



# Equity & Anti-Racism Advisory Committee Meeting

Monday, December 1, 2025

4:30 p.m.

Council Chambers – Town Hall

Agenda

| Item # | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Required Action                               | Lead         | Time   |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------|--------|
| 1.     | Approval of Agenda                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Decision                                      | Cllr. Butler | 2 mins |
| 2.     | Approval of Minutes from October 6, 2025                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Decision                                      | Cllr. Butler | 2 mins |
| 3.     | Declaration of Conflict of Interest                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Decision                                      | Committee    | 2 mins |
| 4.     | Public Input<br>PLEASE NOTE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reminder to all speakers that the Town conducts its business with the seven sacred teachings in mind, truth, honesty, love, courage, respect, wisdom and humility.</li><li>• Members of the public participating in public input will conduct themselves in a manner that is respectful to the</li></ul> | Comments/feedback to be directed to the Chair | Cllr. Butler | -      |



|    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                    |              |        |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------|--------|
|    | <p>public, committee and staff. Should this not occur, the Chair will advise them to end their questions and/or comments immediately.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have up to 5 minutes to provide input to be directed to the Chair.</li> <li>• Responses will be provided after the meeting either via email or in person and may be included on a future CAO Report.</li> <li>• Any input that relates to personnel, current or potential litigation issues, or planning issues for which a public hearing has already occurred, but no decision has been made by Council, will not be responded to.</li> </ul> |                    |              |        |
| 5. | Chairperson's Comments, welcoming a new committee member – Miranda Eggerton                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Comments/Direction | Cllr. Butler | 5 mins |
| 6. | Update on Wolfville's Equity and Anti-Racism Plan Progress                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Comments           | Barb         | 7 mins |



|     |                                           |                                     |                        |         |
|-----|-------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|---------|
| 7.  | Land Acknowledgement<br>Policy Discussion | Discussion                          | Barb &<br>Committee    | 30 mins |
| 8.  | Roundtable                                | Comments                            | Cllr. Butler<br>& Barb | 5 mins  |
| 9.  | Next Meeting – date to be<br>decided      | Comments                            | Cllr. Butler           | 15 mins |
| 10. | Next Meeting – date to be<br>decided      | Discussion and<br>possible Decision | Cllr. Butler           | 5 mins  |
| 11. | Adjournment                               | Decision                            | Cllr. Butler           | 1 min   |



## **Update to the Equity and Anti-Racism Advisory Committee**

As outlined in [Wolfville's Equity and Anti-Racism Plan](#), that was adopted in March of 2025, staff must report to the committee on progress by December 31 of each year. In this report, you will find a brief description of what we have achieved since April 1, 2025.

### **Policies to be reviewed, revised or drafted within the three years of the plan include:**

Policy 610-004 Street naming policy has been merged with 120-007 Municipal lands and facilities naming policy and are now known as the Municipal Asset Naming Policy. This has been developed and reviewed by Committee and referred to the Council Policy Task Force. This policy will be at Committee of the Whole on December 2.

Policy 710-003 Grants to organization and the Strategic partnerships program has been reviewed by staff and the CAO. This will be discussed at the Equity and Anti-Racism Committee in 2026.

Land acknowledgement (no current policy) and recognition of the contributions of Black Nova Scotians (no current policy) is before the Equity and Anti-Racism Committee on December 1.

Hate speech guidelines (no current policy) – This semester, students at Acadia University, studying with Dr. Cynthia Alexander, have spent time with the Town's first Equity and Anti-Racism Plan. In response to the work the Town is doing, and in support of it, students from disciplines and programs across campus will be presenting work they have developed with a focus on advancing cultural competency which promotes public safety and civic literacy through self-awareness, knowledge, and skills to bridge cultural divides, understand diverse perspectives, and foster more equitable, respectful community relationships.

The students' work will include some reflection on hate speech guidelines, which will come back to the Committee.

## **Vision Statement**

Council completed their strategic planning process and approved the following:

Wolfville is committed to the seven sacred teachings: truth, honesty, love, courage, respect, wisdom & humility. Those teachings shape our vision, mission, values and acts.

A vision statement describes a desired future state; it reflects what Wolfville aspires to become: **An inclusive and vibrant community where natural beauty, heritage, innovation, and well-being bloom.**

A mission statement is a declaration of the Town's purpose and approach to serve the community: **Lead with care, creativity, and purpose – honour our past, enrich our present, and shape a resilient future.**

Values are deeply held beliefs and ideals that guide the Town's actions, decisions, and interactions: **Accessibility, Collaboration, Diversity, Equity, Inclusivity, Informed Decision-Making, Innovation, Safety, Stewardship and Trust.**

You can review the [strategic plan by clicking here.](#)

## **Soups and Sides**

Soups and Sides has been busy this season with just under 1,500 guests in our first 10 weeks. We continue to be supported by student volunteers and Community Development students successfully ran our "sides" over four weeks. Staff are grateful to our campus champions who continue to promote the weekly community meal. Extra soup is also being provided to the ASU Food cupboard.

## **Restorative Communities Project – now called CIRCLES-NS**

Staff from the Town have been participating in some of the preliminary work of the CIRCLES-NS Living Lab that is part of our restorative community project. Acadia is also involved in this work.

## **Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action #57**

On September 29 the Town offered two blanket exercise sessions with the support of Santelle's Healing Circles. This has increased awareness of staff and Council and has provided increased awareness of the history of Indigenous experiences in Canada.

