

EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES: STRONGER TOGETHER

UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-2024

In Loving Memory

JOE B. MARSHALL
JUNE 30, 1940 - JANUARY 19, 2024



The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq dedicates the 2023-2024 Annual Report in loving memory of Joe B. Marshall.

As the former Executive Director of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Tribal Council, Joe B. served with distinction for over 15 years, until 2016. His remarkable contributions as a founding member of the Tribal Council in 1969, and his commitment to over 50 years of service, are a testament to his vision and unwavering dedication to advancing the interests of the Mi'kmaq people.

Our thoughts and prayers remain with Joe B., his family, friends, and loved ones. His legacy lives on in our hearts, guiding us forward.

Message from Executive Director

Once again, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq has seen remarkable growth this year, with our team now expanding to **63 staff members and counting**. This growth highlights our ongoing commitment to delivering enhanced services and addressing the evolving needs of our communities. As we reflect on this past year, we celebrated key milestones, including my own 25 years of service within the UNSM organization – an honour I am deeply proud of. The **administration team** has done its best to keep pace with the UNSM expansion. Through policy and procedure our executive, financial, communications and human resources continue to evolve to better assist and serve the entirety of the UNSM organization. Across all our UNSM departments, we remain focused on building stronger, healthier Mi'kmaq communities, ensuring that our efforts today create lasting impacts for future generations.

The Capacity Development Department has made great strides this year, driving progress across several key areas. Our work with the **Tripartite Forum** continues to strengthen collaboration between the Mi'kmaq, provincial, and federal governments, ensuring our communities' voices are heard. In **Governance and Information Data**, we've enhanced transparency and accountability through improved data management. **Emergency Management** has expanded its capacity, ensuring we are better prepared to protect our communities in times of crisis. On the **infrastructure front**, we successfully launched our first Infrastructure & Capital Building Conference, opening new opportunities for sustainable community-led projects. Additionally, our **Strategic Planning** efforts have focused on creating long-term initiatives that align with our community's goals and ensure lasting impact. Together, these efforts reflect our commitment to growth, resilience, and the well-being of our Mi'kmaq communities.

The Health Department has seen tremendous growth and development this year, with each department contributing to the overall well-being of our communities. Our **Jordan's Principle team**, aside from their exemplary work within community, attended the National Gathering, and continue their critical work in ensuring that the needs of our children are prioritized and met. The **Mental Wellness Team** has expanded its reach, providing vital support services to promote mental health across our communities. The **Early Learning and Child Care Governance** team has been instrumental in shaping programs that support the development of our youngest members, setting a strong foundation for future generations. **Healing Our Nations** continues to provide culturally relevant health education and support, while our **Dietician** has focused on promoting healthier lifestyles through nutrition education and personalized guidance.

Together, these teams have significantly enhanced the services available to our communities, ensuring a traditional approach to health and wellness.

Wela'lin,
Douglas Brown
Executive Director

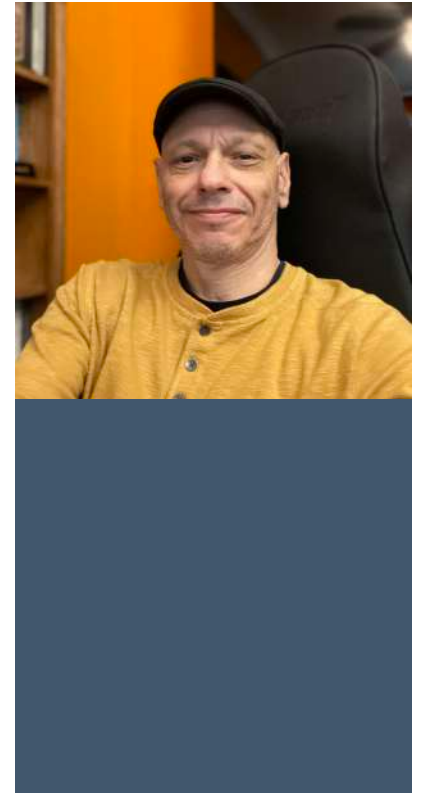


TABLE OF CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	03
TABLE OF CONTENTS	04
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	05
BOARD OF DIRECTORS	06
MEMBER BANDS	07
YEAR IN REVIEW	8-11
HEALTH BRANCH	12-33
CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT	34-44
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS	45-51

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) has proudly served the Mi'kmaq people for over 50 years, providing a unified political voice and advocacy for Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in the Province of Nova Scotia. Initially formed in response to a proposed federal policy of assimilation, the UNSM has expanded its role, focusing not only on advocacy but also on delivering modern governance services to its member bands. These services are aimed at enhancing governance capacity and incorporating best practices rooted in Mi'kmaq values.

Reflecting on the period from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024, the UNSM has demonstrated resilience and adaptability, particularly in navigating the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite travel restrictions, employee shortages, and other operational hurdles, the organization has emerged stronger. Today, UNSM has grown significantly, with a staff of over 60 employees, and its budget has seen an impressive 400% increase. This growth is supported by an evolving staff policy designed to align with Mi'kmaq cultural values.

This annual report highlights key milestones, challenges overcome, and ongoing efforts in governance, community engagement, and advocacy. Through our continued commitment to the Mi'kmaq people, the UNSM remains focused on fostering innovation and building a sustainable future for our communities.

MISSION STATEMENT

- To protect and maintain Mi'kmaq rights and entitlement.
- To preserve an enhanced way of life for the Mi'kmaq that is assured by our ancestry and guaranteed by our Mi'kmaq Treaty Rights.
- To guarantee liberty, freedoms and restoring life.
- To fulfill the goals and objectives of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq as stated in the Constitution.
- To promote the education of the bands in matters affecting the Mi'kmaq.

OBJECTIVES

- To promote the welfare and well-being of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.
- To improve the economic and social conditions of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia.
- To promote the rights of Mi'kmaq people, to inform Mi'kmaq of their rights and to assist Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia in their enforcement of their rights.
- To promote discussion of Mi'kmaq problems.
- To seek to promote a better understanding between Mi'kmaq and other people.
- To initiate and carry out programs for the advancement of Mi'kmaq people.
- To cooperate with governmental and private agencies for the promoting of the interests of Mi'kmaq people.
- To do all such things as are incidental or conducive to the attainment of the above objectives.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



CHIEF LEROY DENNY
ESKASONI



CHIEF TERRANCE J. PAUL
MEMBERTOU



CHIEF WILBERT MARSHALL
POTLOTEK



CHIEF NORMAN BERNARD
WAGMATCOOK



**INTERIM CHIEF
JOHN L. BERNARD**
WE'KOQMA'Q



STARR PAUL
ESKASONI - COUNCILLOR



JOHN FRANK TONEY
ESKASONI - COUNCILLOR



KJI KEPTIN ANTLE DENNY
MI'KMAQ GRAND COUNCIL



**UNAMA'KI DISTRICT CHIEF
ALEX CHRISTMAS**



CHIEF ANDREA PAUL
PICTOU / REGIONAL CHIEF



**KJI SAQAMAQ
NORMAN SYLLIBOY**
MI'KMAQ GRAND COUNCIL

MEMBER BANDS

UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ



MEMBERTOU FIRST NATION

47 AUTWEN MAS'L AWTI
MEMBERTOU NS, B1S 2P5
PHONE: 902-564-6466
FAX: 902-539-6649

CHIEF TERRANCE J. PAUL
DARRELL W. BERNARD
CRAIG CHRISTMAS
DEAN CHRISTMAS
GAIL CHRISTMAS
PAUL BRADLEY GOULD
MARY I. JOE
JOHANNA LAPORTE
DAVID MARSHALL
PAUL MACDONALD
ALLISTER (BUSTER) MATTHEWS
LAWRENCE PAUL
STORM SACK

ESKASONI FIRST NATION

63 MINI MALL DRIVE
ESKASONI NS, B1W 1A6
PHONE: 902-379-2800
FAX: 902-379-2172

CHIEF LEROY DENNY
SOPHIA BASQUE
BERTRAM BERNARD
BLAIR BERNARD
DUMA BERNARD
LEON DENNY
ELDON GOULD
PIERRE GOULD
DERECK JOHNSON
THOMAS JOHNSON JR.
STARR PAUL
CHRIS STEVENS
JOHN F. TONEY

POTLOTEK FIRST NATION

12004 HIGHWAY 4
BOX 538
RR 1 ST. PETER'S NS
BOE 3B0
PHONE: 902-535-3317
FAX: 902-535-3004

CHIEF WILBERT MARSHALL
TYRONE BERNARD SR.
MARY SUSAN LAFFORD
MARY LEE JOHNSON
AARON MARSHALL
JOHN DUNCAN JOHNSON
JONATHAN MARSHALL
ISAIAH BERNARD
JOCELYN MARSHALL

WE'KOQMA'Q FIRST NATION

PO BOX 149
WHYCOCOMAGH NS, B03 3M0
PHONE: 902-756-239
FAX: 902-756-2393

INTERIM CHIEF JOHN L. BERNARD
STUART BASQUE
JASON BERNARD
WALLACE BERNARD
JOHN W. CREMO
PETER J. GOOGOO
STEWART PETERS
BRANDON POULETTE

WAGMATCOOK FIRST NATION

PO BOX 30001
WAGMATCOOK NS, B0E 2N0
PHONE: 902-295-2598
FAX: 902-295-3398

CHIEF NORMAN BERNARD
THOMAS PECK
PETER PIERRO
KIM DENNY
RICHARD PIERRO
EVAN GOOGOO
TRAVIS ISADORE
ANGELA PIERRO
CORNEILIA PECK



April 2023 - March 2024

YEAR IN REVIEW

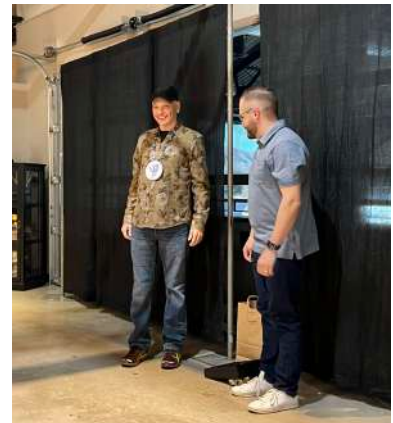


HAPPY RETIREMENT, ANN!

In May 2023, after 23 years of dedicated service, Ann Gottschall retired from her role in the Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative at the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. Ann played a key role in developing and implementing diabetes prevention, healthy living, and management programs that significantly impacted community health. Her leadership saw the successful launch of initiatives like the Heart Smart program, diabetes walk challenges, and community education sessions. Ann also empowered healthcare professionals through glucometer training and led the Membertou Diabetes Working Group. Her dedication and contributions will be remembered, and she will be greatly missed. We wish her all the best in her retirement.

CONGRATULATIONS ON 25 YEARS OF SERVICE!

