



UNION
OF NOVA
SCOTIA
MI'KMAQ

ANNUAL REPORT



2025-2026

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Once again, the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) has experienced a year of remarkable growth and achievement. Guided by unity, resilience, and Mi'kmaw self-determination, we have continued to strengthen services, advance innovative initiatives, and respond to the evolving needs of our communities.

The Capacity Development Department made significant progress across key areas. Through the Tripartite Forum, we strengthened collaboration among Mi'kmaq, provincial, and federal governments and continued to ensure Mi'kmaw voices are being heard.

The integration of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch into UNSM advanced transparency, accountability, and Indigenous data sovereignty.

Emergency Management expanded community preparedness through training, tools, and resources, while Infrastructure advanced important initiatives, including the first Infrastructure & Capital Building Conference, the Net Zero Feasibility Study, the multi-community Solar Farm Project, and deep energy retrofit studies. Strategic Planning continued to focus on long-term priorities aligned with community goals.

The Health Department also achieved tremendous growth. Jordan's Principle delivered thousands of services and community projects while advocating nationally for equitable access. The Mental Wellness Team supported more than 900 clients through crisis response, advocacy, cultural supports, and community wellness days. Early Learning and Child Care Governance advanced a culturally grounded approach to early years, while Healing Our Nations expanded harm reduction and sexual health education across Atlantic Canada. Dietitian Services strengthened Mi'kmaw food sovereignty through initiatives such as the Food Bundle Project and mobile kitchen partnership.

Together, these accomplishments reflect UNSM's continued commitment to building stronger, healthier, and more resilient Mi'kmaw communities and creating lasting opportunities for generations to come.

Wela'lin,
Douglas Brown

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OUR PURPOSE & DIRECTION

For **more than 55 years**, the **Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM)** has proudly served as a unified political voice for the Mi'kmaq people and a strong advocate for Aboriginal and Treaty Rights across Nova Scotia. What began in response to federal assimilation policies has evolved into an organization that advances rights while delivering modern governance and community services grounded in Mi'kmaq values and traditions.

From **April 1, 2025, to March 31, 2026**, the UNSM continued to demonstrate resilience, innovation, and a strong commitment to community priorities. With more than **70 dedicated employees** and a budget that has grown by over **400%**, UNSM has strengthened its capacity to respond to increasing demands and emerging opportunities.

This annual report highlights key achievements, milestones, and challenges across governance, advocacy, and community engagement. It reflects UNSM's continued focus on building capacity, strengthening relationships, and preparing for a sustainable future while ensuring Mi'kmaq voices remain heard, respected, and represented.

As the UNSM looks toward its 60th anniversary in 2029, it remains committed to advancing the interests of the Mi'kmaq people and supporting strong, thriving communities for generations to come.

» OUR VISION:

Strong, healthy, and self-determined Mi'kmaq Nations, grounded in culture, community and collaboration.

» OUR MISSION:

We fight for the rights and interests of our communities at every level of government.

» OUR VALUES:

Our programs celebrate and strengthen Mi'kmaq language, art, and knowledge passed down through generations.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



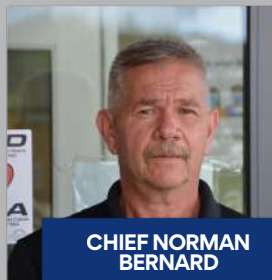
CHIEF LEROY DENNY
Eskasoni First Nation



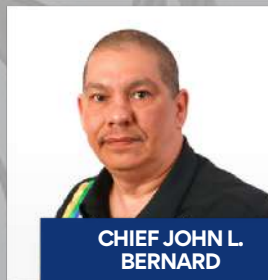
CHIEF TERRY PAUL
Membertou First Nation



**CHIEF WILBERT
MARSHALL**
Pollatek First Nation



**CHIEF NORMAN
BERNARD**
Wagmatcook First Nation



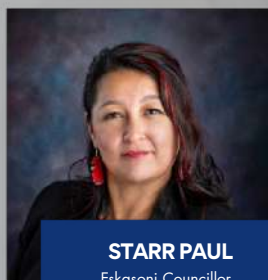
**CHIEF JOHN L.
BERNARD**
We'koqma'q First Nation



CHIEF ANDREA PAUL
Regional Chief



JOHN FRANK TONEY
Eskasoni Councillor



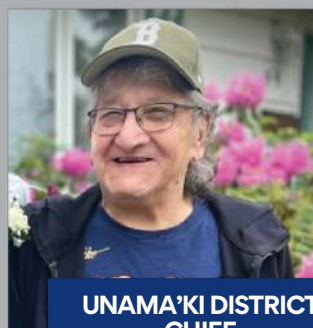
STARR PAUL
Eskasoni Councillor



KJI-SAQAMAW
Norman Sylliboy



KJI KEPTIN
Antle Denny



**UNAMA'KI DISTRICT
CHIEF**
Alex Christmas

MEMBER COMMUNITIES

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Sophia Basque
Bertram (Muin) Bernard
Leon Denny
Jerod Francis
Eldon Gould
Matthew Ryan Gould
Pierre Gould
Derek Johnson
Thomas Johnson Jr.
Starr Paul
Kateri Stevens
John Frank Toney

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Angela Pierro
Peter Pierro
Richard Pierro

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Craig Christmas
Dean Christmas
Gail Christmas
Mary I. Joe-Francis
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Johanna LaPorte
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Storm Sack

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Matilda Googoo
Emma Lewis
Stewart Peters Sr.
Stewart L.M Peters Jr.
Brandon Poulette

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Chief Wilbert Marshall
Isiah Bernard
Tyrone Bernard
John Duncan Johnson
Mary Lee Ann Johnson
Mary Susan Lafford
Aaron Marshall
Jocelyn Marshall
Jonathan Marshall





CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT





CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The 2025–2026 fiscal year was a year of growth, collaboration, and capacity building for the Capacity Development Department. Across our program areas, we remained focused on supporting the self-determination, well-being, and long-term success of the five Unama'ki Mi'kmaq communities, while responding to community priorities and emerging opportunities.

Working alongside Chiefs and Councils, community administrations, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, partners, and community members, the department advanced initiatives in governance, strategic planning, economic and infrastructure development, cultural and language revitalization, emergency preparedness, and Mi'kmaw data sovereignty.

Key accomplishments included the completion of the **UNSM Strategic Plan** and **UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan**, providing clear direction for future decision-making and regional growth. Governance initiatives advanced Matrimonial Real Property law development, Indigenous Justice Strategy implementation planning, community strategic planning in Eskasoni and Wagmatcook, and regional human resources capacity development. Community Development continued to advance Comprehensive Community Planning, economic development, renewable energy, and strategic partnerships that support long-term sustainability and resilience.

A significant milestone was the launch of Mawkim, strengthening the region's capacity for Indigenous-led data governance and Mi'kmaw data sovereignty. The department also celebrated the 25th anniversary of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch and its continued contribution to ethical, community-driven research.

Cultural programming created opportunities for youth and community members to strengthen connections to Mi'kmaw language, culture, teachings, and land through language initiatives, cultural gatherings, storytelling, and camps. These programs continued to foster connections among community members, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and language speakers.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

The Infrastructure and Emergency Services Program experienced significant growth, advancing work in housing, community planning, emergency preparedness, environmental stewardship, GIS and technical services, and workforce development. The team's work was recognized nationally through a Clean50 Award, while investments in training and community infrastructure strengthened local capacity and service delivery.

Through the **Tripartite Forum**, the department continued to support collaboration among Mi'kmaq, provincial, and federal partners across health, social, education, justice, economic development, sport and recreation, and culture.

While the department's accomplishments are reflected in individual projects and initiatives, our greatest achievement continues to be the strengthening of relationships and community capacity. Our work is grounded in supporting community priorities, creating opportunities, and ensuring that decisions reflect Mi'kmaw values, knowledge, and voices.

As we look ahead, Capacity Development remains committed to working in partnership with our member communities to build on this momentum, address emerging challenges, and support stronger, healthier, and more self-determined communities for future generations.

Wela'lioq to the Chiefs, Councils, community administrations, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, staff, partners, and community members whose leadership, participation, and support made this year's work possible.

Joan Stevens

Director of Capacity Development

Email: joanstevens@unsm.org



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Governance Program works to strengthen the capacity of UNSM member communities by supporting leadership, enhancing organizational effectiveness, and advancing strong governance systems. Guided by the ten core functions of governance, including leadership, strategic planning, law-making, human resources, financial management, membership, and community engagement, the program provides practical and responsive support tailored to the unique priorities of each community. Throughout 2025–2026, the Governance Program worked collaboratively with member communities, UNSM leadership, staff, consultants, and external partners to advance governance initiatives that support self-determination, effective decision-making, and long-term sustainability.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

- Support provided to UNSM member communities through governance and planning initiatives.
- MRP law development advanced in Eskasoni and Potlotek.
- New five-year UNSM Strategic Plan developed through extensive engagement.
- Community Strategic Planning initiatives launched in Eskasoni and Wagmatcook.
- Human Resources Capacity Development initiative launched to strengthen regional HR collaboration.
- Funding secured to support Indigenous Justice Strategy implementation planning.
- Ongoing participation in the Gluskabewimk Indigenous law revitalization project.
- Strategic planning support provided to the Mawkim Data Governance initiative.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

KEY ACTIVITIES & SERVICES

The Governance Program provided governance planning, facilitation, strategic advisory services, and capacity-building support to member communities and UNSM throughout the year. Key activities focused on strengthening governance systems, advancing self-determination, and supporting long-term organizational and community planning including:

- Supporting Matrimonial Real Property law development in Eskasoni and Potlotek
- Facilitated development of the new UNSM Strategic Plan
- Secured funding for Indigenous Justice Strategy implementation planning
- Launched Community Strategic Planning initiatives in Eskasoni and Wagmatcook
- Strengthened the Human Resources Capacity Development initiative
- Continued participation in the Gluskabewimk Project
- Provided strategic support to the Mawkim Data Governance initiative.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Major accomplishments included:

- Advancing Matrimonial Real Property law initiatives in Eskasoni and Potlotek
- Completing the development of UNSM's new five-year Strategic Plan
- Securing funding to support implementation planning for the Indigenous Justice Strategy
- Launching Community Strategic Planning initiatives in Eskasoni and Wagmatcook
- Expanding the Human Resources Committee and management training initiative
- Continuing participation in the Gluskabewimk Project
- Supporting the Mawkim initiative through strategic planning and governance expertise.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Through governance planning, facilitation, engagement, and advisory support, the Governance Program strengthened governance capacity within member communities and across UNSM.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT GOVERNANCE

Community engagement processes helped ensure governance initiatives reflected local priorities and values while supporting informed decision-making and stronger accountability frameworks. Community Strategic Planning initiatives in Eskasoni and Wagmatcook established the foundation for future community-led planning and long-term development. The Human Resources Capacity Development initiative created new opportunities for collaboration among HR professionals and identified priorities for future management training. Funding secured for Indigenous Justice Strategy implementation planning will support future collaboration and action on Mi'kmaw justice priorities.

CHALLENGES + LESSONS LEARNED

Many governance initiatives require extensive engagement, consultation, relationship building, and consensus development. Timelines are often influenced by leadership schedules, community priorities, and the need to ensure meaningful participation. The year reinforced the importance of flexibility, communication, and community-led approaches in achieving successful governance outcomes.