## **Non-Market Housing Strategy**

This piece of work is wrapping up and will be presented to Council in early 2026 as part of the final deliverables for the Housing Accelerator Fund project that Wolfville has been engaged with.

## **Community events and programming**

Translations - The Town funded a special screening of Shelley Thompson's docuseries, "Translations," that was made available to the community in the spring of 2025. Every seat in the Al Whittle was filled and extra guests stood to watch the screening.

Period Positivity Workshops - In this Town-funded workshop we are re-storying menstruation and the female body for pre-teens. Topics like menstruation, ovulation and female reproductive anatomy are normalized explicitly as vital body functions that are not only a part of living a healthy life but help keep you healthy. Together we explore why and how that is.

Indigenous Film Mawiomi – A week of indigenous films was screened at Acadia at the end of September, in partnership with the Town and the University. The films were free to community members and well attended.

## **Land Acknowledgement Discussion**

### **Backgrounder**

Example of a Land Acknowledgement Informed by Indigenous Culture.....page 2

Example of an Africentric Land Acknowledgement.....page 4

Land Acknowledgement Used by Some Black Healthcare & Social Services Professionals in  
Nova Scotia.....page 6

Treaty People Education Brochure

This example is designed to be read aloud at Town events or meetings:

The Town of Wolfville acknowledges that we are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. These lands and waters have been cared for since time immemorial and are governed by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. These treaties affirm Indigenous sovereignty and call for respectful, ongoing relationships.

We recognize the Mi'kmaq as the original stewards of this region. Their deep knowledge systems, cultural practices, and spiritual teachings continue to guide sustainable ways of living and caring for the natural world. In the spirit of **reciprocity, shared responsibility, and equity**, we commit to honoring Indigenous leadership and weaving Indigenous knowledge with Western approaches to build a more inclusive and resilient future.

As a town committed to reconciliation and respectful governance, we ask that all who live, work, and gather here do so with the Seven Sacred Teachings in mind: **Truth, Honesty, Love, Courage, Respect, Wisdom, and Humility**. These teachings guide us in building a community rooted in understanding, fairness, and care for one another and the land.

Here too (table below), are **Mi'kmaw translations of key phrases** that can be incorporated into a land acknowledgment to honour the language and deepen cultural respect. These are suitable for signage, spoken introductions, or printed materials at Town of Wolfville events.

**For example** – the land acknowledgment could begin with:

*Pjila'si*. Welcome. The Town of Wolfville acknowledges that we are located in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq People. *Wela'lin* for joining us in honoring this land and its original stewards.

These lands and waters have been cared for since time immemorial and are governed by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship. These treaties affirm Indigenous sovereignty and call for respectful, ongoing relationships.

....



| English Phrase                             | Mi'kmaw Translation                                            | Pronunciation Guide (approximate)                            |
|--------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Mi'kma'ki (the land of the Mi'kmaq)</b> | <i>Mi'kma'ki</i>                                               | meeg-mah-gee                                                 |
| <b>Hello / Welcome</b>                     | <i>Pjila'si</i>                                                | bee-jil-ah-see                                               |
| <b>Thank you</b>                           | <i>Wela'lin</i>                                                | well-ah-lin                                                  |
| <b>Truth</b>                               | <i>Tepit</i>                                                   | teh-pit                                                      |
| <b>Honesty</b>                             | <i>Wikimuan</i>                                                | wee-guh-moo-ahn                                              |
| <b>Love</b>                                | <i>Kesalul</i>                                                 | keh-sah-lool                                                 |
| <b>Courage</b>                             | <i>M'sit Nokomaaq</i>                                          | m-sit noh-go-mahk                                            |
| <b>Respect</b>                             | <i>Nmu'ltes</i>                                                | nuh-mool-tess                                                |
| <b>Wisdom</b>                              | <i>Na'gu'set</i>                                               | nah-goo-set                                                  |
| <b>Humility</b>                            | <i>Etuaptmumk</i>                                              | eh-too-ahpt-moomk                                            |
| <b>Land acknowledgment</b>                 | <i>Kepmite'tmnej aqq<br/>aqqewey aqq weji-<br/>sqalia'timk</i> | kep-mee-tetm-nej ahk ahk-way<br>ahk weh-jee-skah-lee-ah-timk |

## Reconnaissance africentrique du territoire

En tant que personnes de descendance africaine/kémétique, nous offrons cette reconnaissance des terres en solidarité avec les peuples autochtones de la Grande île de la Tortue avec les efforts et les intentions délibérés envers la décolonisation.

Nous reconnaissons que la grande île de la Tortue, n'était jamais destinée à être possédée.  
Nous reconnaissons que la plupart des terres confiées aux peuples autochtones, étaient partagées par choix, mais trop souvent prises de force.

Nous reconnaissons que le colonialisme historique ainsi que celui en cours, a conduit à la situation actuelle où l'on donne des reconnaissances du territoire, plutôt que territoire lui-même.

En tant que personnes d'origine africaines/kémétiques, plusieurs d'entre nous sommes venus ici par choix, tandis que beaucoup sont arrivés historiquement ici par force.

Nous reconnaissons les complexités par lesquelles, on nous avait promis des terres  
Qui ne nous ont jamais été donné,  
Par ceux qui n'avaient jamais eu le droit de donner.

