



Communities We Serve

Nova Scotia First Nations:

- Annapolis Valley
- Eskasoni
- Glooscap
- L'sitkuk
- Membertou
- Millbrook
- Paqtnkek
- Pictou Landing
- Potlotek
- Sipekne'katik
- Wagmatcook
- Wasoqopa'q
- We'koqma'q

Newfoundland First Nations:

- Miawpukek
- Qalipu

The Mawkim/Data Governance team coordinates national-level surveys, including the First Nations Regional Health Survey, the First Nations Regional Early Childhood, Education and Employment Survey, the First Nations Labour and Employment Development, and the new First Nations Regional Social Survey (2026).

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

The Makwim/Data Governance team is hosted and supported by the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) and administers data-related surveys and projects with Mi'kmaq First Nations in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The Data Governance team has their own website under UNSM: Mawkim.org. In Mi'kmaq, the word "mawkim" means to count and record.



Host Organization: Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) is a tribal council organization serving five of 13 Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia: Membertou, Eskasoni, Potlotek, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q. Established in 1969, the UNSM provides a unified political voice for the Mi'kmaq people of Nova Scotia. The Mawkim/Data Governance team is managed under the Capacity Development department of UNSM.

Please visit our website: www.mawkim.org



Our team receives funding and support from the national First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC). FNIGC became an independent, incorporated non-profit entity on April 22, 2010. But their history can be traced back to 1996, when the Assembly of First Nations formed a National Steering Committee to design a new national First Nations health survey in response to the Federal Government's decision to exclude First Nations people living on reserves from three major population surveys.

Mi'kmaq Regional Data Centre

The Mi'kmaq First Nations of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland have been working towards establishing a Regional Data Centre to administer data collection and research in accordance with Mi'kmaw principles and priorities. These efforts are supported by FNIGC and a network of regional bodies across the country. By establishing a Regional Data Centre, Mi'kmaw First Nations communities and governments will have timely access to accurate, reliable, and quality data.

Governance Framework

In the fall of 2023, the Mi'kmaq Chiefs in Nova Scotia authorized the establishment of a Steering Committee to oversee the creation of the Regional Data Centre. The Steering Committee members include: Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, Mi'kmaw Grand Council, Tajikeyimik Health Authority and Newfoundland representatives. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide strategic direction for the Data Governance team.

Data Sovereignty

Data sovereignty will create the governance capacity First Nations need to engage with other levels of government on an equal footing – in mutually beneficial ways – to help resolve common issues more quickly and effectively. It is essential for these Regional Data Centres to be non-political. It is widely acknowledged that independence is necessary for a statistical agency (or data centre) to have credibility and trust, and to carry out its functions to provide an unhindered flow of reliable, useful, high-quality information to all rights holders, the public and policy makers, as we see fit.

MAWKIM TEAM



Robin Thompson
Data Governance
Manager



Muin Ji'j Bernard
Special Projects
Coordinator



Melissa Webb
Operations
Analyst



Shenayah Gould
Projects
Coordinator



Camryn Sock
Outreach
Coordinator



Zabrina Downton
Research
Analyst



Erica Johnson
Administrative
Assistant



Lauren Adams
Project Manager,
Regional Data Centre



Lillianna Simon
Research
Coordinator

STAFF UPDATE

LAUREN ADAMS

PROJECT COORDINATOR, REGIONAL DATA CENTER

Lauren Adams is a colonial settler who grew up and is based in Nova Scotia. She is the Project Manager of the Regional Data Centre within the Data Governance Team at the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and holds a Bachelor of Mathematics from the University of Waterloo. With a strong foundation in data and analytics, Lauren is dedicated to advancing Indigenous data sovereignty through approaches that are secure, culturally grounded, and community-centred. Guided by a project management approach rooted in collaboration and community priorities, she works to strengthen Mi'kmaq-led decision-making and ensure access to meaningful, reliable tools and information that support self-determination.



LILLIANNA SIMON

RESEARCH COORDINATOR, DATA LITERACY PROGRAM

Lillianna Simon (she/her) is Mi'kmaq from Eskasoni First Nation in Unama'ki (Cape Breton). As a Researcher Coordinator with UNSM, she will be using her background in public health and the Two-Eyed Seeing approach to work with First Nation communities. Lillianna will help design and run research projects that respect and incorporate Indigenous knowledge, focusing on the community's needs to improve their health and well-being.



WANT TO JOIN OUR TEAM?

JOB OPENINGS

- Program Coordinator (Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch)
<https://unsm.bamboohr.com/careers/69>
- Administrative Assistant (Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch)
<https://unsm.bamboohr.com/careers/70>

MI'KMAW ETHICS WATCH (MEW)

In February 2025, Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW) officially transitioned to the Data Governance team at UNSM, coinciding with its 25th anniversary. Founded in 2000 by a committee empowered by the Sante' Mawio'mi (Grand Council), MEW has served as the cornerstone of ethical oversight in research involving Mi'kmaw people. MEW's integration into UNSM enhances its reach, supports the development of new ethical frameworks, and strengthens collaborative relationships between communities, institutions, and leaders.



