COMMUNITY MEETING
Handbook

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn
Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative

Our Rights. Our Future.

INDEX

COMMUNITY MEETING
HANDBOOK INTRO

A major component of what we do at Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn (KMK) is engaging with our Mi'kmaw communities - it's in our name. Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn means "we are seeking consensus." KMK works on behalf of the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia and this work cannot, and should not, be done alone or in isolation. We must be able to engage and hear from those who we represent. It is fundamental to our role within the organization, but for many of us, also for our role within our Mi'kmaw communities. We know that these same principles apply to any organization or group that wishes to engage with Mi'kmaw communities.

While engagement could look different for different projects – for instance, surveys, conferences, presentations, podcasts, videos, there are fundamental elements that these all need to be successful, informative, educational, and engaging, for community members.

The purpose of this handbook is to support organizations when reaching out to Mi'kmaw communities for a meeting or presentation and to ensure that the standards we set as a Mi'kmaw organization are followed by every organization.

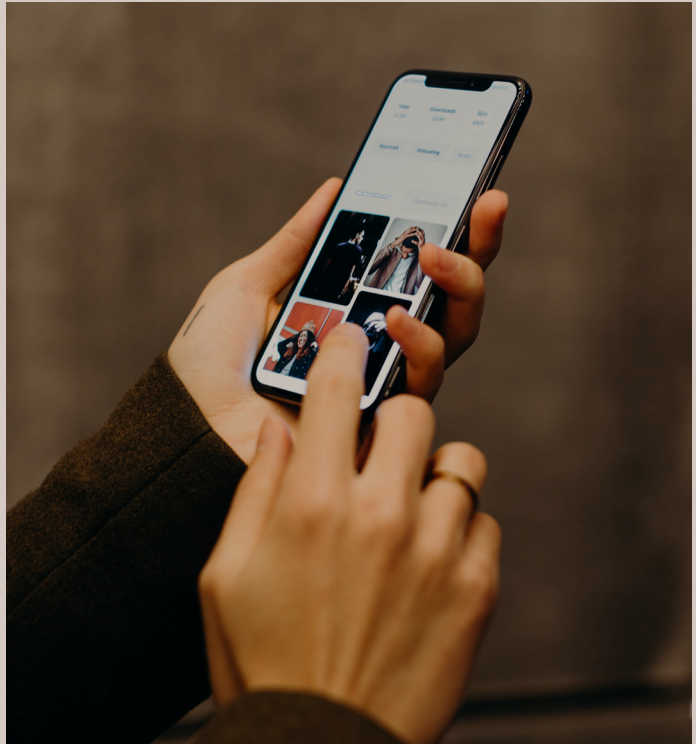# Planning A
Community Session

What is your objective?

Before you even pick up the phone or start sending emails to book your meetings or sessions, you must know what your objective is.
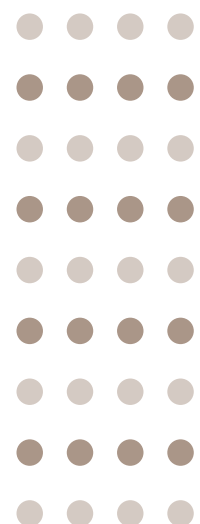
Engagement vs. Information

• Are you going to communities to get their feedback on an important topic?

• Are you hosting an engagement or information session, to explain an aspect of your work to community members?

Whether it is giving, or getting information, there are always going to be important take-aways that all parties need. Ensure that you know what that is and how you need to collect the information.

5 W's: Who, What, When, Where & Why... & How

These are all important questions to ask yourself when planning a community session.

WHO needs to hear this information?

It may be the Chief and Council of a community, it may be the whole community, or it may be an organization that works on behalf of the communities.

WHO needs to be informed?

Ensure that you inform the community Chiefs and Councils that you would like to go to their community.

Once you have their approval they will often recommend an individual in their community that you should work with to help coordinate and promote the event. Be aware that the Chief and Council will likely get asked questions, before and after, so it is important that they are also well informed. Often we recommend holding Chief & Council sessions before the any broader community sessions are considered.

WHAT are you talking about, and what methods will you be using to engage the audience?

WHEN does this need to be done by?

Be mindful that many Mi'kmaw organizations work operate under April 1st – March 31st fiscal year funding. They too will often be trying to conduct sessions and engage communities especially nearing the end of the fiscal year.

WHERE are you holding these sessions?

Think beyond the parameters of our Mi'kmaw communities. For example, what about engaging the Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre to hear from those who live in the urban area.

When planning community engagement ensure that all targeted groups are reached. For example, when you go to Wasoqopa'q (Acadia), make sure that you also include stops at their other satellite communities.

HOW to inform your audience:

- Posters
- Social media (Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, YouTube)
- Share posters in community locations /buildings/newsletter
- Email
- Phone calls
- Mi'kmaq Maliseet Nation News announcement

Planning & Logistics

Where do I start?

This is a comprehensive list of tasks and action items that need to be completed when planning a community session. It serves as a guide so you can take all the necessary steps to ensure nothing is overlooked.

This checklist includes action items that should be completed before, during and after the event.


