



Unama'kie'l A'tukwaqan ukwit Sante' Mawio'mi.
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Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq
March 2024

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Executive Summary

The Mi'kmaq are Indigenous to what is now known as Atlantic Canada, the Gaspé Peninsula, and parts of Maine. Mi'kmaq maintain a distinct identity shaped by their language, customs, and traditional governing system organized under the Sante' Mawio'mi, or in English, Grand Council. This council historically oversaw seven districts and played a pivotal role in managing teachings, knowledge, and community well-being. Despite the impacts of colonization, which necessitated adaptations in its role and structure, the Sante' Mawio'mi remains a vital web preserving Mi'kmaq cultural integrity beyond colonial frameworks.

The document focuses on the practice of Indigenous storywork, guided by a decolonized research approach advocated by scholars like JoAnn Archibald. It aims to capture and preserve the narratives of respected community members from Unama'ki (Cape Breton, NS), highlighting both traditional wisdom and contemporary challenges faced by the Sante' Mawio'mi. This approach underscores the reciprocity between storytellers and their stories, emphasizing ethical methodologies that honour Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being.

Central to the Sante' Mawio'mi's role is the Kji-Saqamaw, the executive leader responsible for guiding political, spiritual, and social matters. Alongside them, the Kji-Keptin and Putu's fulfill integral roles as war leader and negotiator, respectively, while Keptin-aq serve as local leaders maintaining community ties and stewarding resources. Together, they uphold Mi'kmaq sovereignty through inclusive governance practices that value contributions from women, children, elders, and the queer community.

The priorities of the Sante' Mawio'mi encompass a wide array of initiatives aimed at community well-being and cultural continuity. These include revitalizing the Mi'kmaq language, asserting Treaty rights, and promoting sustainable resource management under the principles of Netukulimk. Education is pivotal, integrating Mi'kmaq perspectives into curricula and fostering youth leadership to ensure the transmission of cultural knowledge and values.

Collaboration between the Sante' Mawio'mi and local Chief and Councils is essential for advancing collective interests across Mi'kma'ki. Regular gatherings facilitate dialogue on common goals and strategies, bridging traditional and contemporary leadership to navigate challenges posed by colonial legacies such as the Indian Act. Transparency and community input guide decision-making processes, ensuring that initiatives reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of Mi'kmaq communities.

Addressing divisions perpetuated by colonial policies is paramount, requiring a two-eyed seeing approach that integrates Indigenous and Western perspectives. This approach informs advocacy efforts aimed at securing rights and resources for the Mi'kmaq Nation at local, provincial, and federal levels. Restorative justice principles are promoted to address systemic issues like disproportionate incarceration rates, emphasizing community-based solutions rooted in cultural values. Ultimately, the Sante'

Mawio'mi's vision for the future emphasizes equity, cultural revitalization, and collective stewardship of Mi'kmaq lands and resources. It aims to reclaim traditional roles and practices, ensuring that leadership embodies ancestral wisdom and values. By fostering unity and resilience through inclusive governance and cultural preservation, the Sante' Mawio'mi seeks to empower future generations and uphold the enduring legacy of the Mi'kmaq Nation.

The Mi'kmaq journey towards greater sovereignty is guided by reclaiming language, stories, and spirituality as foundational tools. These elements are crucial for asserting autonomy and navigating challenges collectively. Advocacy blends Indigenous and Western perspectives through two-eyed seeing¹, advocating effectively for rights at all levels of governance.

Community input and grassroots involvement are prioritized by both the Sante' Mawio'mi and local Chief and Councils, ensuring decisions reflect diverse perspectives and needs. Role models in leadership positions inspire and advocate for sovereignty, facilitating open dialogues and empowering community members to participate in decision-making processes through forums like talking circles and referendums.

Education plays a pivotal role in empowering the community, ensuring understanding of treaty rights and responsibilities. Revitalizing the Mi'kmaw language and integrating Indigenous perspectives into education systems are critical steps for preserving identity and asserting sovereignty in historically marginalized spaces. Enforcing Mi'kmaw laws rooted in Tetpaqa'ltimkewey—doing what is right for the collective—further strengthens sovereignty and autonomy. This holistic approach encompasses cultural revitalization, community empowerment, advocacy, education, and treaty rights assertion, guiding the Nation towards a future anchored in its values and traditions. The Sante' Mawio'mi's priorities span governance and community well-being, integrating physical and spiritual consciousness. Reclaiming traditional roles ensures council members understand their responsibilities as representatives, supported by ongoing education and outreach. Open communication with the Nation fosters informed decision-making, facilitated by tribal councils that provide community-wide support.

Child welfare is prioritized, advocating for family support amidst modern challenges. Restorative justice approaches are promoted to address systemic issues like disproportionate incarceration rates, emphasizing community-based solutions. Economic stability through sustainable livelihoods, particularly in fishing, is pursued under the principles of Netukulimk.

Preservation of culture and language revitalization are core to maintaining identity and passing on knowledge. Collaboration and unity among council members aim to uphold Treaty rights and foster reconciliation within the community. Recognizing individual contributions, or Kepmite'lsultinew—to honour ourselves and others, promotes unity and belonging.

¹ Two-eyed seeing, Etuaptumuk, was first recorded by Mi'kmaw Elder, Dr. Murdena Marshall. (Institute for Integrative science and health, 2004)

Note from the executive of the Sante' Mawio'mi

The Sante' Mawio'mi of the Mi'kmaw nation, from its beginnings (*amskwes*), has always been a distinct people (*L'nu*), representing the allied families speaking their language, free to enjoy their knowledge system and spirit and traditions. The Sante' Mawio'mi gradually developed from one of the spark people (*L'nu*) in the creation story from the great sacred fire. These sparks generated the inherent powers of the allied families called the Mi'kmaq. Around the tenth century, the allied Mi'kmaw clans, relatives and dependents consensually created the tribal district governance and the national federation of the Sante Mawio'mi or Great League of the allied tribal districts (*awitkatultik*). The Sante Mawio'mi was viewed as many families living in one lodge.

The allied tribal districts with the Sante' Mawio'mi were designed to maintain the interconnectedness and interdependence of Mi'kmaw life. It prefers to envision the entire situation before acting. The allied families generated a caring nation based on kinship and being related. Kinship and relationship generate the art of being relatives and belonging. From the *L'nu* perspective, the concept of kinship was *lakutuwaken*. This foundational concept generated the law of kinship or being related. It denotes the interconnected nature of relationships. It represents the ethic of connection that allows self-fashioning freedom. The family alliance is part of our sacred gifts (*westawlet*) to exercise choice within relationships and belonging. These sacred gifts are vital to the sustenance of the coalition and are established and renewed through choices and actions.

Mi'kmaw constitutionalism is an enduring performance based on an oral tradition. It is a created and shared alliance and covenants. It explains why Mi'kmaw belonging takes a particular form and how belonging operates. It is repeatedly performed in diverse ways in each family, clan, tribal district, and the Mawio'mi. It includes the wildlife and plants protected by the constitutional law. It is part of how we are related. In Mi'kmaw constitutionalism, the Sante' Mawio'mi of the Mi'kmaw nation has retained its ancient, unique and subdued customary style of equanimous leadership through taciturn dialogues, deliberation, mediation, consensus building, and relentless diplomacy. The Sante' Mawio'mi is an inherent order governed by its officers and laws in its seven national territory districts of the Mi'kmaw clan and families. The allied clans or families' free association and consent created tribal districts and a consensual federated nation.

Its practical tribal district chiefs (*saqmawa'ki*) agreed through these peace and friendship treaties that the Sante' Mawio'mi and district chiefs would occupy and manage our ancestral territory under our law and lifeways. The district leaders were skillful in reaching our consensus positively. After conflicts, they reached a consensus and peacefully laid down our hatchet and the many bad things that occurred in war. Their consensual treaty relations show disdain and discomfort for others thinking or implying superiority (*wel'ansit*) over Mi'kmaq.

From each Mi'kmaw clan (*wikamou*) and their families, the Sante' Mawio'mi recognizes one or more gifted persons and spiritual leaders of "*aoutmoins*," as the French priests

called them. Among the Mi'kmaq, these spiritual leaders were known as *kinapag* and *sayas* who became *keptinaq* ("beloved men" or, in Latin, "captains" or chiefs, *keptin* singular beloved man) of the Mawio'mi.

Today, the Sante' Mawio'mi are the keepers of the seven generations, and it is time to fulfill our responsibilities to all our kin and relations. From among the keptins, they selected the executive of the Sante' Mawio'mi, the *Kji-Saqamaw* (grand chief"), a *Kji-Keptin* ("grand captain") and *Pu us* (advisors). These positions reveal the interrelated duties and act to organize, guide and speak daily for the Mawio'mi. They also have relationships with other Indigenous, allied, and foreign nations. They existed to teach through dialogue with the keptins, narrative, and examples of the conduct of life. The Sante' Mawio'mi has many different roles in its contemporary structure beyond the keptins.

The Mawio'mi's authority within the nation has always been spiritual, persuasive, and non-coercive. Consensus is essential to its jurisdiction and actions. The continuity and authority of national government exist in our knowledge system and language, in a common bond and vision that transcends temporary interest. This bond arises naturally from the fate of birth into a family (*munijinik*), community (*wigamow*), territory (*sitqamuk*), and people (*ginuk*). However, the Mawio'mi authority did not govern, distribute, or manage the tribal districts or the daily operations of the Mi'kmaw First Nations. The Mawio'mi controlled and regulated the national territory through our land tenure system. They practice our knowledge system, spiritual customs, religious beliefs, and educational practices according to ecological circumstances.

In renewing and restoring our nation under Mi'kmaw laws and traditions and the constitution of Canada, the Mawio'mi decided that affirming the seven districts' role in our traditional constitutional law was necessary to reassert and reinforce their role and strengthen the Mi'kmaw nation. The governance of the Mi'kmaw tribal districts honours our most sacred traditions, making Mi'kmaw governance so enduring.