In May 2023, Douglas Brown, Executive Director of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, celebrated 25 years of dedicated service. A Membertou community member and the first known Mi'kmaw lawyer to retire in the region, Doug was honored in 2020 by the Mi'kmaq People's Council. Called to the bar in 1997, Doug's expertise and advocacy have been vital to the organization, particularly in defending Mi'kmaq hunting rights. Staff celebrated his milestone with a brunch and a custom-made medallion. Congratulations, Doug, on this remarkable achievement and for your invaluable contributions over the past quarter century.



CONGRATULATIONS, MUIN JI'J!

In June, eight inspiring young Indigenous leaders were selected for this year's Voices of Youth Indigenous Leaders event at the Senate of Canada. Among them was UNSM's Special Projects Coordinator for Information Governance & Data Projects, Muin Ji'j Bernard, chosen for the 2023 program, which highlights Indigenous youth aged 18-35 making a positive impact in their communities.

Congratulations, Muin! We are incredibly proud of your accomplishments—you are a true inspiration.

April 2023 - March 2024

YEAR IN REVIEW



STAFF MEETING & TEAM BUILDING EVENT

In mid-June, the UNSM held a staff meeting at the Membertou Trade & Convention Centre. Team members shared updates from their departments, and guest speaker Dan Christmas gave a presentation on the early years and history of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq. After lunch, staff participated in an "Amazing Race" team-building exercise, with Capacity Development taking first place over the Health Department and Jordan's Principle.

It was an informative and engaging day for all. Special thanks to the staff at the Membertou Trade & Convention Centre for their excellent service in making the day a success.

TREATY DAY (OCTOBER 2023)

A mass was held at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica, marking the first church service with the Mi'kmaq choir and 35 Grand Council members since the onset of COVID-19 in 2020. The Honourable Arthur J. LeBlanc, Lt. Governor of Nova Scotia, hosted a flag-raising ceremony at Government House, featuring drumming by the Kiju Boys, prayers by Elder John W. (Tiny) Cremo and a Mi'kmaq flag-raising song by Arlene Stevens. Treaty Day ceremonies included remarks from officials such as the Honourable Trevor Boudreau and Chief Sydney Peters.

Grand Chief Donald Marshall Sr. Elder Award Recipients: Joe and Judy Googoo (Wagmatcook and We'koqma'q), Shirley Clark (Glooscap First Nation)

Chief Noel Doucette Youth Achievement Award Recipients: Maria Young (Eskasoni), Miracle Johnson (Membertou.)



UNSM SPREADS HOLIDAY CHEER

In December 2023, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) embraced the spirit of giving by adopting a family in need. The family, a single parent with four children, received five gifts per child, generously donated by UNSM staff from each department. This initiative helped create cherished holiday memories for the family during a challenging year.

UNSM remains committed to supporting those in need and giving back to the community, marking a heartwarming conclusion to the year by spreading love and compassion.

April 2023 - March 2024

YEAR IN REVIEW

UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ HOSTS 54TH ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY



For the first time in four years, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) hosted their 54th Annual General Assembly on September 25th at the Membertou Trade & Convention Centre, marking a post-pandemic return to in-person gatherings.

The event began with opening prayers led by Grand Chief Norman Sylliboy, followed by the Honour Song, performed by Sons of Membertou. Executive Director Doug Brown welcomed staff and attendees with opening remarks, setting the tone for the day. Dan Christmas, UNSM's guest speaker, also delivered a brief address and presented several awards in recognition of contributions to the organization.

Presentations throughout the day featured updates from key departments, including Finance, Capacity Development and the Health Branch.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of Lifetime Achievement Awards to Joe B. Marshall and Unama'ki District Chief Alex Christmas, in recognition of their longstanding dedication and service to the Mi'kmaq communities of Nova Scotia. Although Joe B. Marshall was unable to attend, his children, Jay Marshall and Eleonor Bernard, accepted the award on his behalf.

UNSM staff were also recognized for their contributions with Years of Service Appreciation Awards and COVID-19 Crisis Response Recognition Awards.

April 2023 - March 2024

YEAR IN REVIEW



2023 Years of Service Award Winners

Five (5) Years:

Anne Basque	Donna Christmas	Aaron Corbett
Tracey Googoo	Jewl Stevens	Megan Bowers
Wasuek Googoo	Kelly Holley	Kirstin Ward
Richard (Buddy) Young		Michael Dwyer

10+ Years:

Beverly Madill	Joan Stevens	Rachel Paul-Coles
----------------	--------------	-------------------

25 Years:

Douglas Brown

The COVID Crisis Response Recognition Award was presented to staff members who went above and beyond expectations during the pandemic:

COVID Crisis Response Recognition Award Winners:

Jennifer Jesty	Todd Vassallo	Richard (Buddy) Young	Kelly Holley
----------------	---------------	-----------------------	--------------

Congratulations to all the honorees!

HEALTH BRANCH

Community wellness is our utmost priority, guiding the work of the UNSM Health Branch. Our mission is to advocate, support and serve Mi'kmaq communities. We do this through programs, services, and partnerships that aspire to enhance the wellness and vitality of our Mi'kmaq communities.

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Health Branch include departmental programs such as Health Technician, Home and Community Care, Dietitian Services, Aboriginal Diabetes Initiative, Dietitian Services, Healing, Our Nations, Mental Wellness Team, Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq (Early Learning and Child Care), and Unama'ki Jordan's Principle.

Unama'ki Jordan's Principle is a child-first initiative developed to ensure First Nations children receive equitable services in the areas of education, health, social development, and culture. This past fiscal year we submitted 3814 funding requests and have serviced 2487 children. This is 2500 more requests than last year. Indigenous Services Canada has indicated that they expect Jordan's Principle cases to double each year for the next 5 years. We are seeing that trend reflected in Unama'ki. We also received over 700 referrals from community and provincial agencies. This is the highest number of referrals received to date. This initiative is expanding as more families become aware of the available support. We have increased our outreach to community members living outside of their home community, reaching 167 children. There was a significant increase in the number of group applications requests. This year we submitted 24 Group Application requests.

The Cultural Support Program continues to be a success. As the demand for cultural support services continues to rise, the program is adapting the needs. In doing so, we will offer

more group activities in community to service those needs. A new staff member joined our team and we have plans to hire an additional worker in the new fiscal year.

Aging out continues to be a challenge, as Indigenous Service Canada will only support children until their 19th birthday. In the upcoming fiscal year, we will be hiring a Transitions Coordinator to support children and families aging out of Jordan's Principle. We are also working with Province of Nova Scotia through the Health Tripartite Committee to develop strategies to assist families transition to provincial services.

In response to the growth of Jordan's Principle, we have opened offices in Potlotek Health Centre and began renovations on a space in Wagmatcook to house two new Wagmatcook staff hired this fiscal year. We now have Jordan's Principle office in all the Unama'ki communities.

Indigenous Early Learning & Child Care Governance Over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Governance Program did high level engagement in 11 out of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia with the daycare and headstart managers, health directors, education directors, and some social or employment officers on the development of an L'nu Early Learning and Child Care governance structure. A report with the results of these engagements will be completed and shared.

HEALTH BRANCH

A briefing note was developed and shared with the Chiefs and organizations outlining our shared commitment and collaboration, between Health, Education, and Social (the CMM, Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat (METS), Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Tajikeimik, and UNSM) to the process of engagement and governance development for IELCC in Nova Scotia. We have decided to rename it to *Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq: Working Together For Our Children*.

The biggest challenge with the project so far, has been the jurisdiction over the host organization of the development and implementation of the IELCC governance structure. We hope to bring the Nova Scotia Chiefs together in the next fiscal year to discuss and come to a consensus regarding the host organization for the implementation of the IELCC Governance structure.

Dietitian Services support First Nation food sovereignty by proving group-based nutrition education to all 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia. First Nations People have always known that food is more than just nourishment. Traditional foods are a pathway to wellness. The loss of food sovereignty has contributed to poor health outcomes for our people both physically and psychologically. In the last year, our Dietitian, Chelsey Purdy has been engaging with communities and exploring strategic direction for development of a program that is informed by l'nu'k values.

In addition, the Dietician Program has hosted two food-focused retreats. One for Mi'kmaw Women in Care-Based Roles and

One for Cooks, Caterers, and Harvesters. Future plans include Hosting a land-based gathering at Kejimikujik National Park. This gathering will be open to community members with priority given to those involved in food-related work. Food Mapping Project – to map food-related strengths like kitchen spaces or food banks across Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia. Weltamultiek Summer Internship – to support Mi'kmaw students pursuing careers related to food.

UNSM Home and Community Care Program (HCCP) continues to support the First Nation communities of Nova Scotia, Newfoundland, and Labrador through the great work of our UNSM Coordinator Beverly Madill. In addition to the coordination of this program, UNSM also coordinates and hosts the professional development for the Atlantic Region. These activities are steered by the regional planning team up of Home Care Coordinators from UNSM, MAWIW, North Shore, MCPEI, and Regional ISC Home Care Coordinators with regular input from community staff. UNSM is regarded as an experiences partner to deliver these educational sessions. With support from leadership within communities we will continue to develop and deliver education program to staff to ensure quality care for our communities.

As this important program is coming on its 25th Anniversary this October, we want to acknowledge former UNSM HCC Coordinator Michelle Landry. Ms Landry's early work has been foundational in guiding and support each community CHN in the implementation of home care program until...

HEALTH BRANCH

communities were able to hire staff to take over the role and work with the provincial continuing care sector, as well as advocate for federal funding to sustain the program over the years. Many community members have benefitted from this program in order to remain in their own homes for healing, aging in place, and for some, receiving caring and respectful end of life care. It is through the dedicated and compassionate staff we have been able to carry out this work with such limited funding throughout the years. Through SARs, H1N1 and Covid-19, our home care staff have shown resiliency and leadership in making sure our communities have been well taken care of. UNSM extends heartfelt gratitude for these program leaders within our communities.

Healing Our Nations (HON) has long been affiliated with UNSM Health. As of April 1st, 2023, HON is officially a full department under the UNSM Health Branch. This strategic move brings increased organisational support and stability to their good work. Under the umbrella of UNSM Health, Healing Our Nations will continue “teach, educate and support our people in the prevention of HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis” in the Atlantic Region. Healing Our Nations provides education, prevention, and awareness to the four Atlantic Provinces, 33 First Nation communities, off reserve Indigenous and non-Indigenous partner organizations and off-reserve community members. HON was in every one of the 33 First Nation communities at least once and delivered 44 educational and/or prevention activities such as workshops, information booths, peer mentor training, UNSM wellness days, Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Family Fun Day, PRIDE events

and Naloxone Training. If communities request extra training, HON will return to communities to do additional session when needed.

