

Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2021-2022

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Implementing meaningful and authentic Treaty Education in the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial

Description of Research

Reconciliation and treaty education have implications at both federal and provincial levels. At the federal level, there is a collective national responsibility for reconciliation with Indigenous peoples via the 94 Calls to Action released in 2015 by the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (NTRC, 2015). The 94 calls to action address systemic injustices endured by Indigenous peoples in the domains of justice, health, language and education. At the provincial level in Nova Scotia, a memorandum of understanding has been resigned in 2020 without an end date (the original was signed in 2015 and had a 5-year expiry) between the province, Mi'kmaw Kinamatnewey, and the Mi'kmaq Grand Chiefs to promote Treaty Education and reconciliation as a collective responsibility in the domains of the public service, the general public, and in the public education system (Government of Nova Scotia, 2020).

In the provincial public-school system in Nova Scotia, there are 7 Regional Centres of Education (RCE) and one francophone school board (Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial). At the federal level, the RCEs and CSAP have a responsibility, specifically under call to action #63 to share the *truth* and promote reconciliation in a strategic way within the many facets of the system. (NTRC, 2015). Provincial responsibility for the RCEs and CSAP fall under the Provincial Treaty Education Framework and the Inclusive Education policy. The CSAP is a francophone school board with 22 schools spread all over the province. There is a unique history of mutual alliance between the Mi'kmaw and Acadians. Acadia wouldn't exist without the Mi'kmaw, who showed them how to live off the land upon arrival in Mi'kma'ki and hid them during the times of the Great Expulsion. Both groups, Mi'kmaw and Acadian, have faced oppression and marginalisation and continue to face barriers with language preservation and revitalization.

One of the overarching priorities of the CSAP is to offer an education of first quality, in French. The majority of Mi'kmaw were forced to learn the English colonial language. Using etuaptmumk as a methodological approach, this research explores the advantages and the challenges of incorporating authentic and meaningful Treaty Education at the CSAP.

Research Outcomes

The research outcomes of this study will provide a framework for a strategic plan to authentically and meaningfully incorporate Treaty Education within the unique context of the CSAP. This model can also be used and adapted at the provincial level as well as the RCEs.

This framework will go beyond theory to include practical strategies that authentically and meaningfully incorporate Treaty Education at the CSAP, building on the cultural confidence of non-*Inu* personnel on the importance of Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being. Rooted in the Treaty Education Framework, Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being are inclusive by nature. A strategy on meaningful and authentic implementation of Treaty Education and reconciliation also has important implications in the provincial inclusive education policy and can serve as a model to other provincial education systems in Canada. It will have direct implications on curriculum development and lesson planning and will directly respond to the responsibilities set out in NTRC call to action 63.

Perhaps the greatest impact of a framework on the integration of authentic and meaningful Treaty Education will be on the children. Children spend most of their entire childhood in the school system. It is important for the school system to ensure that all students experience their education in an inclusive, safe and engaging environment. The ways of the Mi'kmaw, embedded in the Treaty Education Framework, will contribute to this type of environment, and over generations, contribute to a culture of inclusivity.

“Education is what got us into this mess, and it is education that will get us out” (NTRC, 2015). It has been seven generations since Mi'kma'ki has dealt with the impacts of colonization. This generation of children is considered the 8th generation— the first generation born since the last residential school closed. In oral tradition, they are thought to be the generation of eight fire, the Dream Catcher generation. They will let the feelings of hope and reconciliation flow through— stopping feelings of bitterness and ignorance of the generations before them.

Knowledge Sharing

- Online course development for all staff at CSAP on the four key questions of Treaty Education (May 2022)
- Live streamed ceremony for National Truth and Reconciliation Day for all schools of the CSAP. (October 3, 2022)
- Ongoing Mi'kmaq/French language initiatives at CSAP

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- Weekly podcast with Radio Canada- La Mouvée, Optique Mi'kmaw. Host of *La Mouvée* Nathalie Geddry and I have weekly discussions on current news and events happening in Mi'kma'ki and across Turtle Island. I offer my perspective on various issues and topics, such as, most recently, the importance of the new national ribbon skirt day, and other topics, including the visit of the pope, the National Indigenous Summer Games, CSAP initiatives, etc. (September 2021-present)

Completed Project Deliverables

- Coursework completed (December 2020)
- Portfolio defended (January 2023)

Forthcoming Project Deliverables

- Building and defending research proposal (Spring 2023)
- Continue developing education platforms for Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being, treaty education, Elders and Knowledge holder's voices (ongoing)

Activities Outside of Your Research

- Ongoing learning of Mi'kmaw language through Mi'kmaw/French initiatives with the CSAP (September 2019-present)
- Cultural activities including drumming and singing (opening performance for events) September 2021-present)
- Cultural workshops with students (september 2019-present)

Future Plans

I plan to continue learning as much as I can about my culture and share it as it is meant to be shared. Netukulimk and etuaptmumk are key concepts that need to be incorporated into the education system and with my role as Mi'kmaw Education this means ensuring collaboration with the department of education, and the consultants and curriculum writers at CSAP. I plan on continuing to learn my language as I am realizing more and more what a beautiful language it is.

Once my research project is completed for the doctoral program, it will serve as an important tool for creating guidelines on how to meaningfully incorporate treaty education in a francophone minority context. It will help solidify the importance of etuaptmumk within the school community.

References

Government of Nova Scotia (2020). *Equity and Inclusive Education– Treaty Education*.
<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/psp/equity-inclusive-education/treaty-education>.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (2015). *Honouring the truth, reconciling for the future: summary of the final report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*.
Winnipeg: The Commission: <http://www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=890>