En tant que personnes d'origine Afrikaine, nous reconnaissons la Grande Ile de la Tortue qui nous soutient,  
exprimons une profonde gratitude aux peuples des Premières Nations, Métis, et Inuit, et nous nous engageons à honorer la dignité et le divin qui, en fin de compte, nous relie tous.

~ ©par Kaye Johnson (traduit par Kaniasta)  
14 octobre, 2020

## Africentric Land Acknowledgement

As people of Afrikan descent, we offer this land recognition in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island in the efforts and deliberate intentions toward decolonization.

We acknowledge the land of Turtle Island, that was never meant to be owned. We recognize that most of the land that was entrusted to the Indigenous peoples, was in some cases shared by choice, but all too often taken by force.

We recognize the historical colonialism, and the ongoing colonialism, that has led to the present-day situation where land acknowledgements are offered in place of land.

As people of Afrikan descent, many of us have come here by choice, while many are here as a result of historical force.

We acknowledge the complexities where we were promised land that was never given,  
By those whose it never was to give.

As people of Afrikan descent, we acknowledge the land of Turtle Island that sustains us, express deep gratitude to its Indigenous peoples, and pledge to honour our dignity and divinity that ultimately connects us all.

~ ©by Kaye Johnson  
14 October 2020

**Reconnaissance africentrique du territoire (version courte)**

En tant que personnes de descendance africaine/kémétique, nous offrons cette reconnaissance des terres en solidarité avec les peuples autochtones de la Grande île de la Tortue avec les efforts et les intentions délibérés envers la décolonisation.

En tant que personnes d'origine Afrikaine/kémétique, nous reconnaissons la Grande Ile de la Tortue qui nous soutient, exprimons une profonde gratitude aux peuples des Premières Nations, Métis, et Inuit, et nous nous engageons à honorer la dignité et le divin qui, en fin de compte, nous relie tous.

~ ©par Kaye Johnson (traduit par Kaniasta)  
14 octobre, 2020

**Africentric Land Acknowledgement (short version)**

As people of Afrikan descent, we offer this land recognition in solidarity with the Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island in the efforts and deliberate intentions toward decolonization.

As people of Afrikan descent, we acknowledge the land of Turtle Island that sustains us, express deep gratitude to its Indigenous peoples, and pledge to honour our dignity and divinity that ultimately connects us all.

~ ©by Kaye Johnson  
14 October 2020

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT USED BY SOME BLACK HEALTHCARE & SOCIAL SERVICES  
PROFESSIONALS IN NS

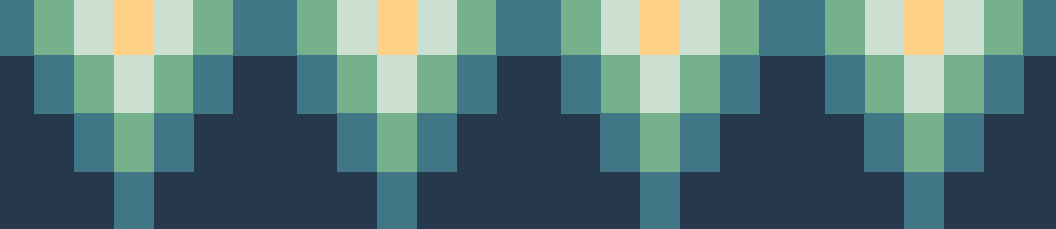
**First, we must acknowledge that we are in Mi'kma'ki, the ancestral and unceded traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq People. This territory is covered by the Treaties of Peace and Friendship which Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik/Wool-las-two-wi-ig (Maliseet/Malecite) Peoples first signed with the British Crown in 1725.**

**These treaties did not deal with surrender of lands and resources but in fact recognized Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet) title and established the rules for what was to be an ongoing relationship between nations.**

**We further acknowledge the histories, contributions, and legacies of the African Nova Scotian people who have shared these lands for over 400 years. We also acknowledge the shared ancestry of all people of African descent in Nova Scotia.**

**For many of us our presence in this land is unavoidably bound to the history and legacy of dehumanizing enslavement and forcible displacement of African people. Others of us are here in this land for many reasons including seeking refuge from violent conflict, political strife, or other potential life-threatening experiences. Others are here seeking a better future for themselves and their families.**

**We therefore acknowledge the interconnected histories of Indigenous people and people of African descent in this land.**



**We are all  
Treaty People**

**Muiuatmu'kl msit  
kinu Ankukam-  
kowe'l**

**Les traités nous  
concernent tous**

**Is luchd-  
cùmhnaint sinn  
uile**

# What is Treaty Education?

Nova Scotia has a series of historic treaties with the Mi'kmaq dating back to the 1720s. These treaties, known as the Peace and Friendship Treaties, are still in effect today. However, these treaties were denied or ignored at times during Nova Scotia's past.

## **Treaty Education is a series of programs & services that will**

- help Nova Scotian students, public service employees, and members of the general public learn more about Mi'kmaw culture, our shared history, and the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties;
- explain how the treaties were significant building blocks for Nova Scotia and Canada; how they were denied in the past, and the benefit today
- help Nova Scotians begin the long journey toward reconciliation.

On October 1, 2015, an agreement was signed between the Province of Nova Scotia and Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia that created a new partnership called Treaty Education Nova Scotia. The agreement commits to teach Treaty Education in all classrooms, grades and schools across Nova Scotia, not just in the Mi'kmaq ones. It also ensures that the general public and public service benefit from Treaty Education.