MEW continues to rely on the invaluable contributions of community members who volunteer their time and expertise to serve as reviewers and advisors. Recruitment efforts are currently focused on expanding representation across environmental science, forestry, fisheries, and health.

MEW is guided by an advisory committee and will be undergoing an operational review and improvements over the next year. Recently a new logo was approved and launched.

MEW Update July 2025

- 14 volunteer reviewers
- 42 applications so far this year
- 7 amendment applications
- 2 exemption applications
- 33 full applications
- 23 approved applications

INTRODUCING OUR NEWEST AND IMPROVED APPLICATION SYSTEM THROUGH THE MAWKIM WEBSITE!

NEXT MEW APPLICATION DEADLINE:
DECEMBER 1ST 2025

MEW APPLICATIONS CAN BE FOUND ON OUR WEBSITE:
WWW.MAWKIM.ORG



NS Regional Chief Andrea Paul

MAWKIM DATA SOVEREIGNTY FORUM

The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) and the Mawkim / Data Governance team hosted the Mawkim Data Sovereignty Forum on October 22-23, 2025, at the Delta Dartmouth in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. The event brought together a diverse gathering of First Nations leaders, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Youth, Researchers, and Allies to advance the conversation of Mi'kmaw and First Nations data sovereignty.

Over two days, the forum provided a space for discussion, learning, and collaboration around the theme of reclaiming control over First Nations data and knowledge. Participants explore how communities can strengthen capacity, assert data sovereignty, and ensure that data is governed in ways that reflect Mi'kmaw values, protocols, and self-determination.

A highlight of the forum was the official announcement of Mawkim, the regional data centre currently in development to serve Mi'kmaq communities in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Mawkim will play a central role in supporting communities in managing and protecting their own data in alignment with their principles and governance systems.

OVERVIEW

Throughout the event, knowledge keepers, researchers, and professionals led a series of workshops and presentations, sharing practical strategies and community-led approaches to data governance. These sessions provided valuable insights into how First Nations can build their own frameworks for data collection, storage, and use, ensuring that information is managed responsibly and benefits the communities they represent.

UNSM and the Mawkim team extend gratitude to all presenters, participants, and partners who contributed to the success of this important gathering. The momentum from this year's forum will continue to shape the future of Mi'kmaq-led data governance in Atlantic Canada.



(L-R UNSM Executive Director Doug Brown, Governance Manager Robin Thompson, FNGIC CEO Jonathan Dewar)



Facilitation Artwork done by Savanna Joe (Nipi Design)

25 YEARS OF MEW CELEBRATION

At the Mawkim Data Sovereignty Forum in October 2025, we held a celebration of the 25th anniversary of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW). During this celebration the organization honoured its long-standing volunteer reviewers, Dr. Marie Battiste, Laurianne Sylvester, and Dr. Mary Beth Doucette. These respected leaders were recognized for their sustained dedication and significant contributions to advancing Indigenous research governance, MEW's ethical review process, and community-led data sovereignty. Their years of mentorship and advocacy have been central to MEW's legacy, and their recognition served as a highlight of the forum and MEW's ongoing commitment to Indigenous self-determination and ethical research practice.



(MDSF MC's Camryn & Maisyn Sock presenting gift to Dr. Marie Battiste)



(L-R Susy Denny, Zabrina Downton, Lauren Adams, Muin Ji'j Bernard, Douglas Brown, Robin Thompson, Joan Stevens, Melissa Webb, Shenayah Gould, Camryn Sock, Julia Witmer)

We were very estacted to welcome our past team members Susy Denny & Julia Witmer, Capacity Development Director Joan Stevens, and Executive Director Doug Brown to join in our team photo. We thank them for their guidance, support, and wisdom for the Data Governance team. Wela'liioq.

PROJECT UPDATES

REGIONAL HEALTH SURVEY (RHS) PHASE 4

The Regional Health Survey (RHS) is currently in Phase 4. Surveys are being conducted by trained fieldworkers from the community, with support from the Data Governance team.

The current overall project completion is 85% across all actively surveyed communities. Our region is among the highest in Canada for RHS participation. The team will be officially ceasing RHS4 survey collection as of November 15th, 2025.

The team will be meeting with all Mi'kmaq Health Directors in-person in Dartmouth on November 26th to review over RHS4 themes. This will assist the Health Directors in determining what data from RHS4 is relevant and applicable to each individual Mi'kmaq community, and how this can manifest for reporting and planning purposes.

Throughout RHS Phase 4 data collection our team has continued to work closely with local fieldworkers, community leadership, Health Directors, and health centres to ensure that the data collection process is respectful, inclusive, and reflective of community needs and values.

