a treaty (Palmater 2000). Few have investigated how Indigenous and Settler fishers coexist in the post-*Marshall* decision context and what it means to 'share the same waters'.

Our article explores this context through ethnographic observational and interview data gathered from two months of fieldwork in a rural fishing community in the Maritimes. We examine the data by employing Herbert Blumer's (1955, 1958) group-position theory, which has also been used by Bobo and Tuan (2006), Denis (2012, 2015) and Fleras (1990) to

understand contemporary relations among Indigenous peoples and Settlers. In this article we question whether interactions among Indigenous peoples and Settlers through sharing the same waters is enough to sustain amicable relations among communities and whether the level and type of interactions which occur are more important for understanding how the two groups perceive one another and potentially build long-term solidarities.

Literature review

In 1993, Donald Marshall Junior was charged with fishing eel illegally, out of season and without a permit. On 17 September 1999, Marshall was acquitted of the charges based on a 1760–1 Treaty which guarantees Mi'kmaq and Maliseet peoples' right to hunt and fish in order to maintain a moderate livelihood. Immediately following the *Marshall* decision, the Mi'kmaq took to the water, seeing it as an instance of hope for economic independence in their communities (Coates 2000; Ramos 2007). Settler fishers reacted by demanding compensation, partaking in protests and violent demonstrations (Ramos 2007: 271), and contributing to a shocking rhetoric of racism (Coates 2000).

In an effort to halt the escalating violence, the government pushed for Mi'kmaq communities to stop their fishing until the implementation of the *Marshall* decision could be formalised and regulated. During this time, media and academics alike criticised the Supreme Court for its ambiguous ruling, and the prime minister pointed out that the federal government had the right to suspend the Supreme Court's decision (Palmater 2000; Ramos 2007). As a result, on 17 November 1999, the Supreme Court offered a clarification to the *Marshall* decision which affirmed that the decision was subject to government regulation and that it only applied to fishing.

Following this clarification, the DFO drew up individualised *Marshall* Agreements with First Nation communities in the Maritimes. These agreements were intended to accomplish two things: to appease commercial fishers by requiring *Marshall* fishers – Mi'kmaq fishers who take part in fishery as a result of the *Marshall* decision – to follow the same regulations as those in the commercial industry and to facilitate greater entry of Mi'kmaq communities into the commercial fishery. The DFO met with First Nations individually to draw up the agreements, which received criticism from a number of researchers as a way to divide communities and to coerce them

into signing *Marshall* Agreements (e.g. Coates 2000; Kearney et al. 2007; Kennedy and Wiber 2001).

Thirty-two out of thirty-four Mi'kmaq communities in the Maritimes signed such agreements (Stiegman 2003) and, in doing so, agreed to fish by industry standards in return for government purchase and allocation of fishing licences. The two communities which did not sign agreements did so for a number of reasons, which are complex and beyond the scope of our analysis. However, some key factors were that these communities aimed to regulate their own fisheries, as per their treaty rights and according to their traditional, cultural, and spiritual values. The communities also did not trust the DFO to regulate their fisheries sustainably (Stiegman 2011; Stiegman and Pictou 2007). For the other 32 communities, agreements have become the cause of resentment between many Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers in the region. One reason is because, in an effort to allocate licences quickly, the government paid fishers more than their gears were worth, which then inflated the cost of entering the industry. This meant that many children of fishing families, who had planned to continue in their family business, could no longer afford the cost of entry (Marshall 2009; Wagner and Davis 2005). Another reason is that many fishers worked the greater part of their careers to pay off their licences and wrongly perceived that Mi'kmaq communities received theirs at no cost. *Marshall* Agreements have contributed to ongoing resentment between fishers in the Maritime region.

Stiegman (2003, 2011) and Stiegman and Pictou (2007), who analysed Mi'kmaq and Settler fisher relations after the *Marshall* decision, contend that increased interactions between Settler and Aboriginal communities in the region have the power to clear such misconceptions and the tensions among communities. Neveu (2010) argues the same. She believes that coming together in dialogue over an issue has the power to break down miscommunications and build relationships between Settler and Indigenous communities. Coates also found productive models at work in the aftermath of the *Marshall* decision, based on close contact at the community level (2000: 188). These observations are in line with propositions by intergroup contact theory (Allport 1954; Denis 2015; Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006).