PRIORITIES FOR 2026-2027

Key priorities for 2026–2027 include continuing support for Matrimonial Real Property law development and ratification processes, supporting implementation of the UNSM Strategic Plan, advancing Indigenous Justice Strategy priorities, completing Community Strategic Plans for Eskasoni and Wagmatcook, continuing development of the Human Resources Committee and management training initiatives, participating in Indigenous law revitalization initiatives, and expanding governance capacity-building supports and advisory services.

SUCCESS STORY

One of the most significant achievements of the year was the development of UNSM's new five-year Strategic Plan. Through engagement with the Board of Directors, Community Administrators, and staff, the Governance Program facilitated discussions that identified organizational priorities, opportunities, and long-term goals. The completed plan provides a clear roadmap for the next five years, strengthening accountability, supporting decision-making, and ensuring UNSM's work continues to reflect community priorities and Mi'kmaw values.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Community Development Program supported the Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM) and its member communities through long-term community planning, economic development, clean energy initiatives, and strategic partnerships.

A key focus was advancing **Comprehensive Community Planning (CCP)** in **Membertou, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q** through community engagement, leadership meetings, working groups, and collaborative planning.

The program also completed the **UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan**, advanced entrepreneurship opportunities, supported the **Net Zero Action Plan**, and explored renewable energy and future economic development opportunities. Strong partnerships with Indigenous, provincial, and federal organizations continued to expand opportunities for UNSM and its member communities.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

3

Member communities advancing Comprehensive Community Plans

1

UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan completed

1

Entrepreneurship Hub Feasibility Study approved to proceed

3+

Key clean energy and sustainability initiatives advanced

REGIONAL

Indigenous, provincial, and federal partnerships strengthened



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

Community Development's work focused on:

- Comprehensive Community Planning
- Economic Development and Entrepreneurship
- Clean Energy and Net Zero Planning
- Strategic Partnerships
- Capacity Building and Leadership
- Regional and National Representation

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING (CPP)

The program continued to advance Comprehensive Community Plans in **Membertou, Wagmatcook, and We'koqma'q.**

Community Development facilitated engagement sessions, leadership meetings, validation sessions, and working groups to ensure plans reflected community priorities and aspirations. Draft plans were prepared and reviewed based on community feedback, supporting each community in establishing a long-term vision for growth and development.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

A major accomplishment was the completion of the UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan, providing a roadmap for future economic growth, strategic partnerships, and long-term prosperity across member communities.

The program also:

- Explored the development of a corporate entity within UNSM to support future economic development, renewable energy, infrastructure, and business opportunities.
- Advanced the Entrepreneurship Hub Feasibility Study, which received approval to proceed.
- Participated in discussions regarding Mi'kmaq participation in the Wind West Initiative.
- Explored funding and partnership opportunities to support Indigenous economic development.

CLEAN ENERGY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Community Development continued to advance UNSM's clean energy priorities through the **Net Zero Action Plan**, renewable energy planning, and regional collaboration.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

Work included early-stage planning for solar energy opportunities, participation in Clean Energy Leadership meetings, and collaboration with Indigenous Services Canada, CMM, North Shore Tribal Council, Efficiency Nova Scotia, and Clean Foundation.

These efforts strengthened UNSM's readiness to pursue sustainable energy projects aligned with community priorities.

PARTNERSHIPS + COLLABORATION

The program strengthened relationships with Indigenous, provincial, federal, community, and industry partners, including **Indigenous Services Canada, KMKNO, Efficiency Nova Scotia, Clean Foundation, Wskijinu'k Mtmot'agnuow Agency (WMA), and UNSM member communities.**

Staff also participated in the Tripartite Economic Development Committee, Economic Development Officers Symposium, workshops, steering committees, conferences, and regional working groups.

COMMUNITY IMPACT AND OUTCOMES

Community Development contributed to sustainable growth and long-term planning by:

- Advancing comprehensive community planning in three member communities.

- Completing the UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan.
- Strengthening collaboration among communities, governments, Indigenous organizations, and external partners.
- Expanding opportunities for renewable energy and economic development.
- Building organizational readiness for future business and clean energy initiatives.
- Supporting community priorities through ongoing engagement and strategic planning.

CHALLENGES & LEARNING

The program managed multiple complex initiatives while responding to changing funding opportunities, shifting engagement schedules, and coordination across communities and partners.

These experiences reinforced the importance of **strong relationships, open communication, flexibility, and collaborative project management.** Continued engagement with member communities and strategic partners will...



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

remain essential to ensuring initiatives reflect community priorities and achieve meaningful, long-term outcomes.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, Community Development will continue to build on this year's progress by focusing on:

- Supporting implementation of Comprehensive Community Plans.
- Advancing the UNSM Net Zero Action Plan and renewable energy opportunities.
- Pursuing economic development funding and investment opportunities.
- Continuing development of an UNSM corporate entity to support strategic business initiatives.
- Advancing the Entrepreneurship Hub initiative.
- Strengthening Indigenous, provincial, and federal partnerships.
- Supporting implementation of the UNSM Economic Development Strategic Plan.

SUCCESS STORY

A significant achievement during 2025–2026 was the alignment of **community planning, economic development, and sustainability priorities.**

Through Comprehensive Community Planning, member communities identified priorities including economic diversification, renewable energy, youth opportunities, housing, and community well-being. Community Development used these priorities to guide the Economic Development Strategic Plan, Net Zero Action Plan, entrepreneurship initiatives, and exploration of new governance structures.

By connecting community priorities with strategic partnerships, funding opportunities, and regional collaboration, the program has established a strong foundation for **sustainable economic growth that reflects Mi'kmaq values and supports the long-term vision of UNSM and its member communities.**



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

CULTURAL PROGRAM

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the UNSM Culture Program supported **Mi'kmaq language and cultural revitalization, community identity, cultural well-being, and land-based learning throughout Unama'ki.**

A major focus was the **Reclamation and Revitalization of Mi'kmaq Language in Unama'kik** project, funded by Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK). The program delivered community engagement sessions in **all five Unama'kik** communities to explore language-learning needs and opportunities for future Language Nests.

The Cultural Team also delivered youth-focused camps and gatherings, supported cultural stewardship initiatives, and participated in regional committees and working groups. These activities created opportunities for community members to connect with **Mi'kmaq language, teachings, traditional practices, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and the land.**

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

5

Unama'kik communities engaged

5

Community language engagement sessions

22

Youth participated in Storytelling Through Language and Culture Gathering

12

Youth participated in Maple Tapping Cultural Camp

3

Major cultural camps and gatherings delivered



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

CULTURAL PROGRAM

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The Culture Program focused on:

- Mi'kmaq Language Revitalization
- Youth Cultural Engagement
- Land-Based Learning
- Cultural Camps and Gatherings
- Traditional Knowledge and Teachings
- Cultural Stewardship
- Community and Regional Partnerships

LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION

Through funding from Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, the Cultural Team advanced language revitalization initiatives focused particularly on youth aged 15–29.

Engagement sessions were held in all five Unama'kik communities to identify language-learning needs, opportunities, and gaps and to explore the development of future Language Nests.

Sessions incorporated cultural activities such as Luski bread making, medicine pouch creation, Waltes, and hand drum workshops, creating culturally grounded

opportunities for participants to connect with language and tradition.

CULTURAL CAMPS AND GATHERINGS

The Cultural Team delivered three major language and culture-focused camps and gatherings, including *Weji-Npisuti'kw Kti'sultiminu (Healing Through Our Language), the Storytelling Through Language and Culture Gathering, and the UNSM Maple Tapping Cultural Camp.*

Participants learned directly from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, language speakers, artists, and cultural facilitators through storytelling, traditional skills, language learning, cultural teachings, and land-based activities.

CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

The Cultural Team delivered three major language and culture-focused camps and gatherings, including *Weji-Npisuti'kw Kti'sultiminu (Healing Through Our Language), the Storytelling Through Language and Culture Gathering, and the UNSM Maple Tapping Cultural Camp.*



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

CULTURAL PROGRAM

Participants learned directly from Elders, Knowledge Keepers, language speakers, artists, and cultural facilitators through storytelling, traditional skills, language learning, cultural teachings, and land-based activities.

CULTURAL STEWARDSHIP AND REPRESENTATION

The Cultural Team continued to support initiatives that promote cultural awareness, stewardship, and Mi'kmaq representation, including:

- Mukla'qati interpretation and awareness project
- Jajiktek Trail Steering Committee
- Cabot Trail 100th Anniversary Steering Committee
- Gluskabewimk Project
- Indigenous, environmental, cultural, and advisory committees throughout Unama'ki and Nova Scotia

These partnerships strengthened opportunities to bring Mi'kmaq perspectives, knowledge, and cultural priorities into regional initiatives.

COMMUNITY IMPACT & OUTCOMES

The Culture Program strengthened connections between **youth, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, language speakers, community members, and the land.**

Participants gained opportunities to engage with Mi'kmaq language, ceremony, storytelling, traditional skills, and cultural teachings. Community engagement findings will help inform future language planning and revitalization efforts across member communities.

The program also strengthened cultural continuity by creating spaces where youth could develop their identity, relationships, cultural knowledge, and sense of belonging.

CHALLENGES & LEARNING

Demand for cultural programming and language revitalization continues to exceed available funding and staffing resources. Community engagement demonstrated strong interest in expanded language-learning opportunities, youth camps, and more frequent cultural gatherings.

The year also reinforced the importance of **flexible, culturally safe learning environments.** Meaningful learning often...



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

CULTURAL PROGRAM

...occurs through relationships, storytelling, hands-on activities, and connection to the land rather than through highly structured programming. These lessons will continue to inform future program development.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, the Culture Program will continue seeking opportunities to expand cultural and language programming throughout Unama'ki.

Priorities include:

- Delivering a **Unama'ki Youth Fish Camp** in partnership with the UNSM Diabetes Team.
- Supporting development of an **Indigenous Men's Facilitation Workshop**.
- Continuing bush camp and land-based programming.
- Exploring traditional skills programming, including tree identification and basket-making materials.
- Establishing a **Cultural Advisory Circle** to support program development, cultural integrity, governance, and the inclusion of traditional knowledge.

SUCCESS STORY

In March 2026, the Cultural Team hosted the **UNSM Maple Tapping Cultural Camp** at Cabot Shores Wilderness Resort, bringing together **12 Mi'kmaq youth** for a weekend of language, culture, land-based learning, storytelling, and wellness.

Guided by Knowledge Keepers, language speakers, and facilitators, youth learned to identify and tap maple trees and produce maple syrup, maple sugar, and maple candy. The camp also included storytelling, Mi'kmaq language learning, Waltes, cultural teachings, and a sweat lodge ceremony.

The camp demonstrated the value of **culturally grounded, land-based programming** in supporting youth identity, wellness, relationships, and belonging. By learning together on the land and sharing stories and teachings, participants had an opportunity to strengthen their connection to Mi'kmaq culture, community, and one another.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

MAWKIM



PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Data Governance Team (Mawkim) continued to advance Mi'kmaw data sovereignty across Nova Scotia and Newfoundland through Indigenous-led research, ethical review, community engagement, and data governance initiatives.

Guided by the OCAP® principles, Mawkim supports Mi'kmaq ownership and control of data while building community capacity to collect, understand, and use information in ways that reflect Mi'kmaw values, priorities, and self-determination.

A major milestone was the official launch of Mawkim, following a comprehensive strategic planning process. The team also strengthened Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, advanced regional survey initiatives, expanded partnerships, and continued laying the foundation for a future independent Mi'kmaw data governance organization.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

9

Team members

60

Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch
applications reviewed

14

Volunteer ethics reviewers

85%

Regional Health Survey Phase 4
completion rate

25

Years of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch

1

Regional Data Sovereignty Forum
hosted.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

MAWKIM



KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

Mawkim's work focused on:

- Mi'kmaw Data Sovereignty
- Indigenous-Led Research
- Ethical Research Review
- Community-Based Data Collection
- Data Literacy and Capacity Building
- Regional Partnerships and Collaboration

DATA GOVERNANCE & RESEARCH

Mawkim provided strategic planning, ethical review, research support, survey implementation, community engagement, and data governance capacity building.

