

[Page 35 - Murdena Marshall: Mi'kmaq Godparents](#)ISSUE : [Issue 60](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1992/6/1

Murdena Marshall: Mi'kmaq Godparents (Murdena, tell me about Godparenting....) Well, prior to European contact, the Mi'kmaq family is generated by the extended family--the activities of the extended family. That your parents didn't have the sole responsibility of your upbringing. That other people within your family also had a role in educating you and in making you into a good productive individual. And those are your grandparents, on both sides, on your mother's side and your father's side--had a hand. They're the ones that really--from the formative years, which ' '??'- are 4, 5, 6--had the most influence on you. Because you spent the greatest amount of time with them. Since your parents were always out gathering food and doing stuff to keep the elders and the children fed. So the adults spent most of their time hunting, getting food for their families. So you spent your greatest amount of time with your grandparents when you were growing up. From them you learned about your whole history. You learn about how to run a household. Girls were taught how to run households, how to take care of siblings. Boys were taught little things--how to be a hunter--from their grandfathers. Through play, and through interaction. But there was another individual in your life who had a lot of influence on you. And that was your other--well, your guardian. The "godparents" name just was the ' '1''- i-it'' 3' 'fe-r' r'. S'f-' Christianized. But prior to European contact, we had someone within the community who you could turn to if you were in trouble, if you were unhappy. You know, there was somebody for you that's yours. And that you're identified with that person. And that person's very important to you. Just as important as your parents. And just as important as your grandparents. It may be one of your aunts. Or it could be-- someone from the community. The language tells us that they were from the same gender. That a girl had a woman mentor, and the boy had a male mentor. But when a girl says "godparent" in her language, automatically it springs into the mind of the listener that (the godparent is Bird Island Tours TOURS 7 DAYS A WEEK June 1-30: 10 AM & 1:30 PM • Sept 1-15:1:30 PM July 1 - August 30: 8:30 AM & 10 AM & 1:30 PM 4 miles off Trans-Canada Highway (Route 105)' A 2 1/2 hour cruise from MOUNTAIN VIEW BY THE SEA Camping and Cabins BIG BRAS D'OR, CAPE BRETON • (902) 674-2384 Your Sign of Quality DON'T ACCEPT LESS Let our experienced staff help you with all your printing needs SPECIALISTS IN PROCESS COLOR PRINTING 180 Townsend St.. Sydney ' \_ • %??\*gygy 564-8245 Fax-. (902) 539-2040 539-8666 Specialists in ""jsjSMVx' -' • --' Phone: 539-4111 | ??r7-'??l H'DldC&M'' • No structural changes rWy??'-?w' , , No more painting yyUiO'Oyy'\* • Clean from inside /:'AA/sf>' FREE ESTIMATES 341 Welton St.. Sydney SERVING ALL OF CAPE BRETON PRODUCTS LTD. I