The theory recognises that increased interaction among groups reduces misconceptions and prejudice which might arise when they have little contact (Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). It also explores the conditions which best facilitate the easing of tensions and stereotypes. Pettigrew (1998) emphasises the particular importance of face-to-face interaction and

friendships. However, looking at Indigenous–Settler relations in Northern Ontario, Denis (2015) shows that such contact may reduce overt hostility, but does not challenge sentiments of superiority by dominant Settler groups. In turn, our article seeks to examine whether that is the case in the Maritimes as well.

To understand relations among Mi'kmaq and Settlers, Herbert Blumer's (1955, 1958) group-position theory offers a useful analytic lens. His theory deals with racial and ethnic tension, and explains how this tension emerges and is sustained. He explains that 'race prejudice exists basically in a sense of group position rather than in a set of feelings which members of one racial group have toward the members of another racial group' (1958: 3). His thesis shifts the focus from individual experiences and puts it instead on the collective process by which one group defines and redefines another. The process operates through the public in arenas such as the media in which spokespeople from the dominant group define the subordinate group (pp. 3–4). Therefore, 'prejudice does not stem from a lack of intergroup friendships, but from a historically developed sense of (group) superiority; it is a "defensive reaction" triggered when the dominant group's sense of entitlement to resources and privileges appears threatened by the subordinate group's gains or aspirations' (Denis 2012: 456).

In discussing racial prejudice, Blumer explains that four feelings experienced by the dominant group contribute to their prejudice against others: (1) the dominant group feels a sense of superiority; (2) the subordinate group is considered inherently different; (3) the dominant group feels that it can claim privileges which allow them to label others; and, (4) the dominant group also fears or suspects that subordinate groups will challenge their advantaged position (1958: 4). Therefore, the dominant group is concerned with its position vis-à-vis the subordinate group.

Blumer also explains that group position is formed over time and is a historical product of the conditions set at the point of contact between groups. He argues that the process of the definition of 'others' occurs through communication between members of the dominant group, while the subordinate group is viewed as an abstract image (p. 5). Bobo and Tuan (2006) show that these processes create and institutionalise racial group differences. Prejudice between groups, Blumer (1958) argues, emerges when one group feels that their proprietary claim to resources or power and privilege is threatened.

There are four implications of seeing other groups in abstract terms: (1) the collective image of outside groups is not shaped through one-on-one

interaction, but instead through public arenas – such as assemblies, meetings, or media – via spokespeople or representatives (ibid.: 6); (2) because images are formed in public arenas, they are shaped through ‘big events’ which touch deeply held preconceived sentiments and raise questions about relations and group position; (3) people who have the most influence in public discussion are those who have authority, prestige and power, so the imaging of the subordinate group is shaped by those from the dominant group; and (4) self-interest dictates the position which the dominant group defends.

Bobo and Tuan argued that in ‘many ways Blumer’s approach to prejudice, though developed only in a very brief essay, is regarded as a classic statement’ (2006: 1) on the topic. Bobo and Hutchings (1996) and Bobo (1999) explain that Blumer’s (1955, 1958) group-position theory offers a synthesis of other racial prejudice models, including ‘the self-interest approach, the classical prejudice approach, and the stratification belief approach’ (Bobo and Hutchings 1996: 955). Although Blumer’s theory (1955, 1958) applies to ‘race’ and does not consider historic and ongoing processes of colonisation, we believe that the feelings and implications identified in his theory help elucidate how perceptions and understandings of Indigenous people are formed among communities which have little contact or interaction with them.

Similar to other processes of marginalisation, racialisation is inherently a process of power which is socially constructed; however, it is also based on a devaluation of people sharing given ascribed characteristics (Fleras and Elliott 2003; Satzewich and Liodakis 2007). Colonisation of Indigenous peoples is also a process of power and likewise intersects with a devaluation of people based on physical characteristics in addition to other factors such as language and culture. For this reason, similar to Denis (2012, 2015), Bobo and Tuan (2006), and Fleras (1990), we extend Blumer’s (1955, 1958) group-position theory, in order to understand unequal colonial dynamics between Indigenous and Settler Canadians.