The team successfully completed **Regional Health Survey Phase 4 data collection**, achieving an **85% completion rate**, one of the strongest participation rates among participating First Nations regions nationally.

Mawkim also completed development of the **Regional Social Survey**,

supporting future data collection that better reflects the experiences and priorities of Mi'kmaw children and families.

MI'KMAW ETHICS WATCH

Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch (MEW) continued its role in providing ethical oversight for research involving Mi'kmaw communities while celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2025.

During the year, MEW:

- Reviewed **60 research applications**.
- Engaged **14 volunteer reviewers**.
- Launched an online application portal.
- Established an advisory committee.
- Hired a new Program Coordinator.
- Initiated collaboration with Nova Scotia Health.

These developments strengthened ethical review processes and reinforced community authority over research involving Mi'kmaw people.



COMMUNITY IMPACT & CAPACITY BUILDING

Mawkim strengthened awareness and understanding of Indigenous data sovereignty while supporting communities to use data for local decision-making, planning, and governance.

The team launched the **Mi'kmaw Data Literacy Initiative** in response to identified community needs. The initiative will help build confidence and capacity in understanding, interpreting, and using data.

Mawkim also hosted a **Regional Data Sovereignty Forum** and participated in national and international Indigenous data governance gatherings, expanding knowledge, partnerships, and opportunities for collaboration.

PARTNERSHIP + COLLABORATION

Mawkim continued to strengthen relationships with Mi'kmaw leadership, communities, Indigenous organizations, researchers, health organizations, and regional partners.

Participation in national and international

Indigenous data sovereignty events helped connect the team with broader movements and emerging practices in Indigenous data governance and ethical research.

CHALLENGES + LEARNING

As a growing program, Mawkim balanced strategic planning, organizational development, survey implementation, ethical review, community engagement, and capacity building.

The team identified a continued need to increase community awareness of Indigenous data sovereignty, directly informing the development of the Mi'kmaw Data Literacy Initiative.

Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch also identified the need to recruit additional reviewers with expertise in areas such as **climate change, fisheries, forestry, and environmental research.**

The year reinforced that relationship building is fundamental to successful data governance. Strong partnerships with communities, leadership, researchers, and organizations remain essential to advancing Mi'kmaw data sovereignty.



LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, Mawkim will focus on:

- Expanding the Mi'kmaw Data Literacy Initiative.
- Implementing the Regional Social Survey.
- Strengthening Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch operations and reviewer capacity.
- Deepening community engagement and data governance capacity.
- Enhancing data governance resources and tools.
- Continuing progress toward an independent Mi'kmaw data governance organization.
- Strengthening national and international partnerships supporting Indigenous data sovereignty.

SUCCESS STORY

THE LAUNCH OF MAWKIM

The launch of Mawkim marked a transformational milestone in advancing Mi'kmaw data sovereignty.

Through extensive collaboration with stakeholders and leadership, the team unveiled a new identity, strategic direction,

website, vision, and mission focused on Indigenous-led data governance.

The launch coincided with the Regional Data Sovereignty Forum and the 25th anniversary of Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch, bringing together communities, leaders, researchers, and partners.

More than a new identity, the launch established a unified platform for advancing Mi'kmaw control and governance of data, strengthening partnerships, and building capacity for future generations of Mi'kmaw researchers, decision-makers, and communities.





CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Infrastructure & Emergency Services Program expanded its capacity to provide **infrastructure, housing, emergency management, environmental, and technical services** to UNSM member communities throughout Unama'ki.

The program grew to **13 staff members** and expanded its services to include Marine Safety, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), land stewardship, trail development, Mi'kmaq language translation, and community beautification.

Capacity building remained a key priority, with **more than 1,000 hours of training and professional development** completed by staff and community participants. Community engagement focused on housing, infrastructure, erosion protection, flooding, emergency preparedness, and clean energy, supporting stronger community resilience and sustainable development.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

13

Staff members supporting program delivery

1,000+

Hours of training completed

9

Mi'kmaq Building Inspector trainees supported

5,000+

GIS assets documented

220

Residential energy-efficiency inspections completed

129

Unama'ki Alert System reports submitted

1

National Clean50 Award received



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The program focused on:

- Infrastructure and Housing
- Emergency Management and Preparedness
- GIS and Asset Management
- Environmental and Land Stewardship
- Clean Energy and Energy Efficiency
- Technical Services and Capacity Building
- Marine Safety and Community Development

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY BUILDING

The program delivered the **Mi'kmaq Building Inspector Program**, building local capacity for infrastructure oversight and inspection within Mi'kmaq communities. **Nine participants** received training, supported through two Building Inspector Program courses.

GIS and asset management initiatives also expanded, with **more than 5,000 community assets documented**, providing valuable information to support infrastructure planning,

decision-making, and long-term community development.

Staff and community participants completed **more than 1,000 hours of training and professional development**, strengthening technical skills and community capacity.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

Emergency management services continued to strengthen community preparedness and response capacity. Activities included Emergency Response Plans, wildfire evacuation planning, emergency support services, and community engagement focused on preparedness and resilience.

The program also strengthened the Emergency Management Network through the recruitment of Emergency Management Officers within member communities.

The **Unama'ki Alert System generated 129 reports**, supporting improved emergency communication and community reporting.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLEAN ENERGY INITIATIVES

The program expanded environmental and land stewardship activities through Marine Safety, trail development, community beautification, and clean energy initiatives.

The Greener Neighbourhoods initiative completed **220 residential energy-efficiency inspections** in Potlotek and We'koqma'q, supporting future energy-efficiency improvements and retrofit opportunities.

The program also received national recognition through a **Clean50 Award** for contributions to clean energy initiatives.

COMMUNITY IMPACT & OUTCOMES

The program strengthened community capacity and planning through:

- Expanded infrastructure and technical services.
- Development of local building inspection capacity.
- Documentation of **5,000+ GIS assets**.
- **220** residential energy-efficiency inspections.

- Enhanced emergency planning and communication.
- Expanded training, mentorship, and professional development.
- Development of a Mi'kmaq translator database and volunteer database.
- Increased community access to GIS and technical expertise.

The program also reorganized its services into **Emergency, Environmental, and Technical Services divisions**, supporting more focused and efficient service delivery.

PARTNERS & COLLABORATION

Infrastructure & Emergency Services continued to work with member communities, leadership, and external partners, including **Indigenous Services Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and Natural Resources Canada**.

Strategic partnerships supported new funding opportunities, infrastructure initiatives, clean energy projects, emergency preparedness, and expanded technical services.



CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

INFRASTRUCTURE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

CHALLENGES + LEARNING

Project timelines were affected by delays in approved funding, permitting and regulatory requirements, weather conditions, and scheduling challenges.

These experiences reinforced the importance of **consistent communication, flexibility, and strong relationships** with communities, leadership, and project partners. Regular engagement and responsive technical support will continue to guide program delivery.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, the program will focus on:

- Implementing a **Youth Job Shadowing Program**.
- Increasing community participation in emergency preparedness initiatives.
- Strengthening partnerships with Tribal Councils and external agencies.
- Expanding GIS-based asset management systems.
- Continuing comprehensive community data collection.
- Enhancing emergency management readiness and infrastructure planning.
- Continuing training, mentorship, and technical capacity building.

SUCCESS STORY

The **Hunter's Mountain Youth Cultural Survival Camp** brought youth together for hands-on learning focused on land stewardship, Treaty education, outdoor survival skills, emergency preparedness, and Mi'kmaq cultural practices.

The camp combined traditional knowledge with practical emergency and survival skills, creating a culturally grounded learning environment that strengthened **confidence, resilience, cultural pride, and connection to the land**.

Positive participant feedback and coverage by APTN highlighted the impact of the initiative. The camp demonstrated the value of investing in **land-based youth programming as a pathway to cultural connection, environmental stewardship, community resilience, and capacity building**.





MI'KMAQ • NOVA SCOTIA • CANADA

Tripartite Forum

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Tripartite Forum brings together the **Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, the Government of Canada, and the Province of Nova Scotia** to identify and address service gaps and priorities affecting Mi'kmaw communities.

During 2025–2026, the Forum advanced collaborative work through its Executive, Officials, Secretariat, and seven Working Committees, with priorities spanning culture and heritage, economic development, education, health, justice, social services, and sport and recreation.

A key focus was strengthening governance and strategic direction. A **two-day strategic planning session in May 2025** identified opportunities to improve communication, governance, funding, youth engagement, accountability, and alignment between committee workplans and Forum priorities.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

3

Tripartite partners

7

Working Committees

100+

Participants at the Mukk
Nqa'ltultik Economic
Development Symposium

60+

First Nations representatives at the
symposium

1

Strategic planning session

1

Regional Women and Girls in
Sport consultation completed



MI'KMAQ • NOVA SCOTIA • CANADA

Tripartite Forum

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The Tripartite Forum's work focused on:

- Culture and Heritage
- Economic Development
- Education
- Health
- Justice
- Social Services
- Sport and Recreation

WORKING COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES

The seven Working Committees continued to identify service gaps, share information, advance projects, and strengthen collaboration among Mi'kmaw, provincial, and federal partners.

Key initiatives included the **Wi'kipaltimk Gathering, Shubenacadie Indian Residential School Legacy Project, Mi'kmaq Women and Girls Participation in Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity Action Plan**, and **Mi'kmaw Entrepreneur Hub**.

Committees also advanced priorities related to Mi'kmaw language and education, Jordan's Principle, disability supports, housing and homelessness, Indigenous justice, community recreation, and economic development.

STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE

In May 2025, leadership and Working Committee co-chairs participated in a two-day strategic planning session focused on:

- Strengthening governance, communication, and documentation.
- Clarifying roles and responsibilities across committees.
- Improving oversight, funding, and resourcing.
- Aligning Working Committee workplans with Executive priorities.
- Updating and reviewing Terms of Reference.
- Strengthening accountability and youth engagement.

The Forum's Secretariat and Liaison teams also continued developing an **operational resource binder** to support consistent procedures and information sharing.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

WI'KIPALTIMK GATHERING

The Culture and Heritage Committee completed the **Wi'kipaltimk 2025** three-day gathering in Sydney, honouring Indian Day School Survivors while...



MI'KMAQ • NOVA SCOTIA • CANADA

Tripartite Forum

celebrating Mi'kmaq culture. The gathering included educational sessions, traditional arts, storytelling, wellness activities, cultural demonstrations, and Indigenous performances.

MUKK NQA'LTULTIK: A COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS SYMPOSIUM

The Economic Development Committee hosted **Mukk Nqa'ltultik**, bringing together **more than 100 participants, including over 60 First Nations representatives**, to strengthen relationships and advance Mi'kmaw economic development.

Discussions explored clean energy, tourism, procurement, entrepreneurship, youth engagement, and community partnerships, while identifying opportunities to strengthen support for Economic Development Officers.

WOMEN AND GIRLS IN SPORT

The Sport and Recreation Committee completed community consultations for the **Mi'kmaq Women and Girls Participation in Sport, Recreation, and Physical Activity Action Plan**. Feedback from participants across age groups will inform the...

development and validation of the final action plan.