The Unama'ki District Rebuilding Project, launched in September 2022 with the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, has guided the Mi'kmaw First Nations in the Unama'ki tribal district through phases of discussions, engagement, visioning, and strategic planning. Through a two-phase process, we sought to engage with our leadership, communities, and Keptins to ensure that this strategic plan reflects our present aspirations and future needs. It is a tool to guide other districts through the challenges and opportunities of today and the coming generations.

Through this three-year collaborative effort through a two-eyed (*etuaptmumk*) approach in Unama'ki, the Mi'kmaw keptins and First Nations identified key priorities of district governance—such as unity, better administrative and service delivery processes, citizenship, and resource management—essential to make life better for the Mi'kmaw families.

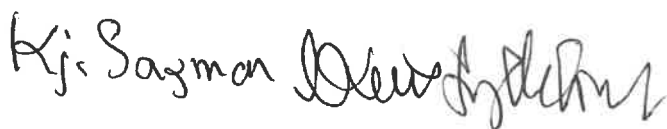
In keeping with Mi'kmaw traditions, the *Unama'kie'l A'tukwaqan ukwit Sante' Mawio'mi* report is the result of two years worked in consultation and cooperation with Mi'kmaw First Nations and the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq to renew the constitutional structure of the Mi'kmaw nation to continue the develop a nation-to-nation relationship with Canada.

This report provides a collective vision of the path forward to implement the constitutional and statutory rights of the Mi'kmaw nation and to reverse the historical actions of Canada in dividing the Mi'kmaw nation by the Indian Act. The report reflects the priorities and proposals identified by Mi'kmaw First Nations and keptins. It is another step along our collective journey of renewal of the Mi'kmaq nation. It is the beginning, and the other districts have to determine their role in the Mi'kmaq nation. The Sante' Mawio'mi remains committed to the work in consultation and cooperation with Mi'kmaw First Nations to meet their priorities and to renew the tribal district governance of the Mi'kmaw nation.

Through the renewal of the seven tribal districts of the Mi'kmaw nation, we hope to rebuild a better, more equitable future for Mi'kmaq families and, in doing so, establish a nation-to-nation with Canada and the Atlantic provinces for this and future generations.

Together, we are charting a new way forward to renewed nation-to-nation relationships based on the implementation of our inherent, treaty, and statutory rights. Kji-Saqamaw Norman Sylliboy reminded us to follow his grandfather, Kji-Saqamaw Gabriel Sylliboy's teaching: "The strength of our people lies in our unity and our traditions. We must never forget where we come from and the teachings of our elders." Similarly, Kji-Keptin Antle Denny affirms, "We have to come together for future generations, the way we are brought up to do. We are taking our rightful place on our lands, so we always have a say in what happens in Mi'kma'ki. We have a responsibility handed down from our families and clans."

With respect and unity,



Kji-Saqamaw Norman Sylliboy, Kji-Keptin Antle Denny, aqq Putu's Danny Alex





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It is with great respect and honour that the UNSM supports the 'Unama'kie'1 A'tukwaqan ukwjit Sante' Mawio'mi' for the Mi'kmaq Grand Council. This important Initiative embodies a familiar method of the story-telling of Mi'kmaq nationhood.

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) has been optimistically supportive to the Mi'kmaq Grand Council in both an historic and general sense and more recently and specifically with the collaboration Unama'ki Tribal District Project.

The UNSM's involvement has remained focused on building stronger relations and advocacy on Mi'kmaq rights, narratives and ensuring that our efforts today create lasting impacts for future generations.

This report reflects the voices of elders, Keptins, and community members within Unama'ki, and highlights the importance of oral history, community involvement and a shared understanding

Sincerely,

Douglas Brown

Douglas Brown,

Executive Director, Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq

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Introduction

The Mi'kmaq, are a distinct Indigenous group, holding indigeneity to what is now known as the Atlantic Provinces in Canada, including the Gaspé Peninsula, and parts of Maine (USA). As a Nation, the Mi'kmaq have their own language, customs, and beliefs, including their own governing process and practices that expanded seven distinct districts.

***There are more Mi'kmaq than the hairs upon my head – Grand Chief Membertou –
(Thwaites, 1613).***

This collective practice of governances was carried out by an appointed group of individuals that formed the Sante' Mawio'mi—Grand Council.

The Sante' Mawio'mi, served as the internal body that carried teachings, knowledge, spiritual and physical well-being throughout the districts of the nation. The executive leadership of the Sante' Mawio'mi, served as an external body, carrying the collective voice of the Nation.

Due to colonization, which included changes in governance and the introduction of religion, the role of the Sante' Mawio'mi has remained fluid and responsive to the changes within the nation. By collectively gathering stories from well-respected community members in Unama'ki (Cape Breton, NS) this document serves as an opportunity for the Mi'kmaq to story the traditional and contemporary aspects of the Sante' Mawio'mi that is not lost in colonial understanding nor interpretation.

This document serves as a narration of the collective stories of community members who are guided through inquiry to delve the profound teachings embedded in the traditional governing structure of the Mi'kmaq, while shedding hope and understanding in how the Sante' Mawio'mi can continue to resonate in the contemporary climate.

Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Overview:

Introduction of the Research Team

Each of the researchers are Mi'kmaw, they hold language, culture, and are active practitioners of L'nuitasimk. The researchers are active within community and the academy. In respecting the practice of storying, the researchers introduce themselves in the context of community.

Primary Researcher: Semise'l Sa'n

Teluisi Semise'l Sa'n, wetakutm Sa'n ek aqq Popo'l ek. Teleyawi Mi'kma'kik aqq wejikwey We'kwistoqnik, Unama'kik. Weskewa'si nike' Plamui-Sipuke'l, ta'n etli-kwenkettjik tapusijik nijinnaq. Mekite'tman l'nueye'l kekina'muaqan, tli'sutiminu, teli-l'nuo'lfi'kw, aqq teliktlamsitasulti'kw.

My name is Semise'l Sa'n, my relations are the Sa'n and Pop'l families. I'm from Mi'kma'ki, grew up in Eskasoni, Unama'ki District. I now reside by the Salmon River, where I am raising my two children with my partner. I am a first language speaker. I take pride in our teachings, our language, who we are as Mi'kmaq, and our principals.

Semise'l holds a Bachelor of Social Work with a focus in Social Justice and Indigenous Issues. Semise'l is currently enrolled in the Masters of Social Work in the field of Indigenous Study.

Secondary Researcher: Ramona Morris

Teluisi Ramona Morris, wetaqne'wasi We'kwistoqnik, Unama'kik. Weskewa'si nike We'kopekwitk. Meki'tetm ta'n teli- l'nui, Mekite'm ta'n teli l'nui kna'muwey aq melkuktm ta'n teli elikowkik L'nu'k.

My name is Ramona Morris, I am from Eskasoni and now I now reside in Millbrook. I take pride in being L'nu, I take pride in teaching about Lnu'imk and I am dedicated to working for L'nu'k.

Ramona holds a Master of Education in Indigenous pedagogy and is currently enrolled in The Schulich School of Law at Dalhousie University with a focus in Aboriginal Law.

Secondary Researcher: Nicholas Phillips

Teluisi Nicholas (Nik) Phillips, tleyawi Mi'kma'kik aqq wetaqne'wasi Mulin-Sipuk. Akumkik Phillips-aq aqq Cope-aq. Weskewita'iek nikmaq Plamui-Sipuke'l, tapunketjik mijua'ji'jk. Kesatm kekina'muwey, amalitekey, aqq kekina'masimk L'nui'simk. Nuji-amalitekey.

My name is Nicholas (Nik) Phillips, from Mi'kma'ki and my ties are in Millbrook, My relations are the Phillips and Cope. I currently live by the Salmon River, raising my two

children. I have a passion for educating, crafting and teaching L'nu consciousness. I am a well known crafter.

Nik holds a Masters of Child and Youth with a focus in trauma informed practice and Indigenous identity. Nik is a Ph.d candidate in Education.

Methodology

Indigenous storywork has been a long-standing practice for Indigenous communities, which is inclusive of the Mi'kmaq nation. JoAnn Archibald (Q'um, Q'um Xiiem), is an Indigenous Scholar who has supported the two-eyed sharing of Indigenous Storywork to the greater research community. In further recognizing the need and readiness to decolonize the way research, and the interpretation, is carried forward with Indigenous ways of knowing and being. The approach, fieldwork, and writing of this document has been conducted with conscious intention, integrity. And a strong commitment to honouring the reciprocity of the stories and their tellers through the methodology of storywork.

We further recognize that these stories are gathered from only one of the seven (7) districts that comprise Mi'kma'ki, which is noted in the research opportunities of the document.

The storytellers and their stories derive from personal experiences and stories passed down through families and communities. These stories are carried from all six communities in the district of Unama'ki: Waqmitkuk, We'koqma'q, Maupeltu, Malikewe'jk, Potlotek, and We'kwistoqnik.

In total eleven (11) community members were interviewed. As part of the storytelling process, community members are guided through a series of loose, open-ended questions. The conversations are fluid, embracing personal experiences, stories learned from others, and knowledge passed down through kin. Consequently, the quality and richness of these stories offer a comprehensive experience of the Sante' Mawio'mi, presenting a variety of perspectives and understandings that range in time and existence.

This practice is further enhanced by conducting the storywork in the Mi'kmaw language. A language that is synthetically structured in motion, thought, and perspective. The Mi'kmaw language is a verb-based language that is spoken in the act of doing. The speaker is consciously aware of the interconnectedness of all existence, including the sole responsibility to maintaining balance. The language is therefore spoken from the perspective of the individual speaking the tongue. This approach ensures deeply enriched, fluid, conversations that remain intact. These stories in turn are not lost in translation nor interpretation. This practice further allows common terminology to be identified, capturing the essences of the larger discussion.

The stories captured within this document offer further understanding into the richness of Mi'kmaw culture and identity. The stories speak of the deeply rooted importance of reviving the use of the language. These stories tell of the resilience, strength, and cultural richness of the Mi'kmaq Nation—a legacy not bound by time, space, and people. These stories bear witness to the enduring legacy of colonization, with the forced assimilation to land dispossession and resource depletion. Thus, a shift in family dynamics and communal relations. The stories captured within this document are not

just stories; they are living testaments to the spiritual and physical well-being of L'nu'k. They remind readers of the interconnectedness of the past, present, and future.

