

FOUNDATION FOR
**Mi'kmaw Language
Curriculum**

Website References

Website references contained within this document are provided solely as a convenience and do not constitute an endorsement by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development of the content, policies, or products of the referenced website. The department does not control the referenced websites and subsequent links and is not responsible for the accuracy, legality, or content of those websites. Referenced website content may change without notice.

School boards and educators are required under the department's Public School Programs' Internet Access and Use Policy to preview and evaluate sites before recommending them for student use. If an outdated or inappropriate site is found, please report it to links@EDnet.ns.ca.

Foundation for Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum

© Crown copyright, Province of Nova Scotia, 2015

Prepared by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

The contents of this publication may be reproduced in whole or in part provided the intended use is for non-commercial purposes and full acknowledgment is given to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

Foundation for Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum

Acknowledgements

This document was created in partnership between Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. We would like to thank all those that contributed to the writing of the previous *Foundation for Mi'kmaw/Miigmao Language Curriculum* (2003). We also acknowledge those involved in the writing of this version of the *Foundation for Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum*:

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Advisory Committee

Elizabeth Paul, Eskasoni First Nation
Arlene Stevens, Eskasoni First Nation
Barbara Sylliboy, Eskasoni First Nation
Jane Meader, Membertou First Nation
Maynard Marshall, Potlotek First Nation
Rosemary Marshall, Potlotek First Nation
Jacqueline Sullivan, Paqtnkek First Nation
Sheila Francis, Pictou Landing First Nation
Curtis Michael, Sipekne'katik First Nation
Phyllis Googoo, We'koqma'q First Nation
Josephine Peck, Wagmatcook First Nation

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey

Eleanor Bernard
Blaire Gould
Yolanda Denny
Anne Curry

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Wyatt White
Ian Doucette
Elaine Melanson
Robin Harris

We would also like to thank all of the provincial and Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Mi'kmaw language teachers who contributed in the development of the document.

We also acknowledge the contributions made by Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada's Education Partnership Program.



Elmaptekemk / Vision

Elmaptekemk

Kepme'k L'nui'suti, Kisu'lkw kisi-iknuksi'kip aq Kniskamijinaqi'k aq Kukmijinaqi'k naqtmuksi'kip. Nuta'q mlkuktmnenow aq siawa'tunenow wjit knjannaq aq elmi'knikewaq.

Miamujpa kinu L'nui kina'masulti'kw aq L'nui kina'mua'ti'kw kulaman kikmanaq kijitta'q L'nuey. Nuta'q nenasultinenew aq kijitunenew ta'n wetapeksulti'kw kulaman me' pmi-aji-mlkikna'titaq L'nu'k aq pmi-aji-mlkiknatew L'nuey.

Vision

The Mi'kmaw Language is sacred, given to us by Our Creator and passed down to us by the ancestors. We must be committed to protect, nurture, and preserve our language in order to bequeath to our children and future generations a living and lasting legacy.

We, therefore, have the responsibility to reclaim, revitalize, and reinstate the traditional language of the Mi'kmaw and to re-establish its use in daily situations. Our ancestral language is the very essence of the Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being and is the means by which we can strengthen and empower the Mi'kmaw Nation.

Contents

- Introduction** 1
 - Purpose of the Document 2
 - Guiding Principles 2
 - The Nature of the Mi'kmaw Language 4

- Essential Graduation Competencies** 5
 - Connections between the Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum and
Essential Graduation Competencies 5

- Organization of Curriculum Outcomes** 8
 - Stages of Language Development in the Curriculum 8
 - Organizing Strands 9
 - Curriculum Outcomes and Indicators for Mi'kmaw Language Aligned
with Essential Graduation Competencies 9

- Resources** 11



Introduction

The statements below were collected at the 2015 L'nui'sultinej Conference.