SHUBENACADIE INDIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL LEGACY PROJECT

The **Indian Residential School Legacy** Project continued toward completion, with site construction and sculpture fabrication underway. Guided by Survivors, Elders, and community partners, the project will create a permanent space honouring Survivors and supporting remembrance, education, and healing.

COMMUNITY IMPACT & OUTCOMES

Through collaboration among Mi'kmaw, federal, and provincial partners, the Forum continued advancing community priorities and strengthening relationships.

Key outcomes included:

- Advancing initiatives across seven priority areas.
- Strengthening collaboration and information sharing.
- Engaging more than **100 participants** through the Economic Development Symposium.



MI'KMAQ • NOVA SCOTIA • CANADA

Tripartite Forum

- Advancing cultural and reconciliation initiatives.
- Supporting community-driven approaches to sport, health, education, justice, and economic development.
- Identifying governance and operational improvements through strategic planning.

CHALLENGES + LEARNING

The strategic planning process highlighted ongoing challenges related to **communication, governance, funding, youth engagement, and policy alignment**.

These discussions reinforced the need for clear roles, consistent communication, adequate resources, and stronger alignment between Working Committee activities and overall Forum priorities.

Continued collaboration among UNSM, the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM), the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA), and government partners remains important to strengthening the Forum and achieving meaningful outcomes.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, the Tripartite Forum will focus on:

- Strengthening governance and accountability.
- Updating and reviewing Terms of Reference.

- Improving alignment between committees and Executive priorities.
- Strengthening communication and operational processes.
- Advancing community-driven projects across Working Committees.
- Continuing collaboration across key priority areas.
- Expanding opportunities for youth engagement and participation.

SUCCESS STORY

MUKK NQA'LTULTIK:

A COMMUNITY

CONNECTIONS SYMPOSIUM

Mukk Nqa'ltultik: A Community Connections Symposium demonstrated the value of bringing Mi'kmaw communities, Economic Development Officers, governments, and partners together around shared economic priorities.

With **more than 100 participants and over 60 First Nations representatives**, the symposium provided opportunities to share knowledge, strengthen relationships, and explore opportunities in clean energy, tourism, procurement, entrepreneurship, and youth engagement.

The event reinforced the importance of collaboration and relationship building in advancing **Mi'kmaw economic development**, while creating momentum for continued regional cooperation and future opportunities.



HEALTH BRANCH



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALTH BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

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

The Health Branch includes Health Technician, Home and Community Care, Dietitian Services, Unama'ki Diabetes Initiative, Healing Our Nations, Wellness Team, Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq (Early Learning and Child Care), and Unama'ki Jordan's Principle.

The 2025–2026 fiscal year saw continued progress in expanding access to essential health services, strengthening partnerships, and advancing culturally grounded approaches to community wellness. Across all program areas, the focus remained on responding to immediate needs while building sustainable foundations for long-term health and resilience.

KEY PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Dietitian Services

Dietitian Services advanced Mi'kmaw food sovereignty and food systems development through two provincial gatherings, 20 community engagement sessions, and 10 hands-on workshops. More than 250 community members participated in initiatives focused on food security, traditional food systems, school food programming, and land-based approaches. Indigenous student placements also supported the development of future leaders in food systems and community development.

Unama'ki Diabetes Initiative (UDI)

UDI provided culturally safe diabetes prevention, education, and self-management supports across the five Mi'kmaq communities of Unama'ki. Programming included individual consultations, Diabetes 101 sessions, healthy cooking classes, wellness activities, and community health promotion events. The program reached **112 participants** and strengthened partnerships with Health Centres, health teams, Home and Community Care, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, social workers, and youth programs. Priorities moving forward include community-based screening, improved data collection, expanded outreach, and new initiatives such as the Unama'ki Fishing Camp and annual Unama'ki Diabetes Journey.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALTH BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Healing Our Nations

Healing Our Nations delivered harm reduction education and health promotion across Atlantic Canada, engaging more than **1,200 participants from 33 First Nation communities** through 79 activities and education sessions. More than 70 partnerships were established or maintained across health, education, justice, and community sectors. Naloxone training was delivered in 20 communities, alongside the distribution of harm reduction supplies and peer mentorship opportunities for Indigenous youth and people living with HIV and Hepatitis C.

Wellness Team

The Wellness Team provided coordinated support to individuals and families experiencing complex health and social challenges. Case management, counselling referrals, behavioural supports, cultural programming, and family assistance helped community members access appropriate care. Wellness Circles, Circle of Care meetings, New Paths groups, and Options to Anger groups provided opportunities for healing, connection, and personal growth.

Traditional healing remained an important component of the Health Branch's approach. More than **5,600 individuals accessed traditional healing services**, while sacred fires and nearly **200 sweat lodges** provided culturally meaningful opportunities for healing, reflection, and reconnection.

Unama'ki Jordan's Principle

Jordan's Principle supported **1,386 children** and funded **1,709 products and services** during 2025–2026, helping First Nations and Inuit children and families access essential supports.

Despite continued need, approvals and funded services declined during the reporting period. The number of children and services funded in Unama'ki decreased by **40%** from the previous year, while supports for off-reserve First Nations and Inuit children declined by **72%**. These reductions reflect increasing administrative barriers and funding constraints rather than reduced community need.

Moving forward, priorities include advocating for sustainable, needs-based funding; reducing administrative barriers; strengthening First Nations governance and oversight; increasing approvals; and ensuring compliance with CHRT orders.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALTH BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Early Learning and Child Care Governance

The Early Learning and Child Care Governance Project advanced Mi'kmaw-led governance and long-term planning for culturally grounded Early Learning and Child Care across Nova Scotia. Key accomplishments included supporting the Atlantic First Nations ELCC Capital Process, co-developing the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw ELCC Governance Framework, *Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq* (Working Together for Our Children), and advancing policy and governance work with regional partners.

Community engagement identified priorities including Early Childhood Educator recruitment and retention, Mi'kmaw language revitalization, quality improvement, and capital investments. The project also supported the successful Mawita'k Wjit Knijannaq Early Childhood Education Conference and strengthened regional and national collaboration.

First Nations and Inuit Home and Community Care (FNIHCC)

FNIHCC continued to support individuals of all ages living with chronic or acute illness, disabilities, and age-related care needs to remain safely in their homes and communities. The program strengthened workforce capacity through dementia care, palliative care, leadership development, and professional learning opportunities.

UNSM provided second-level support through community engagement, coordinator meetings, training, reporting, and partnerships with organizations including the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia, Nova Scotia Health, Continuing Care, and Tajikeimik. Work also continued the UNSM Health Strategic Action Plan (2023–2028), with priorities including chronic disease management, dementia education, and integrated care.

Wi'kipaltimk Mawio'mi

In August 2025, UNSM hosted Wi'kipaltimk Mawio'mi, honouring Indian Day School Survivors, at Open Hearth Park. The three-day gathering celebrated Mi'kmaq resilience, culture, and pride through traditional mawio'mi, music, traditional food demonstrations, waltés, Elder and Knowledge Carrier teachings, and Indigenous arts and crafts vendors.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ HEALTH BRANCH

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

UNSM Health Leadership

The Director of Health oversees and manages a comprehensive interprofessional team. In addition to leading the Health Branch, the Director of Health is the current Health Tripartite co-chair (Mi'kmaq), member of the Mi'kmaq Research Advisory Committee, Dalhousie External Advisory of the Office of the Vice Provost of Indigenous Relations, Nova Scotia Health Lung Cancer Screening Committee, Tajikeimik collaborator and represents the UNSM across many other committees. The Director of Health is also the Health Technician to the Unama'ki Chiefs. In this capacity, the majority of role is spent working with the Chiefs at the Atlantic Health Partnership ensuring leadership has the best health policy advice. At the Health Partnership, I sit at the Health Directors table, Chiefs table (as advisor), at Public Health & Primary Care Committee. Kelly Holly is at Non-Insured Benefits committee, Richard Young is at Mental Wellness committee, Jenna Marr is Child and Youth committee.

In Peace, Friendship,

Kara Paul

Director of Health

Email: kpaul@unsm.org





UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

DIETITIAN SERVICES

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Mi'kmaq Food Systems and Nutrition Program advanced **Mi'kmaq-led food systems planning, knowledge sharing, community engagement, and school food coordination** across Nova Scotia.

The program connected communities, organizations, and government partners to identify priorities, strengthen coordination, and support community-led food initiatives. Work continued to position food systems as an important pathway for **health, cultural revitalization, education, economic development, food sovereignty, emergency preparedness, and self-determination.**

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

250+

Community members reached

20

Community and partner engagement sessions

600+

Harvester attendances recorded across listed engagement sessions

10

Hands-on workshops delivered

2

Provincial food systems gathering

3

Indigenous student opportunities created



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

DIETITIAN SERVICES

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The program's work focused on:

- Mi'kmaw food systems and food sovereignty
- School food planning and coordination
- Traditional food knowledge and land-based learning
- Local food procurement and infrastructure
- Community engagement and asset mapping
- Youth and student learning opportunities
- Cross-sector partnerships and planning

FOOD SYSTEMS ENGAGEMENT AND PLANNING

The program contributed to local, provincial, and national conversations on **Mi'kmaw food systems, school food, local procurement, food infrastructure, and food sovereignty.**

Through **20 engagement sessions** with Mi'kmaw communities and partner organizations, the program helped identify community strengths, gaps,

priorities, and opportunities. This work strengthened the evidence base for future planning and helped ensure community perspectives inform emerging programs, investments, and policy discussions.

The **Food Bundle Project** continued to advance provincial asset mapping and engagement, documenting food systems strengths, opportunities, and shared guiding values. An English version of the report is now available, with Mi'kmaw translations in development.

SCHOOL FOOD COORDINATION

School food remained a key area of activity, with the program working alongside **Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, Nova Scotia Health, Nourish Nova Scotia, and the Tripartite Committee on Health.**

Partnership work supported planning for provincial engagement and a survey focused on Mi'kmaw-led school food priorities, coordination, decision-making, and future investment.

This work strengthened alignment among partners and created a foundation for Mi'kmaw-led school...



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

DIETITIAN SERVICES

school food planning and implementation as provincial and federal investments expand.

LAND-BASED LEARNING AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

The program delivered **10 hands-on workshops** supporting traditional food skills, land-based learning, and food knowledge transfer.

The second **Kilu'nal na No'kmaq Provincial Land-Based Food Gathering** brought together **50+ participants and staff** at Kejimikujik National Park for food-related activities, cultural learning, relationship building, and knowledge sharing with Elders, Knowledge Holders, community volunteers, and partner organizations.

Youth programming also included the development and piloting of **fish camp activities**, including fish smoking, fish-skin tanning, and preparation of a shared traditional meal through existing summer camp programming.

COMMUNITY IMPACTS + OUTCOMES

The program strengthened the foundation for **Mi'kmaw-led food systems planning** by connecting community knowledge with partner organizations and decision-makers.

Key outcomes included:

- Greater understanding of community food systems strengths, gaps, and priorities
- Stronger partner alignment and coordination
- Increased recognition of food systems as connected to health, culture, education, and economic development
- Improved readiness to respond to emerging school food and infrastructure investments
- Increased opportunities for traditional food knowledge sharing and land-based learning
- Stronger evidence to support future Mi'kmaw-led planning and investment

Together, these activities helped move the work from **engagement and information gathering toward coordinated planning, investment readiness, and implementation.**



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

DIETITIAN SERVICES

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, priorities include:

- Advancing the recommendations and next steps identified through the Food Bundle Project
- Completing guidance and recommendations for **Mi'kmaw-led school food**
- Developing a coordination model for school food planning and implementation
- Identifying roles, responsibilities, training needs, procurement opportunities, and infrastructure priorities
- Strengthening partnerships and community alignment around food systems investments
- Supporting Mi'kmaw participation in emerging provincial and federal food initiatives
- Securing dedicated coordination and human resource capacity to support implementation

A key priority will be ensuring that new investments in **school food, local food systems, and food infrastructure** reflect Mi'kmaw community priorities and advance self-determination.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year strengthened the foundation for a more coordinated and **Mi'kmaw-led food systems approach** across Nova Scotia.