REGIONAL SOCIAL SURVEY (RSS)

The Regional Social Survey (RSS) focuses on understanding the well-being of First Nation's children and caregivers living on reserve. This survey aims to gather data on social and economic indicators that will help shape programs and policies to support Mi'kmaq families. Survey collection is planned to commence as of June 2026. Preceding this, the team will be reviewing all operational processes related to RHS (i.e. recruitment, on-boarding, training, BCR collection, resources and resource management, etc.) to determine gaps and areas which can be improved upon and re-utilized for RSS.

National surveys administered by FNIGC, are reviewed and regionalized by the Mi'kmaq Research Advisory Committee (MRAC). We hosted an MRAC meeting on June 11, 2025, to regionalize the survey questions. This is the third time, the MRAC has reviewed the questions to ensure that they will reflect Mi'kmaq values. There is a final meeting with MRAC that will be held in-person in Dartmouth, NS on November 19th & 20th to provide a final review and feedback reflecting any final and major changes to survey questions.

NATIONAL SURVEYS GATHERING - VANCOUVER, BC

The National Surveys Gathering, held November 4-5, 2025, at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Vancouver, BC, brought together every regional data champion team from across Canada to celebrate the completion of RHS4 data collection and plan the next phase of survey work. Hosted by the First Nations Information Governance Centre (FNIGC), the event focused on reflecting on successes and lessons learned, exploring strategies for the Regional Social Survey (RSS) implementation, and introducing the Child Longitudinal Planning Project. Through team-building activities, group discussions, and visioning sessions, participants collaborated to strength First Nations data sovereignty and shape the future of community-driven research. The gathering closed with an evening celebration at the Bill Reid Gallery of Northwest Coast Art under the shared theme: "Our data. Our stories. Our future".



(L-R Data Governance Team Representatives Melissa Webb, Camryn Sock, & Erica Johnson at the Bill Reid Gallery)

PROJECT UPDATES

CREATING ETHICAL SPACE FOR MI'KMAQ-LED GENETIC, EPIGENETIC, AND OTHER BIOLOGICAL RESEARCH IN NOVA SCOTIA

Over the past year, the Data Governance team has been working in partnership with the University of Toronto, and Carleton University. On a multi-phase initiative exploring First Nations leadership in biobanking and genomic research. Following the February 19, 2025, Feasibility Study Discussion, which was built upon the three-day training held in Pictou Landing First Nation in May 2024, the project has been continued to center on the discussion on community-driven governance of biological samples and the training.

As part of our commitment to meaningful, culturally grounded engagement, the final deliverable of this initiative took place on November 15, 2025, with a community basket-weaving workshop hosted in Pictou Landing First Nation. This gathering was hosted by the Data Governance team with Lynn Battiste (basket maker) and brought together Elders, knowledge holders, youth, and project partners for a hands-on cultural activity that honoured Mi'kmaq knowledge systems and celebrated the conclusion of this phase of the project. Participants learned traditional weaving techniques while reflecting on how cultural practices continue to guide and strength community-lead approaches to research, ethics, and data governance.

The workshop also provided space for continued relationship-building, updates on the feasibility study report circulated earlier this year, and collective discussions on future directions. We extend our appreciation to all participants, facilitators, and community members who contributed their time, knowledge, and leadership through the project.

With this final deliverable now complete, the team looks forward to continuing the conversation with communities and partners as we plan the next steps in supporting First Nations-lead governance in biobanking and genomic research. The biobanking and genomic health research training developed from this project will be offered on the new Mawkim website in 2026.

MI'KMAQ DATA LITERACY TRAINING PROGRAM

The Data Governance team has received funding to develop a data literacy training program for our Mi'kmaq communities. This program will develop data literacy training to support understanding data through the development of culturally relevant data training, tools, programs, and related resources.

Key objectives of the data literacy training:

- Development and distribution of culturally relevant data literacy training tools tailored to the data needs of the Mi'kmaq communities;
- Support the IT infrastructure necessary to be responsive to data literacy needs; and
- Explore relationships with relevant data authorities to facilitate access to and use of data

On June 16, 2025, the team participated in the National Network for First Nations Data Training Initiatives. This meeting brought together regional partners working on similar initiatives. Participating regions shared updates, including online training for senior leadership, community workshops, and the integration of data literacy training into health policy development.

UNSM WINTER SCHEDULE

The Data Governance Team observes the UNSM

Winter schedule, The UNSM Office will also be on Winter shut down from December 12th to January 4th. Some members of the team will be taking vacation before and after these dates.

To reach any member of our team, please email: data@unsm.org.

We look forward to hearing from you. See you next year! Have a happy holidays!



WLI NIPI ALASUTMA AQ PUSU'L PNA'NE

MERRY CHRISTMAS & HAVE A HAPPY NEW YEAR

FROM THE MAWKIM DATA GOVERNANCE TEAM

