

Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing

The knowledge and teachings in this document have been shared by our Ancestors through the generations for the past 13,500 years. The work of Mi'kmaw Services Branch is grounded in these teachings, which are essential understandings in support of student well-being and achievement.

—Mi'kmaw Services Branch

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

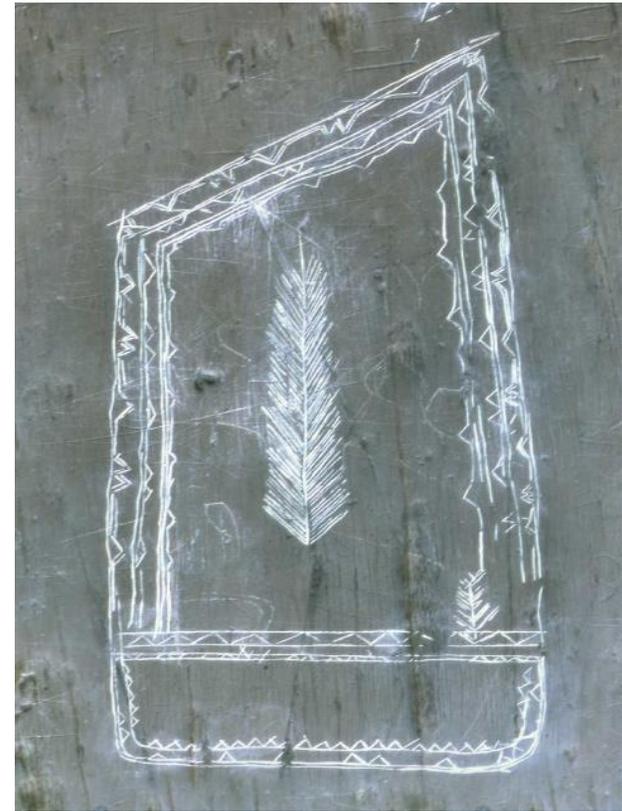
Within the framework of Mi'kmaw culture, ideals, and ethics and in combination with a nurturing environment, every student will be provided with a chance for intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and physical growth and development.

As Mi'kmaw people, we recognize that **we are all connected and entwined together by the supportive strands of relationships**—with one another and with the Earth—and we should always be inspired to place emphasis on the well-being of the collective.

All people are born with individual gifts and strengths that must be acknowledged, valued, and cultivated so that they can reach their full potential as responsible and productive human beings with love and compassion for the sacredness of life.

In addition, we understand that Love and the Ancestors are our sources of strength and inspiration, their guidance coming from many sources including prayers, meditation, dreams, and in the words and deeds of others.

Therefore, the emphasis of Mi'kmaw Education needs to focus on the four aspects of Being—the **heart, mind, spirit, and body**—with the understanding that young people are gifts to Humanity, sacred beings that are to be honoured and treated with love, respect, and dignity.



A traditional peaked cap worn by a Mi'kmaw woman; personalized adornments tell her story.

(Photo from Digital Museums Canada; George Creed Tracing of Kejimikujik Mi'kmaw Petroglyph)

Many misconceptions are deeply ingrained in colonial ideas and imperialistic ideologies that have caused devastation and eradication of Indigenous Knowledge.

The acceptance and establishment of Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing are essential to the education of all our children, critical to their survival, and pertinent to Mi'kmaw identity.

Therefore, as educators, we need to adopt a wholistic approach to Mi'kmaw Education; to do anything less becomes a disservice to our students and to the significance of what we want to convey. Compartmentalizing those aspects of a human being—heart, mind, spirit, and body—and teaching about these aspects in only a cognitive understanding can take away from the traditional and spiritual teachings. And, once again, we are approaching the education of our students from a western paradigm.

Mi'kmaw Education has traditionally operated in a wholistic model of learning. Mi'kmaw core values, principles, and philosophy of life center around our understanding of spirituality and to the connectedness of all of creation. Knowledge was disclosed and shared with the specific purpose of teaching the individual to live in harmony with Mother Earth and how to behave as a sacred being living among other sacred beings.

Acknowledgements

Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing reflects knowledge and teachings gifted through our Ancestors. This document was prepared by respected Mi'kmaw Elder and educator, Jane E. Meader.



A Mi'kmaw person; the sweetgrass braid indicates that they are likely a healer.

(Photo from Digital Museums Canada; George Creed Tracing of Kejimkujik Mi'kmaw Petroglyph)