Process

A series of engagements were conducted between December 2023 and February 2024 with well-respected community members in Unama'kik. Eleven (11) interviews were conducted in total. A select group of community members were identified for their knowledge and potential contributions to the narrative gathering process. This group also facilitated connections with additional community members for further engagement. Interviews were recorded in their homes. The interviews were conducted in the Mi'kmaw language, then transcribed and translated for English readers.

Structure of Document

The community engagements revolved around a set of questions created by the Sante' Mawio'mi. This document will structure itself around these key questions, summarizing them collectively. Recurring themes will be thoroughly examined, supplemented by direct quotes from interviewees, providing first voice experiences. Respecting anonymity of community. Mi'kmaw words will be incorporated to emphasize the significance of language, enriching the narrative with vivid descriptions and deeper understanding.

Community Members

In the introduction of community members, we move beyond surface-level introductions and consider L'nu'k traditional perspectives. We recognize individuals as L'nu'k, understanding their unique roles and contributions to ta'n welo'ltimk—the collective well-being. Family connections and roles are central, shaping emotions and responsibilities.

As individuals, they actively contribute to the community in various capacities, serving as educators, historians, and custodians of Netukulimk, encompassing culture, customs, language, and tradition.

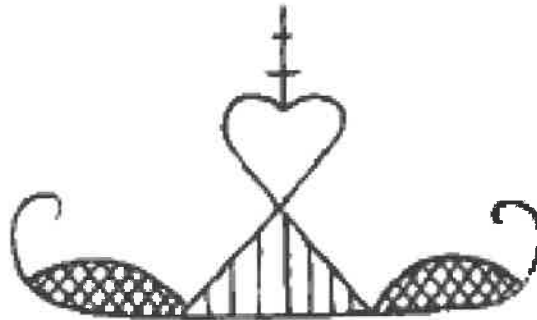
Their family kin extend beyond their current locations and family structures to include kin in all communities of Unama'ki—Milakutmu'tijik—vast family ties.

They hold current and historical connections to Sante' Mawio'mi, sharing firsthand experiences and knowledge alike. This is also true across generations, as community contributors', ranged in age. Thus, presenting different lived experiences, through time, and space.

Muiwalketjik/Acknowledgements

Muiwalket Kisu'lk ukjit ta'n te'sik koqoei kisitoq, aqq msit pitui-kniskamijinaqi'kw aqq pitui-kukumijinaqi'kw ta'n nikanqatmu'tipni'kw. Muiwatmek weskitqamu aqq ta'n teli-mimaju'nsi'kw, msit. Weja'tekemk samqwan, npisun, waisisk, aqq kmu'jk, muiwatmek koqoei mimajik aqq ta'n ne'kaw tel-ml'kuktmu'k tetpaqa'ltimkewey. Anko'tmu'k weksitqamu, aqq msit ta'n wejiwelapetk, ukjit elmi'knikewaq.

Muiwalketjik ta'wenik kis-apoqmatmi'tij ula Sante' Mawio'miey twi'kateken; Sante' Mawio'mi-aq, Kisiku'k, Nuji-kina'mua'tijik, nikanusk, nikana'tutij tli'sutiminu, aqq kikmanaq



We acknowledge Kisu'lk for the creation of all and our ancestors who have come before us. Gratitude is extended to Wksitqamu for providing us with essential gifts and sustaining our interconnected web of life. From the waters to the plants, medicines, animals, and trees, we honour these living relations and our commitment to harmony. As stewards of the earth, we uphold our responsibility to preserve biodiversity and ensure the well-being of future generations.

We honour those who contributed their stories to the collective narrative of this Sante' Mawio'mi document; Sante' Mawio'mi-aq, Elders, Educators, Leaders, Language champions, and our Relations.

As we embark on this journey of exploration and understanding, may we carry forward the teachings of the Sante' Mawio'mi with humility, respect, and a deep sense of gratitude

Narrating the Story

The narrative of the Sante' Mawio'mi, like many Indigenous narratives worldwide, have often been overshadowed by Eurocentric interpretations. These interpretations tend to simplify complex cultural practices. Often resulting in a distorted understanding of their true essence.

The Sante' Mawio'mi, is not an institution, nor is it comparable to colonial governments. The Sante' Mawio'mi, cannot be confined within bureaucratic frameworks or hierarchical structures. It is a vibrant gathering of individuals who hold the heart and mind of the Mi'kmaq Nation. Within this gathering, leadership is not measured by authority nor titles, but by a profound commitment to the physical and spiritual well-being of the whole community, the Mi'kmaq Nation.

The significance of the Sante' Mawio'mi, extends far beyond its ceremonial or administrative functions. It is the very foundation upon which the Mi'kmaq Nation stands, elqanatekewey—the foundation. A testament to centuries of resilience, adaptation, and cultural continuity.



Kji Saqamaw at 2022 Treaty Day Award Ceremony with Mi'kmaw youth (Treaty Education, 2022).

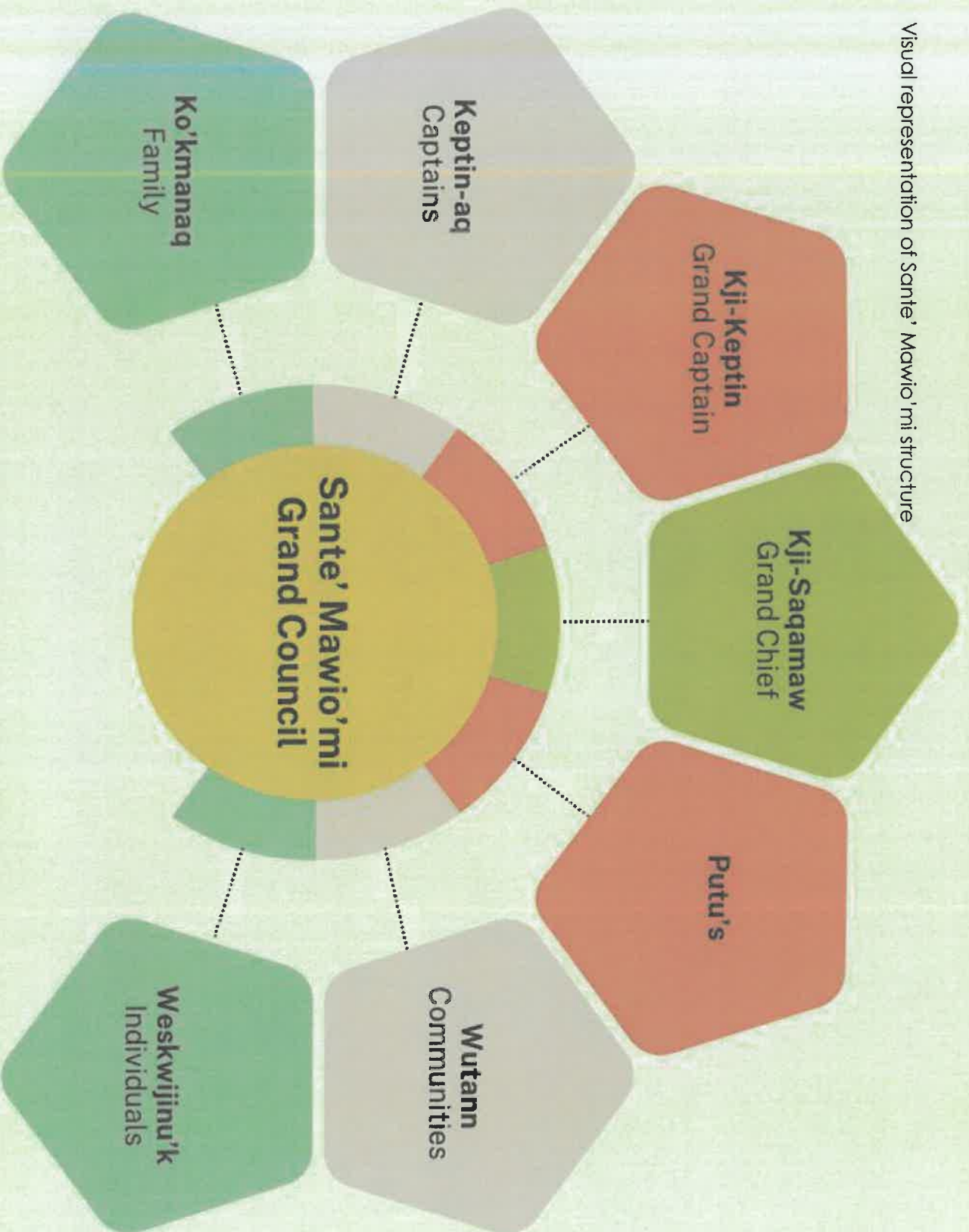
Through generations, the Sante' Mawio'mi, has served as a leader of hope and strength. Guiding the community through times of adversity, success, and transformations. Their teachings are not confined to the past but resonate deeply with the challenges and aspirations of the present. Thus, the Sante' Mawio'mi, positions the Nation between its spiritual and physical consciousness.

The Nation holds the foundation and strength of the Sante' Mawio'mi. Each member of the community contributes to the collective consciousness informing how the Sante' Mawio'mi, is to act and think.

Central to the essence of the Sante' Mawio'mi, is the understanding of collective consciousness—a shared understanding of interconnectedness, and interdependence all have with one another. And the extension of life to include plants, animals, water, and land. Within this mindset, every member of the community, regardless of age or status, plays a unique role in shaping the collective thought. It is through this collective consciousness that the Sante' Mawio'mi, acts and thinks, drawing upon the wisdom of ancestors and the aspirations of future generations to come.

Milakutmu'tijik	They have various relations.
Mili-apoqnmua'tijik	They help out in many different ways.
Mil'-lukutijik	They practice diverse work.
Mil'-kina'mua'tijik	They teach broad topics.

Visual representation of Sante' Mawio'mi structure



Ta'l-mikwite'fmjik, aq q tal-lukutisnik Sante' Mawio'mi-aq wejkwataqnik?

Can you recall the roles of the Grand Council in the past?

Please note: the positions within the Sante' Mawio'mi, are a general reflection of the role and not solely upon the individuals who hold such positions.