HON’s two main funding streams are Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund & Harm Reduction Fund (CAF-HAF), and the First Nations, Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB). This type of work requires building new partnerships and while fostering existing partnerships to ensure effective program delivery, as such as developed 15 new partnerships with fiscal year.

Our **Mental Wellness Team (MWT)** continues to offer programming and services to the five Unama’ki communities and Paqtnekek. MWT work hard to support our the Unama’ki communities and health centers with programs and workshops, crisis and emergencies, case management and behavioral support, cultural and traditional healing, training, and committee work, continued Indian Day School settlement support, family group conferencing circles and sentencing circles, as well as attending criminal court and wellness court for our clients.

Our team has been invaluable support especially during community crisis. The MWT continues to provide ongoing crisis support to the UNSM designated communities. The team works collaboratively with the mental health teams and the health centers in Unama’ki and Paqtnekek. We set up comfort centers, sacred fires, provide food and catering, soft counselling, and crisis/grief counselling (clinical therapist). Unfortunately, there is a continued high need in this area, therefore we are looking for ways to increase staffing to continue to meet

HEALTH BRANCH

these needs.

Mental health and addictions continue to important community priorities and the demand for mental health services in Nova Scotia is steadily rising along with wait times. In response to this, the MWT have implement strategies with the employment of two therapists. A family/youth counsellor and a psychotherapist (adult and crisis/emergency counselling).

In addition to our community and crisis work, we also assist and collaborates with organisations such as Assembly of First Nations, Tajiikeimik, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Cape Breton University, Saint Francis Xavier to name a few. The MWT provides trauma informed, cultural safety, and humility assistance when needed.

Highlights include, the hosting of the new Mental Wellness Days in member communities in honour of Mental Health Month in May, Camp Outside the Lines for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth and Gathering of Lnu'k Minds at Liscombe Lodge with CMM and Tajiikeimik, North American Indigenous Games and the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Summer Games.

UNSM Health Leadership, in addition to leading the UNSM Health Branch which includes 30 staff (more being added in 2024-2025) the Director of Health is the current Health Tripartite co-chair (Mi'kmaq), a member of the National Consortium on Indigenous Medical Education's Recruitment and Retention working group, Nova Scotia Health Lung Cancer Screening Steering Committee, Mi'kmaq & Nova Scotia Health Cancer Strategy Committee, Tajiikeimik collaborator, Atlantic Re-

gion representative for Canadian Institute for Health Information Advancing Cultural Safety, and Health Technician to the Unama'ki Chiefs. In this capacity, the majority of role is spent working with the Chiefs at the Atlantic Health Partnership. As such I sit a at the Public Health & Primary Care Committee and, the Health Directors Committee. Kelly Holly is at Non-Insured Benefits committee, Richard Young is at Mental Wellness committee, Jenna Marr is Child and Youth committee.



In Peace, Friendship,

Kara Paul
Director of Health
Email: kpaul@unsm.org

ABORIGINAL DIABETES INITIATIVE

Home and Community Care Program (HCCP)

The First Nation and Inuit Home and Community Care Program (HCC) is a mandatory program funded through Contribution Agreements with First Nation and Inuit Community and Territorial governments. Service delivery funding was first approved in 1999, with many communities establishing home and community care programs shortly thereafter. In many of these communities, services from the provincial healthcare system were either limited or non-existent, which meant leveraging internal resources to provide care. More than two decades later, we take pride in the health and social organizations that have supported the vision of delivering safe and competent care while honoring the traditional role of family members in caregiving.

Community Staffing and Recruitment

This fiscal year, there was significant staff turnover at the community level, prompting many Band Administrations and Health Directors to focus on recruitment efforts. In addition to participating in community-level interviews, my role also included assisting with updating job descriptions and interview questions. Due to a shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) in the program, I provided current job descriptions, responded to occupational health and safety concerns (especially regarding snow removal, housing repairs, and heat-related issues), and addressed both staff and community needs. Advocacy for increased services from provincial and other organizations was a priority, particularly concerning nursing standards of care such as confidentiality, documentation, and broader health education.

The discharge process for clients returning to community settings from hospitals has shown improvement, even with ongoing staff shortages. It appears that provincial settings are increasingly using our community discharge process sheets in their Continuing Care intranet communications.

Professional Development and Education

funding, which is currently being managed by UNSM. A regional HCC planning team, including ISC regional coordinators and Tribal Council coordinators, determined the year's educational activities, with input from all community coordinators through quarterly meetings, emails, and polling.

Several professional development sessions were attended by both myself and community staff, including:

- **Mental Health Education**, Millbrook (May 2023)
- **Palliative Care Provincial Conference** (May 2023)
- **Palliative Care for First Nations**, in collaboration with Lakehead University, Moncton (June 2023)
- **Facilitators' Training**, hosted by UNSM (May 2023)

Our ongoing partnership with the provincial Advanced Care Planning team enabled the translation of their resources into Mi'kmaw, thanks to a provincial Seniors Grant. Translation and printing costs were fully covered, and each community received its own set of resources to advance work on Advanced Care planning as part of clients' health journeys.

ABORIGINAL DIABETES INITIATIVE

Standardization of Care

All communities received a Home and Community Care Policy and Procedure binder and flash drive, designed to guide Nursing and CCA staff at the community level. These policies and procedures aim to standardize service delivery across communities and ensure equitable care, using uniform templates and processes. They will also be used for Accreditation purposes. While these resources are currently being utilized situationally, the goal is for all coordinators and CCAs to become proficient with the new versions.

Community Support and Advocacy

Community visits for orientation, policy discussions, education, and case management remain a priority. Virtual meetings, phone calls, texts, and emails ensure that every community has access to this supportive role, which also serves to advocate for both the program and its clients.

During this fiscal year, I presented at the Dalhousie University Geriatric Rounds, virtually addressing approximately 80 healthcare educators, interdisciplinary professionals, and physicians on "Caring for Mi'kmaw Elders in the Community." I also assisted a Mental Health and Addictions Social Worker with her presentation on "Alzheimer Care in a First Nation Community" at the Alzheimer's Provincial Conference. Both presentations were highly praised and well received by participants.

Key Events and Collaborations

UNSM hosted the Atlantic Home and Community Care 3-day Symposium in Halifax in October 2023. Feedback from the symposium

was overwhelmingly positive, with high marks for the speakers, venue, and content. Based on input from community coordinators and health directors, we plan to continue hosting these conferences, budget permitting. Planning is already underway for the HCC 25th Anniversary Conference in October 2024. One of our key presenters, Dr. Whynot from Mount Saint Vincent University, provided valuable insights on Aging in Place, which will help shape future initiatives under the UNSM HCC five-year workplan.

Program Initiatives and Focus Areas

The Chronic Disease Prevention and Management Strategic Action Plan Evaluation Committee has been selected and is meeting regularly to draft a final report for review and discussion by Atlantic Chiefs.

Falls prevention remains a key focus for both staff and community education. HCC supported a Falls Prevention and Child Safety booth at the Potlotek Health Fair in December, and the provincial Falls Prevention Coordinator provided an in-person education session to community coordinators at the November quarterly meeting.

A Una'maki HCC Education Day was held in November for newly hired community staff, furthering our commitment to ongoing professional development.

Meeting Frequency and Documentation

Regional Home and Community Care meetings are held monthly, with agenda and meeting notes kept on file. In preparation for major education sessions, additional meetings are...

ABORIGINAL DIABETES INITIATIVE

often scheduled on a weekly basis to ensure thorough planning and coordination.

—

The UNSM HCC program continues to make significant strides in delivering safe, competent, and culturally sensitive care to our communities. As we reflect on the accomplishments of the past year, we remain committed to improving and expanding services to meet the evolving needs of our clients and communities.

For more information, contact:

Beverley Madill, RN BScN CCHN(c)
Home and Community Care Coordinator,
NS, NF & LB
Email: homecare@unsm.org

MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM



Mental Wellness Team and Jordan's Principle.

We are also redesigning our mental wellness logo, with discussions underway about replacing "mental wellness" with "health and wellness" to reflect a more holistic approach to care.

In May 2023, to celebrate Mental Health Awareness Month, we visited the five Unama'ki communities and Paqtnek, hosting community events to promote mental health. Our team organized a world café and promoted self-care by providing free haircuts from local Mi'kmaq hairdressers. Jordan's Principle staff engaged with parents and children, while a Mi'kmaq dietitian shared insights on land-based healing and the importance of re-introducing traditional diets to help prevent chronic diseases like diabetes.

SERVICES OFFERED	CLIENTS SERVED
Case Management	89
Counselling - Individuals	49
Counselling - Families/Groups	13
Programming - Workshops	24
Programming - Multi-session	7
Behavioral Support - Children and Youth	28
Traditional Healing	450
Indian Day School Claims/Follow ups	250
TOTAL	903

Mandate

Under the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM), the Mental Wellness Team (MWT) operates under the supervision of Health Director Kara Paul and works closely with the Jordan's Principle team. Our work focuses on supporting Unama'ki band communities and health centers through a range of services including programs, workshops, crisis management, case support, behavioral interventions, and cultural and traditional healing. Additionally, we provide training, committee work, family group conferencing and sentencing circles also accompany clients to both criminal and wellness courts.

Positive Developments

We are excited to announce that two new social workers will join our team in the next fiscal year, enhancing our capacity to serve both the

CHALLENGES AND NEEDS

Counselling and NIHB Mental Health Providers
Demand for mental health services in Nova Scotia has surged, leading to longer wait times, especially for children and youth under 18. The shortage of service providers exacerbates these delays. While we had two therapists on the team, one left in October 2023. This departure has impacted our ability to provide counselling for children and youth. Currently, we work closely with a contracted psychotherapist who offers crisis and emergency counselling to adults.

Community Crisis Response:

The MWT continues to provide crisis support to UNSM communities, collaborating with mental health teams and health centres...

MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM



in Unama'ki and Paqtnekek. Our response efforts include setting up comfort centers, sacred fires, providing food and catering, and offering soft counselling—all through a culturally informed lens.

Organizational Wellness and Cultural Support:

The MWT collaborates with various organizations, including the Assembly of First Nations, Tajikeimik, Jordan's Principle, Cape Breton University and St. Francis Xavier University. We provide trauma-informed, culturally safe, and humility-based support as needed.

Richard "Buddy" Young represents UNSM on the Cultural Authenticity Committee, which assists in creating Mi'kmaq brands and labels.

We also utilize Traditional Healers funding to provide cultural healing services, such as land-based programs like sweat lodges, sacred fires and other cultural activities.

Notable Community Events:

- **Moose Camps:** Youth in Cape Breton Highlands were taught traditional teachings on moose hunting, including setting up teepees, making ceremonial offerings and preparing moose meat for the community.

- **Crisis and Sacred Fire Requests:** Communities frequently request sacred fires and teepees for crisis situations or deaths, with firekeepers assigned to maintain the fire during the wake or crisis.

