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The nomadic tribes prepared food so that it would safely overwinter. Even as they had to migrate to the milder climate on the coast to survive, they were secure in the knowledge that come spring, when they returned, the salmon would be there to tide them over until summer again brought its bounty.

As we begin the trek back out to the road, I look with a new comprehension at the clusters of rock caches, some uncovered by the team, many still hidden under the forest floor's vegetation.

He smiles when I ask when excavation of the sites will begin. We're back to trowels and sifters again, only this time there won't be any.

His team's job is risk assessment and in doing that they've come to the conclusion that the proposed project presents no danger to the fish caches. They aren't in the path of construction and there is no danger of flooding.

"There is no risk here, other than it becoming known," he says. (One of the prerequisites of the invitation was not to reveal the precise location of the fish caches.)

And so, for now, the fish caches will lie undisturbed, as they have been for nearly 100 years.

"The number one mitigation is avoidance. So they are safe. What we've done is we've located it. It will go in the database."

And for Davis and his team, it's enough that they've been discovered. Back at our original rendezvous site, before I take my leave, I want to know what this discovery means to him.

"It is exciting. It adds another item to the material culture of the Mi'kmaq," he explains.

It will be months before the team renders



A historical photograph from around 1907, of settlement along the Tusket River. (Photo from the Yarmouth County Museum and Archives.)

its final report. From the field work and research the team has identified 70 individual heritage resources within the study area. The fish caches are only a tiny piece of the overall assessment report. When it is completed, the report will not be handed over to the client, although the client is kept informed throughout the process.

The information doesn't belong to Davis's company. The report, which includes photos, videotapes, maps, field notes and all the documented material, will

eventually go to the province's Department of Communities, Heritage and Culture.

"Nova Scotia Power doesn't own that report. We don't own it. We collect it for them, for the people of Nova Scotia," says Davis. "The big problem we have is getting across to people that when we find things, it doesn't belong to us, it belongs to the people of Nova Scotia."

On the department's website, the rationale for the special places legislation is described as follows: "The story of our

distant past is a mystery that continually unfolds and fascinates us. With each new discovery another chapter is written. There is an excitement that captures us when new clues emerge. The image of what the past must have been like becomes more vivid in our minds. With curiosity piqued and imaginations filled, we stride forward with new knowledge of ourselves and our place in history."

And so a new chapter is about to be written.



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