

# Summary Report

Atlantic Indigenous Mentorship Network Kausattumi Grants Program, 2020-2021

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*Implementing meaningful and authentic reconciliation practices in public education through the Treaty Education framework*

***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). 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.

As Senator Murray Sinclair of the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission has stated, "Education is what got us into this mess, but education is the key to reconciliation" (Watters, 2015). Change is needed to address the systemic injustices that continue to infiltrate the public education system due to the lasting harmful impacts of the residential school system and Indian day schools. In 2021, six years since the NTRC calls to action and since the signing of the first memorandum of understanding for treaty education in Nova Scotia, the provincial public education system has a lot of work to do, as much of the public-school community has limited or no knowledge on the meaning of Treaty Education, and even less on how to implement it. It is essential that stakeholders in Nova Scotia's public education system promote Treaty Education in a meaningful and strategic way as per the NTRC Education Calls to Action.

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). Provincial RCE's and CSAP have a responsibility, specifically to NTRC Call to Action # 63 which states:

*We call upon the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada to maintain an annual commitment to Aboriginal education issues, including:*

- i. Developing and implementing Kindergarten to Grade Twelve curriculum and learning resources on Aboriginal peoples in Canadian history, and the history and legacy of residential schools.*
- ii. Sharing information and best practices on teaching curriculum related to residential schools and Aboriginal history.*
- iii. Building student capacity for intercultural understanding, empathy, and mutual respect.*
- iv. Identifying teacher-training needs relating to the above.*

The Nova Scotia public education system also has a responsibility, under the provincial memorandum of understanding, to implement Treaty Education into Nova Scotia curricula. Through Mi'kmaq methodologies including etuamptumumk, msit no'kmaq and netukulimk that honour the 4 R's — respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity — this research explores what Treaty Education and reconciliation mean in the public education system. It specifically asks: How does treaty education and reconciliation get incorporated in the education system in an authentic, meaningful, and strategic way? To honour the 4 R's and to ensure that the research benefits the Mi'kmaw communities and students who attend the public education school system in Nova Scotia, it is essential to explore and develop the research questions in collaboration with Mi'kmaw Elders and community members. The stories shared by Mi'kmaw Elders will provide a framework for the literature review, which will guide the development and the approach of this research.

### ***Research Outcomes***

The research outcomes of this study will provide a framework for building on a provincial strategy regarding how to incorporate Treaty Education and reconciliation in a meaningful way, going beyond the work that has been done to date. It is anticipated that the strategy will move beyond a theoretical approach, to a practical and hands on approach that builds on the cultural confidence of non-Indigenous members of the public education system's while also empowering Mi'kmaw communities, as well as Mi'kmaq and Indigenous students and their ways of knowing and being.

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.

Education makes up a large portion of the lives of students and the greatest impact might be seen here. It has been seven generations since the impacts of colonization have been felt in Mi'kma'ki, and while it may take seven for them to subside, the children who attend public schools today are the first generation of children born since the last residential school closed. In oral tradition, it is said that these children are the generation of change, or the eight fire. It is them who will carry on the torch of reconciliation and be the dreamcatcher generation. That is, they will stop the bad feelings and hurt, and only let the good feelings and hope flow through. A meaningful and authentic strategy on meaningful and authentic integration of treaty education and reconciliation will allow students in the public education system to make their torch burn without end.

### ***Knowledge Sharing***

- Presentations/sharing of Mi'kmaq ways of knowing and being in post-secondary with students in Bachelor of education, Child and Youth Study, Early Childhood Education (ex. University of Calgary, Université St. Anne, MSVU, Acadia, Nova Scotia Early Childhood Education College), June-October 2021
- Professional development on treaty education for senior management, consultants, teachers, students, and community partners of the Conseil Scolaire Acadien Provincial (CSAP), September 2021-Present
- Mi'kmaq/French language initiatives at CSAP (Ongoing)

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

- Coursework completed (December 2020)
- Portfolio committee identified and items sent for review (October 2021)

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

- Ongoing discussions of portfolio items and narrative of areas of competencies developed (Present-Spring 2021)
- Ongoing simultaneous building of research proposal and discussions with community (Present- December 2022)
- Defend portfolio (Winter 2022)
- Continue building proposal (Winter and Summer 2022)
- 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***

- Weekly podcast on Radio Canada - La Mouvée, Optique Mi'kmaq
- Ongoing learning of Mi'kmaq language through Mi'kmaw/French initiatives I am undertaking with CSAP
- Cultural activities including drumming and singing (opening up for events) - September 2021-Present
- Treaty Education Speakers Bureau - 2018-Present
- Cultural workshops (i.e. Beading making dream catchers at CSAP) - September 2021

***Future Plans***

My future plans are to continue through my professional career to find and implement meaningful and authentic ways to incorporate Treaty Education and reconciliation practices in the public school system. Those include weaving what I continue to learn in my Mi'kmaw language as language is essential to the culture. Through my research I would like to develop a framework of cultural confidence for Indigenous, and non-Indigenous teachers and administrative personnel in the provincial public school system.

### References

Watters, H. (2015, June 1). Truth and reconciliation chair urges Canada to adopt UN declaration on Indigenous Peoples. *CBC News*. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/truth-and-reconciliation-chair-urges-canada-to-adopt-un-declaration-on-indigenous-peoples-1.3096225>