# About This Guide

This guide will give you a brief overview of the four questions that guide the work of Treaty Education Nova Scotia:

Who are the **Mi'kmaq** (*meeg-maah-gee*),  
what's their history, and who are they today?

1. What are the treaties and why are they important?
2. What happened to the treaty relationship? (How and why were treaties denied?)
3. What is Nova Scotia doing to reconcile our shared history to ensure justice and equity?

This guide will also provide information on

- what role you can play in reconciliation
- terms and tips for participating in events and ceremonies
- myths and realities about Mi'kmaq

## 1. Who are the Mi'kmaq, what's their history, and who are they today?

The Mi'kmaq are the Indigenous people of Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki encompasses what is known as present-day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec (Gaspé Peninsula), New Brunswick (north of the St. John watershed), parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and parts of Maine.



## Mi'kmaq District

## Meaning

- |                         |                                        |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1. Unama'ki aq Ktaqmkuk | Foggy Lands and Land across the water  |
| 2. Epekwitk aq Piktuk   | Lying in the water and Explosive Place |
| 3. Eskikewa'kik         | Skin dresser's territory               |
| 4. Sipekne'katik        | Where the wild potatoes grow           |
| 5. Kespukwik            | Last flow                              |
| 6. Sikniht              | Drainage area                          |
| 7. Kespek               | Last land                              |



Mi'kmaq have been rooted in Mi'kma'ki for over 13,000 years according to the carbon dating of artifacts from the Mi'kmawey Debert site.

- For centuries, Mi'kmaw people moved through the land, utilizing and understanding the richness of Mi'kma'ki - its plants, animals, watersheds, river systems that are interconnected, and the geology that forms the landscape.
- The Mi'kmaw language is verb-based and orientated to actions and relationships with the natural world. While this relationship is constantly evolving and changing, Mi'kmaw language provides a way in understanding both the cultural and the ecological relationship within Mi'kma'ki, making the language complex, yet fluid.

Not all Mi'kmaq are the same. We need to park our assumptions about what we think Mi'kmaq look like, sound like, and act like. Every individual, family and community is unique and beautiful in their own way.

**Mi'kmaq** (*meeg-gah-mah*) comes from the root word **Ni'kmaq** (*nee-gah-mah*) meaning my kin/my relations. It is plural, referring to the larger group of people and/or the collective tribe of people. Mi'kmaq is not used as an adjective, nor is it a singular noun.

- **Mi'kmaq:** *Mi'kmaq attend this school. Mi'kmaq live in this territory.*

**Mi'kmaw** (*meeg-gah-maw*) comes from the root word Mi'kmaq. However, it is used as a singular noun or adjective.

- **Mi'kmaw singular:** *He is Mi'kmaw. I am Mi'kmaw.*
- **Mi'kmaw adjective:** *The Mi'kmaw community. Mi'kmaw Mawio'mi.*

**L'nu** (*ull-new*) is an ancient term that aligns with **Nilnu** (*nil-new*) meaning my tongue. It refers to the ability to speak the same tongue, or language. L'nu in short refers to "the people", i.e., the people who speak the same language. Much like the term Mi'kmaw, L'nu is a singular noun or an adjective.

- **L'nu singular:** *He is L'nu. I am L'nu. There is only one L'nu in the room.*
- **L'nu adjective:** *She has a L'nu wife. The L'nu community. L'nu Mawio'mi.*

**L'nu'k:** (*ull-new-k*) is the plural of L'nu. It can never be used as a singular noun or an adjective. It refers to the entire group who speak in a similar tongue, i.e., language.

- **L'nu'k:** *L'nu'k attend this school. L'nu'k live in this territory.*

L'nu and L'nu'k may be used interchangeably with the words Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaq. L'nu and L'nu'k are NOT terms to replace Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaq.

Through culture, language, and history, the Mi'kmaq are related to the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Abenaki, Innu, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot, as well as other Algonquian-speaking nations. The Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Wolastoqiyik make up the Wabanaki Confederacy, also known as the "People of the dawn".

As a confederacy, the Wabanaki made treaties with other nations long before the arrival of settlers. Although, these traditional treaties were made of beads that formed images and designs outlining the agreements held within the treaty. These treaties are known as **L'napsku'l** (*Ull-nup-school*) - wampums.

## 2. What are the treaties and why are they important?

Between 1725 and 1779, Britain signed a series of treaties (known as the Peace and Friendship Treaties) with the Mi'kmaq.

A treaty is a solemn agreement, like a contract. When two parties sign a treaty, they are making long-standing promises that will benefit both parties.

### In the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the British and the Mi'kmaq promised they would

- end the hostilities that had been going on between them
- not go to war with each other
- co-operate (trade) with each other

The British and the Mi'kmaq signed what is sometimes referred to as the Halifax Treaty (Peace and Friendship Treaty, 1760-61) at the Burying of the Hatchet ceremony on June 25, 1761.

The treaties are important for the promises they made and are even more significant for the meaningful relationship they created between the British and the Mi'kmaq. **The Peace and Friendship Treaties remain in effect today.**

## 3. What happened to the treaty relationship? (How and why were treaties denied?)

In the 1780s, the Loyalists began to arrive in Nova Scotia. These were American colonists who were loyal to, or had fought for, the British Crown during the American Revolution.

The arrival of more settlers created a different situation between the colonial governments and the Mi'kmaq; the most significant being the gradual erosion of the meanings given to the Peace and Friendship treaties.