Denis (2012), like Bobo and Tuan (2006), recognises the importance of the defensive reaction of dominant groups and fear that their position is threatened by subordinate groups as important elements for understanding racial and ethnic tensions. Denis (2012, 2015) argues that this is a key driver of tensions among Indigenous and Settler communities. If we consider what happened in the wake of the *Marshall* decision, this might account for why tensions emerged in its immediate aftermath and why misunderstandings

persist. Using contact theory and the group-position framework, we thus aim to explore contemporary Mi'kmaq and Settler relations.

Methods

Our research examines three questions: (1) What does the contemporary relationship among Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers look like?; (2) Has closer contact among Indigenous and Settler fishers through fishing the same waters built better relations among communities in post-*Marshall* times?; and, (3) Does the tension seen in the immediate aftermath of the *Marshall* decision still exist?

In order to answer these questions, the lead author conducted an ethnography of a Maritime fishing community. The name of the field site is not disclosed, so that the anonymity of participants is ensured, and will be referred to as the field site. The field site is a rural Maritime fishing community and it was selected for two reasons. First, it was not a site of intense contention in the aftermath of the *Marshall* decision and was thus representative of the majority of Mi'kmaq and Settler communities in the region. Second, the Mi'kmaq boats which currently fish the waters off this location – which is also common among the majority of communities – have signed *Marshall* Agreements. Because both Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers abide by the same rules and regulations, fishing during the same seasons, for the same fish, with the same gear, out of the same waters, there is much interaction and contact between the two groups. As noted in the literature review, some hypothesise that such interaction and contact could break down misconceptions and stereotypes.

The ethnographic work presented in this article took place during the herring fishery, which spanned the period from September to October, and was conducted in 2013. While waiting for schools of herring to come in, fishers spent a lot of time at wharves, where the general mood of people in a workplace and how they interact was observed. There were a couple of reasons for choosing to observe the herring over the more famous and lucrative lobster fishery. First, during lobster season, fishers spend most of their time in boats on the water. The presence of a researcher on the back of an individual fishing boat would be noticeable and awkward. Second, during the herring fishery, captains from different ports tie up alongside each other at wharves waiting for schools of fish to come in. In this environment, there are more opportunities for interaction between

larger groups of fishers and the herring fishery therefore offered a better opportunity to examine Mi'kmaq and Settler relations. Despite observing fishers in the herring fishery, it should be noted that all who participated in our analysis also work in the more widely known lobster fishery as captains and deckhands. Participants fish herring to supplement their incomes from other fisheries, and thus our observations can be extended to the other fisheries at the field site.

Observations took place at the three public wharves from which people fish the waters off the research site. Observation hours totalled 76.5, and were conducted in one- to thirteen-hour increments. Because most interaction at the wharves happened either when waiting for fish or coming in with fish, observations occurred at almost any hour during the day or night. During observations, field notes were taken in three stages, resulting in pages of rich information. In the first stage, jot-notes were recorded on a mobile phone in the field. This was followed by descriptive field notes which captured all aspects of what was observed at the end of each period of observation. Finally, reflective field notes, which recorded what was learned through observations in relation to the research questions, were taken and analysed.

Fieldwork was supplemented with interviews with ten Mi'kmaq and ten Settler fishers. The participants had between ten and forty years' experience in fishing, with the average experience being 27 years. Eighteen Mi'kmaq boats and 149 Settler core-licensed boats fish off the research site. The interviews represent about 56 per cent of Mi'kmaq fishers at the field site and seven per cent of Settler fishers. We do not attempt to generalise the sentiments expressed and observed to all Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers of the region, but we do note that the analysed field site shares properties with 32 out of 34 communities which have signed *Marshall* agreements. Interview participants, both Settler and Mi'kmaq, were recruited from a snowball sample initiated from a field site guide, who is a Settler fisher familiar with both groups and who is well known in the community. Interviews were entirely voluntary and all participants underwent an oral consent process in which they gave permission to participate in and record the interview and to use quotes from it in our research.