Kji-Saqamaw:



Kji-Saqamaw, holds the honourable position of Grand Chief within the Mi'kmaq Nation. The role serves as executive leader of the Sante' Mawio'mi. The role encompasses leadership spanning political, spiritual, and social realms. As a beacon of wisdom, the role offers counsel from matters of physical governance to spiritual understanding.

Honourable Kji-Saqamaw Norman Sylliboy, Grand Chief,

Mi'kmaq Nation,
and Prime Minister of Canada, Honourable Justin Trudeau, Eskasoni February 2024 (Pau, 2024).

Kji-Saqamaw, has been known to be proficient in the writing systems. Kji-Saqamaw, knows prayers, and songs. Sharing knowledge through education, Kji-Saqamaw, travels to communities passing invaluable teachings through the use of language, song, and story.

Additionally, Kji-Saqamaw, traditionally oversees land allocations for families and communities, while ensuring ecological sustainability (Miller, 1983).² Strategically managing resource procurement and depiction, land allocations are conditioned on the overall impact such individuals would have. Thus, the land, water, animals, and plants are always considered in decision making. Kji-Saqamaw serves as a final decision maker, entrusting that all has been considered. This is commonly reserved as restorative justice. Such practice extends to all seven (7) districts of Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki being made up of seven (7) distinct districts, each contributing to the function of the whole, led by Kji-Saqamaw.

Moreover, Kji-Saqamaw upholds cultural traditions, providing final blessing for marriages. He often attends weddings, wakes, salite'l—community auction, and funerals. Offering families moral, emotional, and spiritual support during the time of transition for the dead. Kji-Saqamaw, is a promoter of language and cultural preservation. Such tenure remains guardian of the people, nurturing the

² Miller 1983; p.47. Speck discusses travelling with Kji Saqamaw through Mi'kma'kik, mapping hunting territories.

wellbeing and cultural richness of the Nation. Kji-Saqamaw, carries this knowledge into the conversation and negotiations with other Nations.

The appointment of the position is made through consensus of communities. Consensus is met by the premise of capability. Kji-Saqamaw, is required to possess skill and ability. Which has been acquired through years of mentorship from previous leaders and Elders. Often an appointed role based on hereditary kinship.

However, the Mi'kmaq understanding of hereditary kinship is much deeper than the colonial understanding of immediate blood relations. That is, *hereditary* is not confined solely to direct lineage. Instead, community's appointment of such role lies within the recognition of individuals who embodies the wisdom and knowledge to lead in education, song and prayer. These skills would be obtained by individuals who grow in the presence of leaders. Thus, heredity access ensures the continuation of the legacy and the profound understanding of wetaepaqneyk—ancestors. Community selection of a leader occurs within both immediate family and broader extended relations.

“Kaplie’l Sylliboy-o’q telji mekite’tkek mimajuaqanek aq te’sik respectek weskunkisnek”

“Gabriel Sylliboy thought highly on life, and he had so much respect.”

“Norman Maqaskmaq na, tepaskmat kutey Prime Minister Trudeau’al, same level eykik, Nation Canada aq Mi’kmaw Nation, mu na malatpita’wk.”

“Norman is suitable for the task, his abilities are equivalent to the Prime Minister Trudeau, the Canadian Nation and the Mi’kmaw Nation, we’re ambitious.”

Keluluaqsikewlk

Representative of the collective voice.

Nuji-wulkwija’tiket

The one who supports individuals to do good.

Nikani-awtiket

The leader, creating a path forward.

Kji-Keptin

Kji-Keptin plays a pivotal role in the executive leadership of the Sante' Mawio'mi. Traditionally serving as the war leader and tasked with strategically supporting the Nation for success. Acting as a liaison between the executive body and the Keptin-aq, Kji-Keptin fosters communication and maintains connectivity.



Honour Kji-Keptin Antle Denny, members of Sante' Mawio'mi, and Lieutenant Governor, Honourable Leblanc (LtGovns, 2018).

Kji-Keptin leads Keptin-aq in their duties of accountability and responsibility to the communities and people they serve. Kji-Keptin has often been known for pipe carrying and conducting ceremonies.

Kji-Keptin is often the voice of Kji-Saqamaw in lieu of their presence. Kji-Keptin thus serves as a spokesperson within the Nation, and for the Nation.

The role of the position shifted as part of the historical evolution of colonial influences.

“ Kji-Keptino'q nuji mawa'lasni'kw Keptinaqi'k ”
“Kji-Keptin was responsible for gathering the Keptins.”

“Kji Keptini ilsitow to his keptins ta'n tla'itow kowey”
“Kji-Keptin will address his Keptins on how things are supposed to be.”

Nikanus

A leader

Tetpaqa'ltimkewy nikana'toq

Leads in good faith, by example.

Tetpaqa'taqitink kekina'muwet

Teaches to behave in accordance with L'nu values.

Putu's

The Putu's holds an equivalent status to Kji-Keptin within the executive council of the Sante' Mawio'mi. Operating at the same level but with distinct responsibilities. As lead negotiator, the Putu's facilitates crucial discussions and agreements on behalf of the Nation with other Nations. Including those not of Indigenous ancestry.

Within the broader Wabanaki Confederacy, the Putu's holds position of influence, contributing to the preservation of National and natural laws, through the use of L'napskuk—wampum. Reinforcing spiritual beliefs through mnemonic cues found not only within the readings and interpretation of the L'napskuk, but within the elements and relationship that create them. L'napskuk is not just an object. It is a visual representation created, maintained, and read by the Putu's. Telling of the treaties in physical, spiritual, and emotional form. Stories shared with conviction reminding community of the place and purpose.

Recognizing the spiritual obligation encompassed in carrying such sacredness, the Putu's plays a vital role in preserving the cultural traditions. Fostering unity within the community, conducting customary ritual and pipe ceremonies for the Nation. A skilled storyteller, the Putu's carries knowledge throughout the Nation, sharing ancient prayer and Treaty. The Putu's often opens gatherings with stories grounding listeners in the same mindset. Often balancing listeners between their physical and spiritual self.



Members of Sante' Mawio'mi at portrait revealing of Kji Saqamaw Gabriel Sylliboy-oq (Sylliboy, 2021).³

³ Members of Sante' Mawio'mi executive, Lt. Governor Leblanc and members of the Provincial government pose in front of a custom portrait, painted by Mi'kmaw artist, Alan Sylliboy, of the late Kji Saqamaw Gabriel Sylliboy.

Kwanute' is a song brought to the Mi'kmaq Nation by the Putu's who had learnt this song of friendship in relation to Kwetejk—Mohawk. It spoke to the immediate relation and continued upkeep of responsibility. L'nu'k often sing the song as they enter Kwetej territory, seeking safe passage.⁴

“ Pemi-akntuk ta'n tele'kip, our wars, the history of our people je pemtemit, pemtemit etl-kitjet Putu'sminu in front of everyone, for a reminder of who we are.”

“He starts talking about how things used to be, our wars, the history of our people, he would be crying, our Putu's would be crying in front of everyone while he's reading, for a reminder of who we are.”

Putuwet	The one who blows the shell whistle.
Nulmikjijitoq	The ability to memorize teachings.
Nuja'muwet	Negotiation lead.
L'napskuk	Wampum belts.
Waio'pskl	Wampum beads.
Ankukamkewe'l ekina'muwetl aqq tplutaqan	Educator of Treaties and Law.



Keptin-aq

⁴ Shared by a Mi'kmaw community member during engagement.

Keptin-aq were individuals who were directly connected to the community. Often the communal or district Nikanus—leader. They were responsible for local needs, includes maintaining the connection between communities. They serve as the first layer of leadership with the community and the executive council of the Sante' Mawio'mi.

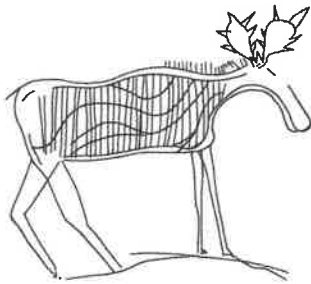
On a communal level, Kepin-aq uphold the customs and rules of the Nation. Respecting the natural laws and Treaties established between, Kisul'k, Weskitqamu aq Waisisk (Creator, Earth, and the animals).⁵ Keptin-aq were the voices of their communities. They participate in marriages and death. Often the individual was responsible for declaring alasutamumkapo'q (type of prayer for the deceased). Often helping the grieving family as they physically and spiritually prepare their loved ones who recently past away. Thus, Keptin-aq gather community consensus and track community population through death logs.

They often open meetings with the reciting of family lineage and the immediate connection to people and place. Grounding community members in connection and like-mindedness.

As Knowledge keepers of the land and resources they steward, they know the location of resources including procurement and sustainability. They therefore manage the hunting and fishing grounds of the families and communities they serve.

“Pema'tu'tij message, very spiritual men aq nekemoki'k il'joqestu'tij, if there was quarrels.”

“They carry the message; very spiritual men and they are the ones who correct if there was quarrels”



⁵ Tia'ms Story is story illustrated by the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources. The story captures the essence of this relationship and commitment.

Ilisutaqitijik	Decision makers for the betterment of the Nation.
Ilkwenaw'tijik	Uphold accountability.
Nuji-koqaja'taqitijik	Tasked to do what's right.
Nikanusk	Leaders
Alasutamumkapo'q	Terminology used often by Keptin-aq in communicating the death of a community member.



Members of the Sante' Mawio'mi gather at Millbrook heritage centre for revealing of repatriated Mi'kmaw clothing, (Phillips, 2023).

E'pijik

In L'nu society, the role of E'pijik are directly tied to the matrilineal connection they possess. They hold the ceremony of life. Their role is a fundamental aspect of community structure and governance. Beyond their roles as caretakers within the family unit, women hold diverse responsibilities that are integral to the functioning and cohesion of the community. They are revered for their wisdom, resilience, and diverse skills they brought to various aspects of daily life.

One significant aspect of their role was their involvement in the well-being and spiritual practice of community. As medicine women and healers, they possess extensive knowledge of botany and healing methods, providing essential care for community members' physical and spiritual well-being. Moreover, women often assume leadership roles in prayer ceremonies, guiding the community in spiritual practices and maintaining connections with the spiritual realm.

