



UNION
OF NOVA
SCOTIA
MI'KMAQ

QUARTERLY

NEWSLETTER

SPRING EDITION 2025



PJILA'SI - WELCOME

We are excited to present the latest edition of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) Quarterly Newsletter—your trusted source for updates, news, and highlights from UNSM and our member communities.

As we step into another exciting quarter, we're eager to share a carefully curated selection of topics, updates, and events designed to inform, inspire and engage you.

Stay tuned for the next edition, coming in June 2025!

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9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

DECEMBER 2024

UNSM CELEBRATES THE SEASON AT ANNUAL CHRISTMAS PARTY

On December 12th, the UNSM staff came together to celebrate the holiday season at their highly anticipated Annual Christmas Party. The event was held at the Joan Harriss Cruise Pavillion in Sydney.

Staff were treated to an unforgettable live performance by The Relates, who kept the energy high and the dance floor lively with their engaging setlist. The celebration also featured door prizes, which added an extra layer of fun and anticipation to the evening.

The Annual Christmas Party provided a wonderful opportunity for colleagues to relax, connect and reflect on the year's accomplishments before heading into a well-deserved holiday break. It was the perfect way to wrap up the year and set the tone for a fresh and inspiring start in the new year.

All UNSM offices closed at noon on December 12th for the holiday season and scheduled to reopen on January 6th, 2025.



National Changes to Jordan's Principle

We want to update you on recent changes regarding non-medical requests under Jordan's Principle.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) has informed us that all non-medical related requests will be sent to National Headquarters for review and decision. This includes any non-medical related requests that have been previously submitted and are waiting for review. **Effective immediately.**

Examples include non-medical related travel, renovations, non-medical respite support, childcare/daycare, furniture, clothing and other necessities.

Unfortunately, this new direction will further impact wait times for families. The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq is committed to advocating on behalf of all families we serve.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your Service Coordinator in your local community or ISC directly at Regional or National Level.

Contact Information:

Jordan's Principle Call Centre 24/7: 1-855-572-4453 or 1-833-652-0210

Email: principedejordanatl-jordansprincipleatl@sac-isc-gc.ca

JANUARY 2025

OFFICE REOPENING FOR 2025

All UNSM offices returned to regular hours business hours of operation after a wonderful holiday break with their loved ones, refreshed and ready to tackle brand new projects and goals, and ready to serve communities in Unama'ki for the upcoming new year on January 6th.

UNSM MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM HOSTS BELL LET'S TALK EVENT TO PROMOTE MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

On January 22nd, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) Mental Wellness Team hosted a special Bell Let's Talk event at the Membertou Trade and Convention Centre. This gathering aimed to foster meaningful conversations about mental health, raise awareness, and provide valuable resources to individuals of all ages.

The event featured activities designed to engage and educate attendees. Guests enjoyed powerful guest speaker presentations that highlighted the importance of mental well-being, traditional drumming and dancing that celebrated culture and healing, as well as games that encouraged connection and participation. To add to the excitement, door prizes were given out throughout the event, and attendees were treated to a variety of refreshments.

By creating a welcoming and supportive environment, this event reinforced the importance of open dialogue surrounding mental health and the role of communities in fostering wellness. The UNSM Mental Wellness Team extends gratitude to all who attended and contributed to making this gathering a success.

JULIE THOMAS RECIEVES KING CHARLES III MEDAL

Julie started at Healing Our Nations (HON) in 2005 as a summer student and returned in 2006 as Special Events Coordinator, organiz-

ing AIDS Walks in Atlantic Canada's First Nation communities. After completing her practicum in 2007, she was hired as the Hepatitis C Coordinator, then became Community Health Educator in 2008, Program Manager in 2013, and Executive Director in 2015. Following a merger with the UNSM, she returned to Program Manager.

With limited initial knowledge of HIV, Hepatitis C, and STBBIs, Julie's passion for education grew, and she became a strong advocate for harm reduction and sexual health, aiming to reduce stigma and promote education within Indigenous communities. Over nearly 20 years in the HIV movement, she has traveled across Canada, worked with Indigenous communities, and contributed to national and international efforts, including representing Canada at the 2022 International AIDS Conference in Munich. Julie has also created two awareness videos aired nationally and authored culturally relevant resources.

In recognition of her dedication, she received The King Charles III Coronation Medal in February 2025 from the Canadian AIDS Society. She is one out of six recipients from Nova Scotia to receive this award.

The King Charles III Coronation Medal recognizes exceptional contributions and commitment to service within communities.

Julie's work at Healing Our Nations has deepened her understanding of her Mi'kmaq heritage and learned about Indigenous history, culture, and language through teachings from Elders and Knowledge Keepers, further strengthening her pride and connection to her First Nations roots.

We would like to congratulate Julie on her most recent accomplishment!