Although some participants requested that their real names be used in the research, in order to ensure the anonymity of the others, all participants were required to choose a pseudonym. Name choices were left up to the fishers unless they requested that one be assigned for them. Some fishers chose names which could be considered unconventional, but were of

significance to that person. Bluefin Tuna, Butcher, and Fisherman One are some examples of these. We respect their choices and use them in our article.

The interview guide was semi-structured and consisted of five core questions focusing on Mi'kmaq and Settler relations. The interview guide was kept concise, in order to gain only enough data necessary to address the research questions as recommended by the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2010) on research ethics, by Kovach (2009) and by Smith (1999), who argue that Indigenous methodologies should be open and flexible to the voices of participants. All interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. Once transcribed, transcripts were returned to interviewees, at which point they were given two weeks to amend their interview. Themes from interviews and observations were compared for differences and commonalities. They were then coded into more detailed observations. The interview guide was formatted in a way according to which answers broke down into three themes relating to the three research questions. The research approach offers both rich articulations of how Mi'kmaq and Settler people view their relations and how these relationships played out in their workplace.

Interactions stemming from sharing the same waters

A number of factors influence the social interactions of Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers in the field site. The two groups are largely segregated on land and this means that members of the Mi'kmaq community and the Settler communities interact with each other mostly in the context of fishing, other work sites, and public spaces, but have fewer personal points of contact.

The reserve system in the Maritimes segregated Mi'kmaq and Settler communities (Stiegman 2011: 3) and created institutional obstacles for interaction. For example, in the field site, children of the Mi'kmaq and Settler communities attend separate schools until the sixth grade. This changes in middle school when children leave their reserve to attend classes in the Settler community's school. Yet, because the two communities are geographically separated, this poses obstacles to out-of-school interactions. In fact, most interactions observed in the field site were public in nature, occurring in workplaces or public spaces, such as the local grocery store or coffee shop, and to a lesser extent, at the local pub. The fact that the Mi'kmaq and Settler communities are geographically separated means that

most interactions are shallow and deeper friendships are less common. Public statistics on intermarriage rates of Canadian Indigenous peoples are difficult to find, not to mention specifically for Atlantic Canada or our field site; however, research on the issue nationally shows that most children of such mixed-unions identify as Indigenous (Boucher, Robitaille and Guimond 2009), signalling that they are excluded from the Settler group. As a result, much interaction which was observed between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers in the field site occurred through participation in the commercial fishery.

The Commercial herring fishing regulations in the research site dictate that each licence holder can catch and sell up to 15,000 lbs of herring within a 24-hour period until the area's quota has been caught. Often, this means that fishers who have reached their daily quota will offer any nets which are still in the water which may contain fish to another fisher who is still trying to achieve their 15,000 lb limit. Generally, fishers will first choose to give nets to family and friends. Second, they will offer nets to a fisher in the vicinity who is still trying to catch herring or to the first person who responds to the captain offering his nets over the VHF radio. In the past, we have observed Settler fishers offering nets to Mi'kmaq fishers and expect that the practice is reciprocal. For the most part, Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers dock their boats at separate wharves, but the lack of a fish buyer at the wharf close to the Mi'kmaq community means that all fishers must sail in to one of the other two wharves where Settlers dock to sell fish. It was during these moments that Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers discussed their recent fishing activities while waiting to sell their catches. Such interactions, however, occurred much less than those among Settlers speaking with other Settlers at the wharves. This could be because most Mi'kmaq boats only spent enough time at the wharves to sell their catches.

In terms of interactions on the water, some of the interview participants spoke about them. Mark Daniel, a Mi'kmaq fisher, who, in response to a question on how Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers get along, said, 'Some of them actually hang out together, and you know, help each other out, especially during herring season ... everybody has their quota, and everybody helps each other get their fish' (Interview 2013). Another Mi'kmaq fisher, Butcher, who bought his commercial licence long before the *Marshall* decision, stated, '[y]ou can hear them on the radio. You can hear Natives talking to non-Natives – yup – everyone gets along pretty good' (Interview 2013).

Radio conversation is significant on the water. Much herring fishing is done at night in packs of approximately fifty to one hundred boats, and it is difficult to see who is around. Captains, moreover, are secluded to their

boats with their crews. This makes the VHF radio an important source of interaction among boat captains. Butcher also spoke of the radio as a venue for Mi'kmaq and Settler interaction (*ibid.*).