Through **250+ community connections, 20 engagement sessions, 10 hands-on workshops, and two provincial gatherings**, the program supported knowledge sharing, relationship building, school food planning, and community-led priority setting.

Moving forward, the focus will be on turning this strong foundation of **engagement, evidence, partnerships, and community knowledge into coordinated action, investment, and implementation.**



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

MI'KMAW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the IELCC Governance Project made significant progress toward **Mi'kmaw-led governance for Early Learning and Child Care across Nova Scotia.**

The project focused on strengthening governance structures, advancing policy and implementation planning, engaging communities and leadership, and building regional and national partnerships. This work established important foundations for a **community-driven, culturally grounded, and sustainable Mi'kmaw ELCC system.**

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The project's work focused on:

- Mi'kmaw-led ELCC governance
- Community and leadership engagement
- Capital planning and infrastructure
- Policy and implementation development
- Quality Improvement and assessment
- Early Childhood Educator workforce supports Mi'kmaw language revitalization
- Regional and national First Nations collaboration

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

5

Community engagement sessions held across Unama'ki

200+

Participants at the Mawita'k Wjit Kni'jannaq Early Childhood Education Conference

13

Mi'kmaq communities represented at the conference

2

Major governance initiatives advanced

2

Provincial food systems gathering

MULTIPLE

Regional, national, and government partnerships strengthened



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

MI'KMAW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE DEVELOPMENT

A major accomplishment was advancing **Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq (Working Together for Our Children)**, the Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq ELCC Governance Process.

Working with the **Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM)**, **Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey (MK)**, **Tajikeimik**, consultants, and government partners, the project supported governance planning, policy development, budgeting, communications, implementation discussions, and the development of supporting governance documents.

A provincial proposal was also developed to reflect Mi'kmaq priorities and establish a foundation for long-term governance and service delivery.

The project also contributed to the development of the **Atlantic First Nations ELCC Capital Process**, helping ensure future capital investments and funding approaches better reflect First Nations priorities and community needs.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT + PARTNERSHIPS

Community perspectives continued to guide governance planning. **Five engagement sessions** were held across Unama'ki, providing opportunities for communities to identify priorities related to affordability, quality childcare, governance, and future planning.

Community feedback consistently identified the need for:

- Recruitment and retention of qualified Early Childhood Educators
- Professional development opportunities
- Mi'kmaq language revitalization and language nests
- Improved Assessment and Quality Improvement supports
- Capital investments for aging and expanding infrastructure
- Culturally appropriate early learning environments

The project also strengthened collaboration with Mi'kmaq organizations, provincial and federal governments, and First Nations partners through advisory committees, leadership meetings, working groups, and policy tables.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

MI'KMAW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaw ELCC priorities were advanced through participation in **national expert working groups, Chiefs Committee meetings, First Nations caucuses, health partnership meetings, and other national forums.**

This work provided opportunities to contribute to national ELCC policy and evaluation discussions while sharing Mi'kmaw perspectives and experiences with other Indigenous jurisdictions.

EARLY LEARNING AND COMMUNITY EVENTS

The project supported the **Mawita'k Wjit Knijannaq Early Childhood Education Conference, bringing together 200+ participants representing all 13 Mi'kmaq communities.**

The project also supported the first community-based **Early Childhood Educator appreciation visits**, recognizing the important role educators play in supporting Mi'kmaw children and families.

Additional collaboration included Food Mawiomi planning, AHSOR food...

security initiatives, Jordan's Principle working groups, Assessment and Quality Improvement planning, and future daycare funding administration discussions.

OUTCOMES + LEARNING

The year's work strengthened the foundation for a more coordinated Mi'kmaw ELCC system by:

- Advancing a Mi'kmaw-led governance framework and implementation planning
- Bringing community priorities directly into governance discussions
- Strengthening regional and national partnerships
- Increasing coordination among Mi'kmaw organizations and government partners
- Identifying workforce, language, quality improvement, and infrastructure priorities
- Building greater awareness and recognition of Mi'kmaw approaches to ELCC governance



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

MI'KMAW EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE GOVERNANCE

CHALLENGES

Governance implementation continued to be affected by **delays in provincial decision-making, regulatory and licensing discussions, and uncertainty regarding long-term governance arrangements.**

Capital funding also remains insufficient to address identified community infrastructure needs. While the Atlantic capital process established a strong framework, available investments do not yet match demonstrated demand.

The year reinforced the need for **sustainable funding, clear governance arrangements, adequate capital investment, and continued collaboration** to move from planning into implementation.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, priorities will focus on moving from planning toward implementation by:

- Advancing Maw-lukitimk wjit knijannaq
- Supporting implementation of the Mi'kmaq ELCC governance framework

- Strengthening governance structures and the IELCC Advisory Committee
- Continuing community and leadership engagement
- Advancing Assessment and Quality Improvement initiatives
- Supporting capital planning and infrastructure priorities
- Strengthening recruitment, retention, and professional development supports
- Advancing Mi'kmaq language revitalization within ELCC
- Strengthening provincial, federal, regional, and national partnerships
- Advocating for sustainable funding that reflects community needs.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year established important foundations for **Mi'kmaq-led Early Learning and Child Care governance in Nova Scotia.**

Through community engagement, governance development, partnership building, and regional and national leadership, the project advanced a shared vision for an ELCC system that is **community-driven, culturally grounded, and responsive to Mi'kmaq children, families, educators, and communities.**

The next phase will focus on turning this foundation into **implementation, stronger governance, sustainable investment, and lasting community impact.**



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

UNAMA'KI DIABETES INITIATIVE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Unama'ki Diabetes Initiative (UDI) continued to support diabetes prevention, education, early detection, and self-management across the **five Mi'kmaq communities of Unama'ki**.

UDI provided culturally safe, community-based education and individual support designed to help individuals and families make informed decisions about their health. Programming incorporated Mi'kmaq perspectives, storytelling, traditional teachings, language, and relationship-based learning to create welcoming and accessible opportunities for health education.

The program reached **112 participants** through diabetes education, healthy cooking classes, individual consultations, cultural activities, and collaborative health promotion initiatives.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

112

Participants reached

5

Mi'kmaq communities served

5

Communities engaged in
Diabetes 101 education

COMMUNITY-BASED

Education, consultation, and
referral support

CULTURALLY GROUNDED

Mi'kmaq teachings and
perspectives integrated throughout
programming.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

UNAMA'KI DIABETES INITIATIVE

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

UDI programming focused on:

- Diabetes prevention and management
- Diabetes 101 education
- Healthy and traditional nutrition
- Healthy cooking and meal planning
- Blood sugar management
- Physical activity and wellness
- Foot care and prevention of complications
- Medication awareness
- Stress management
- Individual education, consultation and referrals
- Family and caregiver education

Programming was adapted to community needs and offered in a variety of settings, including community events, health centres, and collaborative initiatives with local partners.

DIABETES EDUCATION & HEALTHY LIVING

Diabetes 101 sessions were delivered across all five Mi'kmaq communities, providing foundational information about diabetes prevention, risk factors, management, and long-term health.

UDI also delivered healthy cooking classes in partnership with the UNSM Dietitian, combining practical meal preparation with education on portion sizes, meal planning, carbohydrate counting, glycemic index, and healthier food choices.

Education and support were also provided to family and care providers through MFCS, while Head Start staff participated in discussions focused on healthy nutrition during the early years.

Offering education sessions during evening hours helped improve accessibility for community members who were unable to participate during the day.

COMMUNITY & CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

Cultural connection remained an important part of UDI programming. Mi'kmaq perspectives were incorporated through storytelling, relationship building, traditional teachings, and the use of Mi'kmaq language in health education.

These approaches helped create comfortable, respectful environments where participants could ask questions, share experiences, and connect health information with their own culture and lived experiences.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

UNAMA'KI DIABETES INITIATIVE

UDI also participated in **Diabetes Awareness Month and World Diabetes Day**, using social media and community engagement activities to increase awareness of diabetes prevention and management.

PARTNERSHIP & COLLABORATION

Collaboration with community Health Centres, community health teams, social workers, Home and Community Care, Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth, and other health professionals strengthened UDI's ability to provide coordinated and community-responsive services.

These partnerships created additional opportunities for health promotion, education, referrals, and community engagement across Unama'ki.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

During the reporting period, 112 participants accessed UDI programming and services.

Participants gained information related to diabetes prevention and management, healthy and traditional nutrition, blood

sugar management, foot care, and lifestyle changes that support long-term health.

Community engagement also demonstrated the value of culturally respectful and relationship-based programming. Incorporating Mi'kmaq perspectives, language, storytelling, and traditional knowledge helped strengthen trust and create meaningful opportunities for health education.

The year also strengthened awareness of UDI services and established a foundation for continued diabetes prevention and management programming across all five communities.

CHALLENGES & LEARNING

Weather-related travel disruptions, varying attendance, and the coordination of schedules across multiple communities and partners presented challenges throughout the year.

UDI responded by remaining flexible and adapting programming to community circumstances.

(continued...)



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

UNAMA'KI DIABETES INITIATIVE

Evening sessions provided an effective way to improve accessibility, while continued communication and collaboration with community partners helped maintain engagement.

The year reinforced the importance of **flexibility, relationship building, cultural relevance, and strong community partnerships** in delivering effective health programming across Unama'ki.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, UDI will continue expanding diabetes prevention and management services across the five Mi'kmaq communities.

Priorities include:

- Expanding community-based screening clinics
- Strengthening data collection and outcome measurement
- Continuing Diabetes 101 and healthy cooking education
- Providing individual consultation and referral support
- Expanding culturally relevant wellness programming
- Developing an Unama'ki Fishing Camp for youth
- Initiating an annual Unama'ki Diabetes Journey

- Strengthening partnerships with community health teams and local organizations
- Developing additional diabetes education and outreach resources
- Supporting earlier identification of diabetes risk factors
- Continuing to integrate Mi'kmaq knowledge, culture, and community priorities into programming.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year strengthened the foundation of the Unama'ki Diabetes Initiative and its role in supporting diabetes prevention, education, and healthy living across Unama'ki.

Through culturally grounded programming, community-based education, individual support, and strong partnerships, UDI reached 112 participants across five Mi'kmaq communities. The program's continued focus on accessibility, relationship building, and Mi'kmaq knowledge helped create meaningful opportunities for individuals and families to increase their understanding of diabetes and take steps toward healthier futures.

UDI remains committed to building community capacity, strengthening prevention and early intervention, and providing culturally relevant diabetes programming that responds to the priorities of Mi'kmaq communities across Unama'ki.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALING OUR NATIONS

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, Healing Our Nations (HON) continued to provide culturally grounded programming focused on STBBI prevention, harm reduction, cultural safety, healthy relationships, and peer mentorship across Atlantic Canada.

HON engaged **more than 1,200 participants** through programming and community engagement activities across **33 Indigenous communities in the four Atlantic provinces**. A total of **749 evaluations** were completed, providing valuable information about participant learning, engagement, and intended behaviour change.