"Mita kinu na Mi'kmaw. Miamuj na siaw-pma'tu'k wjit knjannaq, wjit elmi'knikewaq. Mita tel-kina'muksi'kip kinu. Mu nujjewijik ni'n elnimuikipnik wi'katikn ta'n ewikasikl klusuaqnn ta'n weji-nenman, kelulkik!"
– **Katani Julian**

"The Mi'kmaw language is the essence of who we are as a nation, as a people. Culture, traditions, stories, knowledge, lessons, and identity are encompassed in our traditional language."
– **Melody Googoo**

"Mi'kmaw language is a foundation of cultural competency in our youth. Some feel guilty or torn for not knowing their language and if they even learn a couple of words they become empowered!"
– **Mary Sylliboy**

"I grew up learning how to read and write, and was very seldom forced to speak Mi'kmaw. Today, I teach the opposite way from the way I was taught. Most of my assessments are done orally and most of the language taught is sentence based so students are able to converse. If I were taught this way I'd be much closer to being fluent in Mi'kmaw than excelling in reading and writing."
– **Jasmine Johnson**

"Without our language, our culture becomes weaker in meaning and strength to carry over to future generations. Diversity of culture is important in the world. The Mi'kmaw language and its culture are interchangeable and rely on each other for sustenance. While reading and writing in Mi'kmaw is critical to the sustenance of our language, oral language development is also as important, if not more so. Hearing and speaking the language will give strength to the speakers' self-identity and cultural pride."
– **Carol Anne Johnson**

"The Mi'kmaw language is the centre of our culture. It is from there that we are rooted deeply within our culture. Without our language our culture is diluted."
– **Thomas Johnson**

"Oral language is innate in our very being. Our perceptions, world-view, and understanding of ourselves are best expressed in our language."
– **Mary-Ellen Googoo**

"The Mi'kmaw language identifies who you are, your culture, and your spirit as a Mi'kmaw."
– **Rita Gould**

Purpose of the Document

The Mi'kmaq see the danger of the extinction of their language as one of the most critical problems facing them today. There has been a decline in the number of people who speak the Mi'kmaw language. The power of the English language has greatly influenced the erosion and diminishment of the Mi'kmaw language almost to extinction. The Mi'kmaw language has undergone changes like any other language, but the major change has taken place since formal education was introduced with English as the language of instruction. The Mi'kmaw community recognizes the need to reclaim and strengthen its language—in homes, communities, and schools. It is only through the pervasive use of the language that it will continue to live.

This document provides the vision and structure for all subsequent Mi'kmaw language curriculum development.

Guiding Principles

These guiding principles were developed through advice from and consultation with the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Mi'kmaw Advisory Committee.

Nuta'q L'nui'sultinenew aqq L'nui-kina'masultinenew.

It is essential that Mi'kmaw be the primary language of communication in the classroom. The preservation of oral language in the classroom promotes learning in meaningful contexts and develops additive bilingualism in students. By developing language fluency and proficiency in Mi'kmaw, students will gain the ability to communicate with others, allowing them to deepen and enrich their own learning. Mi'kmaw language education is holistic in nature and unifies language, knowledge, and culture. The goal of achieving fluency in Mi'kmaw is best achieved by devoting the majority of classroom instructional time (roughly 80%, especially at the Novice level) to oral activities. Reading and writing should be used to support what students have learned orally.

Ta'n telo'timk L'nuimk aqq L'nui'simk.

Consciousness and identity are at the heart of the Mi'kmaw language. There is no disconnect between language and culture; the culture is embedded in the language. Promoting the understanding and expressions of Mi'kmaw worldview through the use of the Mi'kmaw language is crucial in students' comprehension of this guiding principle.

L'nui'si msit tami!

Classrooms should be welcoming environments for students. Students should feel comfortable taking risks and making mistakes. The respect for dialect differences should be acknowledged and respected. By developing an awareness of dialects within the Mi'kmaw language students will gain a deeper appreciation of these differences. Teachers need to also be aware that students come into their classes with varying levels of language ability. Teachers will need to see language knowledge and ability as a continuum and ensure that lessons support each student's language acquisition and language development.