In the 19th century, the Canadian Government moved Indigenous peoples onto lots of land called reserves that were much smaller than their traditional territories. This enabled the federal government to seize control over all aspects of Indigenous livelihood, which would include their relationship to the land and identity.

These events, and others, ushered in a long period of denial in Nova Scotia about the contents of the treaties. This continued well into the 20th century.

**A number of laws, policies, and practices mark this damaging period in Canadian history, including, but not limited to, the following:**

- Gradual Civilization Act (1857). Otherwise known as Enfranchisement, this act meant an Indigenous person gave up their Indigenous identity and ability to live on the reserve if they voted, received an education, worked off-reserve, could read or write, served in the military, or, as women, married men who were not Status Indian men
- The Indian Act (1876)
- The Pass System (1885)
- Centralization in Mi'kma'ki (1916)
- Disease epidemics, including tuberculosis, smallpox, typhus, cholera, and influenza
- Ongoing discriminatory policies limiting employment, education, and forbidding Indigenous people from gathering to discuss their rights or practising cultural events like dances and songs

- Residential Schools (1930-1997), including the Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia that closed in 1967.
- The Federal White Paper Policy (1969)
- The Sixties Scoop (late 1950s into the 1980s)

#### **4. What is Nova Scotia doing to reconcile our shared history to ensure justice & equity?**

The devastating and lasting consequences of the treaty denial period are at the heart of reconciliation efforts today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from the Indigenous people who, as children, had been taken from their families and placed in residential schools.

In 2015, the TRC released 94 calls to action focused on building reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. It concluded the residential school system was “cultural genocide” because it forced Indigenous people across Canada to give up their culture under a federal policy meant to “kill the Indian in the child.”

One generation after the next felt the impacts of this trauma, and Indigenous people across Canada continue to feel it today.

Despite the devastating effects of colonization, residential schools, and forced assimilation, the Mi'kmaq in many communities are working hard to heal and continue to speak their language and traditional customs.

Treaty Education focuses on building an understanding of the Mi'kmaq, inherent Aboriginal rights, recognition of the Peace and Friendship treaties as historical and living agreements and continuing the relationship between Mi'kmaq and all peoples of Nova Scotia. It also creates opportunities to learn about the contributions the Mi'kmaq have made to Nova Scotia and treaties as the building blocks of Nova Scotia and Canada. With the creation of the Treaty Education initiative, Mi'kmaq and provincial partners have engaged in various activities and events to reconcile our relationship.

A significant provincial reconciliation event took place February 16, 2017. The Province of Nova Scotia granted the late Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy a posthumous free pardon. A free pardon, which recognizes that a conviction was made in error, considered "only in the rarest of circumstances," marked just the second posthumously granted free pardon by the province of Nova Scotia. Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant said that Sylliboy was pursuing his "aboriginal and treaty rights" and called the pardon "a process of treaty education," which included "understanding and valuing what the Mi'kmaq have contributed in shaping this province and nation."

## **We are all treaty people, and we are all in this together.**

We all have a part to play in reconciliation and making a positive impact on the lives of Indigenous people. Your role depends on your level of involvement. Some roles are more active than others, but all are important.

People who are not Indigenous can be allies to Indigenous people. An ally is someone who supports and advocates for others. Allyship is more than just tolerance—it means actively trying to break down the barriers and create better circumstances for others. Being an ally requires social action, strength, courage, and humility.

An ally steps in when needed to educate others about the realities and histories of marginalized people. For example, you might find yourself at a social gathering where another person says something inappropriate or makes a joke about Indigenous people. As an ally, you would break into that conversation to educate the others who are present.

We are going to focus here on how to be an ally. You do not get to call yourself an ally; you must show you are one through your actions. Allyship is not a destination, it is a journey that is ongoing and at times, challenging.

### **As an ally you will**

- actively support the struggle
- transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who have less
- speak up, even if you feel scared
- acknowledge that the conversation is not about you.

**You will also recognize that every person has a basic right to human dignity, respect, and equal access to resources.**

To be an effective ally you should recognize the privileges you may (unknowingly) be benefitting from. These privileges are diverse and range from the colour of one's skin, sex or gender, class, whether they are able-bodied, or their cultural background.

In addition to being conscious of privilege, be aware of microaggressions or situations that undermine power of oppressed groups, such as instances of racist, sexist, classist, ableist, or colonialist/post-colonial prejudice. If you witness the privileging of one individual over another, point it out. By calling attention to unfair actions, you can prevent others from unwittingly benefiting from unfair discrimination. You don't want to pick on people for the privileges they may not know they have, but rather engage them in a thoughtful conversation. Opening communication on these issues is one of the best ways to spark change and raise awareness about systematic privileging and discrimination.

- Be informed about our shared history by learning about Indigenous people & culture.
- Recognize Indigenous leaders and respect their authority.
- Practice active listening.

Recognize that ignorance has a place in allyship. True allies are encouraged to reflect on and embrace their lack of knowledge regarding the group's marginalization. Allies should keep in mind that they are learning as they go through the process of supporting the Indigenous population. As an ally, you will always be learning.

Not all Indigenous peoples want you as an ally. This may seem harsh to someone who is trying to be supportive, but



it happens, and it absolutely must be respected, even if you consider yourself an ally with the best intentions. Rather than trying to argue and convince an individual that you are “on their side,” respect their boundaries.

In the end, being an ally is not about checking actions off a list. It is a way of being and doing. This means self-reflection, checking in with your motivations, and talking with community members regularly.