- **Camp Outside the Lines (August 2023):** A camp for LGBTQIA+2S was held in partnership with Jordan's Principle, providing a safe

space for idea and cultural exchange.

- **Gathering of L'nu Minds for L'nu Healing (June 2023):** Held at Liscombe Lodge, this gathering featured knowledge sharing from Mi'kmaq elders and medicine carriers, focusing on traditional and cultural healing.



- **2023 Mi'kmaq Summer Games:** The MWT was present at the games in Millbrook to provide cultural and mental wellness support during community sports and cultural events.

- **North American Indigenous Games (July 2023):** MWT attended events in Halifax, supporting Mi'kmaq athletes and providing mental wellness resources at various venues.

MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM



- Mental Health and Addictions Conference (Ottawa, 2023): MWT members presented on Camp Outside the Lines at this conference, hosted by Indigenous Services Canada.

Traditional Healers:

The Traditional Healers Fund supports a range of services, including:

- Wakes, sacred fires and teepees
- Ceremonies such as sweat lodges, naming, and pipe ceremonies
- Traditional teachings, cultural support and trauma-informed care
- Land-based healing and cultural reconnection for clients

Indian Day School Support: The team worked with Unama'ki communities to help claimants file narratives and obtain necessary documents for the Indian Day School claims process.

- Mi'kmaq Men's Group: Our team supported land-based healing ceremonies requested by Eskasoni, Membertou, Potlotek and Paqtnkek participants, providing firekeepers, elders, and traditional healing services.

- MMIWG Awareness Walk (May 2023): We participated in this annual event in Sydney to raise awareness about Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, which included remarks from Mi'kmaq leaders and elders.



(continued...)

MENTAL WELLNESS TEAM



Wagmatcook Wellness Court:

The MWT provides support for the Domestic Violence and Wellness Court. The New Paths program, managed by the Wellness Team, offers mandated Anger Management programming. Requests for training on this program have come from Eskasoni's Mental Health Crisis Centre and the Nova Scotia Justice Department, with a new manual expected by September 2024.

Mental Wellness Committee:

The MWT is an active participant in the Atlantic Policy Congress Health Partnership's Mental Wellness Committee, which meets quarterly to collaborate on decisions that assist regional health directors. Richard "Buddy" Young represents UNSM on this committee, contributing to strategic planning and decision-making.

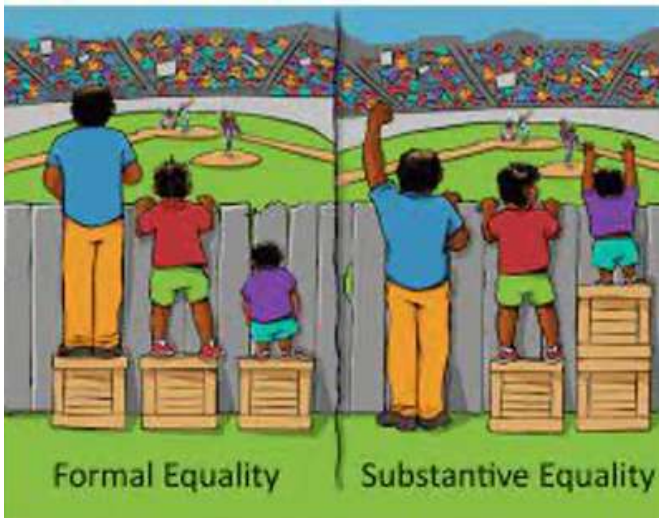
For more information, contact:

Richard "Buddy" Young,
Interim Team Lead
Email: ryoung@unsm.org

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI



Jordan's Principle is a child-first initiative aimed at ensuring that First Nations and Inuit children receive equitable services in education, health, social development, and culture. It is a legal obligation of the Government of Canada to meet these needs. The principle of substantive equality underpins the initiative, addressing disparities to ensure that children receive the same opportunities and services as others.



Eligibility for Jordan's Principle Funding:

- Children with status
- Children eligible for status
- Children ordinarily residing on reserve
- Children recognized by their First Nation

Jordan's Principle supports children from prenatal stages until they reach their 19th birthday. Since its inception in Unama'ki in 2017, Jordan's Principle has expanded with offices in Membertou, Eskasoni, We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook and Potlotek.

Service Coordination Updates:

Service Coordination is the core of Jordan's

Principle, designed to address unmet needs in Health, Education, Social Development, and Culture. **Responsibilities include:**

- Navigating existing services and connecting families with community resources
- Securing funding through the Service Access Resolution Fund (SARF) and identifying required services
- Providing case management services
- Engaging in outreach, education, and community capacity building.

Highlights:

- Provided services to 2,487 individual children across Unama'ki.
- Received 700 referrals from community organizations, provincial agencies and other partners.
- Increased outreach to First Nations people living outside their home communities, reaching 167 children.
- Successfully installed staff in Potlotek, with Potlotek staff now housed at the Health Centre and renovations beginning in the Wagmatcook Cultural Centre.
- Eight staff members attended the National Jordan's Principle Gathering.
- Initiated preparations to offer direct deposit options for Jordan's Principle clients.

Challenges:

- Delays in Government response: The Government of Canada has not met legal timelines for application adjudication, leading to extended waiting periods for families, often exceeding a year.
- Recent changes (October 2023) require minor capital requests to be...

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI

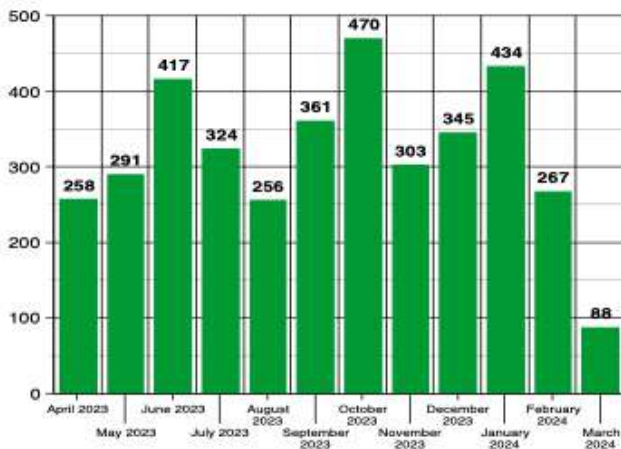


...adjudicated at Headquarters instead of Regional offices, causing additional delays for critical needs such as fencing or home renovations. These delays exacerbate safety concerns for families with children who are flight risks.

Individual Requests:

This year, we submitted 3,814 funding requests for 2,487 children, nearly doubling the previous year's figures. To manage this increased demand, UNSM has expanded Jordan's Principle staff in Eskasoni, Potlotek, and Wagmatcook.

Services Applied For by Month

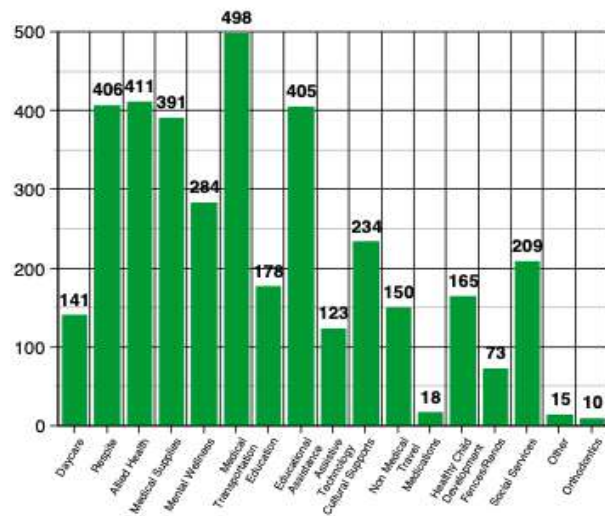


Types of Services Requested:

Services requested reflect national trends, with high demand for:

- Education
- Medical transportation
- Allied Health support
- Respite services

Services Approved



Group Requests:

Requests for group services have surged, providing support to a larger number of children and enhancing community capacity.

Approved group requests include:

- Wagmatcookewey School: Cultural Supplies/Land-Based Learning Opportunities
- We'koqma'q School: Various educational and support services including bus monitors, after-school programs, and emotional wellness services
- We'koqma'q Daycare: Speech Language Services

(continued...)

JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI



(continued...)

- Potlotek School: Various programs including Head Start Materials, Occupational Therapy, and Music Program
- Sydney Academy: Sacred Gathering
- Camp OUTside the Lines (2SLGBTQI+) Camp
- Potlotek Youth Centre: Youth Workers
- Eskasoni: Multiple sports, cultural, and educational programs.

Cultural Supports:

As of March 2023, 38 children received cultural mentoring services, supported by 19 active mentors. Forty-eight children are waiting to be matched with mentors.

This year, we:

- Facilitated drum-making and medicine pouch workshops
- Hosted various group activities for mentors and their mentees
- Planned additional hires and new group activities for the upcoming fiscal year, including a traditional fish camp weekend and new partnerships for cultural support

Community Outreach and Partnerships:

Community outreach and partnerships are vital to our work.

This year, we engaged in numerous activities, including:

- Raising the Villages Food Forum
- Native Council Parenting Journey Facilitator
- Atlantic Health Partnership Information Session
- Various community events, health fairs, and educational presentations
- Participation in national and regional con-

ferences and gatherings

Future Plans:

- Develop aging out/transition planning
- Expand data collection and utilization to better plan for family needs
- Ensure culturally appropriate services and supports for all stages of care
- Increase awareness of Jordan's Principle Capital Asset Funding through advertising and community events
- Support the Chiefs in Assembly and proposed policy options for greater First Nations control over Jordan's Principle
- Implement direct deposit for families
- Fully staff the cultural support program and engage in strategic planning
- Host a Gathering for Atlantic Coordinators.

For more information, contact:

Kelly Holley,

Jordan's Principle Unama'ki Manager

Email: kholley@unsm.org

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Governance

The Indigenous Early Learning and Childcare (IELCC) Governance project is meant to support, coordinate and guide the design, delivery and governance of IELCC that is anchored in self-determination, centred on children and grounded in culture, through new policies, processes, partnerships, authorities, capacities, programs and investments that will strengthen IELCC in Nova Scotia and Canada.

Over the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Governance Program did high level engagement in 11 out of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia with the daycare and headstart managers, health directors, education directors, and some social or employment officers on the development of an L'nu Early Learning and Child Care governance structure.

These high-level engagements asked:

1. What do you see as a priority area to be addressed in order for the Mi'kmaq to exercise jurisdiction and control over ELCC?
2. How do we come together and work together to support children and families?
3. What Mi'kmaq principles and values should be embedded into the decision-making Governance structure?
4. How do we ensure accountability and transparency?
5. How can we develop collaborations and partnerships that support the establishment of a coordinated, integrated First Nations-led ELCC system of policies, programs, services and supports, including national and regional linkages

between relevant departments, governments, nations and related sectors.

