



**We are all  
Treaty People**

**Muiuatmu'kl msit  
kinu Ankukam-  
kowe'l**

**Les traités nous  
concernent**

**Is luchd-cùmhnaint  
sinn uile**

# What is Treaty Education?

Nova Scotia has a series of historic treaties with the Mi'kmaq dating back to the 1720s. These treaties, known as the Peace and Friendship Treaties, are still in effect today. However, these treaties were denied or ignored at times during Nova Scotia's past.

## **Treaty Education is a series of programs & services that will**

- help Nova Scotian students, public service employees, and members of the general public learn more about Mi'kmaq culture, our shared history, and the importance of the Peace and Friendship Treaties;
- explain how the treaties were significant building blocks for Nova Scotia and Canada; how they were denied in the past, and the benefit today
- help Nova Scotian's begin the long journey toward reconciliation.

## About This Guide

**This guide will give you a brief overview of the four questions that guide the work of Treaty Education Nova Scotia:**

1. Who are the Mi'kmaq, what's their history, and who are they today?
2. What are the treaties and why are they important?
3. What happened to the treaty relationship? (How and why were treaties denied?)
4. What is Nova Scotia doing to reconcile our shared history to ensure justice and equity?

**This guide will also provide information on**

- what role you can play in reconciliation
- terms and tips for participating in events and ceremonies
- myths and realities about Mi'kmaq

### **1. Who are the Mi'kmaq, what's their history, and who are they today?**

The Mi'kmaq are the Indigenous people of Mi'kma'ki. Mi'kma'ki encompasses what is known as present-day Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec (Gaspé Peninsula), New Brunswick (north of the St. John watershed), parts of Newfoundland and Labrador, and parts of Maine.



## Mi'kmaq District

## Meaning

### 1. Unama'ki aq Ktaqmkuk

Foggy Lands and Land across the water

### 2. Epekwitk aq Piktuk

Lying in the water and Explosive Place

### 3. Eskikewa'kik

Skin dresser's territory

### 4. Sipekne'katik

Where the wild potatoes grow

### 5. Kespukwik

Last flow

### 6. Sikniqt

Drainage area

### 7. Kespek

Last land

Mi'kmaq have been rooted in Mi'kma'ki (Mig-maah-gee) for over 13,000 years according to the carbon dating of artifacts from the Mi'kmawey Debert site.

- For centuries, Mi'kmaw people moved through the land, utilizing and understanding the richness of Mi'kma'ki - its plants, animals, water sheds, river systems that are interconnected, and the geology that forms the landscape.
- The Mi'kmaw language is verb-based and orientated to actions and relationships with the natural world. While this relationship is constantly evolving and changing, Mi'kmaw language provides a way in understanding both the cultural and the ecological relationship within Mi'kma'ki, making the language complex, yet fluid.

**Mi'kmaq** (*meeg-gah-mah*) comes from the root word Ni'kmaq (nee-gah-mah) meaning my kin/my relations. It is plural, referring to the larger group of people and/or the collective tribe of people. Mi'kmaq is not used as an adjective, nor is it a singular noun.

- **Mi'kmaq:** *Mi'kmaq attend this school. Mi'kmaq live in this territory.*

**Mi'kmaw** (*meeg-gah-maw*) comes from the root word Mi'kmaq. However, it is used as a singular noun or adjective.

- **Mi'kmaw singular:** *He is Mi'kmaw. I am Mi'kmaw.*
- **Mi'kmaw adjective:** *The Mi'kmaw community. Mi'kmaw Mawiomi.*

**L'nu** (*ull-new*) is an ancient term that aligns with Nilnu (nil-new) meaning my tongue. It refers to the ability to speak the same tongue, or language. L'nu in short refers to "the people", i.e., the people who speak the same language. Much like the term Mi'kmaw, L'nu is a singular noun or an adjective.

- **L'nu singular:** *He is L'nu. I am L'nu. There is only one L'nu in the room.*
- **L'nu adjective:** *She has a L'nu wife. The L'nu community. L'nu Mawiomi.*

**L'nu'k:** (*ull-new-k*) is the plural of L'nu. It can never be used as a singular noun or an adjective. It refers to the entire group who speak in a similar tongue, i.e., language.