FEBRUARY

BIG NEWS FROM MI'KMAW ETHICS WATCH

We're excited to announce a new chapter for Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW) as we enter our 25th year of ensuring ethical, fair, and culturally respectful research within Mi'kmaw communities! We want to extend our deepest gratitude to Cape Breton University for stewarding MEW for the past 24 years and to the dedicated volunteer reviewers who contributed their time and knowledge to support this important work.

As of February 3rd, MEW has officially found its new home with the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM)! This transition marks a historic return of MEW to the Mi'kmaq people, reinforcing our ongoing commitment to protecting Mi'kmaw knowledge and research. Moving forward, all researchers – no matter their affiliation – must have their research proposals reviewed by MEW before conducting research with Mi'kmaw communities or on Mi'kmaw knowledge or treaty rights.

Founded in 2000 by the Sante' Mawio'mi (Grand Council), MEW has played a pivotal role in safeguarding Mi'kmaw traditional knowledge and people in research. The name *Eskinuapimk*, originates from the Grand Council's responsibility for overseeing the Council Wigwam, embodying our core mission: providing careful, thoughtful oversight of research involving Mi'kmaw communities.

This milestone also signifies the strength and growing self-governance of Mi'kmaw people in research and data sovereignty. MEW will now be part of the Data Governance team at the UNSM (formerly known as the Information Governance & Data Projects or IGDP), overseeing the implementation of OCAP (Ownership, Con-

trol, Access and Possession) principles to ensure that all research with Mi'kmaw communities aligns with the highest ethical standards.

And there's even more exciting news to share! As we celebrate MEW's 25th anniversary, we're excited to announce that Zabrina Downton has transitioned from her role as MEW's administrator to Program Coordinator. With a full team now supporting MEW, we are ready to achieve greater efficiency, visibility and impact in our work.

Please join us in welcoming Zabrina into her new role as we look forward to this exciting future!

This new chapter at the UNSM marks a significant step forward in our commitment to research and data sovereignty for the Mi'kmaq people. We're more determined than ever to ensure Mi'kmaw knowledge and rights are protected and respected in all research endeavors.



For more information, please contact:
Zabrina Downton
Program Coordinator
Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq
zdownton@unsm.org

HOMELESSNESS SYMPOSIUM



The Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre successfully hosted a transformative Symposium on Housing and Homelessness, made possible through the generous funding of the Tripartite Forum. Held on February 25th and 26th, this two-day event provided a platform for important discussions, community healing and shared solutions.

The symposium began with an opening prayer, setting a reflective and respectful tone for the days ahead. The gathering brought together individuals with lived experiences of homelessness and addiction, as well as key organizations dedicated to providing support to those in need. The event featured two insightful panel discussions: one focused on personal stories and experiences, while the other highlighted the vital work being done by community organizations to assist those facing housing instability.

Throughout the event, smudging ceremonies were held, offering moments of spiritual cleansing and protection for all attendees.

Breakout sessions gave attendees a chance to have focused discussions on homelessness, exploring solutions and sharing ideas. Participants worked together to find ways to strengthen community connections, improve access to resources, and create lasting change.

The symposium concluded with a heartfelt closing prayer, leaving attendees with a renewed sense of purpose and commitment

to addressing homelessness and housing instability within their community. The Friendship Centre extends its gratitude to all those who participated and to the Tripartite Forum for their invaluable support in making this important event possible.

If you or someone you know is experiencing homelessness or struggling with addiction, please reach out to the following resources for support:

- Diamond Bailey Healing Centre
Website: <https://fathomstudio.ca/new-page-1>
- Nova Scotia Native Women's Association
Website: www.nsnwa.ca
- Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre
Website: <https://www.mymnfc.com>
- Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Mental Wellness Team
Website: www.unsm.org

FEBRUARY



Immediate Changes to Jordan's Principle

Due to the significant increase in the numbers of requests, Indigenous Services Canada has begun implementing updated procedures for the approval of products, services and supports under Jordan's Principle.

Funding for the following items will NOT be approved unless this funding is required by substantive equality:

1. Purchase, construction or structural renovations of homes
2. Requests to support sporting events or elite/competitive sport related training, unless they are linked to the specific health, social, or educational needs of the First Nations child.
3. International travel, unless it is related to an exceptional medical need of the First Nations child.
4. Non-medical support such as **travel costs, non-medical respite care, child care, clothing, furniture and vehicles**, unless accompanied by a letter of support from a medical professional.
5. School related requests – supports to school boards off-reserve and private schools will be redirected to provincial school boards, or other existing programs.

All requests MUST receive approval prior to funding distribution

Information to include with Requests

Requests need to include appropriate supporting documentation from a health professional, educational professional, Elder or Knowledge keeper.

The letter must clearly indicate how the requested product/service links directly to the child's unmet needs.

The request for supports/services must clearly show how the child has experienced gaps or delays in accessing government services.

These changes take place immediately and will affect all applications.

If you would like to read the entire document published by ISC please click on the link below.