6. How can we ensure First Nations capacity that is supported at national, regional and community levels to successfully establish and guide a First Nations ELCC system.

Some preliminary items from the engagements are:

- Funding approaches need to be more streamlined
- Funding reporting requirements need to be simplified
- Children and community need to be centered
- IELCC Governance needs to be its own entity – as it doesn't fit under an existing entity.
- Communities would like to see an advisory/Board of Directors built into the governance structure, made up of experts in the field and not only Chiefs.
- There is currently inadequate infrastructure and infrastructure dollars for any meaningful change.

A report with the results of these engagements will be completed and shared.

The ELCC Governance Project Manager has continued completing the work plan activities, developed working relationships with the daycares, headstarts, and Early Childhood programs, throughout Nova Scotia.

In addition to developing relationships with each community, we have developed relationships and partnerships with:

(continued...)

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

- Other IELCC technicians in the Atlantic
- Each level of government (provincial and federal)
- The IELCC Secretariat, NSCC
- Other Mi'kmaq organizations
- Tajikeimik
- Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK)
- Ta'n Eтли-tpi'tmk
- Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat (METS) Funding
- Jordan's Principle and;
- Atlantic Policy Congress of First Nations Chiefs Secretariat.

The ELCC Project Manager has been working with their counterpart at the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), to complete the goals of the IELCC engagement strategy and met with our Nova Scotia L'nu Early Learning and Child Care Governance Advisory Committee with representatives from health, education and social.

Together with representatives from the CMM, Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat (METS), MK, Tajikeimik, and the UNSM shared their desire to work together on IELCC in a way that compliments the strengths and deliverables of partner organizations and communities. We agreed to a new collaboration, **Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq with the following purpose:**

- To enable Mi'kmaq children to thrive, creating vibrant Mi'kmaq families and communities.
- Consideration of culture, language, social determinants, and involvement of multiple Mi'kmaq community, cultural, health, education, employment, and social partners is need-

ed to accomplish this. **Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq would:**

- o Provide a forum for collaboration, integration, and communication across a range of sectors, partners, and decision-makers.
- o With Mi'kmaq communities, prioritize needs and seek resources to address these, build capacity for improvements based on identified priorities through the development of culturally-based, high quality programs and services.
- o With Mi'kmaq communities, support good governance and accountability through planning, oversight, sharing indicators of success and so on.

- The Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq governance structure will potentially have representation from METS, Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services of Nova Scotia (MFCS), MK, NS Native Women, and the CMM (through Health Technicians), Tajikeimik, Ta'n Eтли-tpi'tmk, UNSM, a representative for inclusive education/diverse needs, an Elder and a young parent. Final decisions will be made by the Chiefs of the 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia. Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq will look to include federal and provincial partners more going into the next fiscal year.

- The decision regarding which organization hosts Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq should be made by consensus with partners and leaders once the above structure is created. The governance leads will continue to coordination and development of Maw-lukitimk wjit knjijannaq.

- One of the biggest challenges with the project so far, has been the jurisdiction over the housing of the development and implementation of the governance structure.

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Themes and Challenges heard from visiting each community:

• STAFFING

- o **Wage Parity**
- o **Staff Shortage** - In need of trained Substitute Early Childhood Educators (ECE).
- o **Staff Retention**
- o **Staff Training/Need for Professional Development** - All areas need consistent, ongoing training (programming, Setting up environments, Behavior Techniques etc.)
- o **Orientation for New ECE staff**
- o **Budgets/Funding Allocations** - Unaware of how much money is allocated to community and budgets.
- o **Providing Cultural Experiences into Daily Routine**
- o **Diverse Needs** - Growing number of children with diagnosed diverse needs. Need training for staff, adaptive equipment (i.e.: calming room, sensory toys)

• DIVERSE NEEDS

- o **High Prevalence of Autism**- Communities in need of EA Support and training to support children with Autism.
- o **Ongoing support and training for Diverse Needs**- Autism, Speech Delays, ADD/ADHD etc.
- o **Support Services Readily Available in Community**- Need quick turnaround with referrals and services (i.e. *Early Intervention, JP*)

• INFRASTRUCTURE

- o **New Building**- New Early Learning Centres built in community to house existing programs as well as accommodate growing population.
- o **More childcare Spaces/Seats**- expansion of day care seats in community

- o **Renovations/Repairs to Child Care Center**- Renovating existing centers to improve health, safety and overall childcare experiences for staff, children and community.
- o **More infrastructure funding in general.**

• CULTURAL PROGRAMMING

- o **Language**- Incorporate language daily into Early Learning experiences and daily routines. Have access to Mi'kmaq language keepers.
- o **Land Keepers/Knowledge Keepers to engage children and staff**- Incorporate teachings into daily routine and programming.
- o **Land-based Learning**- Development of outdoor classrooms along with land-based learning curriculum.
- o **Access to Nature**- Tactile experiences with cultural items (i.e. *hides, feathers, traditional medicines etc.*) Need access to woods and trails, land and knowledge keepers.
- o **Traditional Ceremonies**- Involve children and share knowledge of cultural ceremonies. Ongoing participation throughout childcare experience.

• FAMILIES

- o **More Parental/Guardians Involvement**-Feedback as well as direct involvement from parents/guardians
- o **Transportation**- Some families do not have means to transport children to daycare, therefore missing out on experiences or limiting experience.
- o **Daycare Hours of Operation**- Hours of operation cannot accommodate family's needs and work schedules. Some programs only run half days due to program scheduling conflict and use of space. Some families

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

require full day daycare.

- o **Support For Children and Families Off-Reserve** - How can culture, language, ceremonies etc. be incorporated to centres off reserve to include all Indigenous children.
- o **Accommodating the growing rate of Indigenous Population** - Communities populations are growing at a fast rate and need to plan for the future of Early Learning.

We have been working with partners from ISC-FNIHB, CMM and MK, regarding the increase in prevalence of Autism, ADHD and diverse needs in Nova Scotia. This concern was raised numerous times during our community and site visits.

As directed by the Atlantic First Nations Health Partnership Chiefs, the UNSM will receive additional funds to advance the Atlantic First Nations regional capital planning funding to develop an approach for ongoing funding within Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq communities in collaboration with the CMM.

The ELCC Governance Project Manager sits on Maw-Meltamk L'nui - Kina'masit Advisory Meetings (MK Advisory Committee), Regional IELCC Subcommittee Meeting (a subcommittee of the Health Partnership), the Health Partnership Child and Youth Committee, the NSCC L'nu Early Childhood Education Advisory Committee, observing the AFN's ELCC National Expert Working Group (NEWG), and has been appointed as the technician for the AFN's Chief's Committee on Early Learning and Childcare (CCELCC).

For more information, contact:

Jenna Marr

IELCC Governance Project Manager

Email: jmarr@unsm.org

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Healing Our Nations

Healing Our Nations (HON) continues to provide essential education, prevention, and awareness programs across the four Atlantic Provinces, supporting 33 First Nation communities, off-reserve Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations.

In 2023/2024, HON increased its output through two main funding streams: the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) HIV and Hepatitis C Community Action Fund & Harm Reduction Fund (CAF-HAF), and the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB). This report covers PHAC Year 2 and FNIHB Year 1 of the five-year programs. HON implemented a robust evaluation strategy that tracks workshop effectiveness, facilitator and participant feedback, peer leader training, and social media activity, focusing on increasing harm reduction behaviors and access to health services.

HON delivered 44 activities across all 33 communities, including workshops, peer mentor training, Naloxone training, pride events and wellness days. Some communities requested multiple visits, with Lennox Island receiving services four times and Glooscap, Potlotek and Elsipogtog receiving services.

HON strengthened 29 partnerships, including 15 new ones, with organizations such as health centers, schools, and youth centres. These collaborations allowed for timely responses, such as addressing a rise in STBBIs in one community, where HON provided critical harm reduction resources.

HON exceeded its targets for off-reserve funding objectives, delivering a 10-module youth peer mentor training program and hosting

gatherings for peer mentors and individuals living with HIV and Hepatitis C. HON reached 228 non-Indigenous individuals through Cultural Awareness workshops and completed 15 additional workshops for off-reserve organizations.

HON distributed over 50,000 male condoms, 500 female condoms, and a range of harm reduction supplies, reaching 26 First Nation communities. Supplies included syringes, HIV self-tests, Naloxone and crack and meth pipes. Resource distribution led to increased partnerships and awareness across the Atlantic region.

Challenges this year included winter travel disruptions, running out of condoms and insufficient harm reduction supplies for all 33 communities. However, HON also seen successes, including a rise in Naloxone training requests, completion of the Boys and Men's Project with Dalhousie University and the creation of two national HIV awareness videos for World AIDS Day.

Overall, 2023/2024 was a productive year for HON. Despite geographical and logistical challenges, HON continues to deliver effective programs across Atlantic Canada. The five-year plan is on track to meet—and potentially exceed—its targets, contributing to reduced HIV and HCV infection rates and improved health outcomes for Indigenous people.

Julie Thomas
Program Manager
Email: jthomas@unsm.org

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Dietitian Program

First Nations people have long understood that food is more than mere sustenance. Traditional foods are integral to wellness, and the loss of food sovereignty has contributed to adverse health outcomes for our people—both physically and mentally.

Our dietitian services support First Nation food sovereignty by delivering group-based nutrition education across all 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia.

Over the past year, Chelsey has engaged communities to explore strategic directions for programs rooted in L'nu'k values. By working closely with health centre staff in each community, we've planned nutrition events and hosted food-focused retreats. These retreats bring together individuals involved in food-related initiatives, fostering discussions around the cultural significance of food to L'nu'k.

This work has paved the way for a province-wide project that invites community members to create personal Food Knowledge Bundles. Each community will also collaborate to build their Nation's Food Bundle, which will be used to support future engagements and ceremonies.

World Food Forum

In October 2023, the World Food Forum took place at the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization in Rome. Chelsey attended as a member of the Global Indigenous Youth Forum (UNGIYF), representing the North American delegation. The event brought together Indigenous Youth Food Leaders from 54 countries.



Food Retreats

This year, the UNSM Dietitian Program hosted two retreats at the Mersey River Chalets.

Cooks, Caterers, and Harvesters Retreat

In the fall of 2023, a weekend retreat brought together cooks, caterers, harvesters and others involved in food-related work across the community. The event focused on knowledge sharing, reflection, and relationship-building, all centered around a shared connection to food.

This retreat was made possible through a generous donation from the Canadian Parks and Wildlife Society (Nova Scotia Chapter.)



HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Retreat: Mi'kmaw Women in Care-Based Roles

In May 2023, we partnered with the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA) to host a retreat, with funding provided by the University of Toronto's Connaught Fund.