- **L'nu'k:** *L'nu'k attend this school. L'nu'k live in this territory.*

L'nu and L'nu'k may be used interchangeably with the words Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaq. L'nu and L'nu'k are not terms to REPLACE Mi'kmaw and Mi'kmaq.

Through culture, language, and history, the Mi'kmaq are related to the Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), Abenaki, Innu, Passamaquoddy, and Penobscot, as well as other Algonquian-speaking nations. The Abenaki, Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Wolastoqiyik make up the Wabanaki Confederacy, also known as the "People of the dawn".

As a confederacy, the Wabanki made treaties with other nations long before the arrival of settlers. Although, these traditional treaties were made of beads that formed images and designs outlining the agreements held within the treaty. These treaties are known as L'napsku'l - wampums.

## 2. What are the treaties and why are they important?

Between 1725 and 1779, Britain signed a series of treaties (known as the Peace and Friendship Treaties) with the Mi'kmaq.

A treaty is a solemn agreement, like a contract. When two parties sign a treaty, they are making long-standing promises that will benefit both parties.

### **In the Peace and Friendship Treaties, the British and the Mi'kmaq promised they would**

- end the hostilities that had been going on between them
- not go to war with each other
- co-operate (trade) with each other

The British and the Mi'kmaq signed the treaties at a “Burying of the Hatchet Ceremony” on June 25, 1761.

The treaties are important for the promises they made and are even more significant for the meaningful relationship they created between the British and the Mi'kmaq. **The Peace and Friendship Treaties remain in effect today.**

## 3. What happened to the treaty relationship? (How and why were treaties denied?)

In the 1780s, the Loyalists began to arrive in Nova Scotia. These were American colonists who were loyal to, or had fought for, the British Crown during the American Revolution.

The arrival of more settlers created a different situation between the colonial governments and the Mi'kmaq; the most significant being the gradual erosion of the meanings given to the Peace and Friendship treaties.

In the 19th century, The Canadian Government pushed Indigenous peoples onto lots of land called reserves that were much smaller than their traditional territories. This enabled the

federal government to seize control over all aspects of Indigenous livelihood, which would include their relationship to the land and identity.

These events, and others, ushered in a long period of denial in Nova Scotia about the contents of the treaties. This continued well into the 20th century.

**A number of laws, policies, and practices mark this damaging period in Canadian history, including, but not limited to, the following:**

- Gradual Civilization Act (1857). Otherwise known as Enfranchisement, this act meant an Indigenous person gave up their Indigenous identity and ability to live on the reserve if they voted, received an education, worked off-reserve, could read or write, served in the military, or, as women, married men who were not Status Indian men
- The Indian Act (1876)
- The Pass System (1885)
- Centralization in Mi'kma'ki (1916)
- Disease epidemics, including tuberculosis, smallpox, typhus, cholera, and influenza
- Ongoing discriminatory policies limiting employment, education, and forbidding Indigenous people from gathering to discuss their rights or practising cultural events like dances and songs
- Residential Schools (1930–96), including the Shubenacadie Residential School in Nova Scotia that closed in 1996
- The Federal White Paper Policy (1969)
- The Sixties Scoop (late 1950s into the 1980s)

#### **4. What is Nova Scotia doing to reconcile our shared history to ensure justice & equity?**

The devastating and lasting consequences of the treaty denial period are at the heart of reconciliation efforts today.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) spent six years travelling to all parts of Canada to hear from the Indigenous people who, as children, had been taken from their families and placed in residential schools.

In 2015, the TRC released 94 calls to action focused on building reconciliation between Canadians and Indigenous peoples. It concluded the residential school system was “cultural genocide” because it forced Indigenous people across Canada to give up their culture under a federal policy meant to “kill the Indian in the child.”

One generation after the next felt the impacts of this trauma, and Indigenous people across Canada continue to feel it today.

Despite the devastating effects of colonization, residential schools, and forced assimilation, the Mi'kmaq in many communities are working hard to heal and continue to speak their language and traditional customs.