Some Settler fishers, however, noted examples of radio conversations to speak of the inherent differences between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers. Charles Munroe explained that Mi'kmaq fishers help each other out in terms of finding fish over the radio. However, they do so more than Settler fishers. He explains that between Settler fishers there is a level of secrecy, while Mi'kmaq fishers will openly discuss where to find fish over the radio (Interview 2013).

Such public interaction in the commercial fishery matters in terms of relations between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers. Many saw the mass integration of Mi'kmaq fishers into the commercial industry with the *Marshall* decision as being a move that could, over time, open lines of communication between Mi'kmaq and Settler communities, which could result in better relations. Previous research, however, has ignored the fact that in many communities in the Maritimes, a small number of Mi'kmaq have been participating in the commercial fishery before the decision. Although their participation in fishery was sufficiently stunted by the Indian Act (Wagner and Davis 2005), a small number of Mi'kmaq fishers were able to buy their way into the commercial fishery (Wicken 2001: 5).

In the field site, five Mi'kmaq boats entered the commercial fishery before the *Marshall* decision. Because of that fact, interactions between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers in the research site began before the *Marshall* decision, and that also influenced how both Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers think about the *Marshall* fishers. Butcher, a Mi'kmaq fisher, spoke about the support he received from the Settler community when he purchased his commercial licence:

I was out of school and the old man said, 'You've got to do something', so I went fishing for a non-Native. He just lived a mile up the road. He used to. He died and I bought his gear, and all I got was a coil of nylon rope ... I went from location to location and I gathered traps. People were willing to help me start so I could go fishing because I had a core licence. (Interview 2013)

Shot Cord, a Settler whose long-time passion for fishing was obvious, also referred to the core Mi'kmaq fishers who had licences before the decision:

I don't think that it's right for me to have to work 25 years to pay for a fishing gear when someone can get it for nothing ... Some Native guys own their

own gear. They bought it themselves and paid for it. I know four like that. But some of them, they get too much ... Now, I figure, if you work for something you will appreciate it a little bit more. (Interview 2013)

Of the ten Mi'kmaq fishers we spoke with, four had purchased their gear before the *Marshall* decision and they had participated in the commercial industry for an average of 34 years. Bluefin Tuna, a younger Mi'kmaq fisher who took over his father's core gear, mentioned that the existence of core fishers made relations better in our field site compared to other, not so distant, communities.

Unanimously, Mi'kmaq fishers thought that Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers got along well. When we asked Settler fishers to explain how Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers get along, they considered their relationships with both core Mi'kmaq fishers and *Marshall* fishers as influencing how they thought about their relationships. Some Settler fishers, such as Shot Cord, went beyond saying that relations were good and expressed that there was a dichotomy between those who worked for their gear, and those who 'get too much'. Even though there are few Mi'kmaq core fishers, it seems their existence in the research site has influenced how Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers think about their relationships to one another.

The Mi'kmaq core fishers, however, are not the only reason why fishers expressed that Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers get along 'pretty well' in the field site. Nineteen of the twenty fishers mentioned the relationship between groups as being good. Of the fishers who offered reasoning for good relations outside of the presence of Mi'kmaq core fishers, two mentioned the united stance which Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers took over low lobster prices in the spring of 2013. Speaking of this, John Dawson, a younger Settler captain who was too young at the time of the *Marshall* decision to have significant memories of the event, recalled, '[i]t seems like we kind of united a little bit ... Everyone stuck together, so that was pretty cool' (Interview 2013). Bob Andrews, a Mi'kmaq fisher who started running a commercial gear as a result of the local *Marshall* Agreement explained, '[e]veryone seems to be united and all that stuff, on low prices' (Interview 2013). With fishers from both communities united on the same issue, the sentiment of being 'in the same boat' was echoed around selling catches.

Another two fishers attributed the good relations to united concerns over conservation. On this front, three fishers spoke of the elimination of the Mi'kmaq food fishery. Because of the 1990 *Sparrow* Supreme Court decision, Aboriginal peoples in Canada were ensured the right to harvest

fish for traditional, cultural, ceremonial and food purposes within their communities. This meant that Mi'kmaq fishers fished without DFO-issued licences and that sparked tensions among Settler fishers who perceived this as unfair. James Cameron, a Settler fisher of 37 years explained, 'I guess they had the right to a food fishery in the summer. I think they took advantage of that. I think they realise now that the fishery can't sustain that type of fishing. They just fell in line and it's all good now' (Interview 2013).

Seven Settler fishers thought the fact that *Marshall* fishers had to run commercial gear – following DFO regulations – purchased from existing fishers in the region was the main reason that relations have been able to improve after *Marshall*. A Settler fisher, Trevor Jamison, who has 29 years' experience on the water, reflected on this: '[w]hen it came out I was kind of scared. But when they got everything settled and they had to get a core licence just like we did, it was alright' (Interview 2013). John MacDonald, another Settler fisher, who had just finished his 40th fishing season remarked, 'I must admit I was a little apprehensive until the government sat down and they negotiated and the Native fishermen decided to fish the same as the non-Native fishermen' (Interview 2013). George Taylor, a Mi'kmaq fisher who now oversees the running of the *Marshall* fishing gear, touched on a few sentiments felt by other fishers interviewed:

Today, around here, I feel we get along really good because we don't do the food fishery. We respect conservation. Instead, we pass out lobster during lobster season, and when the season is over we don't do any other kind of fishing for lobster ... and, right now we follow DFO regulations ... You've got to follow something, and they keep an orderly fishery. (Interview 2013)

George spoke of the confusion in the immediate aftermath of the *Marshall* decision because *Marshall* fishers began fishing on Mi'kmaq core fisher's informally regulated fishing grounds. Fisherman One, a Mi'kmaq core fisher with a passion for fishing and hunting, was one of the fishers whose grounds were intruded on. It is in recollection of this that he felt fishers have been able to develop good relations because existing fishing gear was bought by the government and distributed to *Marshall* fishers. George argued that once the government started buying local licences for distribution, things became less confusing because *Marshall* fishers inherited their own respected fishing territories through the purchase of licences by the DFO (ibid.). The agency maps out regulated fishing zones which fishers are required to fish within a given fishery and licence. Within these zones, fishers informally

regulate their own territories, meaning that every fisher has their own area(s), which can be based on either coordinates or geographical markers. These areas – or territories – are passed on along with a licence when it is sold or reallocated. Regardless of the reasons people gave for good relations in the fisheries, all participants felt the relationship had improved since the *Marshall* decision.

Although public interactions in the context of fishing matter, they were often inconsistent and did not necessarily extend into the private sphere. As Susan McNeil, a Settler fisher who took over her husband's gear when he passed away, explains, 'I don't think they interact at all with each other unless they have to' (Interview 2013). Steve MacDonald, a Mi'kmaq fisher of 25 years expressed,

Everybody gets along: Non-Natives help Natives out. But, I find that Natives have a hard time asking for help other than from other Natives ... I think that this is all culturally based. I don't have any problems asking any other fisher if I needed assistance, but a lot of these guys always rely on their other community members. (Interview 2013)

Steve MacDonald's comments speak to unfamiliarity between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers. One afternoon at the wharf, a group of Settler fishers were discussing how they were not familiar enough with the Mi'kmaq boats to distinguish them among the boats from up or down the shore. Although participation in the commercial fishery over time has contributed to good relations between Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers, for a number of reasons, these relations are still for the most part public and lack personal depth.

The examples of interaction explored thus far illustrate that, for the majority of Mi'kmaq and Settler fishers, there is a lack of private interaction between the two groups. This is not to suggest that there are no instances of private interaction. However, if private interaction between fishers from the communities were the norm, then there would be a general familiarity between the two groups of fishers which would make interactions among fishers more normalised. Very few of the participants shared stories of personal and private interactions.

Despite the fact that fishers almost unanimously spoke of good relations with other fishers, when asked to reflect upon the *Marshall* decision, most Settler fishers spoke of the resentment they felt toward the Mi'kmaq fishing community. When asked to reflect upon the *Marshall* decision, Settler fishers expressed resentment toward Mi'kmaq fishers for the fact that they received government-supported access to the commercial fishery through

the recognition of Aboriginal treaty rights. The resentment is expressed despite the existence of generally amicable relations in the commercial fishery. This suggests that the Settlers' group still defines the subdominant Mi'kmaq group as 'other'.

Researchers who have used group-position theory have argued that a lack of intergroup friendships alone is not what causes racial prejudice, but instead more important is the defensive reaction to a perceived threat (Bobo and Tuan 2006; Denis 2012, 2015). In the Maritimes there have been few bigger perceived threats to Settler fishers than the increased entry of Mi'kmaq fishers into the fisheries as a result of the *Marshall* decision. For this reason, during the interviews which we conducted, fishers were asked about the decision and its aftermath.

Many of the Settler participants interviewed expressed resentment when recalling the *Marshall* decision. Flint Rock expressed his frustration by noting,

You know, [the *Marshall* decision is] good for them I guess. But when is all this paying-back going to end ... ? I was going to buy a gear, and the year I could have the Indians decided they were going to go fishing, and the gears went from \$100,000 to \$500,000. So I was bidding against the government. (Interview 2013)

He went on to speak about how he felt that Mi'kmaq tax exemptions allowed them to get ahead in the fishery faster than he has been able to. Many Settler fishers felt that such exemptions allowed Mi'kmaq fishers to buy new boats more frequently than Settler fishers. Susan McNeil spoke of her frustration over Mi'kmaq tax exemptions by noting,

I think if the Natives want to do what they are doing now, fishing and everything, that they should be doing it the same as the White man: Paying taxes, fishing the same way, and paying the same way as the White man does. (Interview 2013)

Shot Cord resented that it took him 25 years to pay off his fishing gear, while some Mi'kmaq fishers got theirs for what he felt was 'nothing' (Interview 2013). Charles Munroe, another Settler fisher, touched on a few of these sentiments when he said, '[p]eople get cranky at them for getting things cheaper and not having to pay taxes' (Interview 2013). A few of the Mi'kmaq fishers understood this resentment and spoke about it too. Don Doe, who worked on a *Marshall* Agreement boat and whose father was a core Mi'kmaq fisherman, explained,

There is resentment toward the band because I think they [both Settler fishers and Mi'kmaq core fishers] know they [*Marshall* fishers] get grants and stuff, while everyone else has to pay for their own stuff ... So, I honestly think they [the band] shouldn't be taking the money. They should be supporting themselves. (Interview 2013)

Don Doe's comment speaks to another complexity, which is the relationship between core Mi'kmaq fishers and *Marshall* fishers. Andrew Murphy, another core Mi'kmaq fisher, noted, 'I bought my own gear, and through *Marshall* everybody got, more or less, free lobster gears, which is good. I wish they would give me a free lobster gear!' (Interview 2013). The existence of core Mi'kmaq fishers in the field site influenced Mi'kmaq fishers' ability to understand the resentments felt by Settler fishers. The difference between Mi'kmaq core fisher's recollections and Settler's views of the *Marshall* decision lie in the fact that Mi'kmaq core fishers understand the *Marshall* decision as positive for Mi'kmaq communities, not as preferential treatment of one group over another.

Not all Settler fishers had strong feelings when recalling the *Marshall* decision. Nick MacDonnell and John Dawson, both younger fishers with ten and 12 years' experience respectively, explained that they were too young at the time of *Marshall* to have vivid memories of it (Interviews 2013), while Trent Baker, a Settler lobster fisher of 27 years, said that his experience fishing around Mi'kmaq boats was so infrequent that he did not feel the decision had affected him much at all (Interview 2013).

The resentments which continue to exist do occur because the government has recognised Mi'kmaq rights through gear distribution, through Aboriginal rights and through some tax exemptions. The Settler group, however, blames Mi'kmaq fishers and not the government for colonial policies and for this situation. For instance, Settler fisher Flint Rock argues, '[y]ou see them out there, they aren't participating really. They have no payments. Where's the inspiration to go fishing if there are no payments?' (Interview 2013). Charles Munroe accuses Mi'kmaq fishers of not having as much care for their fishing gears as Settler fishers (Interview 2013). This speaks to Shot Cord's comment about appreciating something more if you have to work for it.