Women also play crucial roles in education and knowledge transmission within the community. As educators, they pass down traditional knowledge that is weaved with their own experiences and present understanding, with language, and oral histories. Ensuring the continuity of Mi'kmaw identity and language. Additionally, women are responsible for gathering essential resources from the land, such as medicinal plants, food, and materials for crafting. Further demonstrating their deeply rooted relationship with Weskitqamu.

In the political sphere, women hold influential positions within the Sante' Mawio'mi, where they contribute to decision-making processes and oversight of community affairs. Often seated on the outside of the gathering lodge of the Sante' Mawio'mi, Epijik participated in maintaining the spiritual alignment of political conversations. Where the gathering leaders would seek consensus from the women seated on the outside, ensuring spiritual and physical alignment.

E'pijik hold the authority to impeach individuals deemed unfit for political membership and are involved in treaty negotiations, reflecting their significant role in governance and diplomacy.

However, with the arrival of Christianity and the imposition of patriarchal interpretations, women's roles within the Sante' Mawio'mi are marginalized, and they are therefore excluded from direct participation in council meetings—as depicted in Eurocentric recordings.

Despite this exclusion, women have kept ways to maintain their influence and involvement in decision-making processes. Through ceremony, and the expression of collective approval or disapproval, women ensure that their perspectives are considered and respected within the governance structure.

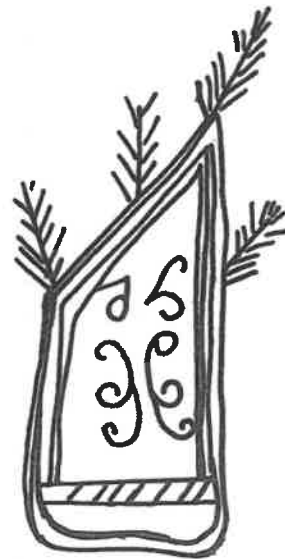
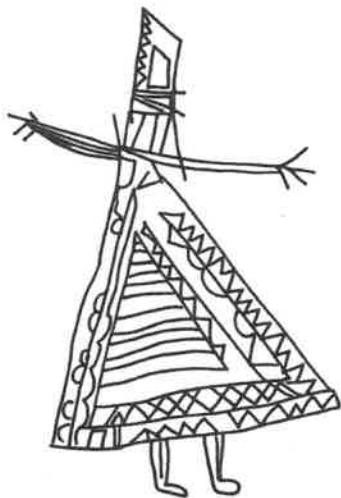
The practice of seeking consensus between the spiritual and physical realms exemplifies the holistic approach to the decision-making process within Mi'kmaq society, where the well-being of the community is prioritized above individual interests. By recognizing and honouring the contributions of E'pijik, both historically and in contemporary contexts, Mi'kmaq continue to uphold the principles of equality, respect, and collective responsibility that have sustained the Nation for generations. Mi'kmaq community still operates as a matrilineal society.

This, however, is not to negate the current climate in which E'ipijik continue to face, as missing and murder Indigenous women and girls, continue to bring much disparity to the Nation.

“Women held essential positions within the Council, they oversaw various aspects”

“E'pijik pemkepultijik kwijimuk (kji-wikuo'mk), Neskawtijik, kejitu'tj ta'n teliaq.”

“Women would sit outside (of the grand wikuo'm) knowing what is said inside.”



Kisiku'k

Kisiku'k, play crucial roles and are valued members of the community. They contribute their wisdom and knowledge, essential for community sustainability and well-being. Their deep understanding of both contemporary and traditional ways bridges generations, ensuring cultural continuity and accountability. As the oldest members, they carry the collective wisdom of previous generations and personal experience.

As they near the end of their physical journey, the community and family reciprocate by tending to their needs. Honouring their ongoing contributions as knowledge keepers and sharers of the Nation.

Elder Susie Marshall-oq, Elder Silipay Denny-oq, June 2015



Each Keptin chaired Elder circles in seeking guidance and community consensus. This is also true for the executive council of the Sante' Mawio'mi where members have and continue to seek guidance and clarification from the oldest, and most well-respected Elders of the Nation.

“Ketu ajikna'ti'k, nutaq jiksitanew kisiku'k”

“If we want to be stronger, we have to listen to our Elders.”

Mijuwa'ji'jk

Mijuwa'ji'jk, represent the newest generation and are considered the purest gift from the spirit world. Children are surrounded by several individuals who will contribute to their growth and well-being as they move through the stages of life. Acknowledging their significance, children are held in high regard within the community. Regarded as the future leaders, they are treated with unconditional love and respect. With various ceremonies marking their growth and development. Mijuwa'ji'jk are considered in all decisions made by the community. Including those yet to arrive into the physical realm.

Children are encouraged to be children. They are not burdened with adult responsibility. They are able to be present in all gatherings but are reminded not to interrupt.



Mi'kmaw children dances during the annual dry march (Sa'n, 2024)

"E'pijik ekinu'tumwa'tijik ekinutumuwa'tijik, L'nui alasutmaq n aq eykipni'k ji'nmuk ketapikia'tijik." e'pijik, e'pitij mijuwa'ji'jk

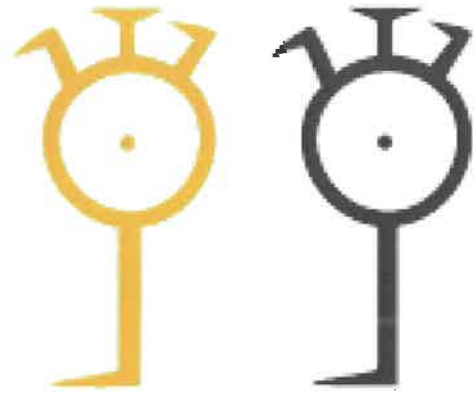
"The women teach the women, the women teach the children Mi'kmaw prayers and there were men who sang"

"Amuj ankite'tmujik mijua'ji'jk..."

"We have to think about the children"

Two-spirit

Two-spirited individuals are an integral part of the modern-day queer community, representing a diverse range of gender identities and sexual orientations within Indigenous cultures. While a pan-Indigenous concept, those of two-spiritedness, share diverse ranges of gender identities and sexual orientations that existed prior to modern interpretations.



Mi'kmaw Hieroglyphic of two spirits (Phillips 2024).

In traditional Mi'kmaw society, two-spirit individuals served significant roles in various aspects of community life, such as conducting marriages, ceremonies, and holding leadership positions both in the physical and spiritual realm. Their ability to navigate responsibility is fluid. Allowing such individuals opportunity to fulfill important roles in supporting the well-being and sustainability of the community.

The acceptance and understanding of gender and sexual fluidity among two-spirit individuals was deeply rooted in Mi'kmaw culture long before the introduction of colonialism, heteronormative principles, and homophobia. Colonialism and heteronormativity has altered such traditions relating to two-spirited people. Many of the traditional words that accompanied this community have been lost. The mutual respect and understanding has not, however, as several of the community members share the importance of these individuals as contributors to the whole.

"...Toqo ula mimajuinu paqsitpi-kjijiteketew. Mita na mimajuinu tewijaskmat, ataskmat na aqq kinu mita tapunaji nekm ukjijaqamijk. E'piteweye'l aqq ji'nmueye'l."

"...Even if this individual is extremely knowledgeable. Because that person's abilities are greater than ours because they have two spirits. A man and a woman spirit."

Youth

Youth, no longer children but transitioning into young adults, are mentored and encouraged to become active contributors to the community. They often learn from family and kin, listening to stories and participating in ceremonies as they prepare to take on greater responsibilities.

“Tujiw ekina’mu’kik nutqo’ltijik, mita mu ekina’muajik nike’ tami. Tetpaqo’tmin ta’n taqowey ketantoq. Mu kisi-asamte’mu’n, amuj kina’matnuo’ko’mi el’tu’kl kina’muksinew.”

“And then teach the young ones, because they are not being taught anywhere. How to properly treat what you hunt. You can’t over harvest, we have to create spaces in education.”



Mi'kmaw
awareness
residential

youth raise
and funds for
school survivors

(APTN, 2021).

Kinapk–Grassroots–Warriors

The Mi'kmaq Nation has long confronted the challenges of colonialism with resilience and strategic foresight. Collectively navigating negotiations and conflicts to preserve Mi'kmaq identity. Essential to this endeavor are warriors, known as Kinapk, known as grassroots activists who tirelessly defend lands, waters, and traditions. Their unwavering commitment ensures the continuity of Mi'kmaq customs and values amidst external pressures.

Grassroots play a crucial role in amplifying Mi'kmaq voices, advocating for rights, sovereignty, and fostering community solidarity. Through grassroots organizing, they mobilize support, raise awareness about pressing issues, and accountability.

Kinapk uphold our ancestral practices, safeguarding ceremonial rituals and storytelling that connect us to our traditional ways.



Mi'kmaq flag is flown in solidarity to livelihood fishing in Taqwek-Saduniville (Santé, 2020).

Furthermore, these individuals are dedicated stewards of the environment, protecting natural resources from exploitation and advocating for environmental justice. Their holistic approach recognizes the intrinsic connection between our well-being and the health of the land, water, and ecosystems. In essence, Kinapk serve as guardians of Mi'kmaq Nationhood, embodying the spirit of resilience and determination that defines our people.

"Ete'kl ceremonies on how to become a kinap, amuj tepikinaq kunjij aq tepi knaq kalamun to have that gift"

"There are ceremonies on how to become a Kinap, you have to be mentally strong and your heart has to be capable to have that gift."



"Go back to the grass roots-aq nekemuk taqewey weja'taj guide-ewa'lulnij. Klaman you don't make decisions in isolation."

"Go back to the grass roots and allow them to guide you. So, you do not make decisions in isolation."

Koqoey ketu' nmitu'n elmi'knik ukjij L'nu'k?

What do you hope to see in the future of the Mi'kmaw Nation?

In envisioning the future, there are several key aspirations and goals community members hope to see materialize within the community and Nation. They relate to inherent rights as traditional and current stewards of this place, Mi'kma'kik.

The Sante' Mawio'mi can aspire to revert to their hereditary roots, ensuring that those who hold authority are deeply connected to the traditions and values of the ancestors and the knowledge they have stewarded for over 11,000 years. Central to this vision is the principle of equity, where every individual is valued and respected for their unique contributions to the community. Offering inclusion of women, two-spirited, youth, Elders and kinapik.

The roles within the Nation are characterized by honesty and integrity. Fostering trust and cooperation among all members. This includes internal collaboration and the active participation in each of the communities. By working together collaboratively, they can harness collective strength and resilience. Allowing community to draw upon the wisdom passed down by ancestors, while also remaining open to necessary adaptations and innovations needed in modern society.

To enhance Nationhood, individuals, communities, and leadership must work collectively to cultivate healthy, transparent relationships amongst all districts. Gathering regularly can foster strong relationships and manifest a sense of pride, honour, and respect from within the Nation. Through solidarity, the Nation can maintain the strength to proceed in the exercising of inherent rights to advance sustainability that benefits all.

A core objective is to prioritize the revitalization and preservation of the language. Recognizing the Mi'kmaw language is the foundation of cultural identity. The Mi'kmaw language holds cultural values, traditions, practices, and the sacred relationship to the natural world. The future of the Mi'kmaw Nation must stand firm in strengthening the language. The Language holds cultural protocol (Marshall, 1997).

By strengthening the linguistic understanding, the Sante' Mawio'mi can ensure that future generations inherit a rich and vibrant legacy.

Furthermore, there must be a prioritization of exercising the inherent rights as a sovereign Nation; protecting the natural resources and fostering sustainable practices that benefit all members of the community. This entails not only upholding Treaty rights but also actively participating in the fields of law, archaeology, and other areas where Mi'kmaw expertise and perspectives are essential. This further requires the current Peace and Friendship Treaties with the

British to be translated into the Mi'kmaw language. The Treaties must then be used and upheld within this consciousness.

The Sante' Mawio'mi needs to continue educating the Nation about their collective rights, emphasizing the responsibilities that come with being a contributing member of the whole.

Education plays a pivotal role in the vision of the future, with a focus on incorporating Mi'kmaw language and culture into school curricula and promoting agricultural practices that are rooted in traditional knowledge. Additionally, the Sante' Mawio'mi should seek to instill a sense of pride and responsibility in youth, encouraging volunteerism and civic engagement as pathways to personal and collective empowerment.

The traditional term Plalikewimk— acts of reciprocity, is a common theme that rises within the research. It is defined as the willingness to share your talents, skills, and abilities for the betterment of the community with good intentions. Plalikewimk emphasizes reciprocity and collective well-being within the Nation.

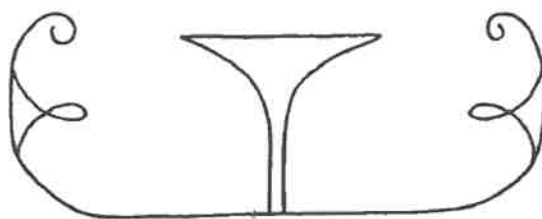
Ultimately, the vision for the future is one of unity, resilience, and cultural resurgence, where the Mi'kmaw people thrive in harmony with one another and the natural world. Through collective action and a commitment to the core values (Marshall, 1997).



Kji Sawamaw Gabriel Sylliboy speaking to Mi'kmaq c. 1903 (NMAI, 2024).

"So satimuk nemituan ni'n umm Grand Council that everybody's equal so everybody will have a say and different roles that are honest and is for the people. That's when you're going to have a strong Grand Council."

"Kinu na amuj pa ula sitqamu'minu aqq maqamikewminu, ikatmu'kl na. Kutey nike' fisheries aqq kowey, nemitu'n jijuaqa mawi'ta'tij telikna'ti'k, nasik tetpiso'lti'kw mu kisa'taqatiwk."



"We have to defend this world and our lands. Like with fisheries and things, you'll see at times when we gather their strength, but when we are divided, we won't succeed."

MI'kipukueta'new	For the Nation to stand firm.
Mawo'ltinew	To gather amongst each other.
Mawiapoqmatultinew	To help one another.
Mawlukutinew	To work as a collective.

Ketu' tal-nmitu'n Grand Council elmi'knik?
How do you envision the Grand Council?

The Sante' Mawio'mi serves in upholding the Nation's sovereignty, particularly concerning land, culture and language. Leadership is tasked with articulating historical rights and envisioning a future where these rights are fully recognized and respected by all.

Sante' Mawio'mi membership is inclusive and representative of all districts within Mi'kma'ki, ensuring that every voice is heard and valued in decision-making processes. This inclusivity extends to women, two-spirited individuals, youth, children, parents, Elders and kinapik. Recognizing their vital contributions to the wholeness of the Nation.



In addressing contemporary issues, the Sante' Mawio'mi serves as a conduit for information, keeping the Nation informed and engaged in initiatives that affect the collective well-being. This in turn, requires participation from current communities to invite and create space for the Sante' Mawio'mi to come and educate. However, in holding such leadership, Sante' Mawio'mi must hold communities accountable. Through advocacy and collaboration with the communities, the Sante' Mawio'mi can effectively navigate complex challenges and advocate for the interests at local, district and National levels.

Utilizing technology, the Sante' Mawio'mi can enhance communication, engagement. And can facilitate meetings with Elders, who are unable to participate for health reasons. The use of technology can support the language revitalization efforts. It embraces modern tools while upholding cultural ways and values.

One of the key responsibilities of the Sante' Mawio'mi can be to separate from colonial titles, reclaiming traditional names while asserting inherent rights as a sovereign Nation. This includes leading negotiations, advocating for jurisdiction, and enhancing the social welfare of the people through collective stewardship of resources, water and land use throughout all of Mi'kma'ki.

The Sante' Mawio'mi should take a proactive approach to education, ensuring children learn about treaties and cultural protocols in schools. Achieved through implementation and active participation, including but not limited to leading the language revitalization within the Nation.

Ultimately, the Sante' Mawio'mi embodies trust, responsibility, and accountability, serving as the collective voice of the Nation and safeguarding cultural identity, natural resources, and future generations.

"Teluwey ni'n iksatmuk taqewey nmituan na grand council apijiw mi'kiknewa'tnew aqq iknmuanen nekmuk klusultinew ukjit kinuk."

"I say that I would love to see the Grand Council re-strengthened and to appoint them to speak on our behalf."

"Mita eykik kisiku'k kitnmat ala'sit, you know, ewlikatat kisna welqatk wikuaq. Katu mu nuta'nuk nekm wanta'sualanenew. Apoqnmuanew ne'kaiu a tlimukknen taqewey nekm sespite'tk aqq kejitoq."

"Because today there are some Elders who have a hard time getting around, you know, they have poor mobility, or they are simply happy being at home. But there is no need for us to look past them. We need to continue to help them to tell us what is important to them and what they know."

Nikana'tnew Ankukamkewe'l	To lead in Treaties.
MI'kuktmnew Tli'sufiminu	To work hard towards our language.
Wiaqa'ltimk	Inclusion.
Elita'suwalanew Sante' Mawio'mi	To rely on the Grand Council.

Koqoey ki'l L'nuin piami-kepmite'tmn (mawji-ksite'tmn?) -
What is important to you as an L'nu?

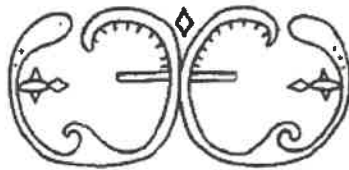
There is a deep reverence for Netukulimk, which encompasses the holistic and sustainable management of natural resources. This involves defining modern-day Netukulimk to reflect the current state of the environment and ensuring that it aligns with the cultural values. In further, recognizing the continued and ongoing depletion of resources.

Language revitalization is another crucial aspect, extending beyond basic instruction to encompass a comprehensive integration into school curricula, and everyday life, throughout Mi'kma'ki. The language is not just a means of communication but a vessel for preserving identity, culture, and worldview.

Spearing in the District of Piktuk, November 2021 (Sa'n 2021).



Cultural preservation is paramount, encompassing traditions, customs, and values that have been passed down through generations. Elders hold a special place of respect and honour within the community, serving as



teachers of wisdom and guidance.

Respecting natural law is ingrained in the collective consciousness, guiding the interactions with the land, water, and all living things. There is a deep understanding of the interconnectedness of all life forms and the active strive to live in harmony with all surroundings.

Gatherings serve as opportunities for the Nation to gather, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity.

Building strong relationships within community and with the family is essential. Plalikewimk, or mutual support, underscores the commitment to helping and uplifting one another in times of need; selflessly.

Advancing the Mi'kmaw economy on a global scale is a priority, ensuring that the people have access to opportunities for prosperity and self-sufficiency. This includes building upon the work of the ancestors and leveraging the resources and expertise for the benefit of the Nation.

Above all, there is a collective aspiration for the Nation to be recognized and respected globally, with a seat at the United Nations as a sovereign and independent Nation. A seat in which the Kji-Saqamaw would occupy. This further supports the need for the Peace and Friendship Treaties to be translated into the Mi'kmaw language. Where the language determines and affirms the understanding and action required in upholding the spirit and intent of the treaties.

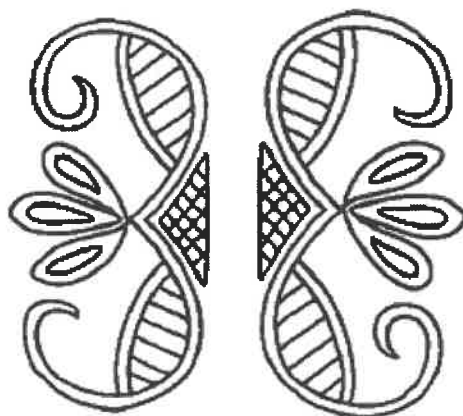
In essence, there is a collective consciousness and commitment to preserving the customary practices of L'nusi'tasimk. With further protection of the natural environment, while advancing the well-being of people.

Plalikewimk	Acts of reciprocity.
Netukulimk	Sustainability and protecting natural resources.
L'nui'suti	Mi'kmaw Language.