On October 1, 2015, the Province of Nova Scotia signed an agreement with the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia that created a new partnership called Treaty Education Nova Scotia. The agreement commits to teach Treaty Education in all classrooms, grades and schools across Nova Scotia, not just in the Mi'kmaq ones. It also ensures that the general public and public service benefit from Treaty Education.

Treaty Education focuses on building an understanding of the Mi'kmaq, inherent Aboriginal rights, recognition of the Peace and Friendship treaties as historical and living agreements and continuing the relationship between Mi'kmaq and all peoples of Nova Scotia. It also creates opportunities to learn about the contributions the Mi'kmaq have made to Nova Scotia and treaties as the building blocks of Nova Scotia and Canada. With the creation of the Treaty Education initiative, Mi'kmaq and provincial partners have engaged in various activities and events to reconcile our relationship.

A significant provincial reconciliation event took place February 16, 2017. The Province of Nova Scotia granted the late Grand Chief Gabriel Sylliboy a posthumous free pardon. A free pardon, which recognizes that a conviction was made in error, considered “only in the rarest of circumstances,” marked just the second posthumously granted free pardon by the province of Nova Scotia. Lieutenant Governor J.J. Grant said that Sylliboy was pursuing his “aboriginal and treaty rights” and called the pardon “a process of treaty education,” which included “understanding and valuing what the Mi'kmaq have contributed in shaping this province and nation.”

## **We are all treaty people, and we are all in this together.**

We all have a part to play in reconciliation and making a positive impact on the lives of Indigenous people. Your role depends on your level of involvement. Some roles are more active than others, but all are important.

People who are not Indigenous can be allies to Indigenous people. An ally is someone who supports and advocates for others. Allyship is more than just tolerance—it means actively

trying to break down the barriers and create better circumstances for others. Being an ally requires social action, strength, courage, and humility.

An ally steps in when needed to educate others about the realities and histories of marginalized people. For example, you might find yourself at a social gathering where another person says something inappropriate or makes a joke about Indigenous people. As an ally, you would break into that conversation to educate the others who are present.

We are going to focus here on how to be an ally. You do not get to call yourself an ally; you must show you are one through your actions. Allyship is not a destination, it is a journey that is ongoing and at times, challenging.

### **As an ally you will**

- actively support the struggle
- transfer the benefits of your privilege to those who have less
- speak up, even if you feel scared
- acknowledge that the conversation is not about you.

### **You will also recognize that every person has a basic right to human dignity, respect, and equal access to resources.**

Not all Mi'kmaq are the same. We need to park our assumptions about what we think Mi'kmaq look like, sound like, and act like. Every individual, family and community are unique and beautiful in their own way.

To be an effective ally you should recognize the privileges you may (unknowingly) be benefitting from. These privileges are diverse and range from the colour of one's skin, sex or gender, class, whether they are able-bodied, or their cultural background.

In addition to being conscious of privilege, be aware of microaggressions or situations that undermine power of oppressed groups, such as instances of racist, sexist, classist, ableist, or colonialist/post-colonial prejudice. If you witness the privileging of one individual over another, point it out. By calling attention to unfair actions, you can prevent others from unwittingly benefiting from unfair discrimination. You don't want to pick on people for the privileges they may not know they have, but rather engage them in a thoughtful conversation. Opening communication on these issues is one of the best ways to spark change and raise awareness about systematic privileging and discrimination.



- Be informed about our shared history by learning about Indigenous people & culture.
- Recognize Indigenous leaders and respect their authority.
- Practice active listening.

Recognize that ignorance has a place in allyship. True allies are encouraged to reflect on and embrace their lack of knowledge regarding the group's marginalization. Allies should keep in mind that they are learning as they go through the process of supporting the Indigenous population. As an ally, you will always be learning.

Not all Indigenous peoples want you as an ally. This may seem harsh to someone who is trying to be supportive, but it happens, and it absolutely must be respected, even if you consider yourself an ally with the best intentions. Rather than trying to argue and convince an individual that you are "on their side," respect their boundaries.