This retreat brought together Mi'kmaw women in care-based roles, including continuing care assistants, early childhood educators, doulas and women who had completed a butchering program.

Key highlights included learning about broths, exploring food from an L'nu'k perspective and participating in traditional ceremonies.

The retreat also provided a valuable opportunity for participants to share their insights during a focus group co-facilitated by UNSM, NSNWA, Dalhousie University, and the University of Toronto. The knowledge gathered will be used to create a handout, which will be shared by NSNWA and UNSM.



Feast and Honouring Ceremony for Elder Rose Morris

This past winter, the UNSM partnered with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) and Parks Canada to host an Honouring Ceremony for Elder Rose Morris of Wasoqopa'q (Acadia) First Nation.

Elder Rose was a beloved member of her community and touched the lives of many. A residential school survivor, she overcame the challenges imposed by the system and went on to earn her Bachelor of Social Work from Dalhousie University. Among her many achievements, she played a key role in bringing the Mawiomi to the Gold River Reserve. Elder Rose began her journey to the spirit world on May 13, 2024.



The UNSM Dietitian Program organized the feast for the Honouring Ceremony, with dedicated support from Earth Keepers and youth in the community who helped prepare, cook and serve the meal to attendees.

The menu featured scallop cakes, salad, two soup options. Luskini'kin served with local honey and jam.

HEALTH LEADERSHIP

Plans for the Upcoming Fiscal 2023-2024

Funding Announcement

The UNSM Dietitian Program successfully secured funding through two grants, with work set to begin in the summer of 2024.

Grant 1 – Province of Nova Scotia

This grant will support a land-based gathering at Kejimikujik National Park in the summer of 2024. The event is open to community members and their families, with priority given to those involved in food-related work.

To sign up, please visit: <https://forms.gle/zzLy2EdhjYxPUsfs6>.

The gathering aims to foster networking and knowledge-sharing among those working in food-related fields. Activities will include food demonstrations, storytelling and more.

Grant 2 – Wabanaki Labrador Indigenous Health Research Network at Dalhousie University

This grant will support UNSM's food mapping project, which will map food-related assets, such as kitchen spaces and food banks, across Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia.

The funding will also enable community members to create their own Food Bundles and contribute to a collective bundle representing the future of food access for the Mi'kmaq.

This project has received Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch approval and will begin in the fall of 2024. We will also be hiring a full-time project coordinator to oversee the initiative—stay tuned to meet our new coordinator this fall.

Weltamultiiek Summer Internship

The Weltamultiiek Internship supports Mi'kmaw students pursuing careers in food-related fields, such as culinary arts and nutrition, through 10–13-week internships with the UNSM.

Our first intern will be hired in May 2024. During their internship, the selected candidate will assist with community events, gain hands-on experience in the role of a dietitian and help develop dehydrator recipes.

We are actively seeking additional sustainable funding to continue offering paid student opportunities through this program.

The program is also evolving, with ongoing community engagement, networking with key stakeholders and discussions around potential program names guiding its development.

Chelsey Purdy,

Dietitian

Email: cpurdy@unsm.org

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Kwe' UNSM Board of Directors, Councils, Grand Council aq community members!

Ni'n teluisi Joan Stevens, aq wetapeksi Pik-tuk. I've been with the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq for 13 years and have served as the Director of Capacity Development for the past seven years.

2023-2024 marks the fourth year of our five-year Capacity Development Departmental Strategic Plan. We continue to focus on our five key priority areas: *governance, planning, infrastructure, emergency management and special projects*. Looking ahead, we will begin working on a renewed strategic plan for 2025-2030 during the 2024-2025 fiscal year.

As of April 2023, our department has taken on the management of two significant programs within the UNSM. The UNSM Tripartite Forum Secretariat, which includes the Tripartite Forum Liaison, Communications Specialist and Administrator is now under our department's responsibility. Additionally, the Information Governance and Data Projects (IGDP) team has joined the Governance team.

The Capacity Development department is supported by Levi Francis, Operations Coordinator, Kennedy Marshall, Projects Coordinator, and Morgan Metallic, Administrative Assistant.

On behalf of the Capacity Development department,

Wela'lioq!



Joan Stevens
Director of Capacity Development
Email: joanstevens@unsm.org

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

Tripartite Forum

The Tripartite Forum fosters collaboration among the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, the Federal Government and the Provincial Government, addressing issues that impact Mi'kmaw communities while respecting their unique needs. This Forum seeks to build prosperous and vibrant Mi'kmaw communities by having all Parties jointly identify, design, and implement solutions to pressing issues. While the Forum addresses service delivery gaps, it does not serve as a platform for discussing constitutional Aboriginal or treaty rights.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee is the highest decision-making body within the Tripartite Forum, where consensus-driven decisions are made. The Committee can overrule current policies, influence legislative changes, and must approve the formation, mandate, and workplans of all other committees.

Officials Committee

The Officials Committee oversees forum operations, restructuring and working committees. They develop agendas for the Executive Committee, set meeting dates, and address issues with the Tribal Council and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA). The Officials Committee also approves projects funded by the Tripartite Forum.

Secretariat Committee

The Secretariat provides administrative support, including meeting logistics and coordination. Admins from the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) and the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) are as-

signed to working committees, ensuring the organization of venues, catering, agendas, minutes, and more. In 2024, Jewel Stevens was appointed as the new Liaison for UNSM, and Samantha Trites became the Liaison for CMM.

Working Committees:

Justice Committee

- Co-Chairs: *Shelly Martin (Mi'kmaq), Wayne Woodard (Provincial), David Hansen (Federal)*

The Justice Working Committee addresses justice-related issues among Mi'kmaw, Federal and Provincial governments. In January 2024, presentations were made on funding from Justice Canada, Nova Scotia Policing Standards, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. The Committee is implementing Phase 2 of their By-Law Report and a subcommittee is working on the Gluskabewimk Project, led by Naomi Metallic.

Health Committee

- Co-Chairs: *Kara Paul (Mi'kmaq), Skylan Parker (Provincial), RJ Carr (Federal)*

- The Health Working Committee focuses on including women and gender equality, mental health, disabilities and racism. Their key priorities include Cancer Care Strategy, Birth Rights, Jordan's Principle and Mi'kmaq language preservation. In May 2024, the committee plans to collaborate with the Social Committee on a Jordan's Principle project proposal.

(continued...)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Social Committee

- Co-Chairs: *Sandy-Lynn Fisher (Mi'kmaq), Shannon Kelly (Provincial), Natacha Beniot (Federal)*
- The Social Working Committee is addressing housing, homelessness, disability support and increasing awareness of available services for Mi'kmaq people. The committee is working on a Homelessness Symposium and will also collaborate with the Health Committee on Jordan's Principle.

Economic Development Committee

- Co-Chairs: *Michael Peters (Mi'kmaq), Rhonda MacDougall (Provincial), Mike Rothenburg (Federal)*
- The Economic Development Working Committee focuses on addressing economic gaps through information sharing. The committee has formed two sub-committees: one on Indigenous Tourism, led by Mike Rothenburg, and another on an Economic Development Officer Symposium, led by Tracey Menge from KMKNO.

Education Committee

- Co-Chairs: *(Mi'kmaq: Vacant), Melody Martin-Googoo (Provincial), Helen Long (Federal)*
- The Education Working Committee is working on restructuring its workplan to address gaps in areas such as Mi'kmaq Early Years, lifelong learning, treaty education and Mi'kmaq language and special education.

Culture & Heritage Committee

- Co-Chairs: *Tim Bernard (Mi'kmaq), Sean Weseloh-McKeane (Provincial), Faith Wallace (Federal)*
- The Culture and Heritage Working Committee focuses on Heritage Preservation, Community

Identity and Cultural Expression. Current projects include the Indian Residential School (IRS) Commemoration Phase 3 and the Oral History research project of St. Peters Canal.

Sports & Recreation Committee

- Co-Chairs: *George Tex Marshall (Mi'kmaq), Michelle Aucoin (Provincial), Bert Milberg (Federal)*
- The Sports and Recreation Working Committee works on indigenous sport initiatives, such as Mi'kmaq Physical Activity Leadership and the Mi'kmaq Sport Council of Nova Scotia, building on the success of the North American Indigenous Games (NAIG) 2023.

Tripartite Forum Liaison Officer & Administrator Activity (April 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024)

UNSM Meetings Attended:

Jewl Stevens served as the UNSM Liaison, except during her maternity leave from December 2022 to September 2023, during which Lorna Christmas was her proxy. Jewl, alongside Communications Specialist Jessica Christmas, attended various meetings, including Executive, Officials, and Working Committees, supporting the Forum's efforts. Discussions focused on committee issues, planning sessions and reviewing Forum policies.

Jewl Stevens,
Tripartite Forum Liaison
Email: jewlstevens@unsm.org

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



The Nation Rebuilding Project

The Nation Rebuilding Project is supported by the Governance team and aims to facilitate discussions between the Mi'kmaq Grand Council and community Chiefs and Councils on the topic of inherent ("traditional") governance for the Mi'kmaq Nation. The project began as a pilot in the Unama'ki district, with plans to expand these discussions to other districts in the future. Due to the late receipt of funding in the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Unama'ki district agreed to continue strategic planning and research into 2023-2024.

In May 2023, the Advisory Committee, which includes members of the Grand Council Executive and Unama'ki Keptins, held meetings to conclude activities for the 2022-2023 year. However, planning for the 2023-2024 fiscal year didn't begin until September 2023, also due to delayed funding. In February 2024, a special meeting was held with mainland Keptins, followed by a debrief in May 2024.

The Centre for First Nations Governance (CFNG) was contracted to assist with planning. A visioning session in November 2023, attended by the Honourable Dan Christmas, was followed by a planning session with mainland Keptins.

Researchers Semise'l San and Ramona Morris were contracted to explore the traditional roles of the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. Their research, documented in the report, "*Sante' Mawio'mi*", focuses on the Unama'ki district and is based on interviews with Elders, using oral history to capture their knowledge of the *Sante' Mawio'mi*.

At the Advisory Committee's request, a professional development session for L'nu lawyers was facilitated by Sa'ke'j Henderson in March 2024, focusing on the history of the Grand Council.

The second Leadership Gathering for the Unama'ki district took place in March 2024 in Membertou, providing a project update, presenting research findings, and fostering further leadership discussions. Participants included the project Advisory Committee, Unama'ki Chiefs and Councils, Senator PJ Prosper, the Honourable Dan Christmas and the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) Governance Director. The keynote address was delivered by Sa'ke'j Henderson, legal advisor to the Grand Council, who presented on the legal and historical context of Nation Rebuilding. Researchers Semise'l San and Ramona Morris also presented their "*Sante' Mawio'mi*" report. Leadership sessions were facilitated using CFNG's five Pillars of Effective Governance: People, Land, Laws & Jurisdiction, Governing Systems and Resources.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

Comprehensive Community Planning

The Planning team provides member communities with a range of planning capacity support, including the coordination and development of Comprehensive Community Plans (CCPs) and Strategic Plans. The team successfully completed the CCP for Potlotek and is currently supporting the development of CCPs in Member-tou, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q through partnerships with local CCP Coordinators and community leadership. Their support includes coordinating and facilitating community engagement sessions, collecting and analyzing data and contributing to the writing of the CCPs. The team is also working on finalizing a Strategic Plan for Potlotek, with an independent contractor hired by the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) to develop the document for community use.