HON delivered programming in First Nation communities as well as schools, universities, health institutions, justice organizations, and community settings.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

1,200+

Participants reached

33

Indigenous communities engaged

79

Activities reported

749

Evaluations completed

70+

Community + sector partnerships



KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

HON's programming responded to community-identified priorities and included:

- Cultural Awareness
- Harm Reduction and Naloxone/Narcan Training
- Sharps Safety and Disposal
- STBBI Education
- Healthy Relationships
- Youth Peer Mentorship
- Community Information and Outreach

The range of programming allowed HON to adapt its approach to different communities, audiences, and identified needs.

HARM REDUCTION

Harm reduction remained a significant community priority throughout the year. Twenty-six of 33 First Nation communities received harm reduction supplies, while 20 communities received Naloxone/Narcan training.

An average of approximately 15 Naloxone/Narcan kits was distributed per training session. Communities also received fentanyl, xylazine and benzodiazepine test strips, sharps containers, condoms, lubricant, sterile supplies, and other harm reduction materials.

Reported distribution included:

Resource	Reported Distribution
External condoms	64,820
Internal condoms	735
Dental dams	270
Lubricant	1,350 packets
Sharps containers	1,124
Fentanyl test strips	35 boxes
Xylazine test strips	31 boxes
Benzodiazepine test strips	32 boxes
Syringes	16 cases
Cookers	500
Sterile water	8 boxes

Note: Some resource distribution at information booths was not recorded. HON identified improved tracking as a priority for the coming year.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALING OUR NATIONS

KNOWLEDGE & BEHAVIOURAL IMPACT

Evaluation results demonstrated positive changes in participant knowledge and behavioural intentions.

Participants reported increased intentions related to STBBI prevention and harm reduction, including:

- Getting vaccinated
- Using condoms and lubricant
- Accessing PrEP
- Obtaining a prescription for PrEP
- Reducing the sharing of drug-use equipment

These findings demonstrate the value of culturally grounded education and harm reduction messaging in supporting informed health decisions.

YOUTH PEER MENTORSHIP

The Youth Peer Mentorship Program continued to be an important component of HON's work, supporting Indigenous youth leadership, cultural identity, health literacy, and peer connection.

Two Youth Peer Mentorship sessions were delivered during the reporting period:

- **Nova Scotia:** Nine Indigenous youth who work with Indigenous youth participated in a session on February 26, 2026.
- **New Brunswick:** Seven Indigenous youth participated in a session on March 28–29, 2026.

Both sessions achieved **100% evaluation completion.**

Youth Peer Mentorship integrates leadership development with STBBI education, healthy relationships, harm reduction, and culturally grounded learning. The program provides participants with knowledge and practical skills that can be shared with their families, peers, and communities.

COMMUNITY AND CULTURAL ENGAGEMENT

HON hosted its annual Elder and Youth Gathering in Membertou First Nation, expanding participation to 15 youth.

Youth participated in culturally led activities and teachings, including:

- The four sacred medicines
- Quill art
- Ribbon work



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALING OUR NATIONS

- Sacred fire teachings
- Sweat Lodge teachings

The gathering provided an opportunity for youth to connect with Elders and Knowledge Keepers while strengthening cultural learning and community connection.

HON also hosted its **Aboriginal AIDS Awareness Family Fun Day in Fort Folly First Nation**, engaging **33 community participants**, with **22 completed evaluations**. Participants increased their knowledge of HIV prevention, treatment, and ways to support people living with HIV.

PARTNERSHIPS + COLLABORATION

HON's work was supported by **more than 70 partnerships** across health, justice, education, research, and community sectors.

Existing partnerships continued to provide a strong foundation of trust and collaboration, while new partnerships with justice, youth, and provincial health organizations helped expand HON's reach.

HON staff also contributed to research projects, advisory committees, and working groups related to Indigenous health, STBBI care, HIV, Hepatitis C, PrEP/PEP, smoking cessation, disability, and health and healing.

CHALLENGES + LEARNING

Winter weather presented challenges for travel across the four Atlantic provinces, resulting in some workshops being cancelled or rescheduled. Where appropriate, HON offered online programming; however, many communities preferred to reschedule activities so they could be delivered in person.

Participant recruitment was another challenge for some workshops. HON Educators responded by maintaining communication with host communities, offering alternative dates or online delivery, and adapting workshop topics where appropriate.

HON also identified a need to strengthen participant and resource tracking at information booths. Improved tracking processes will be implemented to better understand participant demographics and the distribution of educational materials and promotional resources.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

HEALING OUR NATIONS

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, HON will continue to provide culturally relevant STBBI and harm reduction programming and supplies across the 33 First Nation communities in Atlantic Canada.

Priorities include:

- Continuing harm reduction education and supply distribution
- Providing Naloxone/Narcan and Sharps Safety training
- Supporting stigma-free access to harm reduction services
- Building the capacity of health centres, addictions services, and community members
- Continuing culturally grounded education and community engagement
- Strengthening participant and resource tracking

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year demonstrated the continued importance of Healing Our Nations culturally grounded approach to STBBI prevention, harm reduction, health education, and community capacity building.

Through programming across Atlantic Canada, HON reached more than 1,200 participants, worked across 33 Indigenous communities, and maintained a strong network of 70+ partnerships. Evaluation findings indicate positive changes in knowledge and behavioural intentions, while strong participation in peer mentorship and community programming demonstrates continued demand for HON's work.

HON remains committed to strengthening community capacity, reducing stigma, and supporting safer and healthier futures for Indigenous peoples across Atlantic Canada.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

FIRST NATIONS & INUIT HOME & COMMUNITY CARE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, UNSM Home and Community Care (HCC) strengthened **clinical practice, staff capacity, professional education, and community partnerships** to support safe, culturally appropriate, and wholistic care in First Nation communities.

The program continued to support individuals and families to **remain at home as long as possible**, while responding to increasingly complex care needs and respecting client choice, culture, traditions, and community priorities.

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

HCC focused on:

- Staff education and professional development
- Clinical practice and professional standards
- Dementia and Alzheimer's care
- Chronic disease and palliative care
- Wound and ostomy care
- Community capacity building
- Care transitions and continuity of care
- Regional and provincial partnerships

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

90+

Nursing and support staff engaged through the Atlantic Home Care professional development conference

U-FIRST

Dementia and behavioural intervention training delivered to Home Care Coordinators and staff

REGIONAL

Clinical, education, and program support provided across Nova Scotia and to three communities in Newfoundland and Labrador

COMMUNITY-FOCUSED

Ongoing support for clinical practice, staff development, care transitions, and complex client needs

- Program reporting, accountability, and second-level support.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

FIRST NATIONS & INUIT HOME & COMMUNITY CARE

EDUCATION AND CAPACITY BUILDING

UNSM HCC delivered **U-First dementia and behavioural intervention training** in partnership with the Nova Scotia Alzheimer Society, strengthening staff knowledge and confidence in responding to dementia-related needs.

An Atlantic Home Care professional development conference hosted by UNSM, with support from Saint Elizabeth Education, brought together **more than 90 nursing and support staff**, including CCAs and PSWs.

Ongoing education was also provided through virtual and in-person sessions, community visits, consultations, and professional support based on identified community needs.

CLINICAL PRACTICE AND CLIENT CARE

HCC continued to strengthen community nursing practice through support with **scope of practice, clinical standards, complex care, and professional issues**.

Partnerships with provincial Continuing Care and Nova Scotia Health provided access to a **Wound and Ostomy Care specialist nurse**, supporting clients with complex wounds while building community nursing capacity and supporting accreditation readiness.

HCC also contributed to **palliative and end-of-life care education**, sharing community experience with the Nova Scotia Provincial Palliative Care Network on approaches that strengthen client-centred care.

PARTNERSHIPS AND CONTINUITY OF CARE

Regular collaboration with Home Care Coordinators, Health Directors, provincial Continuing Care, Tajiikimik, and other health partners strengthened communication and coordinated support.

Planning began for a **Transitions in Care Symposium** to bring together community and provincial partners and identify opportunities to improve transitions between home, community, and other levels of care.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

FIRST NATIONS & INUIT HOME & COMMUNITY CARE

HCC also contributed to the Nova Scotia College of Nursing Managers Leadership Workshop and supported updates and implementation of the **Transitions to Practice Toolkit**.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

HCC maintained required **annual, monthly, and quarterly reporting**, while providing follow-up on community concerns and ongoing program and clinical support.

The HCC Coordinator provided second-level service delivery support to communities across Nova Scotia and, based on program capacity and identified needs, to **three communities in Newfoundland and Labrador**.

KEY LEARNING

The increasing complexity of home care needs reinforced the importance of **ongoing education, professional support, and stronger Communities of Practice** for Home and Community Care professionals.

Communities also identified an opportunity to strengthen access to **occupational therapy assessments before home modifications**, helping ensure renovations respond to functional needs and are coordinated with housing and home care plans.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2026–2027, HCC will focus on:

- Expanding staff education and professional development
- Strengthening dementia, chronic disease, and palliative care capacity
- Building Communities of Practice for Home and Community Care professionals
- Supporting safe clinical practice and professional standards
- Improving transitions between home, community, and other levels of care
- Strengthening regional, provincial, and community partnerships
- Supporting culturally appropriate, wholistic care that enables people to remain at home.



UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

FIRST NATIONS & INUIT HOME & COMMUNITY CARE

- Responding to increasingly complex needs among people living with chronic illness, cancer, dementia, and aging-related conditions

Moving forward, HCC will continue to support a **coordinated continuum of care** that recognizes the interconnected roles of housing, social, mental health, rehabilitation, health, and community services.

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year strengthened UNSM Home and Community Care's role in **building community capacity, supporting clinical excellence, and improving continuity of care.**

Through professional education, specialized clinical support, partnerships, and responsive program guidance, HCC continued to strengthen the ability of communities to provide **safe, culturally grounded, and wholistic care** that supports individuals and families to live with dignity in their homes and communities.



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, Jordan's Principle continued to support First Nations and Inuit children and families across Unama'ki through five community-based offices in Membertou, Eskasoni, We'koqma'q, Wagmatcook, and Potlotek.

Despite continued community need, declining funding, reduced approvals, and increasing administrative requirements created greater challenges in accessing supports.

KEY AREAS OF SUPPORT

Jordan's Principle facilitated access to:

- Health services and therapies
- Medical transportation
- Educational supports
- Medical and adaptive equipment
- Disability-related services
- Cultural and community-based programming
- Service coordination and advocacy

These supports continued to address persistent gaps affecting children and families.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

1,386

Children supported.

1,709

Products and services delivered.

5

Community-based offices.

40%

Decrease in children and services funded from 2024–2025.

72%

Decrease in supports for children living off-reserve.

2,400+

Fewer children served since 2023–2024



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Jordan's Principle provided critical assistance to children and families who might otherwise experience delays or barriers to essential services.