In the end, being an ally is not about checking actions off a list. It is a way of being and doing. This means self-reflection, checking in with your motivations, and talking with community members regularly.

## Terms & Tips

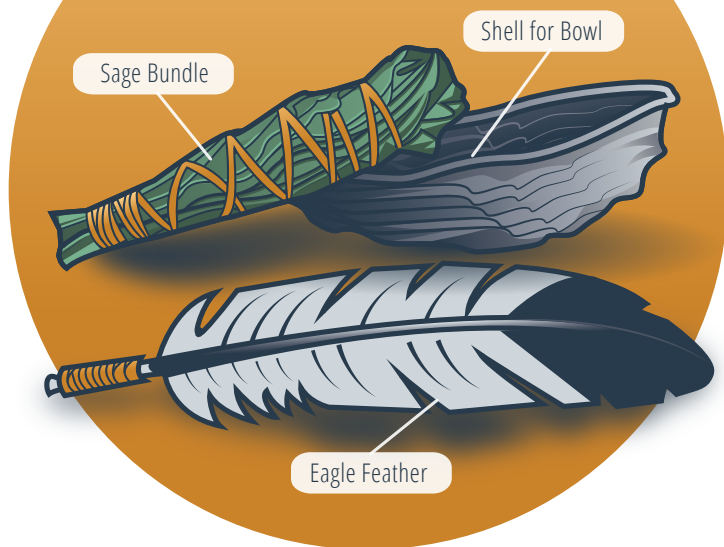
**Elder** – Elders are typically older in years and are held in high esteem by the community. They are wisdom carriers who transfer historical, cultural, and/or traditional knowledge from one generation to the next. This knowledge is valuable for local context and decision-making processes.

One does not become an Elder by reaching a specific age. The state of being an Elder is given to an individual by community and often humble Mi'kmaw Elders do not recognize themselves as such.

Elders may lead ceremonies, such as smudging ceremonies, opening prayers, and talking circles. Their teachings and advice are often provided indirectly through storytelling, to help guide and advise others in their work.

**TIP:** The practice varies from community to community, but you should present an Elder with an offering of tobacco wrapped in red cloth, as well as a gift or honorarium for their contributions. Show respect to Elders by inviting them to speak first and listen without interrupting. In a social setting where food is served, Elders are generally served first.

## Smudging with Sacred Medicines



### Smudge & Sacred Medicines – Traditional Mi'kmaw medicines include:

- sweetgrass to cleanse the body, mind, and spirit
- sage to help get rid of negativity
- cedar to protect a person throughout their life
- ceremonial tobacco, which is offered as thanks to Kisu'lkw (gee-soolg) – The Creator

A smudge bowl can be a large shell, stone, or clay bowl used to burn sacred medicines during a smudging ceremony. Spiritual leaders may mix one or more sacred medicines together in the smudge bowl, allowing them to burn for a longer period. The most familiar smudge bowl material is an abalone shell because its large size and thickness prevents the holder from getting hurt while the medicines are burned.

Whether medicines are sprinkled on the ground or burned in a bowl or shell, both are known as “an offering.” When medicines are lit during prayer time, that is a “smudging ceremony.” During a smudging ceremony, the smoke from the burning medicines is directed to seven distinct parts of the body:

- Eyes, to help see the good in other people
- Ears, to help hear and listen to others
- Mouth, so only good words are spoken
- Mind, so we have good thoughts
- Feet, so good paths are followed throughout life
- Whole body, to have respect for self
- Heart, so it remains pure and respects all Creation

Smudging can be done during the day or night, and as often as necessary.