## Terms & Tips

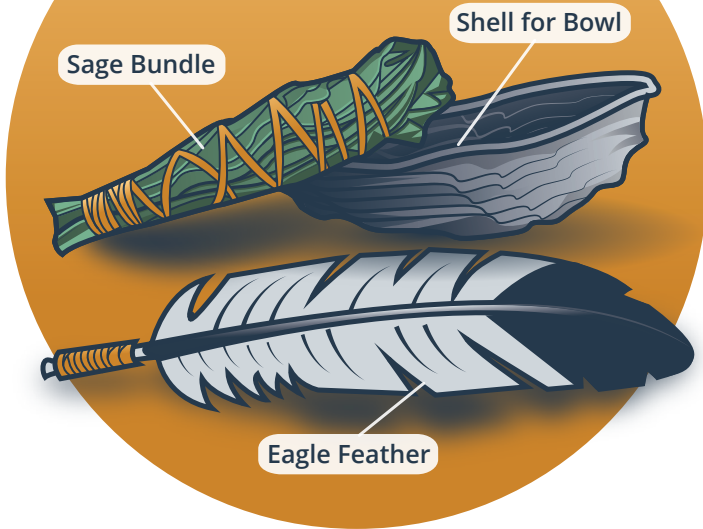
**Elder** – Elders are typically older in years and are held in high esteem by the community. They are wisdom carriers who transfer historical, cultural, and/or traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. This knowledge is valuable for local context and decision-making processes.

One does not become an Elder by reaching a specific age. The state of being an Elder is given to an individual by community and often humble Mi'kmaw Elders do not recognize themselves as such.

Elders may lead ceremonies, such as smudging ceremonies, opening prayers, and talking circles. Their teachings and advice are often provided indirectly through storytelling, to help guide and advise others in their work.

**TIP:** The practice varies from community to community, but you should present an Elder with an offering of tobacco wrapped in red cloth, as well as a gift or honorarium for their contributions. Show respect to Elders by inviting them to speak first and listen without interrupting. In a social setting where food is served, Elders are generally served first.

## Smudging with Sacred Medicines



### Smudge & Sacred Medicines – Traditional Mi'kmaw medicines include:

- sweetgrass to cleanse the body, mind, and spirit
  - sage to help get rid of negativity
  - cedar to protect a person throughout their life
- ceremonial tobacco, which is offered as thanks to **Kisu'lkw** (*gee-sool/g*) – The Creator

A smudge bowl can be a large shell, stone, or clay bowl used to burn sacred medicines during a smudging ceremony. Spiritual leaders may mix one or more sacred medicines together in the smudge bowl, allowing them to burn for a longer period. The most familiar smudge bowl material is an abalone shell because its large size and thickness prevents the holder from getting hurt while the medicines are burned.

Whether medicines are sprinkled on the ground or burned in a bowl or shell, both are known as “an offering.” When medicines are lit during prayer time, that is a “smudging ceremony.” During a smudging ceremony, the smoke from the burning medicines is directed to seven distinct parts of the body:

- Eyes, to help see the good in other people
- Ears, to help hear and listen to others
- Mouth, so only good words are spoken
- Mind, so we have good thoughts
- Feet, so good paths are followed throughout life
- Whole body, to have respect for self
- Heart, so it remains pure and respects all Creation

Smudging can be done during the day or night, and as often as necessary.

**TIP:** Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room and refrain from smudging or leave the room during the smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition.

**Medicine Bundles** – These are used for carrying items that help create a spiritual connection to Kisu’lkw, such as an eagle feather, smudge bowl, sacred medicines, animal claws or teeth, a sacred pipe and/or hand drum—all things used during ceremony. Some items are gifts from a ceremony or celebration, and others are simply objects the individual has collected.

A medicine bundle may start out as a small bag or pouch and grow as things are gathered throughout one’s life.

Like all sacred medicines, bundles are kept in a private place and only brought out during ceremonial times.

**TIP:** Do not touch or handle a medicine bundle unless asked or invited to do so.

**Sweat Lodge** – This is a dome-shaped structure, much like a wigwam, except with a rounded roof. A sweat lodge ceremony, or a “sweat,” involves people gathering in a sweat lodge to pray to Kisu’lkw for healing, teachings, and guidance. A sweat lodge keeper will guide everyone before, during, and after a ceremony. Sweat lodge ceremonies can be different each time; one sweat lodge keeper may smudge, pray, sing, chant or drum differently from one another. You can leave the lodge at any time, simply by asking for the door to be opened. Sometimes, people enter the lodge for the wrong reasons, and if the spirits want that person to leave, they will not be forced to stay. However, they can still be part of the sweat lodge by sitting outside the lodge and adding prayers and energy to the circle within.

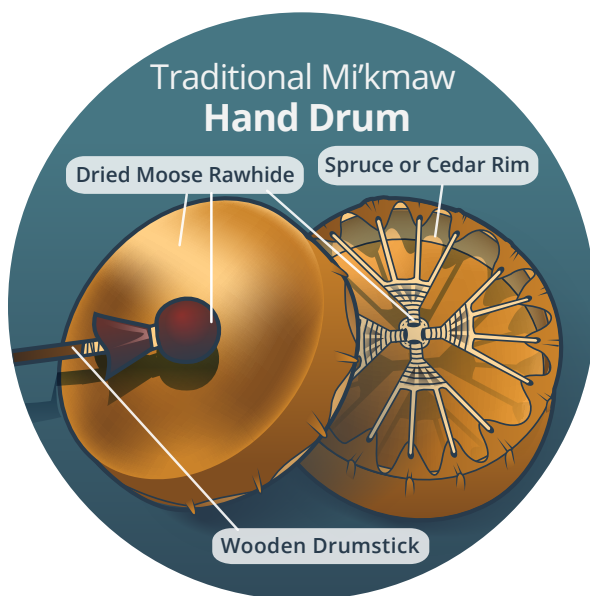


**TIP:** Show respect for the ceremony and do not talk during it.

**Sacred Fire** – A sacred fire is burned for four days and four nights, but this can also vary. One-day fires are very popular. Shorter fires may be burned for a special person or situation.

