

***Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Cultural Ancestral Material*. Stephen J. Augustine. Mercury Series, Ethnology Paper 140. Gatineau: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2005. 260 pp.<sup>1</sup>**

Reviewed by Janice Esther Tulk

*Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Cultural Ancestral Material* by Stephen J. Augustine is a catalogue of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet material culture held by the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Objects in this collection date as early as 1841 and represent post-contact culture of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities. Cultural materials dating from even earlier periods are extant, but are largely housed in the collections of museums in other countries. While two-thirds of the collection was assembled from the contributions of several anthropologists, including Frank G. Speck, W. H. Mechling, and Wilson Wallis and Ruth Wallis, one-third of the collection is the result of the efforts of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet people, including objects collected by Gabe Paul, James Paul, and Dr. Peter Lewis Paul (pp. 5-6).

This print catalogue grew out of an electronic catalogue that was titled *Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Cultural Objects on the Web*. This had been produced with the support of Canada's Digital Collections of Industry Canada. Its goals were to create an accessible finding aid to objects held by the museum and to produce an information source for curriculum development. As Andrea Leforet's preface to the print version notes, the electronic catalogue of objects made them available to community members, educators, and students around the world at the click of a mouse. However, the lifespan of internet resources may be quite short; the print version of the catalogue would circulate at a slower pace, but provide much needed longevity. As of the time of writing this review, the electronic catalogue is no longer available at its original location; however, items in the print catalogue are included in Collection Storage on the Canadian Museum of Civilization website at <http://collections.civilization.ca>.

This catalogue is divided into two parts: Mi'kmaq Artifacts and Maliseet Artifacts. Ordered by catalogue number (and therefore largely in chronological order by collection date), each entry provides a photographic negative number, digital photograph number, object name, object type, description, cultural affiliation with community where possible, and collection date and collector/donor, where known. Most entries are accompanied by a high quality color photograph of the item. In the few instances where photographs are not available, there is no explanation given for their omission. There are also a few anomalies in the catalogue numbers supplied that deviate from the standard form (III-F-# identifying Mi'kmaq and III-E-# identifying Maliseet). A footnote explaining these deviations would have been useful should one wish to do further work with these materials.

While the indices that are provided make it easy to locate the specific type of material culture in which one is interested, with indices specific to each collection and an index to object names, further cross-referencing would have improved its usability for scholars working in specific communities or with specific people. In future editions, an index to artifacts by community or

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<sup>1</sup> Posted to Museum Anthropology Review August 31, 2007. See: <http://museumanthropology.wordpress.com/2007/08/31/mar-2007-2-8/>. © 2007 Janice Esther Tulk.

place name would be a very helpful addition, as well as an index by the maker, owner, or donor of the artifact itself.

The brief introductory essay that accompanies this catalogue provides a general overview of the types of cultural objects produced in post-contact Mi'kmaq and Maliseet communities, the indigenous materials used to produce them, and the impact of contact on many aspects of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet culture. Augustine's expertise as both the museum's Curator of Ethnology (Eastern Maritimes) and a Mi'kmaq who has learned about traditional Mi'kmaq culture from his Elders is demonstrated by the re-classification of some items originally thought to be Maliseet as Mi'kmaq artifacts. This will be particularly significant for those working with these collections in the future. However, it is here that Augustine had an opportunity to produce explanatory or interpretive material that would be of great value to researchers using this catalogue as a resource. Discussion of the problems of identification, the similarities and differences between Mi'kmaq and Maliseet material culture, the culture-specific characteristics or decorative motifs of the artifacts presented, or the relationship of material culture to worldview would have made this already successful catalogue of material culture an even stronger resource for scholarly purposes.

*Mi'kmaq and Maliseet Cultural Ancestral Material* is a finding aid that indexes a wide range of Mi'kmaq and Maliseet material culture held in the collections of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. Tools, musical instruments, baskets, clothing, and many other items of material culture are catalogued, making known the contents of the museum collection to First Nations communities, as well as the general public, educators, and researchers. This text will be a valuable tool for those studying material culture through the disciplines of folklore, anthropology, ethnomusicology, or history.

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