Apoqmatultimk ta'n tel-kina'masimk.

Teachers should provide opportunities for students to mentor peers, respect what students bring to the classroom, and give students opportunity to use whatever language competencies students bring to the classroom. Facilitating these opportunities will allow students to grow in language development through the use of everyday language.

Ewe'mumk piley kisite'taqn ekina'muemk L'nuey.

Technology permeates all aspects of our daily lives. Students today are incredibly reliant on and used to many forms of technology. As a result, teachers need to utilize modern technology when teaching Mi'kmaw language. Recently, there has been a tremendous increase in the development of technology that supports language development, especially apps, digital books, videos, and web resources. This increase in technologies that reinforce language development will help teachers to support students of all learning modalities.

Wiaqa'tumk ta'n tel-mil-kina'masimk.

Teachers should look for ways to incorporate various kinds of learning into lessons using visual arts, music, and structured play as techniques for creating an engaging learning environment. Incorporating language learning into activities related to daily living such as cooking, singing, and outdoor activities will enhance language acquisition and help students make connections with their community and everyday lives.

Pisko'lujik wutankewaq kina'mua'tinew.

Community support is integral to Mi'kmaw Education. The community has an obligation to support language revitalization, enhancement, promotion, and development. Teachers need to find ways to involve the community in the school through events and activities in order to enhance language development. Parents should feel welcome in the school and teachers need to engage parents, as much as possible, in their children's language learning. Teachers also need to provide opportunities for Elders to be present in the classroom as a resource, because Elders are the keepers of knowledge and language.

The Nature of the Mi'kmaw Language

The Mi'kmaw language is an ancient language that has developed over the centuries in Mi'kma'ki. It is a sacred language, given to the people by Kisu'lkw. The Mi'kmaw language is the way in which Mi'kmaw values, customs, beliefs, and attitudes are passed on from generation to generation. To learn the language, therefore, is to deepen one's understanding of Mi'kmaw consciousness and identity.

Mi'kmaw is predominately an oral language. It is important to remember that there may be slight variations in language (vocabulary and pronunciation) between, and within, Mi'kmaw communities. Often, these variations are slight and do not interfere with communication. Mi'kmaw Language teachers should reinforce students' knowledge of language while respecting, valuing, and accepting the language that students bring to the classroom. It is the role of Mi'kmaw Language teachers to facilitate the coming together of traditional and contemporary language use, which will further the goal of promoting and revitalizing the Mi'kmaw language.

Mi'kmaw language is a verb-oriented language. This means that all words in a clause are based around the verb and not, as in English, around the subject. Unlike French, there is no gender in the Mi'kmaw language, but there is a clear distinction between animate and inanimate objects. Mi'kmaw language has free word order; there is no predetermined syntax. When the language is written in Nova Scotia, the Smith-Francis orthography is the recognized writing system.

Essential Graduation Competencies

Essential Graduation Competencies articulate the interrelated sets of attitudes, skills, and knowledge learners need to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life/work transitions. The Essential Graduation Competencies are Citizenship, Communication, Creativity and Innovation, Critical Thinking, Personal Career Development, and Technological Fluency. They are cross-curricular in nature. Programs and courses, expressed through general and specific curriculum outcomes, provide the context for development of these competencies over time.

The Essential Graduation Competencies are a framework for the development of programs and courses. Development within this framework ensures that curriculum outcomes align with the competencies and provides opportunities for interdisciplinary learning.

Connections between the Mi'kmaw Language Curriculum and Essential Graduation Competencies

Essential Graduation Competencies are attitudes, skills, and knowledge that prepare learners to successfully participate in lifelong learning and life/work transitions. The Mi'kmaw language curriculum is designed to support the attainment of the essential graduation competencies.