**TIP:** Do not take photos at the sacred fire.

**Drums** – The drum is sacred and respected among many Indigenous communities, including the Mi'kmaq. For Indigenous Peoples, the drum represents the universal heartbeat of Mother Earth. In Mi'kma'ki, drums are made from materials gathered from the land. This includes wood from spruce or cedar trees and rawhide from moose and deer.



The drum is the exclusive property of the person who made it, purchased it, traded for it, had it given to them as a gift or prayed for it. It is not community property unless that is its specific purpose. If the drum belongs to an individual, then permission must be given by that individual for anyone else to even touch it, much less play it.

**TIP:** Always show respect for the drum.

**Mi'kmaq Honour Song** – The Mi'kmaq Honour Song is about healing. Singer-songwriter George Paul of Metepenagiag, New Brunswick, was at a gathering of Indigenous communities in Regina. He watched representatives from different First Nations perform their nation's dance or song; however, there was no performance during the introduction of the Mi'kmaq. George left the ceremony feeling the need to bring something back to the Mi'kmaw Nation. He received the Honour Song during a sweat lodge ceremony in the 1980s. It now serves as an anthem for Mi'kmaq and is played at Powwows, ceremonies, schools and events throughout Mi'kma'ki.

When singers come to the drum to start learning how to sing, this is the first song they are taught.

# The Mi'kmaq Honour Song

*Kepmite'tmnej ta'n teli l'nuwulti'kw,  
Ni'kma'jtut ke' mawita'nej  
Gep-me-day-dum-min-age Dahn Deli Ulnoo-deeg,  
Knee-kem-mudge-doot gay Maui-dah-nej.*

*Let us respect each other as people,  
when we gather.*

---

*Kepmite'tmnej ta'n wettapeksulti'k  
Ni'kma'jtut ke' apoqnmatultinej.  
Gep-me-day-dum-min-age Dahn  
Wed-da-beck-sool-deeg,  
Ne-kem-mudge-doot Gay  
Ah-bun-na-mah-dul-din-age.*

*Let us respect where we come from,  
we should always help one another.*

---

*Ke' Apoqnmatultinej ta'n  
Kisu'lkw teli ika'luksi'kw, wla wskitqamu'k.  
Gay Ah-bun-na-mah-dul-din-age Dahn  
Gee-soolk Deli Ee-gah-look-seek, Ula Sit-gum-mook.*

*Let us help each other as the creator intended,  
when we were placed on Mother Earth.*

*Way-Ya-Hey-Yo (vocalables)*

**TIP:** Do not record performances of the song without permission.

**Eagle Feather** – The Mi'kmaq consider the eagle the most powerful bird in the sky. Of all the birds, the eagle gets the closest to Kisu'lkw and helps carry prayers to the spirit world. That is why eagle feathers hold such great cultural and spiritual meaning.

\* Eagles must not be harmed for their feathers.

**Being given an eagle feather is a great honour. Eagle feathers are often given to someone in recognition of**

- their life's work
- meaningful deeds they have done
- their deep understanding of cultural teachings

Several Canadian provinces, including Nova Scotia, allow a person to use an eagle feather when swearing an oath.

**TIP:** Never touch another person's eagle feather without permission.

**Mawio'mi – Mawio'mi** (*mawy-oh-me*) is the Mi'kmaq term for pow wow. It is a two-day celebration held over a weekend and open to anyone who wants to learn about First Nations culture. It may include dancing, drumming, singing, and ceremony, such as the sacred fire and smudging. Booths are set up for food vendors and artisans to sell their crafts and art. Some artisans put on demonstrations, while dancers and drummers engage in celebrations. These events are a time to gather with family, friends and to celebrate community & culture.



Traditional Mi'kmaw dancing is a celebration of life, and each dance tells a story. There are many different dances, including

- kojua
- fancy
- traditional
- jingle
- shawl
- grass

Most traditional dancers wear beautifully crafted regalia made especially for them. All regalia are unique and tell a story of the wearer's dancing journey and their family history (such as their clans, colours, etc.). Their designs can include beads, feathers, ribbons, or other items to express the dancer's personal history.

**Regalia** are **not** costumes—they are spiritual connections to **Kisu'lkw** (*gee-soolg*) and are worn to show respect during ceremonies. They are sometimes called “outfits.”



Mawio'mi'l (*plural*) are a welcoming space, ensuring a wonderful experience for everyone.

**TIP:** Be aware of Mawio'mi etiquette. Guidelines may vary between provinces and regions, so check with the Master of Ceremony, arena director, or committee if you're unsure of expectations; they will be happy to answer questions.