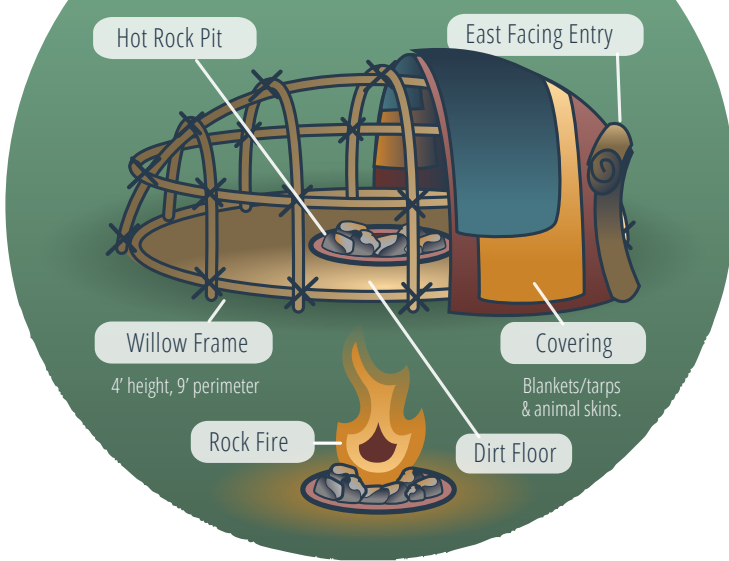
**TIP:** Smudging is always voluntary. People should never be forced or pressured to smudge. It is completely acceptable for a person to indicate that they do not want to smudge. That person may choose to stay in the room and refrain from smudging or leave the room during the smudge. Respect for all is the guiding principle in any Indigenous tradition.

**Medicine Bundles** – These are used for carrying items that help create a spiritual connection to Kisu’lkw, such as an eagle feather, smudge bowl, sacred medicines, animal claws or teeth, a sacred pipe and/or hand drum—all things used during ceremony. Some items are gifts from a ceremony or celebration, and others are simply objects the individual has collected.

A medicine bundle may start out as a small bag or pouch and grow as things are gathered throughout one’s life. Like all sacred medicines, bundles are kept in a private place and only brought out during ceremonial times.

**TIP:** Do not touch or handle a medicine bundle unless asked or invited to do so.

## Anatomy of a Sweat Lodge



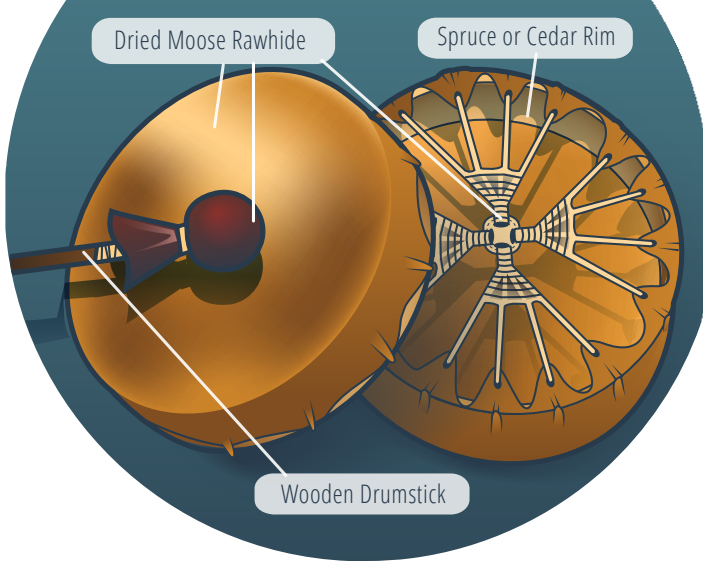
**Sweat Lodge** – This is a dome-shaped structure, much like a wigwam, except with a rounded roof. A sweat lodge ceremony, or a “sweat,” involves people gathering in a sweat lodge to pray to Kisu’lkw for healing, teachings, and guidance. A sweat lodge keeper will guide everyone before, during, and after a ceremony. Sweat lodge ceremonies can be different each time; one sweat lodge keeper may smudge, pray, sing, chant or drum differently from one another. You can leave the lodge at any time, simply by asking for the door to be opened. Sometimes, people enter the lodge for the wrong reasons, and if the spirits want that person to leave, they will not be forced to stay. However, they can still be part of the sweat lodge by sitting outside the lodge and adding prayers and energy to the circle within.

