



STRATEGIC PLAN|2020-2025



**SERVING NOVA
SCOTIA'S 12
MI'KMAQ
COMMUNITIES**



A successful holistic life-long
journey rooted in Mi'kmaq
language and culture.



INTRODUCTION

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is the official name for the Mi'kmaq Education Authority.

Incorporated in 1997, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is recognized through federal and provincial legislation as the instrument of Mi'kmaq First Nations to exercise their jurisdiction over education in Nova Scotia. Presently twelve of the thirteen Mi'kmaq First Nations of Nova Scotia are members of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey.

MK's focus is on supporting these communities in enhancing education and student success. This strategy has been instrumental in the achievements in educational outcomes for Mi'kmaq students over the past twenty years.

As the *Mi'kmaq Regional Management Organization*, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey focuses on facilitating and assisting the jurisdiction of education for the Mi'kmaq communities it serves. In delivering on its mandate, MK recognizes the differences across communities and their autonomy in the delivery of education.

The *Mi'kmaq Education Act*, a self-governing agreement, recognizes the role of the regional management organization in supporting local Band schools and their communities in delivering language immersion and other culturally rich programs and activities.

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey is focused on collaborating with communities rather than directing the activities of its members' local schools enabling the delivery of a full range of education services from K-4 to Post Secondary Support.

Since its inception, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey has received national recognition for its success in improving the graduation rate of Mi'kmaw students in Nova Scotia. At more than 94%, the high school graduation rate among First Nation students in Nova Scotia leads the country.

Not content to rest on past success, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey continues to evolve to meet the needs of Mi'kmaw students under a new ten-year funding agreement. Continuously responding to changes in the learning environment is creating both challenges and opportunities for MK in this new decade.

Building on its previous plan, this strategic plan is a roadmap for that new decade. Areas of special emphasis include putting communities at the centre of education; ensuring the survival of the Mi'kmaw language; raising individual student performance results; making creative use of new technologies; developing enhanced experiential, land-based learning opportunities; supporting post-secondary learners; innovating teaching methods and strengthening the capacity of the MK organization itself.

The stakes are high, but our success to date strengthens our resolve to continue to make a difference in the lives of Mi'kmaw youth.

LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

The story of Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is a powerful one. It offers validation of the Mi'kmaq Nation's vision of self-determination in making sure our children and youth get the best possible start and can achieve their dreams unimpeded.

It hasn't always been so. In fact, twenty years ago, only 30 per cent of Nova Scotia's Mi'kmaq students were graduating from high school. Today that number is more than 94%, the highest among First Peoples in Canada.



Established in 1997, MK set out on an ambitious path with the Mi'kmaq Nation taking control of education. Today, twelve of thirteen Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq communities are part of MK.

For me personally, the formation of MK was inspirational – it motivated me to train to become a teacher. Education is so foundational to our people in leading cultural reclamation and anti-oppression and decolonization practices. We are

proud of our achievements in education, but mindful of the fact that there is much more left to do.

The recent signing of a new ten-year agreement with the federal government is an important milestone for MK. It recognizes our collective success as a facilitator and supporter of best practices in Indigenous education. It recognizes the leadership of the schools in twelve Mi'kmaq communities throughout our Province, including the advice and guidance of traditional knowledge holders and our Elders. It underscores the momentum being achieved in revitalizing our language and culture.

As we embark on a new strategic plan, I want to recognize the strong efforts and hard work being led in Mi'kmaw communities, our Board of Directors and the MK leadership and staff team in actualizing what was the dream of the Mi'kmaq to control our own education in an environment that values and affirms the strengths of Mi'kmaq language and culture.



Board Chair,

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Reflecting on past successes, I am reminded of the both the challenges and opportunities before us in continuing to enhance Mi'kmaw education in Nova Scotia.

That is why this strategic plan and the accompanying operational planning is so very important. It is a plan that I can confidently say has benefited from extensive input and engagement from all our stakeholders. Central among these is our communities. MK's operative philosophy is 'nothing for you without you' – putting local schools and the communities we serve at the centre of the Mi'kmaq education enterprise.

As we launched the strategic plan renewal process, both our Board and I have been squarely focused on making sure we received broad-based input from all who share our abiding interest in optimizing educational outcomes for our Mi'kmaw youth.

Early community meetings were held to secure feedback. We visited the twelve communities and held forums to hear from teachers, education directors, community members, leadership, elders and youth. The input received from these meetings has been foundational to the development of this strategic plan.

I can also say that I learned a great deal during these community meetings and committed to ensuring that this important feedback has been reflected in this plan.

We also held sessions with Principals, teachers and the MK leadership and staff team.