In collaboration with Safety Canada and We'koqma'q, the Planning team is coordinating the development of a safety plan, which will be included as the ninth focus area of We'koqma'q's CCP.

Additionally, the Planning team supports the Capacity Development teams by facilitating meaningful community engagement to identify priorities, aspirations and challenges. They have assisted in the planning, coordination and facilitation of community engagement sessions.

The team remains actively involved in the Indigenous Community Development National Strategy and completed the "Train the Trainer" course in March 2024.

Gage Sabattis, Planning Coordinator, provided administrative and coordination support to the team throughout 2023-2024.

Kim Milley
Planning Manager
Email: kmilley@unsm.org

The L'nu Learning Hub

The L'nu Learning Hub is a collaborative initiative developed through a partnership between the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM), the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), Labour, Skills, and Immigration (LSI), and the Mi'kmaw Economic Benefits Office (MEBO). Its purpose is to deliver continuing education courses tailored to the Indigenous worldview and realities, aimed at enhancing governance capacity in member communities.

The Hub has successfully delivered training to UNSM and the CMM employees in Facilitation Skills, Business Skills, Conflict Resolution and Presentation Skills. Beyond internal opportunities, the Hub has also offered Communication Skills training for Front Line Workers in member communities and is collaborating with LSI and MEBO to expand these offerings.

In early October 2023, Joan Stevens and Kim Milley were selected to participate in the Workplace Education Initiative (WEI) Instructor Training. By December 2023, both Joan and Kim had successfully completed the program, becoming the first two female Mi'kmaq WEI Instructors in Nova Scotia.

Congratulations to Joan and Kim!

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Emergency Management

The Emergency Management program provides essential support to member communities, addressing gaps in comprehensive emergency management and serving as a liaison between communities and service providers. The program plays a crucial role in preparing member communities for major weather events, such as hurricanes and snowstorms, by assisting with preparedness efforts and emergency response plans.

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) administers the **Everbridge Emergency Alert System**, which has seen growing success, with 4,000 people currently registered. To date, the system has successfully delivered 167 alerts, including boil water advisories, road closures, severe weather alerts and notifications about missing or dangerous persons. The alert system has gained national recognition, and UNSM has been invited to assist the federal government in developing a National Red Dress Alert System for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two-Spirit people.

The UNSM has also secured funding to provide Trunk Mobile Radios (TMR Radios) to member communities. These radios will enable Emergency Response teams to communicate not only with other Indigenous communities across the Atlantic region but also with external agencies. TMR training has been coordinated and delivered to all five member communities in Unama'ki.

All-Hazards Community Plans have been completed for these five communities, outlining their capacity to respond to emergencies. These plans emphasize prevention, mitiga-

tion, preparedness, response and recovery, providing a framework for effective coordination, communication, and cooperation during emergency events.

Additionally, 3D Wave Design Flood Modeling has been completed for the five communities, using software to create 3D models that identify potential flood and fire risk zones.

In October 2023, a one-day "Post-Fiona Lessons Learned" conference was held at the Keltic Lodge in Ingonish, Nova Scotia. This event brought together representatives from the five member communities to discuss their response and recovery experiences following Hurricane Fiona.

In partnership with Access Nova Scotia, an ATV Rally and Provincial Registration event was held in Eskasoni, giving community members the opportunity to register their ATV vehicles.

The Emergency Management program also coordinates a variety of training opportunities for member communities. These include Wildland Fire Training, Nova Scotia Power (NSP) Power Pole Training, First Aid Training, Medical First Responder Training, Roundtable Exercise Training, Jaws of Life Training, Red Cross Evacuation Planning, Traffic Control for Firefighters Training and Incident Command Training for Chief and Council.

Jennifer Jesty
Emergency Resilience Manager
Email: jjesty@unsm.org

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Infrastructure

The Infrastructure team oversees housing, infrastructure, and public works projects at the community level. In 2023, the Extended Asset Conditioning Report (E-ACRS) was successfully completed for the communities of Member-tou and Potlotek. The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) hired an engineering firm to inspect all Indigenous Services Canada (ISC)-funded buildings and provide detailed reports, enabling communities to submit proposals for necessary repairs and maintenance.

The UNSM secured \$1 million in funding from the Natural Infrastructure Fund for erosion protection. This funding is being used to install a living shoreline to mitigate climate change and erosion in the member communities of Eskasoni and Potlotek.

The team is actively developing Asset Management Plans (AMP) for member communities, which project the cost of re-capitalization and the remaining lifecycle of community assets over a 35-year period. Data is being collected to map all assets within these communities.

The UNSM is also working on Maintenance Management Plans (MMP), a computerized maintenance management system designed to schedule and track work orders based on standard operating procedures, ensuring regular maintenance and accountability to extend asset lifespans.

The 1st Annual UNSM Infrastructure Conference took place in April 2023 in Truro, Nova Scotia, in collaboration with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) and the North Shore Mi'kmaq Tribal Council.

The team has been assisting communities in identifying capital assets that could be converted into transitional housing units. For example, the Wagmatcook church was identified as a potential command center. Through secured funding, the UNSM developed a housing survey as part of a housing asset strategy plan and hired a housing inspector and engineer to bring the building up to code.

In partnership with the CMM, three Mi'kmaq men, Eddie Johnson from Potlotek, Justin Goo-goo from Wagmatcook and Peter Stevens from Eskasoni are currently enrolled in the Nova Scotia Building Officials' Association Building Inspector Program. They are expected to graduate in the spring of 2025.

The infrastructure team coordinated two special projects this year. In collaboration with the CMM, they hosted a youth cultural camp at Hunter's Mountain, where 25 youth from across the province participated in ceremonies and land-based teachings led by ceremonial leaders and skilled hunters from the member communities. Additionally, through a partnership with Cape Breton University (CBU) and Parks Canada, UNSM Infrastructure is involved in the Mi'kmaw Place Naming Project, which seeks to restore traditional Mi'kmaq names to locations along the Cabot Trail and within National Parks, with updated signage reflecting these names.

The infrastructure team includes Devin MacAskill, Projects Manager, Justin Googoo, Housing Coordinator and John M. Johnson, Infrastructure Intern.

(continued...)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



Wasuek Googoo
Infrastructure Co-Manager
Email: agoogoo@unsm.org

Darrell Bernard
Infrastructure Co-Manager
Email: darrellbernard@unsm.org

- Potlotek
- Eskasoni
- Wagmatcook

Newfoundland First Nations:

- Miawpukek
- Qalipu

IGDP coordinates national level surveys, including the First Nations Regional Health Survey, the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey, the First Nations Labour and Employment Development and the new First Nation Regional Social Survey.

Information Governance and Data Projects



The Information Governance & Data Projects (IGDP) team is supported by the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) and administers data related projects with all Mi'kmaq First Nations in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland.

Communities We Serve

Nova Scotia First Nations:

- Bear River
- Annapolis Valley
- Glooscap
- Sipekne'katik
- Millbrook
- Pictou Landing
- Paqtnkek
- We'koqma'q
- Membetou

First Nation Information Governance Centre (FNIGC)

Our team is provided with funding and support from the national First Nation Information Governance Centre (FNIGC.) FNIGC became an independent, incorporated non-profit entity in April 2010. Their history can be traced back to 1996, when the Assembly of First Nations formed a National Steering Committee to design a new national First Nations health survey in response to a decision from the Federal Government to exclude First Nations people living on reserve from three major population surveys.

FNIGC and the IGDP team work together to administer regional data collection & research processes that embody the principles of OCAP: Ownership, Control, Access and Possession.

The IGDP team administers various data-related projects across Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Below is a summary of some of the exciting work we have recently completed or are currently undertaking:

(continued...)

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

REGIONAL HEALTH SURVEY (RHS) PHASE 4

The Regional Health Survey (RHS) is the first national health survey created and conducted by First Nations people for First Nations people. Now in its fourth phase, RHS results support policy and programming at community, regional and national levels.

Administered by the IGDP team with support from FNIGC, the survey is only administered in First Nation communities with community consent as indicated by a signed Band Council Resolution (BCR). Personal participation is voluntary and can be revoked at any time.

Current Progress

The IGDP team is currently securing BCRs and hiring, training and supervising local fieldworkers to collect the survey responses. Data collection for Phase 4 began in 2023 and is underway in 12 of 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia and in Miawpukek, Newfoundland.

Next Steps

Data collection is expected to be completed by fall of 2024. Once complete, the IGDP team will analyze the data and produce a report for the region, including summaries for community use.

REGIONAL SOCIAL SURVEY (RSS)

The First Nations Regional Social Survey (RSS) is a new survey focusing on the well-being of First Nations children and families living on reserve and in northern communities.

Gathering First Nations driven data on social and economic indicators, the RSS hopes to better understand the socioeconomic context and experiences of Mi'kmaq children and families.

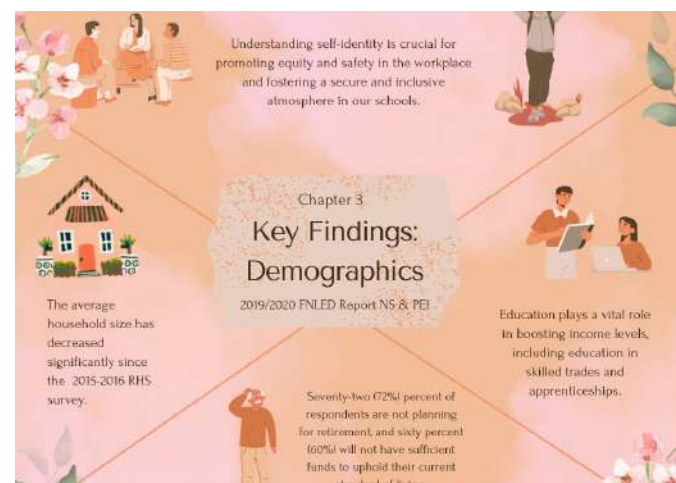
The RSS data collection process is expected to

begin in the spring of 2025, starting with community consent.

FIRST NATIONS LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT SURVEY (FNLED)

Overview

The First Nations Labour & Employment Development Survey was conducted in 2019 and 2020. The survey collected data on several factors such as employment trends, workforce participation and economic conditions within Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. A comprehensive report was created and made public at a gathering in July 2023.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



More females attain high school diplomas; more males obtain trade certifications.