“Teltekip, kisiw-suwa'tis ta'n te'sik nuta'n katu tel-pije'k nike' wskitqamu telji kitnmaq, ma kis-tla'tikewk. Amuj piluamu'kl klusuaqann ewe'mu'kl. Kisi-suwa'tisk pasik ta'n te'sik, ma' ajino'tmu'n aqq ajkineywawjik waisisk, taqewey wesuwa'tu'n. Waisisk kisna mime'jk kisna kowey. Amuj ankife'tmen nekemuk ta'n tewijaskma'tijik, nekemuk mu kisi-asamta'qi wen.”

"It used to be; to take how much you need. But with the poor state of the world, we can't do that. We must use different terms. You can only take as much, without harming or disrupting the animals or anything you are taking. Animals, fish, or anything. You have to think of the state that they are in. We cannot over harvest them."

**"Awsamta'sik
wisqikwenuk.
kisi-iko'tasik
aqq musikiskituk
samqwaniktuk..mu
Amujpa**



ankite'tmu'k app."

**kowey, mu tepi
Asamelk kowey
maqamikewiktuk
aqq
kisi-npilsinuk.
nekemowey**

"When things are over harvested, there isn't much time for regrowth. There are too many things being placed in the land, sky and the water, it cannot heal itself. We must think about that too."

Kis-tali toqolukuti'fis Sante' Mawiomi aqq Chief and Council-aq klaman kisi toqi-tmoqjentaq aqq maw-maliaptitaq koqoey.

How can the Grand Mi'kmaw Grand Council and Chief and Council work together to advance our Nation's priorities?

The Sante' Mawio'mi and local Chief and Councils can collaborate effectively to advance the priorities of the Mi'kmaq Nation by:

Gathering together: The need for regular meetings and gatherings where representatives from both entities can come together to discuss common goals, challenges, and strategies for advancement.

Working together: Collaborating on initiatives and projects that align with the Nation's priorities, leveraging the strengths and resources of each entity for collective progress. By uniting under a single consciousness first leadership and contemporary leadership can assert sovereignty and surpass the confinements of current provincial and federal regulations such as the Indian Act.

Addressing and prioritizing concerns: Prioritizing issues and concerns that require immediate attention, and working collaboratively to develop solutions and action plans that are supported by community engagement and consultation. Including the engagement and consultation with women, youth, children, parents, two-spirited, Elders and kinapk.

Advancing the Nation: Recognizing and respecting the position of leadership. The Sante' Mawio'mi represents the entire Mi'kmaq Nation of Mi'kma'ki, while local Chief and Councils serve specific communities. Collectively such leadership can coordinate efforts to advance the interests and well-being of all Mi'kmaq people.

Centralizing support: Local Chief and Councils can rely more on the guidance and support of the Sante' Mawio'mi, recognizing its role as the overarching governing body representing the entire Mi'kmaq Nation. Chief and Councils can be supported through complex situations that are supported by culture and language. In turn, the Sante' Mawio'mi stays informed on political relations with the colonial government at local, provincial, and federal levels.

Ensuring transparency: Establishing clear channels of communication and transparency between the two systems, ensuring that information is shared openly and decisions are made collaboratively which are informed based on the well-being and engagement of the Nation's people.

Informing one another: Keeping each other informed about initiatives, challenges, successes, and best practices, fostering a culture of shared learning and continuous improvement. There needs to be a strategic move away from 'gatekeeping' knowledge.

Working towards common goals: Setting collective goals and objectives that

Ketlamife'itultinew	To firmly believe in each other.
Mi'kipukueta'new	To stand firm.
Mawlukutinew	To work together.
Mawiapoqmatultinew	To help each other.
Mawita'nej telikna'ti'kw	Gather to demonstrate our strength.
Mawukwamk	Gather together as one Nation.

reflect the priorities of the Mi'kmaq Nation and working together to achieve them in a coordinated and effective manner.

By fostering collaboration, transparency, and mutual respect, the Sante' Mawio'mi and local Chief and Councils can work together to advance the priorities and aspirations of the Mi'kmaq people, ultimately contributing to the well-being and prosperity of the Nation.

"There's no meeting, so we need meetings between the Chief and council and the Grand Council directly. Not indirectly like that. So, I can't see it going anywhere if they cannot do that."

"Matmu'kl kiskuk a' apijiknanenew. Toqo pasik kisi-tli-apijiknatisnu, na mawukwaik. Mita mikwite'te'n "naskukwaik mnaqana'titisnu, mawukwaik, ml'kikna'tisnu."

"Today we are fighting things to regain strength. And that is the only way we can regain strength; is that we must come together for the common good. Because remember, if divided, we will be weak. If we act together, we will be strong."



Kji

Saqamaw-oq Ben Sylliboy in Nova Scotia Provincial House with community elected chief Deborah Robinson (White, 2008).

Tal-kisi aji-mi'kiknewa'lsuti'kip, kinu L'nu'k?

How do you think we can strengthen our Nation?

Strengthening the Nation requires a multifaceted approach that encompasses various aspects of the collective identity and governance. Central to this effort is the recognition of the importance of family kin ties and family backgrounds. Such understanding is founded in the concept of Melkikinaq teli-l'nu'lti'kw – the strength of L'nu identity.

Families are the core of Mi'kmaw society. This can further be explained in the choice of terminologies community members used during the engagements. That is, families themselves hold differences and alternative perspectives which are expressed through the use of the Mi'kmaw language. Cohesive in relation, families make the communities, who lead the Sante' Mawio'mi, who represents the Nation. Everything is connected. The Sante' Mawio'mi ensures the spiritual and physical consciousness is not separate from the next, but rather working together with one another for the betterment of all.

Returning to the teachings and wisdom of the ancestors is paramount in guiding the path forward. By embracing cultural knowledge and values that have sustained community for generations, reaffirms the cultural identity. This entails gathering as a Nation, engaging in face-to-face meetings, and participating in conversations that facilitate open dialogue and collaboration. Establishing talking circles and documenting discussions are vital steps towards ensuring transparency and accountability.

Addressing divisions perpetuated by colonial government policies and systems is another crucial aspect of strengthening the Nation. Reclamation and assertion of sovereignty in a place of two-eyed seeing will support the relationship with colonial governments to further understand and acknowledge unity. Sharing knowledge and experiences, including successes and failures, allows leaders to learn from one another and adapt strategies accordingly.

Revitalizing the language, culture, traditions, and treaties, including collective Treaty rights are fundamental to preserving identity. These elements are integral to Mi'kmaq and should be embedded into daily lives and governance structures.

Upholding the principles of Ta'n teli-l'nuo'ltimk - guiding collective actions and behaviours based on shared values and identity - reinforces cultural resilience and cohesion.

Investing in mentoring programs for youth within the Sante' Mawio'mi is essential to ensuring that the next generation is equipped to lead the Nation into the

future. Promoting inclusion and empowerment within communities and leveraging the expertise of Mi'kmaq lawyers.

Collaborating with all community members is a vital step towards building a stronger and more unified Nation. Writing treaties in the Mi'kmaw language and ensuring equitable distribution of treaty benefits are crucial for the betterment of the entire Nation. Additionally, revitalizing traditional customs, such as apoqnamatultimk.

Kepmite'Isultinew To honor ourselves and each other.

Nenatultinew To know one another.

Ketlamite'Itultinew To have faith in ourselves and each other.

Tetpaqa'taqatimk To behave in accordance with L'nu values.



***“Recognizeowa’luk, ta’n te’si’k recognizeowa’luk me’ mlkikinatISnu mu kisi ai’juk
pusik kinuk amujpa government ika’lsit Provincial Government aq Federal
Government, amujpa ika’lsijik nekemoke elt.”***

“ Recognize them, all of us have to recognize them then we will become stronger, no one can do it but us, the Government has to be involved Provincial Government and Federal Government, they have to be involved too.”

***“PukwelkI kina’matnewey etek nekmukik (pitui-kniskamijinaqi’k) kisi we’mi’tijek.
Pasik nuta’q kinu suwapeka’tnenew. Tujiw qoji we’mnenew kiskuk.”***

“There are lots of teachings that they (ancestors) utilized. We just have to take them and apply them today.

***“Teluwey ni’n, nuta’q te’sk nike’ tepaskmaik, apiji-l’nu’wi’kminen apiju
(ankukamkewe’l). Tujiw kitasik L’nuiktuk mita aji-wulinsitasik kitmin L’nuiktuk.”***

“I say, while we are capable to re-write them (Treaties) into Mi’kmaw. Then to be read in Mi’kmaw because it will be understood better when read in Mi’kmaw.”



Mi’kmaw

treaty day celebration. (Treaty Education Nova Scotia, 2015).

youth at

Tal-kisi aji-alsulsumti'kip L'nu'lti'kw, aq q ilsitmnew ta'n teliaq aq q tela'sik kmitkinuk?

How do you think our Nation can become more sovereign?

The language and stories are deeply rooted in understanding. They serve as powerful tools for reclaiming and asserting sovereignty. Spirituality also plays a crucial role in uniting the Nation through challenges, helping to adapt and overcome obstacles.

Advocacy is essential at all levels, from grassroots initiatives to positions of authority and leadership. Utilizing two-eyed seeing, can blend Indigenous and Western perspectives to advocate effectively for the rights and interests of the Nation.

Listening to the voices of the people is paramount. Both the Sante' Mawio'mi and local Chief and Councils must prioritize community input and be receptive to suggestions for improvement. In order to be of one consciousness, all perspectives must be seen and understood.

Grassroots involvement is key to guiding the Nation's direction. Establishing advisory groups for Elders, youth, parents, two-Spirited, women and Grassroot peoples ensures that decisions reflect the needs and desires of the community.

Role models who occupy these higher positions in the community must serve as inspirations and advocates for Mi'kmaq sovereignty, paving the way for future generations. They therefore hold responsibility to facilitate open dialogue through the use of talking circles and referendums to empower individuals to speak up and contribute to the decision-making processes.

Education is a vital tool for empowering the people of the Nation, ensuring they understand their rights and responsibilities under treaties.

Language revitalization efforts are crucial for preserving identity and asserting sovereignty. Teaching the next generation about history, traditions, and treaties ensures they carry forward the legacy of the Nation's sovereignty.