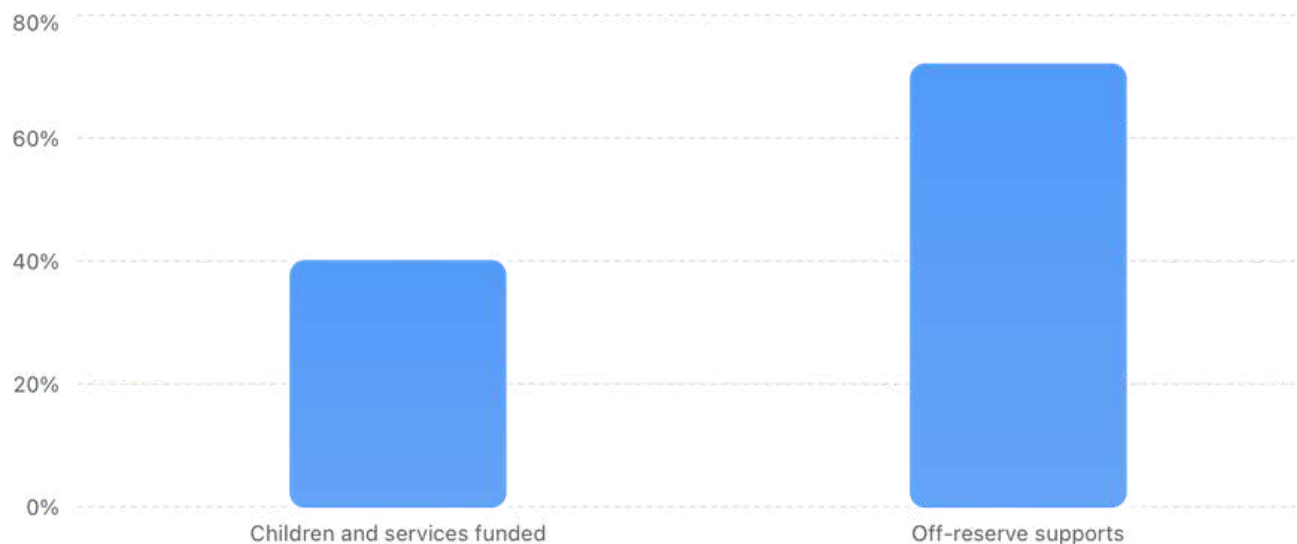
During the year, **1,386 children were supported and 1,709 products and services were delivered.** However, overall access to funded supports continued to decline.

Since 2023–2024, approximately **2,400 fewer children have been served**, while more than **2,100 fewer products and services have been delivered.**

DECLINING ACCESS TO SUPPORTS

Decline in funded supports

Reported decreases during 2025–2026 compared with the previous fiscal year.



These reductions do not indicate reduced need. They reflect increased scrutiny, more restrictive approval processes, additional documentation requirements, and longer processing times.



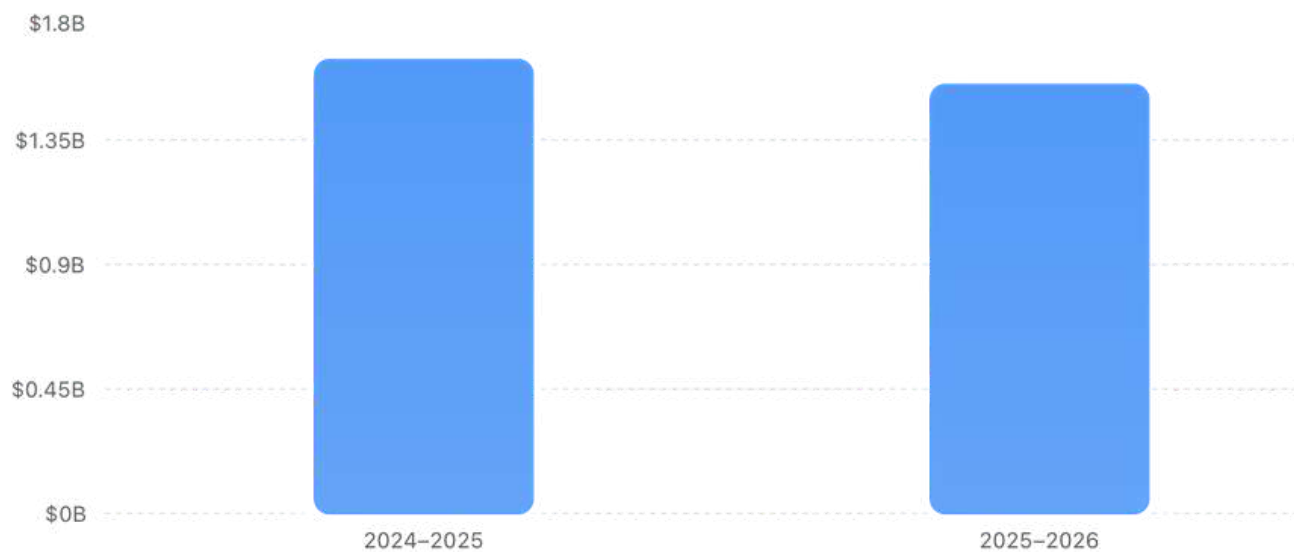
JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI

NATIONAL FUNDING CONTEXT

National Jordan's Principle funding decreased from **\$1.64 billion in 2024–2025** to a **proposed \$1.55 billion in 2025–2026**, a reduction of approximately **\$90 million**.

National Jordan's Principle funding

National funding decreased from 2024–2025 to the proposed 2025–2026 level.



The funding reduction occurred while demand for services remained high, reinforcing the need for sustainable, needs-based funding.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Despite increasing pressures, Jordan's Principle:

- Supported 1,386 children
- Delivered 1,709 products and services
- Maintained five community-based offices
- Continued advocacy and service coordination for children and families
- Helped families navigate complex health, education, disability, and social service systems
- Monitored changes in federal funding and approval practices



JORDAN'S PRINCIPLE UNAMA'KI

CHALLENGES & LESSONS

The 2025–2026 year highlighted several ongoing challenges:

- Community need continues to exceed available resources.
- More complex applications and documentation requirements created additional barriers.
- Narrower eligibility interpretations and delayed approvals affected service access.
- Declining approvals and funding reduced the number of children receiving supports.
- Strong First Nations participation in governance and decision-making remains important.
- Jordan's Principle continues to play a critical role in addressing systemic service gaps.

LOOKING AHEAD

Priorities for the coming year include:

- Advocating for sustainable, needs-based funding
- Reversing the decline in approvals and service access
- Reducing administrative barriers and processing delays...

- Strengthening First Nations governance and decision-making
- Advocating for compliance with CHRT orders
- Maintaining timely, equitable, child-first, and culturally responsive services

CONCLUSION

The 2025–2026 fiscal year demonstrated the continued importance of Jordan's Principle in supporting First Nations children and families across Unama'ki.

1,386 children received support and 1,709 products and services were delivered through five community-based offices. At the same time, significant declines in funded supports highlight growing barriers to access.

The key message for 2025–2026 is clear: **community need remains high while funding and access to supports continue to decline.**

Moving forward, sustainable needs-based funding, reduced administrative barriers, and stronger First Nations decision-making will be essential to ensuring children receive the supports they need, when they need them.



Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Wellness Team

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the UNSM Wellness Team continued to provide **culturally grounded, trauma-informed mental wellness supports** across Unama'ki and mainland Nova Scotia. Through direct client support, advocacy, crisis response, traditional healing, referrals, community programming, and partnership development, the team responded to evolving community needs while strengthening access to culturally safe services.

The team's **"meeting people where they are"** approach supported individuals, families, and communities through both ongoing wellness needs and periods of crisis, with Mi'kmaq culture, traditional healing, and relationship-building remaining central to service delivery

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

The Wellness Team's work focused on:

- Mental wellness and case management
- Crisis response and community healing
- Traditional healing and cultural supports
- Advocacy and systems navigation
- Family and youth wellness
- Community outreach and education
- Partnership and coordinated care

SERVICE HIGHLIGHTS

182

Case management
clients supported

10

Wellness Circles

125

Referrals received

5

Circle of Care Meetings

66

Jordan's Principle respite-
support letters

5

New Paths Groups

55

Counselling referrals

5

Options to Anger Groups

23

Behaviour intervention referrals

5,616

People supported through
traditional healing services

16

ACES referrals

144

Sacred fire days

15

Cultural support referrals

194

Sweat lodges supported



Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Wellness Team

MENTAL WELLNESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Mental Wellness Day events were delivered across **seven Mi'kmaq communities** during Mental Health Awareness Month, creating opportunities to increase awareness of available supports, reduce stigma, and strengthen connections among community members, Elders, and service providers.

The team also partnered with **Paqtnekek Health Centre** to deliver Women's Wellness Day and Men's Wellness Day programming focused on wellness, traditional healing, health education, and community connection.

Specialized programming included **10 Wellness Circles, five New Paths groups, five Options to Anger groups, and five Circle of Care meetings**, providing opportunities for healing, skill development, reflection, and peer connection.

TRADITIONAL HEALING & CRISIS RESPONSE

Traditional healing remained a significant component of the team's work. Approximately **5,616 individuals were supported through traditional healing...**

services, with 144 days of sacred fires and 194 sweat lodges supported throughout communities.

The team also strengthened culturally grounded crisis response. In response to community tragedies and losses, staff worked alongside leadership, Elders, families, and community partners to establish **comfort centres, sacred fires, cultural ceremonies, and healing spaces**, providing immediate emotional and cultural support.

A major community initiative was **Wi'kipaltimk**, a large Mawiomi held at Open Hearth Park in recognition of Indian day school and residential school survivors. The gathering provided an opportunity for remembrance, cultural connection, community healing, and collective recognition.

PARTNERS + COLLABORATIONS

Partnership development remained essential to improving access to coordinated care. The team conducted outreach with organizations including health centres, the Ally Centre, Elizabeth Fry Society, Boys and Girls Club, Jane...



Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Wellness Team

...Paul Centre, Pallet Home, and long-term care facilities.

Collaboration continued with **Mi'kmaw Family and Children's Services, Wellness Court, Pre-Court Services, Jordan's Principle representatives, community leadership, Elders, Traditional Knowledge Keepers**, and community organizations.

Participation in interagency circles, wellness committees, and collaborative service-planning activities strengthened referral pathways and helped address increasingly complex individual and family needs.

CAPACITY BUILDING

The team completed **Trauma-Informed Care training** and continued **New Paths facilitator training**, strengthening staff capacity and creating opportunities to expand culturally grounded programming in communities.

Professional development and collaborative planning also supported the team's ability to respond to changing needs while maintaining trauma-informed and culturally safe practices.

COMMUNITY PRIORITIES AND LEARNING

Community members continued to identify the need for **accessible counselling, crisis intervention, traditional healing, behavioural supports, housing advocacy, and family wellness programming**.

Increasingly complex client needs reinforced the importance of strong referral pathways, coordinated service delivery, flexible responses, and partnerships across health, justice, family services, and community organizations.

The year also demonstrated that the impact of mental wellness programming extends beyond service statistics. **Trust, relationships, cultural connection, and the ability to access support in safe and familiar community settings remained central to successful engagement.**



Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Wellness Team

LOOKING AHEAD

In **2026–2027**, the Mental Wellness Team will focus on:

- Expanding **New Paths** programming and facilitator capacity
- Strengthening community-based **crisis response**
- Increasing outreach across Mi'kmaq communities
- Expanding access to **culturally responsive wellness services**
- Continuing traditional healing and community wellness initiatives
- Strengthening coordinated care and referral pathways
- Continuing staff training and professional development
- Responding flexibly to emerging community needs

CONCLUSION

The **2025–2026** fiscal year demonstrated the continued importance of culturally grounded mental wellness supports for Mi'kmaq individuals, families, and communities.

Through **182 case-management clients, 125 referrals, 5,616 people supported through traditional healing services, 144 sacred fire days, 194 sweat lodges, community wellness programming, crisis response, advocacy, and strong partnerships**, the Mental Wellness Team expanded access to support while strengthening connections to culture and community.

The team's impact is reflected not only in the number of services delivered, but in the **relationships built, barriers reduced, communities supported, and opportunities for healing created**. Through culturally responsive, trauma-informed practice and a commitment to meeting people where they are, UNSM Mental Wellness continues to support **wellness, resilience, healing, and hope** across Mi'kmaq communities.