[Statement by Minister Hajdu on the changes to operating procedures related to processing requests under Jordan's Principle - Canada.ca](#)

MARCH

UNSM RECIEVES LOW CARBON COMMUNITY GRANT FOR SOLAR ARRAY PROJECT IN WE'KOQMA'Q

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) is proud to announce that it has received a Low Carbon Community Grant for a groundbreaking solar array project at the We'koqma'q Mi'kmaq School. This initiative marks the first solar energy project for the UNSM, and it is an exciting step forward in our commitment to sustainability and renewable energy.

On March 9th, recipients of the grant gathered at Province House, where they had the opportunity to discuss their projects and engage with Premier Tim Houston and the newly appointed Minister of Energy, Trevor Boudreau. It was a meaningful occasion to share the impact of these projects and further strengthen ties within the community.

The solar array project will begin in the coming weeks, with the aim of providing sustainable energy for the We'koqma'q Mi'kmaq School. This is a significant milestone for the community, and the UNSM is excited to be part of this important initiative.

Congratulations to all the recipients, and special thanks to the host community of We'koqma'q for their support. We look forward to the positive impact this project will have for years to come.

Please see below for the list of the 2024-2025 Low Carbon Communities Grant Recipients.

2024-2025 Low Carbon Communities Grant Recipients			
	Organization	Amount Awarded	Project
1	Annapolis Valley Regional Centre for Education	\$33,706	Canning Geo-Exchange District Heating Project
2	Cape Breton Regional Municipality	\$50,000	Fleet Staff Training – Electrification Including Ev Operation and Charger Maintenance
3	Cape Breton Regional Municipality	\$28,694	Fleet EV Charger Study – Plan and Implementation
4	Climate Focus Society	\$50,000	Climate Focus Atlantic (E-Magazine/Online Media Platform Incl. Podcast)
5	Dalhousie University	\$75,000	Sunny Side Up: Tackling Climate Action and Local Food Security with Agrivoltaics
6	Dalhousie University	\$50,000	Community-Based Planning and Design for The Electrification of Transport Systems in Rural Municipalities
7	Diocese of Nova Scotia and PEI	\$37,500	Bringing Electric Vehicle Charging to Nova Scotia's Faith-Based Communities
8	Halifax Regional Fire & Emergency	\$75,000	The Phoenix
9	Halifax Regional Municipality	\$75,000	Home Energy Retrofit Assistant (HERA)
10	Halifax Regional Municipality	\$74,043	Sustainable, Off-Grid Cold Storage (Feasibility and Upscaling)
11	Halifax Regional Municipality	\$75,000	Solar Carport Feasibility Study
12	Halifax Regional Water Commission	\$75,000	Vehicle Fleet Electrification Feasibility Study

13	Hope Blooms Inc	\$39,200	Feasibility Study for Scalability of Off-The-Grid Music Studio
14	Lemonade Communications Consulting	\$25,000	Cycling For Transportation on Nova Scotia's South Shore
15	Municipality of the County of Colchester	\$75,000	Colchester Community Solar Garden Feasibility and Design Study
16	Municipality of the County of Kings	\$75,000	Meadowview Solar Garden (Preparatory Phase)
17	Municipality of the District of Shelburne	\$52,500	Low Carbon County: Energy Planning and Engagement in Shelburne County
18	Municipality of the District of St. Mary's	\$61,739	Large Scale Solar Feasibility Study Municipality of The District of St. Mary's
19	North Preston Medical Society	\$75,000	Construction Design Planning for A Deep Retrofit of The North Preston Day Care Centre
20	Nova Scotia Community College	\$50,625	NSCC Cumberland Campus – Geothermal Feasibility Study
21	Nova Scotia Community College	\$70,000	Renewable Energy Shore Power System for Small Fishing Vessels
22	Sociable Media Inc.	\$37,500	Reimagined Energy Podcast – Nova Scotia
23	Techsploration Inc.	\$50,000	Techsploration Clean Energy Project
24	The District 13 Recreation & Planning Commission	\$26,000	Ivor Macdonald Shared Geothermal Project
25	Tomorrow's Legends	\$60,000	Legends Arena Solar Powered Sports & Cultural Complex
26	Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq	\$72,000	We'koqma'q Mikmaq School Solar Array
27	Verschuren Centre Inc. & Potlotek FN	\$65,270	Potlotek First Nation's Community Energy Transition Plan (CETP)



UNION
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UPCOMING
EVENTS

Join us for
Cape Breton University's
Indigenous Alumni
Gathering

Presented by
THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ



**Honouring the Past, Celebrating the Future:
Alumni and Grads Together**

Friday, May 30, 2025

Membertou Trade and Convention Centre

TICKETS: **\$30** plus fees

Visit cbu.ca/indigenous-alumni for tickets and more information.





UNION
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EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Are you passionate about making a difference?
The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq is currently
hiring for the following positions:

- Capacity Development: Administrative Assistant
- Health Services: Operations Coordinator
- Jordan's Principle Unama'ki:
Service Coordinator Assistant

To view job descriptions, visit:

<https://unsm.bamboohr.com/careers>

OR scan the QR code:

