

Spring/Siwkw 2026

NEWSLETTER



UNION
OF NOVA
SCOTIA
MI'KMAQ



DALHOUSIE
UNIVERSITY

SCHULICH
SCHOOL OF LAW

Celebrating the Next Generation of Indigenous and African Nova Scotian Legal Leaders

On May 28, UNSM Executive Director Douglas Brown attended the Indigenous Blacks & Mi'kmaq (IB&M) Initiative graduation reception at Dalhousie University's Schulich School of Law. A graduate of the program himself, Doug has remained connected to the initiative over the years through advisory committee work and has seen many students build successful careers after coming through the program.

The IB&M Initiative was established following recommendations stemming from the Donald Marshall Jr. Inquiry and was created to help address barriers faced by Mi'kmaq and African Nova Scotian students pursuing careers in law. Since its launch, the program has played an important role in increasing representation within the legal profession and supporting future leaders in their communities.

At this year's reception, Doug was pleased to see graduates being recognized for their achievements. Kait MacLean received the Donald Marshall Jr. Memorial Award, an award that honours a graduating law student who has demonstrated a strong commitment to social justice and criminal law reform on behalf of Indigenous Peoples. Doug noted there were only a few Mi'kmaq graduates in attendance and took the opportunity to catch up with Kait, following the event.

Reflecting on the evening, Doug said it was encouraging to see the continued success of the IB&M Initiative and the positive impact it has had over the past three decades. He noted that the program remains an important pathway for Indigenous and African Nova Scotian students entering the legal profession and expressed hope that even more Mi'kmaq students will take advantage of the opportunity in the years ahead.

Congratulations to all!

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Hours of Operation

Monday - Friday
9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Want to contribute to our newsletter?

Email: communications@unsm.org
to submit stories, announcements,
photos, or upcoming events!

The next submission deadline
is Friday, September 4, 2026
at 4:30 PM.

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published on Friday,
September 18, 2026.



Networking Opportunity: Atlantic Data Governance Team Meeting

On April 28th, the Mawkim Data Governance Team hosted a collaborative meeting with regional Data Governance team representing New Brunswick (NB) and Prince Edward Island (PEI).

This all team meeting was a great opportunity for networking, additional support, and transparency. At this meeting, Mawkim Data Governance and Team NB/PEI gave insight into initiatives supported by their teams and shared best practices.



Networking Opportunity: Leadership Institute

On May 7th, Mawkim Data Governance team representatives presented at the Leadership Gathering hosted by Regional Chief Andrea Paul. The Leadership Conference participants included Nova Scotia Chiefs and Councillors, Assembly of First Nations (AFN) committee members, and other guests.

The presentation highlighted Mawkim's strategic planning, current projects and initiatives, Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession (OCAP) principles and re-

quested leadership feedback on a number of engagement questions. As part of the presentation, an activity was facilitated through Mentimeter to gather perspectives of those in attendance.

Leadership reported that data is only utilized sometimes when making decisions and that additional data is needed to strengthen decision making; particularly in the area of health and wellness. The Mawkim team is planning engagement with stakeholders in 2026-2027.

Jordan's Principle Unama'ki

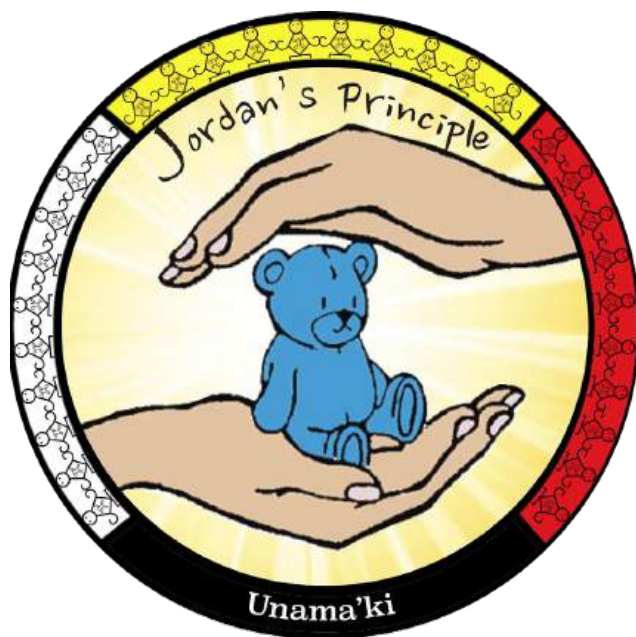
Jordan's Principle Unama'ki is pleased to welcome Emily Bernard as our new Transition Coordinator.

In this role, Emily will support youth who are aging out of Jordan's Principle services by helping them connect with community, provincial, and federal resources that best meet their individual needs and future goals.

Her work focuses on creating meaningful connections early in the transition pro-

cess, allowing youth to become familiar with available supports and build trusting relationships with service providers before they leave our program.

Using a holistic and person-centered approach, Emily works closely with each youth to understand their strengths, aspirations, and unique circumstances.



By identifying supports related to education, employment, housing, health, cultural connections, and overall well-being, she helps ensure that youth have access to the resources necessary for a successful transition into adulthood.

Emily also collaborates with families, caregivers, and service providers to promote continuity of care and reduce barriers that may arise during this important life stage.

Through proactive planning, advocacy, and ongoing support, she is committed to helping youth navigate

this transition with confidence while fostering long-term connections to the services and opportunities that will support their continued growth and success.

For more information, contact:
emilybernard@unsm.org



Mental Wellness Days Across Mi'kmaq Communities

Throughout May 2026, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Mental Wellness Team proudly hosted a series of Mental Wellness Days across Mi'kmaq communities in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month. Events were held on May 5 in Membertou, May 6 in Eskasoni, May 12 in We'koqma'q, May 13 in Potlotek, May 14 at the Jane Paul Centre in Sydney, May 20 in Wagmatcook, May 25 at Kiknu Long-Term Care Home in Eskasoni, and May 28 in Paqtnkek.

These gatherings brought together community members, service providers, and wellness partners to promote connection, support, and overall well-being. Community members enjoyed swag bags, refreshments, free haircuts, giveaways, gift card prizes, and opportunities to learn about available programs and services.

The Mental Wellness Team would like to extend sincere appreciation to all of the organizations and partners who contributed to the success of these events, including Mi'kmaw Family & Children's Services, Jordan's Principle, NADACA, Nova Scotia Early Childhood Development Intervention Services (NSECDIS), Residential School Survivors (RSS), Healing Our Nation, Eskasoni Mental Health

Services, Land-Based Healing through Nepisi'tukul, local Health Centre staff, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Diabetes Lead, and many other community-based programs and organizations.

A special acknowledgement goes to Eskasoni Mental Health Services, whose staff provided valuable cultural programming, traditional teachings, and wellness supports throughout the events. Their contributions were greatly appreciated by community members, and we look forward to exploring opportunities to have their team participate in future Mental Wellness Days across additional Mi'kmaq communities.

The Mental Wellness Team extends heartfelt thanks to all participating communities, partners, volunteers, and attendees. Together, we continue to strengthen wellness, culture, healing, and connection throughout Mi'kma'ki.

Wela'lioq to everyone who helped make Mental Health Awareness Month 2026 a success.



Honouring Tradition and Legacy: The Danny J. Paul Memorial Salmon Ceremony

The Danny J. Paul Memorial Salmon Ceremony was held on June 24, 2026 at the Margaree Fish Hatchery. Hosted by the Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR), the ceremony welcomed community members, partners, and visitors to gather in celebration of and respect for Plamu (Atlantic salmon), an ecologically and culturally significant species to the Mi'kmaq.

The annual ceremony honoured the salmon for its sacrifice, recognized the dedication of water protectors and environmental stewards, and expressed gratitude for the rivers,

watersheds, and ecosystems that continue to sustain communities. Rooted in Mi'kmaq values of respect, reciprocity, and stewardship, the gathering also highlighted the enduring relationship between the Mi'kmaq and Atlantic salmon, emphasizing the shared responsibility to protect the species and its habitat for future generations.

UINR's work combines Mi'kmaq traditional knowledge with western science through the principle of Two-Eyed Seeing, supporting collaborative conservation and stewardship efforts across Unama'ki.

T	W	T	F	S
2	3	4		
9	10	11		
16	17	18		
23	24	25	26	27
30	31			

Important Dates to Remember

Mark your calendar for these upcoming dates:

July 11, 2026
UNSM's 57th
Anniversary

July 27–August 17, 2026
UNSM Summer
Shutdown

July 23 - July 27, 2026
St. Anne's Mission
(Potlotek)

August 13–23, 2026
Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Summer
Games (Sipekne'katik)



Honouring 300 Years of the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1726

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) was honoured to attend the 300th Anniversary of the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1726 at Fort Anne National Historic Site – a day of reflection, celebration, and learning that brought together Indigenous leaders, government representatives, community members, and visitors from across the region.

The event featured inspiring speeches, cultural performances, local artisans and vendors, educational programming, and the unveiling of a commemorative plaque recognizing the Peace and Friendship Treaty of 1726 as an event of national historic significance. Signed on June 4, 1726, the Treaty marked the beginning of a series of Peace and Friendship Treaties between the British Crown and the Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Peskotomuhkati Nations.

Unlike many treaties elsewhere in Canada, these agreements did not involve the surrender of Indigenous lands. Instead, they established a framework for peaceful coexistence and continue

to shape Crown-Indigenous relations in Atlantic Canada today.

One of the day's most engaging sessions, Treaty History: A Fireside Chat, featured Dr. Don Julien and Mercedes Peters, who reflected on the enduring significance of the Treaties and the importance of understanding their place in Canada's legal and constitutional history.



Kji Keptin Antle Denny also delivered a heartfelt address that resonated deeply with attendees, *(continued...)*

reminding everyone that the Treaties remain living agreements.

“I’m going to tell it to you from what I understand from the heart... We never gave up anything in our treaty. We allowed King George to set up two settlements — one in Annapolis Royal and one in Canso. That’s very important when you look at who we are as a nation. Everything that we’ve endured in the last 300 years dignifies our strength.”

His remarks emphasized the resilience of the Mi’kmaw Nation, the continued importance of language and culture, and the ongoing responsibility to honour the nation-to-nation relationship envisioned by the Treaties.

UNSM extends its sincere congratulations and thanks to the organizers, partners, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, performers, volunteers, and everyone who helped make this historic commemoration such a meaningful success. Events like these provide valuable opportunities to deepen our understanding of the Treaties, reflect on our shared history, and strengthen relationships built on respect, partnership, and reconciliation.

Watch the full ceremony:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1oO1XK5WTQI>





Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) Holds All-Staff Meeting

On June 25, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) held a mandatory all-staff meeting, bringing together employees from across the organization for a day of connection, learning, and shared updates.

Leadership provided staff with important organizational updates, including policy changes and other key initiatives, ensuring everyone remains informed and aligned as the organization continues to grow.

The meeting also included engaging icebreaker activities, giving both new and long-serving staff an opportunity to connect, strengthen relationships, and build a sense of community.

Opening and closing prayers were led by Darrell Bernard, while Executive Director Doug Brown welcomed staff with opening remarks and concluded the gathering by reflecting on the organization's future. Doug also shared a brief history of the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, providing valuable context and highlighting the organization's journey and continued

commitment to serving our five (5) Mi'kmaw communities.

The meeting marked an exciting opportunity to come together, reflect on the organization's accomplishments, and look ahead to new beginnings.

There is much to look forward to at UNSM. Stay tuned for what's ahead!



CULTURAL MENTOR RECRUITMENT



WE'RE LOOKING FOR

- First Nations adults (18+)
- People who are kind, reliable, and willing to connect
- No need to be a cultural expert – just be yourself!

WHAT YOU'LL DO

- Spend 3 hours/week with a child or youth
- Take part in simple, meaningful activities
 - Nature walks & land-based learning
- Storytelling & cultural teachings
- Crafts, games, and “just hanging out”
- Help build confidence, identity, and connection

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

- Training and ongoing support provided
- Guided by a Knowledge Holder
- We walk alongside you – this is a shared journey on the land!

WHAT'S IN IT FOR YOU?

- Gain valuable experience for your resume
- Build mentorship and cultural skills
- Personal and spiritual growth
- Compensation provided for your time

WE NEED YOU NOW!



Rooted in culture. Guided by community.

GET INVOLVED

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