These comments reflect a trend which has been picked up in other research on Mi'kmaq integration in the commercial fishery following the *Marshall* decision. Marshall explains that Settler fishers on Grand Manan Island felt that Mi'kmaq fishers were inferior at fishing because they did not come from communities of work, and that they 'would not last since

“they’re too lazy” (2009: 136). In one discussion with a Settler fisher, he told a story about speaking with a Mi’kmaq captain and the Settler fisher questioned why the Mi’kmaq captain could not motivate his crew, to which the captain responded, ‘[t]his is what happens when you come from fifteen years of welfare’ (Interview 2013). Ken Coates (2000: 59) spoke of the dependency culture which the government created between the Mi’kmaq and the state as an ongoing tension. Mi’kmaq Elder Daniel Paul (2000) illustrates how this evolved with historical examples of colonisation where the government reluctantly took responsibility for a destitute Mi’kmaq population, after state-sponsored tactics to eradicate them failed. Coates notes that it is ironic for Settler fishers to go from accusing Mi’kmaq fishers of being lazy to fishing too strongly in the immediate aftermath of the *Marshall* decision (2000: 59). Denis, in his work on Indigenous–Settler relations explains that:

The message Native’s historically received from whites was: ‘You must be like us, but you can never be like us.’ Consequently, they fight two battles: one, to demonstrate their equal worth and be fully accepted in mainstream society; the other, to practise self-determination and sustain their unique identities and rights. (2012: 454)

As a result, although increased contact through the fisheries, and through *Marshall* Agreement licences, has eased overt tensions among communities, underlying resentments linger.

Conclusion

The entry of new Mi’kmaq fishers into the commercial fishery through the *Marshall* decision has over time contributed to better civil relations between Mi’kmaq and Settler fishers. Compared to the immediate aftermath of the decision in 1999, there is far less overt tension and few instances of public contention. This is in line with observations by Stiegman (2003, 2011), Stiegman and Pictou (2007) and Coates (2000), and offers partial support of group-contact theory (Pettigrew 1998; Pettigrew and Tropp 2006). We did not, however, observe many deeper relationships between Mi’kmaq and Settler fishers in the field site and suspect that this contributes to the ongoing underlying resentment Settler fishers have over perceived Mi’kmaq ‘special rights’.

The resentment felt by Settler fishers in the field community reflect

the four basic feelings which Blumer (1958: 4) argues contribute to racial prejudice by dominant groups. These include: (1) a *feeling of superiority*, which is shown by asserting debasing traits to a subordinate group. In the interviews which we conducted in 2013, this was expressed as either laziness or carelessness. (2) The dominant group believes that a subordinate group is not of the dominant group's kind – they are *other*. During our fieldwork, this was seen in the articulation of Mi'kmaq fishers as being inherently different because they are less secretive than Settler fishers. It is also found in comments made by Settler fishers at the wharves speaking about how Mi'kmaq fishers either do not fish as well as Settler fishers or go about fishing in a different way. (3) There is a feeling of *proprietary claim to resources* by the dominant group. Settler fishers whom we interviewed expressed this when they argued that the fact that they had worked for their fishing gears meant they were more deserving fishers. This argument came up more than once in discussions with Settler fishers. Often they would argue that if Mi'kmaq fishers wanted to participate in the commercial fishery, they should have bought their gear just like everyone else, or they should 'go back to fishing their old ways' (Interviews 2013). (4) The dominant group feels their position is *threatened* by the subordinate group. As indicated in our article, through court decisions like *Marshall*, the Mi'kmaq have challenged the dominant Settler group position.

Mi'kmaq communities have managed to shift their group position in the commercial fisheries to the point where Settler fishers now view the Mi'kmaq as having preferential access to the industry. It should be noted that such resentment is also observed outside of the field site and the fishing industry – see, for instance, work by Denis (2012, 2015) in Northern Ontario. It is a broader phenomenon of Settler Canadians' lack of understanding the implications of ongoing colonisation and constitutional and treaty obligations with the country's First Nations (Denis 2012). Settlers recognise 'special' advantage resulting from such obligations without also considering the historical injustices that led to them in the first place (Ramos 2007). We fear that until a broader understanding of the country's colonial history is understood, and until such misconceptions are challenged and overcome, the conditions for ongoing tension and potential conflict remain.

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