

## **Indigenous Historical Centrality and the Significance of Borders in Early Modern Northeastern North America**

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This paper will consider the significance of borders in a region encompassing northern New England and what later became known as the Maritime Provinces of Canada during the early modern era. Proposing a layered approach to the chronology with which boundaries attained significance, the paper will also identify three key phases. From the beginning of European contact to approximately 1725, the boundaries that had the greatest historical significance were those of Indigenous homelands. Contested imperial boundaries could produce intermittent conflicts, but these confirmed Indigenous centrality rather than challenging it. From the treaty-making of 1725 forward, the boundaries among imperial claims began to attain greater importance in the context of the increasing settlement of northern New England. Imperial-Indigenous friendship as an overriding characteristic of both Île Royale and Nova Scotia was not replicated to the southwest of what remained a vague and notional non-Indigenous border. A further phase began with the Loyalist migration during the early 1780s, when – although the Maine-New Brunswick border stayed in dispute for many years – friendship came to be a declining value in what were increasingly colonial-Indigenous rather than imperial-Indigenous relations. Accordingly, the border between the United States and Canada could be seen as having a layered significance. In purely Indigenous terms, it remained a fictional border. At international level, it was a border important enough to require an agreed definition and liable to cause conflict until this was accomplished. However, at the level of relations between Indigenous inhabitants and colonial settlers, the mid-eighteenth century distinction between, on the one hand, the friendship that had prevailed in Mi'kmaw, Maliseet and Passamaquoddy and, on the other, the struggles of the Wabanaki with a more aggressive form of settler colonization, had been replaced by a broadly similar pattern of dispossession and marginalization of Indigenous communities.