**TIP:** Show respect for the ceremony and do not talk during it.

**Sacred Fire** – A sacred fire is burned for four days and four nights, but this can also vary. One-day fires are very popular. Shorter fires may be burned for a special person or situation.

**TIP:** Do not take photos at the sacred fire.

## Traditional Mi'kmaq Hand Drum



**Drums** – The drum is sacred and respected among many Indigenous communities, including the Mi'kmaq. For Indigenous Peoples, the drum represents the universal heartbeat of Mother Earth. In Mi'kma'ki, drums are made from materials gathered from the land. This includes wood from spruce or cedar trees and rawhide from moose and deer.

The drum is the exclusive property of the person who made it, purchased it, traded for it, had it given to them as a gift or prayed for it. It is not community property unless that is its specific purpose. If the drum belongs to an individual, then permission must be given by that individual for anyone else to even touch it, much less play it.

**TIP:** Always show respect for the drum.

**Mi'kmaq Honour Song** – The Mi'kmaq Honour Song is about healing. Singer-songwriter George Paul of Metepenagiag, New Brunswick, was at a gathering of Indigenous communities in Regina. He watched representatives from different First Nations perform their nation's dance or song; however, there was no performance during the introduction of the Mi'kmaq. George left the ceremony feeling the need to bring something back to the Mi'kmaq Nation. He received the Honour Song during a sweat lodge ceremony in the 1980s. It now serves as an anthem for Mi'kmaq and is played at Powwows, ceremonies, schools and events throughout Mi'kma'ki.

When singers come to the drum to start learning how to sing, this is the first song they are taught.

## The Mi'kmaq Honour Song

**Kepmite'tmnej ta'n teli l'nuwulti'kw,  
Ni'kma'jtut ke' mawita'nej**  
*Gep-me-day-dum-min-age Dahn Deli Ulnoo-deeg,  
Knee-kem-mudge-doot gay Maui-dah-nej.*

Let us respect each other as people,  
when we gather.

**Kepmite'tmnej ta'n wettapeksulti'k  
Ni'kma'jtut ke' apoqmatultinej.**  
*Gep-me-day-dum-min-age Dahn Wed-da-beck-sool-deeg,  
Ne-kem-mudge-doot Gay Ah-bun-na-mah-dul-din-age.*

Let us respect where we come from,  
we should always help one another.

**Ke' Apoqmatultinej ta'n  
Kisu'lkw teli ika'luksi'kw, wla wskitqamu'k.**  
*Gay Ah-bun-na-mah-dul-din-age Dahn  
Gee-soolk Deli Ee-gah-look-seeq, Ula Sit-gum-mook.*

Let us help each other as the creator intended,  
when we were placed on Mother Earth.

**Way-Ya-Hey-Yo (vocalables)**

**TIP:** Do not record performances of the song without permission.

**Eagle Feather** – The Mi'kmaq consider the eagle the most powerful bird in the sky. Of all the birds, the eagle gets the closest to Kisu'lkw and helps carry prayers to the spirit world. That is why eagle feathers hold such great cultural and spiritual meaning.

\* Eagles must not be harmed for their feathers.

**Being given an eagle feather is a great honour. Eagle feathers are often given to someone in recognition of**

- their life's work
- meaningful deeds they have done
- their deep understanding of cultural teachings

Several Canadian provinces, including Nova Scotia, allow a person to use an eagle feather when swearing an oath .

**TIP:** Never touch another person's eagle feather without permission.

**Mawiomi** – Mawiomi (mawy-oh-me) is the Mi'kmaw term for pow wow. It is a two-day celebration held over a weekend and open to anyone who wants to learn about First Nations culture. It may include dancing, drumming, singing, and ceremony, such as the sacred fire and smudging. Booths are set up for food vendors and artisans to sell their crafts and art. Some artisans put on demonstrations, while dancers and drummers engage in celebrations. These events are a time to gather with family, friends and to celebrate community & culture.

Traditional Mi'kmaw dancing is a celebration of life, and each dance tells a story. There are many different dances, including

- kouja
- jingle
- fancy
- shawl
- traditional
- grass

Most traditional dancers wear beautifully crafted regalia made especially for them. All regalia are unique and tell a story of the wearer's dancing journey and their family history (such as their clans, colours etc.). Their designs can include beads, feathers, ribbons, or other items to express the dancer's personal history.