CITIZENSHIP

Learners are expected to contribute to the quality and sustainability of their environment, communities, and society. They analyze cultural, economic, environmental, and social issues, make decisions, judgment, solve problems, and act as stewards in a local, national, and global context.

Mi'kmaw language learning will extend students' understanding of Mi'kmaw culture and Mi'kmaw identity. It is important for students to develop their own senses of identity and worth that reflect the bonds they share with the rest of humanity. Through their study of Mi'kmaw culture, students will be able to see that a balance exists between their lives and their environment. Learning experiences will help students to develop an understanding of the Mi'kmaw worldview including sharing, helping others in time of need, and the importance and interconnectedness of the natural world. Through conversing and working with classmates and teachers, students will generate new understanding of how to use the Mi'kmaw language as well as an appreciation for the important role it has in Mi'kmaw society.

PERSONAL-CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Learners are expected to become self-aware and self-directed individuals who set and pursue goals. They understand and appreciate how culture contributes to work and personal life roles. They make thoughtful decisions regarding health and wellness, and career pathways.

The Mi'kmaw language curriculum encourages students to develop into lifelong learners and active proponents of Mi'kmaw language and culture. Students need a solid foundation in language to enable them to function in society. For Mi'kmaw speakers, language fluency not only serves to sustain the language but it also forms the basis for healthy relationships in the larger community. These relationships are fostered by positive self-concepts through the recognition and valuing of Mi'kmaw language and culture.

COMMUNICATION

Learners are expected to interpret and express themselves effectively through a variety of media. They participate in critical dialogue, listen, read, view, and create for information, enrichment, and enjoyment.

The Mi'kmaw language curriculum will build students' awareness of the skills, strategies, and processes they use to learn language and to extend their awareness, understanding, and knowledge of other aspects of Mi'kmaw culture. Learning experiences in Mi'kmaw language will expand and extend students' abilities to use language effectively in a wide variety of communication situations and offer students multiple opportunities to use language effectively in formal, as well as informal, learning situations that demand certain types of language and build students' skills in social language use.

CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION

Learners are expected to demonstrate openness to new experiences, to engage in creative processes, to make unexpected connections, and to generate new and dynamic ideas, techniques, and products. They value aesthetic expression and appreciate the creative and innovative work of others.

Mi'kmaw language curriculum encourages students to engage in creative activities and thought processes. Students can enhance their language as they work together to find creative, innovative ways to solve problems related to language learning and to discuss positive ways to interact with others using the Mi'kmaw language. Because of the complexity of the Mi'kmaw language, students will need to utilize and generate new and dynamic techniques for learning and using the language in their everyday lives.

Mi'kmaw language curriculum also involves the exploration of Mi'kmaw fine arts. To enable students to learn all aspect of the language, it is essential to include fine arts. The students will also enhance their language by learning the vocabulary used in fine arts. Mi'kmaw artists are important resources for this curriculum, including poets, authors, craftspeople, and musicians. These artists are excellent role models for students and can enhance their awareness of the different Mi'kmaw art forms. As well, since art reflects an artist's worldview, the exploration of art and art forms will foster not only language development but also personal identity, consciousness, and self-image.

CRITICAL THINKING

Learners are expected to analyze and evaluate evidence, arguments, and ideas using various types of reasoning and systems thinking to inquire, make decisions, and solve problems. They reflect critically on thinking processes.

Mi'kmaw language curriculum encourages students to think critically and creatively. Through group work, students will make decisions collaboratively and contribute facts and opinions to the decision-making process. Students are also encouraged to make decisions independently. Language processes are essentially problem-solving processes in which students apply knowledge, meaning-making strategies, and prior experiences. Students also develop problem-solving skills through their experiences in using a variety of strategies, resources, and technologies to gain, manage, evaluate, revise, and produce information and language.

TECHNOLOGICAL FLUENCY

Learners are expected to use and apply technology to collaborate, communicate, create, innovate, and solve problems. They use technology in a legal, safe, and ethically responsible manner to support and enhance learning.