### **General Mawio'mi Etiquette:**

- Be on time
- Dress and behave in an appropriate and respectful manner
- Remember that arena benches are reserved for dancers and some seating is always reserved for Elders (bringing your own lawn chair is a great idea)
- Be courteous and aware of those around you,
- Consider donating to honour and support the costs of these typically non-profit events
- Drugs and alcohol are not allowed
- Ask before taking photos at a Mawio'mi
- Do not touch dancer's regalia without permission

**Urban Indigenous Peoples** – As of 2016, nearly 900,000 Indigenous peoples were living in urban areas. Indigenous peoples live in cities and towns for a variety of reasons including employment and educational opportunities.

**TIP:** Remember, cities and towns are still on Indigenous territories. An Indigenous person is not “less Indigenous” because they live in an urban area.

# Mi'kmaw Words & Phrases You Can Learn

| English               | Mi'kmaq          | Phonetic         |
|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|
| My name is            | <b>Teluisi</b>   | Del-lu-we-see    |
| What is your name?    | <b>Taluisin</b>  | Dahl-lou-wii-sin |
| What is her/his name? | <b>Taluisit</b>  | Dahl-lou-wii-sit |
| Hello                 | <b>Kwe'</b>      | Gway             |
| I come from           | <b>Wetapeksi</b> | Weda-bek-see     |
| I am from             | <b>Tleyawi</b>   | De-lay-wii       |
| Welcome               | <b>Pjila'si</b>  | Ji-lah-see       |
| Eagle                 | <b>Kitpu</b>     | Git-boo          |
| Friend                | <b>Nitap</b>     | Nee-dap          |
| Thank you             | <b>Wela'lin</b>  | Well-la-lin      |
| Thank you all         | <b>Wela'lioq</b> | Well-la-lee-oq   |
| I'll see you later    | <b>Nmu'ltes</b>  | Neh-mull-dess    |
| Pow Wow               | <b>Mawio'mi</b>  | Mawy-oh-me       |

# Acknowledging Mi'kmaw Traditional Territory in Nova Scotia

Land acknowledgments have become a widespread practice for many organizations and government in Nova Scotia. They are a way to recognize and honour the past, present, and future contributions of L'nu'k (Mi'kmaq), the Indigenous people of Mi'kma'ki.

While a land acknowledgement and territorial welcome may be something new to those who are not Indigenous, Indigenous people have engaged in this practice for centuries. While Indigenous Peoples have diverse cultures, they all share a foundational connection to the land.

It was further customary practice to acknowledge yourself as a visitor to the area that you did not steward. If there were no family connections to a place, meetings with leadership would occur so the visitor could share their intentions.

Today, acknowledging traditional territory is a way of showing respect for and honouring our shared Treaty relationship. It is an important step towards reconciliation and not intended to create any legally binding obligations or recognition of asserted claims.

Intention, authenticity, and an understanding of our shared history are foundational in developing a land acknowledgement. Land acknowledgements may be varied in their development and delivery. They are meant to be personal and meaningful. Organizations and institutions can collectively reflect on the development and wording land acknowledgements they adopt.

While land acknowledgments are important and appropriate, take care to ensure your land acknowledgement is not a performative piece or a piece that is simply put together to tick a box of required tasks. It's important that the intention of a land acknowledgement is not lost by obscuring it. Sometimes the simplest is the most effective. Always be mindful of your intentions.

### **What is the difference between a land acknowledgement and territorial welcome?**

- A welcome to territory is something an Indigenous person may do when on their home territory to welcome guests to the territory.
- A land acknowledgement is something that a non-Indigenous person or visiting Indigenous person may do.

### **Who may acknowledge Mi'kmaw territory? Who may welcome?**

- Only Mi'kmaq people should welcome others to Mi'kma'ki, their traditional territory.
- All other speakers may choose to acknowledge Nova Scotia is Mi'kmaw traditional territory.

### **When are land acknowledgments and territorial welcomes appropriate?**

- Land acknowledgments are usually the first item during a gathering, or at the start of a speech, event, or presentation.
- While there is no hard and fast rule, if people from outside your internal group will be present then a land acknowledgment could be provided.

## **Why should we acknowledge Mi'kmaw traditional territory?**

- A meaningful land acknowledgement is done with intention, authenticity and understanding of the Treaty relationship, and demonstrates respect and friendship.
- It is a means of recognizing the truth of our shared history, while offering a commitment to walk the path of reconciliation.
- It is a way to express the motto “We are all Treaty people” and recognize our relationship is based on peace and friendship.

## **On what occasions could Mi'kmaw traditional territory be acknowledged?**

- An acknowledgement is usually the first item at public events, e.g., public workshops, conferences, or ceremonies, or at the start of a speech or formal presentation.
- Once an initial land acknowledgment or territorial welcome is made, it may not be necessary for every subsequent speaker to follow suit.
- Land acknowledgements may not be needed in every situation. For example, they aren't typically part of regular day-to-day gatherings, meetings, or training.

## **On what occasions might a territorial welcome be appropriate?**

- For large events, a Mi'kmaw Elder (or community member) may be invited to provide an opening and share a welcome, prayer, song and/or smudge.

## Notes:



# **Kwe' Nitap, *Hello, Friend***

(G-way Nee-dup)

**This guide is not intended to be all things to all people. Rather, it was co-developed by Mi'kmaq and allies engaged in treaty education to be used as a starting point for cultural learning and understanding.**

**To learn more, visit:**

**[novascotia.ca/treaty-education](https://novascotia.ca/treaty-education)**

**Find us on Facebook: Treaty Education Nova Scotia**

