

# Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2022-2023

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*Exploring Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being; Informing clinical social work practice with  
Indigenous peoples in Mi'kma'ki*

**Description of Research**

**Purpose:** Clinical social work education and practice lacks Indigenous informed curriculum and direct working experience with Mi'kmaq peoples and communities. Social workers lack of understanding and experience can, and does, results in causing harm to Indigenous clients. The Truth and Reconciliation Report, 94 Calls to Action, calls upon Canada to address racism, oppression, and justice for Indigenous peoples in Canada. Social workers are bounded by core values, standards of practice and ethics; the onus, then, rests with social workers to decolonize their thinking and professional practice. As a Mi'kmaq social worker in private practice, my research aims to explore how the Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being may inform clinical social work practice with Indigenous clients in Mi'kma'ki, and address these concerns.

**Objectives –** To explore how Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being such as culture, language, ceremony, land based education may inform clinical social work practice with Indigenous peoples in Mi'kma'ki.

**Setting:** Various settings will be used including talking circles, observations, interviews, story-sharing in Mi'kmaq communities, and at cultural events. I will also attend ceremony and note how this learning informs my understanding of the research question.

**Context:** My research will be subject to review by Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch, my university Ethics Board, and guided by my supervisor, committee and committee Elder. My research will take place in Mi'kma'ki, with Indigenous clients, communities and be guided by Elders and Knowledge Keepers throughout.

**Positionality:** I am a Mi'kmaq social worker who lives and works with Indigenous clients and communities in Mi'kma'ki. As a result, my research will involve individuals I may or may not know as a result.

**Methodology:** I will employ decolonizing and Indigenizing methodology. Storywork Methodology (Archibald, 2008) is my chosen methodology and is a good fit for Indigenous research. This methodology was created in consultation with Archibald's Elders, and

**Methods:** Talking circles, one-on-one or group interviews, observations during cultural, and

land-based activities will be used. I also hope to host wellness workshops in communities and include a self-study within my private practice with clients; subject to ethics and university approval.

**Timeline:** From July 2022 to April 2023, I completed all course work. I am currently working on my portfolio and hope to defend it by February 2024, after which I will then work with my committee to begin work on my proposal. I will consult with Elders and Knowledge keepers during every phase of my doctoral work. I expect to complete my proposal by January 2025, after which I will apply for research ethics approval through Mi'kmaq Ethics Watch and my university ethics committee. I will work with my committee and Supervisor on my research design between February-Spring 2025. I will implement my research study from September 2025 to January 2026. I will spend February-April 2026 on analysis and writing with a draft complete by Fall 2026. I expect to defend in December of 2026.

### ***Research Outcomes***

This study will provide a concrete example of implementing Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being in clinical social work practice with Indigenous clients in Mi'kma'ki. One anticipated outcome of my research will be improvements to Indigenous men's health and wellbeing, given they often lack many of the basic supports needed for their their health and wellness. Another is the validation of the value of Indigenous knowledge, fosters Mi'kmaq culture, land-based knowledge, ceremony and language. As the first Mi'kmaw social worker in private practice in Nova Scotia, I envision a future generation of clinical social workers educated and rooted in Mi'kmaq traditions and ways of knowing and being, who are more than simply trauma informed, but hold ceremony (therapy) as sacred and necessary for good health and wellbeing.

### ***Knowledge Sharing***

- Nova Scotia College of Social Workers – Dismantling Colonial Structures (Fall, 2023 panelist)
- Honouring Traditional Medicine 2022 & 2023 (presenter)
- Indigenous Centered Approaches to Health and Wellness, Dalhousie University (panelist)
- MMIWG Gathering – Nova Scotia Native Women (clinical supports and presenter)
- Nova Scotia Hospice Palliative Society – Navigating Hope Through Uncertain Times (panelist)
- Mi'kma'ki Elders and Knowledge Keepers Gathering (presenter)
- Healing from the Land Gathering of Elders and Knowledge Keepers (presenter) Canadian Mental Health Association AGM (keynote speaker)
- Nova Scotia College of Social Workers Annual Conference 2022-23 (panelist)