As with most aspects of today's society, Mi'kmaw language is promoted and preserved through a variety of technologies. Students can use technology available to them such as online resources, videos, apps, e-books, and software to help them learn and communicate in the Mi'kmaw language. Technology also allows students to interact with peers, teachers, and Mi'kmaw speakers from all over Mi'kma'ki.

Organization of Curriculum Outcomes

Stages of Language Development in the Curriculum

The Mi'kmaw language curriculum has been divided into developmental stages. The rationale for this is that Mi'kmaw can be introduced for the first time at any grade level and not only during the elementary years of schooling. The developmental stages used in this document are Poqji-kinu'tmasit (Beginning), Kijka' nenk (Surviving), and Kisi-l'nui'sit (Socializing)—Novice, Basic, and Intermediate. The characteristics associated with each of the levels represent students who have achieved the outcomes for the respective stage. Some characteristics for these language stages have been adapted from the *New Brunswick Oral Proficiency Scale* (Government of New Brunswick, n. d.).

Poqji-kinu'tmasit (Beginning) NOVICE	Kijka' nenk (Surviving) BASIC	Kisi-l'nui'sit (Socializing) INTERMEDIATE
Can satisfy immediate needs by using learned expressions.	Can satisfy minimum courtesy requirements and maintain very simple face-to-face interactions.	Can meet usual school needs and discuss, in a limited fashion, concrete topics or interests linked to areas of experience.
Signs of spontaneity and ease in the second language begin to be evident.	Demonstrates a high degree of spontaneity in oral interaction such as when beginning a conversation and when participating in it.	Can handle most common social situations, including introductions and casual conversations about events in school and community; able to provide autobiographical information in some detail.
May sometimes use simple, original sentences, but not consistently. Understanding is often limited and hinders a normal conversation.	Possesses language competencies that allow for discussion in a variety of circumstances beyond immediate needs, but language is awkward.	Shows a very good control of the language and is comfortable when speaking it (e.g., providing information and giving explanations with some degree of accuracy).
Vocabulary is very limited.	Vocabulary is adequate to express most needs.	Has a speaking vocabulary sufficient to converse simply, although inelegant at times.

Organizing Strands

The curriculum outcomes for Mi'kmaw Language are categorized into three strands—Function, Accuracy, and Culture. There is a curriculum outcome associated with each strand.

Function	Accuracy	Culture
Students will use the Mi'kmaw language in various contexts and for different purposes.	Students will communicate and interact accurately and effectively in the Mi'kmaw language.	Students will demonstrate an understanding of Mi'kmaw values, culture, and customs and practices, using the Mi'kmaw language.

Curriculum Outcomes and Indicators for Mi'kmaw Language Aligned with Essential Graduation Competencies

For each curriculum outcome, performance indicators are listed. Performance indicators are statements that identify specific expectations for the depth, breadth, and expectations for the outcome. Teachers use performance indicators to determine whether students have achieved the corresponding outcomes. The performance indicators in this document represent expectations for students who have demonstrated achievement of the corresponding level of language competency.

FUNCTION

Outcome: Students will use Mi'kmaw in various contexts and for different purposes.

Poqji-kinu'tmasit (Beginning) NOVICE	Kijka' nenk (Surviving) BASIC	Kisi-l'nui'sit (Socializing) INTERMEDIATE
Demonstrates comprehension of short predictable oral texts that consist of previously learned words and phrases. (COM, CT, CI, TF)	Demonstrates comprehension of short, simple oral texts on familiar topics. (COM, CT, CI, CZ, TF, PCD)	Demonstrates comprehension of oral texts about familiar topics. (COM, CT, CI, CZ, TF, PCD)
Engages in simple predictable oral interactions using previously learned words and phrases. (COM, CT, CI, CZ, PCD)	Engages in oral interactions in familiar situations using simple, familiar phrases. (COM, CT, CI, CZ, PCD)	Engages in a variety of oral interactions in uncomplicated social contexts. (COM, CT, CI, CZ, PCD)
Demonstrates understanding of the main ideas of short predictable written texts that consist of previously learned words and phrases. (COM, CT, CI, TF)	Demonstrates understanding of short, simple written texts on a familiar topic. (COM, CT, CI, TF)	Demonstrates understanding of short written texts on a familiar topic. (COM, CT, CI, TF)
Crafts short written texts using a model and previously learned words and phrases. (COM, CT, CI, TF)	Crafts short written texts on a familiar topic using a model. (COM, CT, CI, TF)	Crafts short written texts on a variety of familiar topics. (COM, CT, CI, TF)