Integrating Mi'kmaw ways into the Western education system allows assertion of sovereignty in spaces where the L'nu voice have historically been marginalized and interpreted through a Eurocentric lens.

Enforcing Mi'kmaw laws, rooted in Tetpaqa'ltimkewey—the act of doing the right things in the mindset of the collective, reinforces our sovereignty and autonomy as a Nation.

In essence, achieving greater sovereignty requires a holistic approach that encompasses cultural revitalization, community empowerment, advocacy, education, and the assertion of the rights under treaties. Through these efforts, the community can strengthen the Nation and ensure a future guided by values and traditions.

“Me' ne'kaw kisuk ankewiuksi'kl, ankukamkewe'l.”

“ Even still to this day the we are being taking care of by our Treaties”

Wiaqa'ltimk

Inclusion

Msit no'kmanaq

All our relations.

Mawukwamk

To gather as a Nation.

Maw-klusulfinej

To use our collective voice.



Scotia Museum).

Levi Poulette and Kji-saqamaw Gabriel Sylliboy-oq c. 1937 (Nova

Koqoey nuta'q nikani-maliaptmnew Sante' Mawio'mi-aq

What do you think the Grand Council should prioritize?

The priorities of the Sante' Mawio'mi are multilayered, encompassing various aspects of governance and community well-being, both in the physical and spiritual consciousness.

The Sante' Mawio'mi must maintain relations with the Catholic church but be separate and not governed by its colonial structure. Reclaiming traditional roles and responsibilities ensures each member understands and embraces their role within the council, as representatives of the Nation. This involves ongoing education and outreach efforts to teach the community about these roles and the council's stance on various issues.

Fostering open communication and collaboration with the Nation is essential, allowing for the sharing of knowledge, stories, and perspectives to inform decision-making. Tribal councils that further represent the Nation must hold responsibility for providing space and support for the Sante' Mawio'mi to communicate to the larger community.

Child welfare is a top priority, with a focus on putting children first and supporting initiatives that promote the well-being of families and kinship relationships. Parents must not be forgotten, especially in the current modern climate L'nu families face.

Sante' Mawio'mi must establish traditional law, through restorative perspectives that emphasize community-based solutions and support for traditional methods of discipline. Community members collectively acknowledge the systemic racism community continues to face, with the disproportionate numbers of incarcerated community members.

Livelihood, particularly in fishing and other traditional practices, is supported to ensure the economic stability of the community while maintaining sustainable practices through Netukulimk. Thus, the Sante' Mawio'mi must establish a formal understanding of moderate livelihood that encompasses the physical and spiritual consciousness, and natural law and order.

Preserving culture and supporting language revitalization efforts are fundamental to maintaining cultural identity and ensuring the transmission of knowledge to future generations.

Collaboration and unity are emphasized as the council works together to strengthen the Nation, with a focus on upholding Treaty rights and fostering reconciliation within the community.

Finally, recognizing and honouring the contributions of individuals within the Nation, or Kepmite'Isultinew – honouring ourselves and others, is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and unity among the people.

Through these priorities, the Sante' Mawio'mi seeks to uphold the values and traditions of the Nation while promoting the well-being and prosperity of all its members.

“Their roles, kina'mu, nuta'q nekemoke kina'muwanu skwijinu ta'n telpukuijik aq nekemuk nutaq kna'masultinew ta'n telpukultijik.”

“Teach them their roles, they need to teach the people on where they stand and they also need to learn about how they stand”

Elqanatekewe'l tmoqjenminew	To advance the foundation.
Apoqmatullinew	To help each other.
Mawukwamk	To work together for common outcomes.
Tqwa'ma'tinew	Allyship, working as a team
L'nui'suti nikana'tnew	To lead the Mi'kmaw language.

Research Opportunities

During the period between December 2023 and March 2024, our engagement with community members encountered some challenges that provided

valuable insights for future endeavors. As part of a phase I project, our goal was to gather diverse perspectives from communities in Unama'kik.

While it is unfortunate that several communities in Unama'ki experienced losses during this period. We also understand that community members had pressing priorities elsewhere, and we respect their needs and commitments.

In this initial phase of engagement, our focus was primarily on Unama'ki communities, which provided a foundation for future collaborations with a broader range of voices from different districts within Mi'kma'ki. We are enthusiastic about the prospects of expanding the engagement to include the wider Mi'kmaq community, fostering inclusivity and diversity in into building the collective narrative.

Furthermore, while there may be limitations in the available literature, particularly in terms of firsthand experiences, we see this as a chance to contribute fresh insights and perspectives to the existing body of knowledge. By prioritizing firsthand accounts and amplifying diverse voices, we can enrich the literature and create a more comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.



Mi'kmaw wampum belt (Sa'n 2024).

Mi'kmaq

Alasutamumkapo'q

Ankukamkewe'l ekina'muwetl aqq tplutaqan

Apoqnmatultimk

Apoqnmatultinew

E'pijik

Elita'suwalanew Sante' Mawio'mi

Elqanatekewe'l tmoqjenminew

Ilkwenaw'tijik

Ilsutaqitijik

Keluluaqsikewlk

Kepmite'lsultinew

Kepmite'taqn

Keptin-aq

Ketlamite'ltultinew

Ketlamite'ltultinew

Kinapk

Kisiku'k

Kisu'lk

Kji- Saqmow

Kji-Keptin

Ko'kmanaq

Kwanute'

Kwetejk

L'nu'k

L'nui'simk

L'napskuk

L'nui'suti

L'nui'suti nikana'tnew

Malikewe'jk

Maupeltu

Mawiapoqnmatultinew

Mawiapoqnmatultinew

Mawio'mi

Mawita'nej telikna'ti'kw

Mawlukutinew

Mawlukutinew

Mawo'tinew

Mawukwamk

Mawukwamk

English

time of prayer for the deceased

Educator of Treaties and Law

To help each other

To help each other

Women

To rely on the Grand Council.

To advance the foundation.

Uphold accountability.

Decision makers for the betterment of the Nation.

Representative of the collective voice

To honor ourselves and each other.

Honour

Captains

To firmly believe in each other.

To have faith in ourselves and each other.

Warriors

Elders

Creator

Grand Chief

Grand Captain

Our L'nu Relations

Mohawk friendship song

Mohawk

People of the land

To speak Mi'kmaw

Wampum Belt

Mi'kmaw Language.

To lead the Mi'kmaw language.

Malagwatch

Membertou

To help one another.

To help each other.

Gathering

Gather to demonstrate our strength.

To work as a collective.

To work together.

To gather amongst each other.

Gather together as one Nation.

To work together for common outcomes.

Mijuwa'ji'jk	Children
Mil'-kina'mua'tijik	They teach broad topics
Mil'-lukutijik	They practice diverse work
Milakutmu'tijik	Vast family ties
Milakutmu'tijik	They have various relations.
Mili-apoqnmua'tijik	They help out in many different ways
MI'kipukueta'new	For the Nation to stand firm.
MI'kipukueta'new	To stand firm.
MI'kuktmnew Tli'sutiminu	To work hard towards our language.
Msit No'kmaq	All my relations
Nenatultinew	To know one another.
Netukulimk	Sustainability and protecting natural resources.
Nikana'tnew Ankukamkewe'l	To lead in Treaties.
Nikani-awtiket	The leader, creating a path forward
Nikanus	A leader
Nuja'muwet	Negotiation lead.
Nuji-wulkwija'tiket	The one who supports individuals to do good
Nulmikjijitoq	The ability to memorize teachings.
Potlotek	Chapel Island
Pulikowimpk	Acts of reciprocity.
Putu's	Wampum Reader
Putuwet	The one who blows the shell whistle
Sante' Mawio'mi	Grand Council
Salite'l	Community auction to support families of deceased
Ta'n welo'ltimk	How people are
Tetpaqa'ltimkewy nikana'toq	Leads in good faith, by example.
Tetpaqa'taqatimk	To behave in accordance with L'nu values.
Tetpaqa'taqitimk kekina'muwet	Teaches to behave in accordance with L'nu values.
Tqwa'ma'tinew	Allyship, working as a team
Unama'ki	Cape Breton
Wao'pskl	Wampum Beads
Waisisk	Animals
Waqmituk	Wagmatcook
We'koqma'q	Whycoocmah
We'kwistoqnik	Eskasoni
Weskwijinu'k	people
Wiaqa'ltimk	Inclusion.
Wikuo'm	Dwelling
Wksitkamu	Earth
Wutann	Community

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Appendix

Interview Questions:

1. ***Kisi-tlimik kijka' ta'wen-in? (Prompt, wen-ik kikkmaq? Tami fleyawin?)*** Can you share a little about yourself?
2. ***Ta'l-mikwite'tmjik, aqq tal-lukutisnik Sante' Mawio'mi-aq wejkwataqnik?*** Can you recall what the roles of the Grand Council were in the past?
3. ***Koqoey ketu' nmitu'n elmi'knik ukjit L'nu'k?*** What do you hope to see in the future for the Mi'kmaw Nation?
4. ***Ketu' tal-nmitu'n Grand Council elmi'knik?*** How do you envision the Grand Council?
5. ***Koqoey ki'l L'nuin piami-kepmite'tmn (mawji-ksite'tmn?)*** What is important to you as an L'nu?
6. ***Kis-tali toqolukuti'fis Sante' Mawiomi aqq Chief and Council-aq klaman kisi toqi-tmoqjentaq aqq maw-maliaptitaq koqoey.*** How can the Mi'kmaq Grand Council and Chief and Council work together to advance our Nation's Priorities?
7. ***Tal-kisi aji-m'l'kiknewa'lsuti'kip, kinu L'nu'k?*** How do you think we can strengthen our Nation?
8. ***Tal-kisi aji-alsulsumti'kip L'nu'lti'kw, aqq ilsitmnew ta'n teliaq aqq tela'sik kmitkinuk?*** How do you think our Nation can become more sovereign?
9. ***Koqoey nuta'q nikani-maliaptmnew Sante' Mawio'mi-aq?*** What are some things the Grand Council can prioritize?



Msit Ko'kmanaq