Through this process, we received detailed and insightful feedback and suggestions. Collectively, this input has contributed immeasurably to the substance and spirit to this dynamic plan. By setting out key strategic directions and objectives, we are setting the tone for the direction of MK over the next five years - the central tenet of which is 'hand in hand and side by side' with the communities we serve.

Reflecting on past successes and prospective opportunities and challenges, through this planning process, we were also able to update our vision, mission and values.

As we advance this plan, I am reminded of the obligation we have in our service to each other, to the communities we serve and to our way of life. This springs from our language and sacred teachings on which we steadfastly rely. There is continuity in this from our ancestors and it continues to be a great source of strength today. This plan seeks to strengthen the bonds and connections between communities, our youth, our leadership, Elders and our staff team to facilitate healing and rebirth in ways that align with Mi'kmaw culture, values and language.

On behalf of our team, I am proud to present this strategic plan.

Executive Director,

ORGANIZATIONAL PROFILE/ OPERATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

As a unified team of Chiefs, staff, parents and educators who advocate on behalf of and represent the educational interests of our communities, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is laser-focused on improving the quality of education for our people, while remaining vigilant in maintaining and revitalizing the Mi'kmaq language.

Inspired by Mi'kmaq youth, and with the guidance and leadership from our Board of Directors, education directors, schools, parents, staff, Elders, and partnerships, MK, under the new Agreement period is poised to forge ahead, exploring new opportunities for academic excellence, and re-visiting and enhancing existing operations and programs.

As a nationally recognized leader in the field of First Nation education and language revitalization, since its inception in 1997, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey has achieved notable success. Over the past five years this has included:

- An annual average of **3,000 students** enrolled from the 12 First Nations in Nova Scotia, with approximately 80 percent of those students residing in Cape Breton.
- High school graduation rates that range from **90-to-94 percent** among First Nation students in Nova Scotia, considerably higher than the national average of 36 percent.
- Significant enhancements in **literacy and numeracy**.
- **600** MK-funded First Nation Students from Nova Scotia enrolled in Post-Secondary education.
- 83 percent of First Nation students in Nova Scotia are educated in band-operated schools while the remaining 17 percent are educated in provincial schools.
- Attendance rate at MK schools average **90 percent**.



MK achievements at a glance (2018):

94%



Average graduation rate among First Nations students in Nova Scotia

600

MK-Funded First Nations students in NS enrolled in Post-Secondary Education



ACHIEVEMENTS

In literacy and numeracy significantly enhanced

83%



of First Nation students in NS are educated in MK schools

Annual average of

3000

First Nations students enrolled in 12 schools

91%

average attendance rate at MK schools

MK 2020-2025: The Planning Context

The success Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) has achieved over the past twenty years is broadly celebrated. It provides an incredible foundation on which to build.

While that recognition is acknowledged and appreciated, it is noteworthy for another important reason. *This success was achieved only when Mi'kmaq leadership took ownership and control over the education of Mi'kmaw youth in the twelve communities in Nova Scotia.*

This observation underscores the importance of First Nations leadership in creating pride and accomplishment in our language, culture and ways of living. It has been a confidence builder for our youth and stands as a national testament to the importance of Indigenous ownership and control over its institutions and processes.

Has it been easy? No.

Is it finished? Absolutely not.

In fact, an emerging body of knowledge over the past twenty-years reinforces the point that harm reduction and building confidence in new generations of Mi'kmaw youth still constitutes an urgent agenda.

Slowly, societal awareness around some of these truths are finding fertile ground and deeper acknowledgement and understanding. The 'reconciliation' process and the TRC *Calls to Action* have heightened awareness of the need for Indigenous self-determination. There is a deeper and growing understanding of what decolonization means and a greater respect and recognition of the fundamental importance of Indigenous knowledge – the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. These are foundational to the education enterprise of which Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey is an important steward.

Ultimately, it is against this promising, yet challenging, backdrop that the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey strategic plan has been developed and launched.

It enshrines our 'call to action' to continue to work on improving the quality of education for our people, while remaining vigilant in maintaining and revitalizing our Mi'kmaq language.



VISION MISSION & VALUES

VISION:

A successful holistic life-long journey rooted in Mi'kmaq language and culture.

MISSION:

As the collective voice for Mi'kmaq education, the primary MK mission is to actively promote excellence in Mi'kmaq education, interests and rights for our communities and to facilitate the development of lifelong learning by:

- Engaging every community, learner and teacher to live their dreams, including the power to broaden the meaning of education and supporting dreams that are achievable for each student to the extent of their possibilities, interests and capabilities.
- To respond to the needs of Mi'kmaq communities and students in attaining an education enabling them to be the best they can be at every stage of their educational journey.