- National Gathering of (Indigenous) Grad Students, presented research
- Mi'kmaw and Maliseet News – reprint of NSCSW Connections Magazine
- Indigenous Services Canada Federal Government – Two Eyed Seeing with Indigenous clients
- Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (3 presentations for social worker professional development:
  - 1) Intro to Working with Indigenous Persons in Mi'kma'ki - [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voD\\_tplsAYc](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voD_tplsAYc)
  - 2) Intro to a Mi'kmaw perspective on Intergenerational Trauma - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2j56zOopwEA>
  - 3) Two-Eyed Seeing Perspective on Social Work - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3nUxT9bxAzM>
- Diamond Bailey Centre – Coping with Grief, an L'nu Approach
- Antigonish Women's Resource & Sexual Assault Centre, Series of 4 Workshops
  - 1) Decolonizing Practice Through Two Eyed Seeing
  - 2) Supporting Clients with Appropriate Cultural Responsiveness
  - 3) Managing Stress and Anxiety – Medicine Wheel Teachings
  - 4) Indigenizing the Work/Place, a Trauma Informed Approach
- STFX University, Master of Education. EDUC 509 Trauma Informed Practice (faculty, summer institute for Indigenous cohort)
- Boyne Clarke Law – National Day of Truth and Reconciliation
- Dept of Justice - Healthy Coping and Dealing with Trauma in the Workplace (workshop for cross section of Indigenous employees)

### ***Completed Project Deliverables***

- Completed all PhD Ed coursework (July, 2022 – April, 2023)
- Shared research with Mi'kmaq communities (on-going)
- Shared research in community newsletter and Mi'kmaq/Maliseet News (November, 2023)
- Shared research with Mi'kmaq Elders, Chiefs, and Tajeikemik (on-going)
- Shared research on various panels and with the Nova Scotia College of Social Workers (2022-present)
- Identified 10 articles needed for my PhD Portfolio (November, 2023)
- Identified my PhD supervisor, committee members and Elder (January, 2023)
- Shared research at the National Gathering of Grad Students (October, 2023)
- Published article in NSCSW Connections Magazine (Fall, 2023)

### ***Forthcoming Project Deliverables***

- Continue to share research where appropriate
- Portfolio development and defence
- Write and publish peer reviewed article
- Attend ceremony, and continue to be immersed in the Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and learning and language
- Continue to build relationships and networks with Elders, Knowledge Keepers and communities

- Continue to search literature and add to my learning in various ways

### ***Activities Outside Research***

- Co-chair of Decolonizing committee, NSCSW
- Volunteer for community events such as Truth and Reconciliation Day, Indigenous Veterans and Remembrance Day
- Provide clinical and crisis level supports with Indigenous clients and communities
- Facilitate various workshops and programs that are rooted in holistic Indigenous ways
- Work with numerous Indigenous and non-Indigenous organizations, and all levels of government in decolonizing work
- Pictou Landing Truth and Reconciliation Day 2022-23 (speaker/singer)
- Government announcement: National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence (speaker, ceremonial opening)
- Tajeikemik Mawio'mi – Gathering of local chiefs, Indigenous health personnel and Mi'kmaq Grand Council (clinical supports, led talking circles, shared info of my work February, 2023)
- Prevention and Education Prevention of Human Trafficking (Co-organizer)
- CBC Interview – Culture Shock: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/mi-kmaq-education-culture-shock-1.6937773>

### ***Future Plans***

My future plans include continuing to work as a clinical therapist, educator and consultant within Mi'kma'ki and continue my PhD Education research. Recently, Tajeikemik approached me with an offer to research and develop a program that explores how land-based and ceremonial practices might inform mental health, healing and well-being. I feel this will compliment my doctoral studies as a researcher and provides an opportunity to enrich my research and understanding further.