## Mi'kmaw Regalia



**Regalia** are **NOT** costumes—they are spiritual connections to Kisu'lkw and are worn to show respect during ceremonies. They are sometimes called “outfits.”

Mawio'mi'l are a welcoming space, ensuring a wonderful experience for everyone.

**TIP:** Be aware of Mawio'mi etiquette. Guidelines may vary between provinces and regions, so check with the Master of Ceremony, arena director, or committee if you're unsure of expectations; they will be happy to answer questions.

### General Mawio'mi Etiquette:

- Be on time
- Dress and behave in an appropriate and respectful manner
- Remember that arena benches are reserved for dancers and some seating is always reserved for Elders (bringing your own lawn chair is a great idea)
- Be courteous and aware of those around you,
- Consider donating to honour and support the costs of these typically non-profit events



- Drugs and alcohol are not allowed
- Ask before taking photos at a Mawiomi
- Do not touch dancer’s regalia without permission

**Urban Indigenous Peoples** – As of 2016, nearly 900,000 Indigenous peoples were living in urban areas. Indigenous peoples live in cities and towns for a variety of reasons including employment and educational opportunities.

**TIP:** Remember, cities and towns are still on Indigenous territories. An Indigenous person is not “less Indigenous” because they live in an urban area.

## Mi’kmaq Words & Phrases You Can Learn

English	Mi’kmaq	Phonetic
My name is	Teluisi	Del-lu-we-see
What is your name?	Taluisin	Dahl-lou-wii-sin
What is her/his name?	Taluisit	Dahl-lou-wii-sit
Kwe’	Hello	Gway
I come from	Wetapeksi	Weda-bek-see
I am from	Tleyawi	De-lay-wii
Welcome	Pjila’si	Ji-lah-see
Eagle	Kitpu	Git-boo
Friend	Nitap	Nee-dap
Thank you	Wela’lin	Well-la-lin
Thank you all	Wela’lioq	Well-la-lee-oq
I’ll see you later	Nmu’ltes	Neh-mull-dess
Pow Wow	Mawiomi	Mawy-oh-me

# Acknowledging Mi'kmaq Traditional Territory in Nova Scotia

## Why should we acknowledge Mi'kmaq traditional territory?

- We are all treaty people, and our relationship is based on peace and friendship.
- In the 18th century, the Mi'kmaq and the British Crown entered Peace and Friendship Treaties; these treaties remain in place today.
- Acknowledging traditional territory is a way to show respect and honour for our shared treaty relationship. It is an important step toward reconciliation. It is not intended to create any legally binding obligations or recognition of asserted claims.
- Mi'kma'ki is the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq.

## When should we acknowledge Mi'kmaq traditional territory?

- An acknowledgement is usually the first item at public events, or at the start of a speech or presentation.
- For large events, a Mi'kmaw Elder, Leader, or Knowledge Holder may provide an opening and share a welcome, prayer, song and/or smudge. For smaller events or presentations, an acknowledgment of traditional territory is more appropriate.

## Who may acknowledge or welcome others to Mi'kmaq territory?

- Only Mi'kmaw should welcome others to their traditional territory. All other speakers may choose to acknowledge Nova Scotia is Mi'kmaq traditional territory.

## What is a sample acknowledgement?

- "I/we would like to begin by acknowledging that we are in Mi'kma'ki (MEEG-MA-GEE), the traditional territory of the Mi'kmaq."



# Kwe' Nitap,

(G-way Nee-dup)

This guide is not intended to be all things to all people. Rather, it was developed as a starting point in the development of cultural learning.

Its focus is to educate as part of hosting the 2023 North American Indigenous Games and increase understanding of Indigenous, specifically Mi'kmaw culture.

To learn more, visit:

[novascotia.ca/treaty-education](https://novascotia.ca/treaty-education)

Find us on Facebook: Treaty Education Nova Scotia