TREATY RIGHTS PROTECTED FISHERIES



TREATY RIGHTS PROTECTED FISHERY

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

During 2025–2026, the Treaty Rights Protected (TRP) Fishery Implementation Team strengthened its support for eight L'nu communities and their harvesters participating in the Treaty Rights Protected lobster and elver fisheries.

The team expanded its engagement and compliance capacity, strengthened collaboration with the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq (CMM) and Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMKNO), and increased opportunities for harvesters to directly inform fishery decisions.

A central focus throughout the year was ensuring that fishery management reflects Mi'kmaw Treaty Rights, community priorities, conservation, and Netukulimk, with education and engagement prioritized before enforcement.

2025-2026 AT A GLANCE

8

L'nu communities supported

20+

Community engagement activities facilitated or supported

600+

Harvester attendances recorded across listed engagement sessions

44

Participants per Lobster Handling course session

4

Lobster Handling and Safety course sessions delivered

EXPANDED

Engagement and compliance teams



TREATY RIGHTS PROTECTED FISHERY

KEY AREAS OF IMPACT

TRP Fishery activities focused on:

- Harvester engagement and consensus building
- Elver and lobster fishery planning
- Treaty Rights and Mi'kmaw governance
- Netukulimk and conservation
- Lobster handling and safety education
- Compliance education and monitoring
- Leadership decision-making
- Collaboration with CMM, KMKNO, and federal fisheries authorities.
- Elver opening dates
- Total Allowable Catch (TAC) allocations
- Age eligibility
- Fyke net use
- Fishery management practices
- Harvester recommendations and operational improvements

HARVESTER ENGAGEMENT AND DECISION-MAKING

Meaningful engagement was a major achievement during the reporting period. The Engagement Team worked directly with harvesters across **all eight TRP communities**, gathering feedback on issues affecting the elver and lobster fisheries.

Engagement discussions addressed:

Through multiple rounds of engagement, harvesters discussed previous-season experiences, identified challenges, voted on key issues, and worked toward consensus. Results were compiled and presented to Chiefs and leadership to support informed decision-making.

This approach strengthened the connection between **harvester voices, community leadership, and fishery management decisions**.

EDUCATION, SAFETY & COMPLIANCE

The team continued to emphasize **education as the first response and enforcement as a last resort**.

Four Introduction to Lobster Handling courses were delivered in February...



TREATY RIGHTS PROTECTED FISHERY

2026, with **44 participants at each session**, providing harvesters with practical information related to safe and responsible lobster handling.

The team's compliance capacity also expanded through the addition of a Senior Compliance Officer and monitors. The compliance function supports fishery-plan implementation through monitoring, education, communication with harvesters, and collaboration with KMKNO.

A significant outcome was increased recognition of the role of **Mi'kmaw governance and law** in addressing compliance. During elver season, DFO enforcement officers referred a non-compliance matter involving a TRP harvester to the Mi'kmaq compliance process rather than proceeding directly with charges. This reflected growing recognition of the team's education-first approach and the importance of Mi'kmaq Law.

COMMUNITY JUSTICE AND COMPLIANCE

For the first time, the team established a **Community Justice and Compliance...**

Committee under the assertion of Mi'kmaq Law.

The committee provides a community-based approach to accountability by connecting compliance matters with community leadership and Elders. Its work supports harvesters in realigning with fishery plans and the principle of **Netukulimk**, while strengthening community responsibility for sustainable harvesting.

TEAM GROWTH AND CAPACITY

The Fishery Implementation Team experienced significant growth and internal advancement during the year.

Staff transitions and promotions strengthened leadership, engagement, compliance, and monitoring capacity, including the appointment of a new Fishery Lead at KMKNO and advancement of UNSM team members into Assistant Fishery Manager, Senior Compliance Officer, Monitor, and other roles.

The growth of the team has increased its ability to support harvesters, respond to community needs, and implement fishery plans effectively.



TREATY RIGHTS PROTECTED FISHERY

COLLABORATION + PARTNERSHIPS

The TRP Fishery continued to work collaboratively with CMM and KMKNO, supporting a coordinated approach to fishery implementation across Mi'kmaq communities.

These relationships helped the team better define roles, share information, coordinate engagement, and strengthen collective efforts to protect Treaty Rights while supporting conservation and sustainable harvesting.

CHALLENGES + LEARNING

The year reinforced the importance of **consistent communication, meaningful engagement, and clear roles** among harvesters, leadership, and partner organizations.

The team's experience demonstrated that early engagement and education can help prevent compliance issues and create stronger relationships between harvesters, community leadership, and enforcement partners.

The continued development of Mi'kmaq governance and community-based compliance processes also highlighted the importance of ensuring that accountability is rooted in **community, culture, Treaty Rights, and Netukulimk**.

LOOKING AHEAD

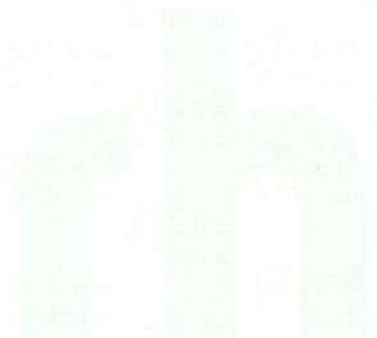
In 2026–2027, the TRP Fishery Implementation Team will continue to:

- Strengthen engagement with all eight TRP communities
- Support harvesters in exercising their Treaty Rights
- Improve consensus-based fishery decision-making
- Expand compliance education and monitoring
- Strengthen the Community Justice and Compliance Committee
- Continue lobster handling and safety education
- Support conservation and sustainable harvesting through Netukulimk
- Strengthen collaboration with CMM, KMKNO, DFO, leadership, and harvesters
- Continue building the capacity of the growing Fishery Implementation Team



FINANCIALS

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Financial Statements
Year Ended March 31, 2026



THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
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Year Ended March 31, 2026

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INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

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

Opinion

I have audited the consolidated financial statements of The Union of Nova Scotia Mi'Kmaq (the Union), which comprise the consolidated statement of financial position as at March 31, 2026, the consolidated statement of operations and the consolidated statements of changes in net assets and cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the consolidated financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies.

In my opinion, the accompanying consolidated financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the consolidated financial position of the Union as at March 31, 2026, and the consolidated results of its operations and consolidated cash flows for the year then ended in accordance with Canadian accounting standards for not-for-profit organizations (ASNPO).

Basis for Opinion

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(continues)

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

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

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

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

Sydney Mines, Nova Scotia
July 27, 2026

Richard Hannem CPA Inc.
Chartered Professional Accountant

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Financial Position
March 31, 2026

	2026	2025 (Restated)
ASSETS		
Current		
Cash	\$ 17,837,870	\$ 13,220,813
Accounts receivable (Note 4)	425,472	1,771,339
Accounts receivable from employees	6,910	8,142
Harmonized sales tax recoverable	358,179	249,994
Prepaid expenses	43,429	-
	<u>18,671,860</u>	<u>15,250,288</u>
Leasehold improvements (Note 5)	168,628	201,732
	<u>\$ 18,840,488</u>	<u>\$ 15,452,020</u>
LIABILITIES		
Current		
Accounts payable	\$ 4,270,804	\$ 3,254,794
Deferred revenue (Note 7)	12,554,872	10,202,215
Severance liability (Note 8)	798,080	778,279
	<u>17,623,756</u>	<u>14,235,288</u>
NET ASSETS		
Unrestricted	1,216,732	1,216,732
	<u>\$ 18,840,488</u>	<u>\$ 15,452,020</u>

Contingent liability (Notes 11, 12)

Lease commitments (Note 14)

On behalf of the Board

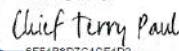
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Director

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Director

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ

Consolidated Statement of Operations

Year Ended March 31, 2026

	Budget	2026	2025 (Restated)
Revenue			
Health Canada Funding	\$ 8,339,746	\$ 9,936,806	\$ 13,187,964
Province of Nova Scotia Funding	265,000	318,911	474,852
FNIGC Funding	1,200,000	2,034,990	957,571
Tajikeimik	-	173,297	-
Indigenous Services Canada	3,493,440	1,911,002	2,946,261
Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq	15,000	52,349	49,174
Atlantic Policy Congress	-	9,300	18,414
MK	255,000	183,378	-
PHAC	-	141,000	141,000
Other	1,398,606	1,196,797	1,721,680
KMK Payment	220,000	442,445	-
ReCover	-	292,200	-
Deferred revenue opening	10,202,215	10,201,211	9,129,890
Deferred revenue ending	(10,202,215)	(12,554,872)	(10,202,215)
	15,186,792	14,338,814	18,424,591
Expenses			
Amortization	-	33,105	33,105
Award	10,000	2,000	2,000
Bad debts	-	5,000	-
Cleaning	37,500	41,715	39,038
Consulting fees	-	933,114	670,449
Data collection	30,000	40,550	59,200
Donations	-	2,400	4,300
Equipment	565,000	3,370	133,050
Equipment rental	-	14,774	9,629
Insurance	73,000	44,836	20,354
Interest and bank charges	15,000	14,268	13,928
Legal fees	-	21,621	-
Marketing and communications	-	83,452	-
Meetings and conferences	1,825,000	913,523	820,285
Office	362,000	456,796	971,208
Performer fees	-	141,305	-
Professional fees	432,000	205,897	227,556
Rent	275,000	308,122	278,748
Salaries and wages	6,031,972	5,833,780	5,275,048
Service delivery	3,684,600	3,379,886	8,235,090
Supplies	-	211,781	119,601
Utilities and telecommunications	65,000	104,970	79,793
Training	412,500	82,209	91,948
Travel	1,368,220	1,460,340	1,315,383
	15,186,792	14,338,814	18,399,713
Subtotal	-	-	24,878
Clawback of current year surplus	-	-	(15,772)
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 9,106

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Changes in Net Assets
Year Ended March 31, 2026

	2026	2025 (Restated)
Net assets, beginning of year	\$ 1,216,732	\$ 1,207,626
Excess of revenue over expenditures	<u>-</u>	<u>9,106</u>
Net assets, end of year	<u>\$ 1,216,732</u>	<u>\$ 1,216,732</u>

THE UNION OF NOVA SCOTIA MI'KMAQ
Consolidated Statement of Cash Flows
Year Ended March 31, 2026

	2026	2025 (Restated)
Operating activities		
Excess of revenue over expenditures	\$ -	\$ 9,106
Item not affecting cash:		
Amortization of leasehold improvements	<u>33,105</u>	<u>33,104</u>
	<u>33,105</u>	<u>42,210</u>
 Changes in non-cash working capital:		
Accounts receivable	1,345,864	2,690,933
Accounts receivable from employees	1,232	-
Accounts payable	1,016,012	(649,868)
Deferred revenue	2,352,657	1,072,325
Prepaid expenses	(43,429)	43,478
Harmonized sales tax recoverable	<u>(108,185)</u>	<u>-</u>
	<u>4,564,151</u>	<u>3,156,868</u>
	<u>4,597,256</u>	<u>3,199,078</u>
 Financing activity		
Increase in severance liability	<u>19,801</u>	<u>217,438</u>
	<u>19,801</u>	<u>217,438</u>
 Net change in cash and cash equivalents during the year	4,617,057	3,416,516
Cash and cash equivalents, beginning of year	<u>13,220,813</u>	<u>9,804,297</u>
Cash and cash equivalents, end of year	<u>\$ 17,837,870</u>	<u>\$ 13,220,813</u>
 CASH CONSISTS OF:		
Cash	<u>\$ 17,837,870</u>	<u>\$ 13,220,813</u>



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