Chapter 5
Key Findings: Education & Training
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

Increase in high school diplomas and undergraduate degrees.

Over half unaware of employment insurance training supports.

Two-thirds with post-secondary education have their costs covered by Indigenous Services.

When surveying participants about their satisfaction levels based on occupation, individuals in the arts, culture, recreation, and sports sectors, despite receiving lower pay, express high overall satisfaction.

Chapter 8
Key Findings: Well-Being & Workplace Culture
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

Participants experience the most harassment and discrimination while working for another First Nation and encounter the highest levels of racism when working off-reserve.

Most satisfied industries include construction, waste management, and remediation services, followed by manufacturing, trade, transportation, and utilities.

Respondents felt most supported culturally when working for a First Nation entity and least supported when off-reserve. Dissatisfaction with their job was

Individuals who possess strong reading, oral communication, writing, math, computer, budgeting, bill-paying, saving, and investing skills typically excel in their chosen careers.

Chapter 6
Key Findings: Basic Skills & Job Readiness
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

Only one-quarter of respondents have a career they are interested in.

Survey participants rate their budgeting and bill payment skills highly but find their saving and investing skills to be lacking.

The majority of those who have no internet access live in communities considered rural.

Twenty-five percent of participants mention occasional challenges in learning, recalling information, or staying focused. Additionally, 43% believe they might have a learning disorder, while 25% experience persistent memory issues or confusion.

Chapter 9
Key Findings: Health Conditions
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

For those who wear glasses or contacts, 61% of respondents still have difficulty seeing.

When facing mobility and flexibility challenges such as walking on uneven surfaces, bending down, and grasping objects with fingers, health conditions often lead to

For those who wear a hearing aid or cochlear implant, 80% still had some difficulty hearing.

In high-paying sectors like finance, insurance, IT, and communication learning over \$50,000 per year, only 3% of respondents are employed.

Chapter 7
Key Findings: Labour Market Indicators
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

Around 75% of respondents feel there are insufficient local job opportunities.

The health, education, and social services fields have the highest percentage of

The labor force participation rate increased by nearly 10% since the National RHS (2015-16).

Over half reported that speaking Mi'kmaw has helped them be successful in their job. Most were taught to speak Mi'kmaw by their mothers. Traditional knowledge and practices are often acquired through Elders.

Chapter 10
Key Findings: Regional Components
2019/2020 FNLED Report NS & PEI

One-fifth of respondents' jobs require extensive travel and one-fifth require daycare. The most common barrier to daycare is availability.

The most common community facilities are health centers, daycares, and elementary schools. The most common services are groceries and restaurants.

Almost all respondents shop outside their community, and almost half shop online, especially single/never

PLEASE NOTE: The graphics pictured above can be found on our website: www.unsm.org

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT
UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

MI'KMAQ RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MRAC)

All national level surveys are reviewed and regionalized by the Mi'kmaq Research Advisory Committee (MRAC). This committee is comprised of technicians and practitioners who are knowledgeable of the subject matter of the survey. Most recently, the MRAC has been reviewing the Regional Social Survey, these reviews will continue in the fall of 2024.

ETHICAL SPACE: IDGP TEAM & THUNDERBIRD FOUNDATION'S EPIGENETICS TRAINING IN PICTOU LANDING

Our Information Governance & Data Projects (IGDP) team, along with the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation, visited Pictou Landing First Nation and had the privilege of delivering a three-day training session titled, *"Indigenous Knowledge and Epigenetics: Creating Ethical Space for Mi'kmaq-Led Genetic, Epigenetic, and Other Biological Research in Nova Scotia"* in late May 2024.

This initiative aims to build capacity and create an ethical space for Mi'kmaq-led biological research, integrating traditional knowledge and lived experience.



DATA CENTRE FOR NOVA SCOTIA AND NEWFOUNDLAND

In addition to administering data related projects, the IGDP is supporting the development of a new independent non political regional data centre. This centre will offer data and statistical services to communities, governments, advocacy organizations and service delivery agencies in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Its goal is to provide the digital infrastructure and professional expertise needed to empower communities and the Mi'kmaq nation to govern, access and repatriate their data.

Current Progress

The development of the regional data centre is community-driven, nation-based and rolling out in phases. The IGDP team has engaged with leadership in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and a Steering Committee has been established with key stakeholders who are starting to have these important and timely conversations.

IGDP is working on Phase 1 of the First Nations Data Governance Strategy, which includes conducting regional engagements and launching data pilot projects.

Next Steps

The aim is to have a functioning Data Centre in approximately four years. IGDP will continue to update and follow direction from leadership, with the Steering Committee guiding the strategic direction. The IGDP team is collaborating with other regions across the country.

FINANCIALS

DocuSign Envelope ID: D635FA87-49E7-4520-9F26-A46282E1D076

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2024

INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

To the Members of The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq

Opinion

I have audited the consolidated financial statements of The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (the Union), which comprise the consolidated statement of financial position as at March 31, 2024, the consolidated statement of operations and the consolidated statements of changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the consolidated financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the accompanying consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of the Union as at March 31, 2024, and the consolidated results of its operations and consolidated cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards. My responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Consolidated Financial Statements* section of my report. I am independent of the Union in accordance with ethical requirements that are relevant to my audit of the consolidated financial statements in Canada, and I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Responsibilities of Management and Those Charged with Governance for the Consolidated Financial Statements

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the consolidated financial statements in accordance with ASNPO, and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of consolidated financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the consolidated financial statements, management is responsible for assessing the Union's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless management either intends to liquidate the Union or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Union's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Consolidated Financial Statements

My objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the consolidated financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these consolidated financial statements.

(continues)

Independent Auditor's Report to the Members of The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (continued)

As part of an audit in accordance with Canadian generally accepted auditing standards, I exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the consolidated financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Union's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of management's use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Union's ability to continue as a going concern. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in my auditor's report to the related disclosures in the consolidated financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Union to cease to continue as a going concern.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the consolidated financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the consolidated financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

I communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that I identify during my audit.

Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia
July 26, 2024

Richard Hannem CPA Inc.
Chartered Professional Accountant

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash	\$ 9,804,297	\$ 10,387,048
Accounts receivable (Note 3)	4,720,411	514,027
Prepaid expenses	43,478	29,246
	14,568,186	10,930,321
Leasehold improvements (Note 4)	234,837	271,046
	\$ 14,803,023	\$ 11,201,367
LIABILITIES		
Current		
Accounts payable	\$ 3,904,663	\$ 2,339,754
Deferred revenue (Note 6)	9,129,890	7,800,547
	13,034,553	10,140,301
Severance liability (Note 7)	560,841	-
	13,595,394	10,140,301
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	1,207,626	1,061,066
	\$ 14,803,020	\$ 11,201,367

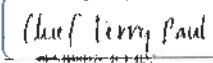
Contingent liability (Note 11)

Lease commitments (Note 14)

On behalf of the Board

DocuSigned by

 Director Chief Leroy Denny

DocuSigned by

 Director Chief Terry Paul

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Operations
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	Budget	2024	2023
Revenue			
Health Canada	\$ 13,000,000	\$ 13,053,981	\$ 11,211,094
Province of Nova Scotia	245,000	245,051	137,580
First Nations Information Governance Centre	2,375,000	2,378,284	1,038,536
Indigenous Services Canada	2,000,000	2,018,155	2,044,954
Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq	17,000	17,379	22,349
Atlantic Policy Congress	-	24,376	15,408
KMK Payment	173,000	173,526	-
Other	947,257	971,870	509,759
PHAC	141,000	141,000	-
Deferred revenue opening	8,069,841	8,069,841	5,673,564
Deferred revenue ending	(9,129,889)	(9,129,890)	(7,800,547)
	<u>17,838,209</u>	<u>17,963,573</u>	<u>12,852,697</u>
Expenses			
Accounting fees	30,000	-	25,000
Amortization	36,209	36,209	30,000
Award	1,500	1,500	2,500
Bad debts	1,500	1,396	-
Cleaning	40,000	39,946	32,557
Consulting fees	795,000	790,410	407,038
Data collection	-	19,750	-
Donations	-	3,550	-
Equipment	-	88,728	-
Equipment rental	30,000	20,631	35,255
HIV/AIDS Strategy	-	-	71,066
Insurance	65,000	64,129	36,156
Interest and bank charges	14,000	13,206	11,241
Legal fees	-	30,375	-
Meetings and conventions	441,000	440,969	220,420
Office	695,000	695,292	527,349
Performer fees	-	6,028	-
Professional fees	35,000	86,028	9,561
Rent	256,000	255,912	201,092
Salaries and wages	4,875,000	4,870,535	4,275,188
Service delivery	8,880,000	8,872,998	5,623,589
Supplies	300,000	293,947	104,032
Telephone	65,000	64,682	53,578
Traditional healer	105,000	104,707	110,919
Training	45,000	43,467	82,505
Travel	1,050,000	1,041,178	575,775
Youth gathering	78,000	78,000	78,000
	<u>17,838,209</u>	<u>17,963,573</u>	<u>12,512,821</u>
Subtotal	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>339,876</u>
Clawback of current year surplus	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>(259,632)</u>
Excess of revenue over expenditures	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ -</u>	<u>\$ 80,244</u>

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 1,061,066	\$ 980,822
Excess of revenue over expenditures	-	80,244
Healing Our Nations opening program surplus	146,560	-
Net assets, end of year	\$ 1,207,626	\$ 1,061,066

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows
Year Ended March 31, 2024

	2024	2023
Operating activities		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ -	\$ 80,244
Item not affecting cash:		
Amortization of leasehold improvements	36,209	30,000
	<u>36,209</u>	<u>110,244</u>
 Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	(4,206,384)	(204,824)
Accounts payable	1,564,909	1,175,981
Deferred revenue	1,329,343	2,126,983
Prepaid expenses	(14,232)	(29,246)
	<u>(1,326,364)</u>	<u>3,068,894</u>
	<u>(1,290,155)</u>	<u>3,179,138</u>
 Investing activity		
Increase in leasehold improvements	-	(31,046)
	<u>-</u>	<u>(31,046)</u>
 Financing activities		
Increase in severance liability	560,841	-
Healing Our Nations opening program surplus	146,560	-
	<u>707,401</u>	<u>-</u>
 Net change in cash and cash equivalents during the year	(582,754)	3,148,092
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	10,387,048	7,238,956
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	\$ 9,804,294	\$ 10,387,048



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

90 SAN'TELE'SEW AWTI
MEMBERTOU PLACE, SUITE 201
MEMBERTOU, NS B1S 0A5

PHONE: 902-539-4107
FAX: 902-564-2137

WEBSITE: WWW.UNSM.ORG

   @UNSMIKMAQ