In executing this mission over the next five years, MK will:

- Empower and support communities to achieve their educational goals
- Maintain Mi'kmaq education at the leading edge through research, development and innovation
- Provide opportunities and support to teachers, learners, parents and communities
- Revitalize Mi'kmaq language and culture
- Promote life-long learning
- Provide a common collective voice
- Actively engage partnerships, parents and communities
- Seek funding opportunities to create long-term sustainability
- Communicate meaningfully

VALUES:

<p>WISDOM & TRUTH</p> <p><i>Elders & Knowledge Keepers</i></p>	<p>RESPECT & HONESTY</p> <p><i>Community, Culture, Language, Rights & History</i></p>	<p>LOVE & WELL-BEING</p> <p><i>Nurturing the Spirit "All My Relations"</i></p>	<p>COURAGE & HUMILITY</p> <p><i>Dare to do things differently</i></p>
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GOAL: SERVING COMMUNITIES

OBJECTIVE 1: Engage communities through regular outreach [and animating conference/gatherings and through optimized communication channels]

OBJECTIVE 2: Provide educators with effective ongoing professional learning opportunities

OBJECTIVE 3: Foster a shared understanding and engagement for each community

GOAL: NURTURING THE SPIRIT OF ALL LEARNERS

OBJECTIVE 1: Holistic learning and nurturing the student's spirit to create confident, well-rounded students - spirit, mind, body and heart

OBJECTIVE 2: Lifelong learning to meet the diverse needs of Mi'kmaq

OBJECTIVE 3: Provide Communities with support and training to deliver enhanced experiential learning

OBJECTIVE 4: Enhanced K-4 experience

GOAL: Ta'n Teli L'nuimk

OBJECTIVE 1: Promote, preserve and revitalize of Mi'kmaq language

OBJECTIVE 2: Community-driven language learning and confidence

OBJECTIVE 3: Develop resources and products to support language revitalization

OBJECTIVE 4: Engage all speakers/voices in advancing language revitalization

GOAL: RE-IMAGINING MK FOR THE FUTURE

OBJECTIVE 1: Align MK structure and policies to optimize results

OBJECTIVE 2: Assess MK's impact by collecting and analyzing student data to support responsiveness to learning needs

OBJECTIVE 3: Optimize Technology to enhance learning, access and opportunities

OBJECTIVE 4: Nurture existing partnerships and forge new ones to support student success

Embodying the 2020 – 2025 MK Strategic Plan



MK in 2025

Being able to clearly envision a desired future is an important dimension of any strategic planning process.

In the MK plan renewal process, strong engagement and input from all involved in Mi'kmaq education in Nova Scotia provided a rich vision of what that future needs to look like in continuing to build on the already significant achievements in advancing and enhancing Mi'kmaq education within our communities.

Tapping into this vigorous and enthusiastic feedback loop, we actively mined the generous input of our stakeholders to crystallize what they saw as the key accomplishments to be achieved by 2025. We built this strategic plan around actualizing these hopes and aspirations.



With the focus clearly on the 2025 planning horizon, this plan will have achieved the following results:

- First and foremost, MK remains the Canadian leader in First Nations education.
- We will have a L'nu College embodying a renewed approach to supporting Mi'kmaq students through their post-secondary journey, while addressing existing gaps.
- As a result of a strong emphasis on the revitalization of the Mi'kmaq language, there will be more immersion programs, more books and curricular materials available, a greater sharing of resources among communities to strengthen language outcomes and a proud celebration of these accomplishments across all communities.
- Specialized teacher training, capacity building and professional development will enhance educational outcomes.
- A contingency plan has been developed to capture the wisdom of Elders and knowledge keepers in a digital format so as to preserve this knowledge for future generations and for curricular enrichment.
- Student data is more broadly and effectively used as a tool to guide instruction and measure results.
- More land-based education and experiential learning and stronger cultural connections within the curriculum will enhance student outcomes.
- Our students are more well-rounded and successful - academically, spiritually, athletically.
- Communities have an enhanced understanding of MK's mission and mandate.
- MK will have launched several pilot projects to advance the delivery of educational support to communities.
- MK is more active in research and able to document our successes on our own.
- Leveraging technology and embracing the importance of digital learning, MK will become a leading practice model in the introduction of the Substitution Augmentation Modification Redefinition Model (SAMR). This model offers a method of using computer technology to impact teaching and learning.
- There is greater collaboration across MK departments, with communities, principals and teachers; and
- MK will have made the required organizational adjustments and have a new resiliency as an education leader in Nova Scotia and nationally, from which others can learn.