Competency Codes: Citizenship (CZ), Personal-Career Development (PCD), Communication (COM), Creativity and Innovation (CI), Critical Thinking (CT), Technological Fluency (TF)

ACCURACY

Outcome: Students will communicate and interact accurately and effectively in Mi'kmaw.

Poqji-kinu'tmasit (Beginning) NOVICE	Kijka' nenk (Surviving) BASIC	Kisi-l'nui'sit (Socializing) INTERMEDIATE
Pronounces previously learned words and phrases correctly with guidance or when prompted. (COM, CT)	Pronounces familiar words and phrases correctly. (COM, CT, CI)	Independently pronounces most words and phrases correctly. (COM, CT, CI)
Uses previously learned language patterns correctly with guidance and when prompted. (COM, CT)	Uses familiar language patterns correctly when prompted. (COM, CT, CI)	Independently uses familiar language patterns correctly. (COM, CT, CI)
Uses previously learned words and expressions in appropriate contexts with guidance or when prompted. (COM, CT, CZ)	Uses groups of related words (clan names, family members, animals, food) appropriately in simple, familiar situations. (COM, PCD, CT, CI, CZ)	Independently uses familiar vocabulary appropriately. (COM, PCD, CT, CI, CZ)

Competency Codes: Citizenship (CZ), Personal-Career Development (PCD), Communication (COM), Creativity and Innovation (CI), Critical Thinking (CT), Technological Fluency (TF)

CULTURE

Outcome: Students will demonstrate an understanding of Mi'kmaw values, culture, and customs and practices, using the Mi'kmaw language.

Poqji-kinu'tmasit (Beginning) NOVICE	Kijka' nenk (Surviving) BASIC	Kisi-l'nui'sit (Socializing) INTERMEDIATE
Participates appropriately in talking circles and other Mi'kmaw customs and practices in the classroom. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)	Participates appropriately in familiar Mi'kmaw customs, practices, and traditions in the classroom. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)	Participates appropriately in a variety of Mi'kmaw customs, practices, and traditions in the classroom. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)
Uses fine arts to help communicate ideas in the Mi'kmaw language. (COM, PCD, CT, CI, CZ, TF)	Uses fine arts to help express preferences, opinions and ideas in the Mi'kmaw language. (COM, PCD, CT, CI, CZ, TF)	Uses fine arts to interpret the Mi'kmaw world. (COM, CZ, PCD, CT, CI, TF)
Demonstrates interest and pride in using the Mi'kmaw language and improving their ability to communicate using previously learned words and expressions. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)	Demonstrates interest and pride in using the Mi'kmaw language and improving their ability to express simple ideas in simple, familiar situations. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)	Demonstrates interest and pride in using the Mi'kmaw language and improving their ability to communicate in Mi'kmaw in uncomplicated social settings. (COM, PCD, CZ, CT, CI)

Competency Codes: Citizenship (CZ), Personal-Career Development (PCD), Communication (COM), Creativity and Innovation (CI), Critical Thinking (CT), Technological Fluency (TF)

Resources

Government of New Brunswick. (n. d.). "New Brunswick Second Language Oral Proficiency Scale Performance Descriptions." gnb.ca/0000/publications/eval/oralprofgr12.pdf.