Coordinating the event:

- Do you have proper authorizations or approvals for your meeting? Do you have Chief and Council approval before conducting your session?
- Know your objective/goal
- Set a date and time
- Book venue and any necessary catering
- Invite attendees/promote the event
- Arrange event logistics
- Follow-up after event

Make a list of what will be needed, where you'll need support, who you will be asking to help you and building a process so that you can ensure that things are being done, deadlines are being met, everything is being taken care of. This list may feel extensive, but it is best to be prepared!

What to bring?

- **Technology** – laptop, projector, recorder (and batteries), slide remote, screen, extension cords, microphones and speakers. Always be prepared to provide your presentation offline and without the support of technology. The technological infrastructure may be different in each community.
- **Materials** – As examples, presentations, handouts, pens and notepad, (if applicable), door prizes and tickets, banners, flags, biographies for speakers.
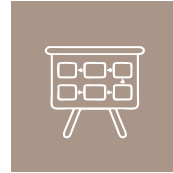- **Personnel** – notetaker, facilitator.
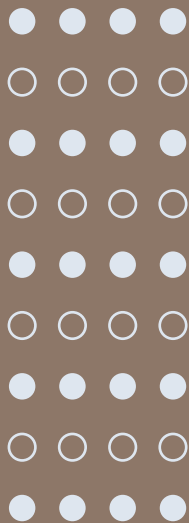
Roles & Responsibilities

Before the session:

1. All necessary parties informed?
2. Have posters been developed to shared and promote your event?
3. Follow up with communities to ensure they shared posters or posts for the event
4. Materials are developed and ready to go
5. Bookings have been made for location, food, facilitators, etc.

Day of session:

At least 30 minutes before participants arrive, room and technology should be set up:

1. Set-up seating, head table, podium, microphone(s), laptop, projector, technology, presentation, flip charts, food and drink, if applicable
2. Hang any posters/maps, or put up banners /flags, if required
3. Set-up registration table with kits, pens and door prize tickets
4. Test technology
5. Provide bios to facilitator
6. Give a bottle of water to presenters speakers (or let them know they are available)
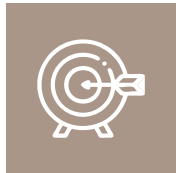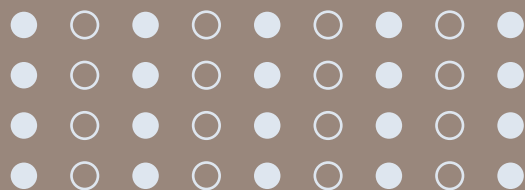
During a session:

1. Registration desk – hand out materials and tickets
2. Introduce speakers.
3. Present information
4. Ask questions
5. Take notes of discussion
6. Distribute door prizes, if appropriate

Immediately after the session:

1. Take down posters/banners, flags, etc.
2. Pack up laptop, projector and other equipment and materials
3. Help clean up the room

Post community visit

1. Follow-up email or survey, if needed
2. Respond to any unanswered questions
3. Relay any messages received to appropriate team members
4. Write report, if needed, and share with Chief and Council

Know Your Audience

Knowing your audience helps you figure out what format or content might best resonate with them. For example, an event geared towards youth may look very different than an event for Elders. The tone, set-up, activities, or even the food and drinks served could look very different.

Knowing what best appeals to your audience can also include getting familiar with the community you will be visiting. Are there preferred places to hold events in that community? What is the best time to hold the event to get a good turnout?

Get familiar with, and leverage "Community Champions". Many "champions" can be identified by Chief and Council and others known in community. They can be a great resource for providing community specific background info, context, advice and guidance.

Community champions can also be helpful in:

- Recruitment - getting people out to your meeting and sharing around the community.
- Breaking the ice at your event
- Facilitating conversations
- Recommendations for guest speakers: subject matter experts, language speakers (as applicable), etc.
- Protocol – Elder, opening prayer, smudge, tobacco, gifting, door prizes, consulting fees
- Food arrangements (when possible, support local community businesses)
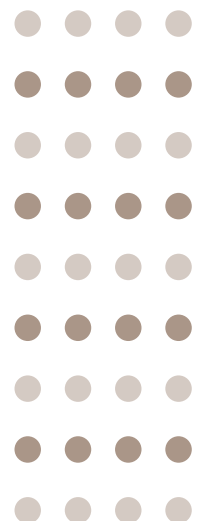
Grand Council & Elders

Grand Council and Elders are so important for sharing knowledge. Here are some helpful tips for engaging Grand Council and Elders:


- Notify Grand Chief and Kji-Keptin.
- Send request to Chief and Council for list of Elders in respective communities.
- Email/call each person to make sure they have the correct information.
- Be informed! Be able to explain what you would like them to share.
- Is it a sensitive topic? Let them share their experiences with respect.
- Know their dietary, accommodation, and travel needs.
- Do round table introductions.
- Have copies of agenda and presentations printed for them.
- Arrive early.
- Ensure there is tea, coffee, water, diet pop and healthy snacks.
- Follow up and thank them for their time.
- If cheques are to be made for attendees, get correct information.
- Always be kind and respectful.

Keep in mind, most of this information can broadly apply to any audience as well.

Best Practices

- Follow-up and check-in on meeting arrangements – space, catering, technology, agenda, protocol.
- NEVER rely on technology – always have a back up plan.
  - Print out your presentations.
  - Have some extra handouts.
  - Prepare some questions or conversation starters.
- Be well prepared and have a plan… but understand you may have to pivot and adjust.
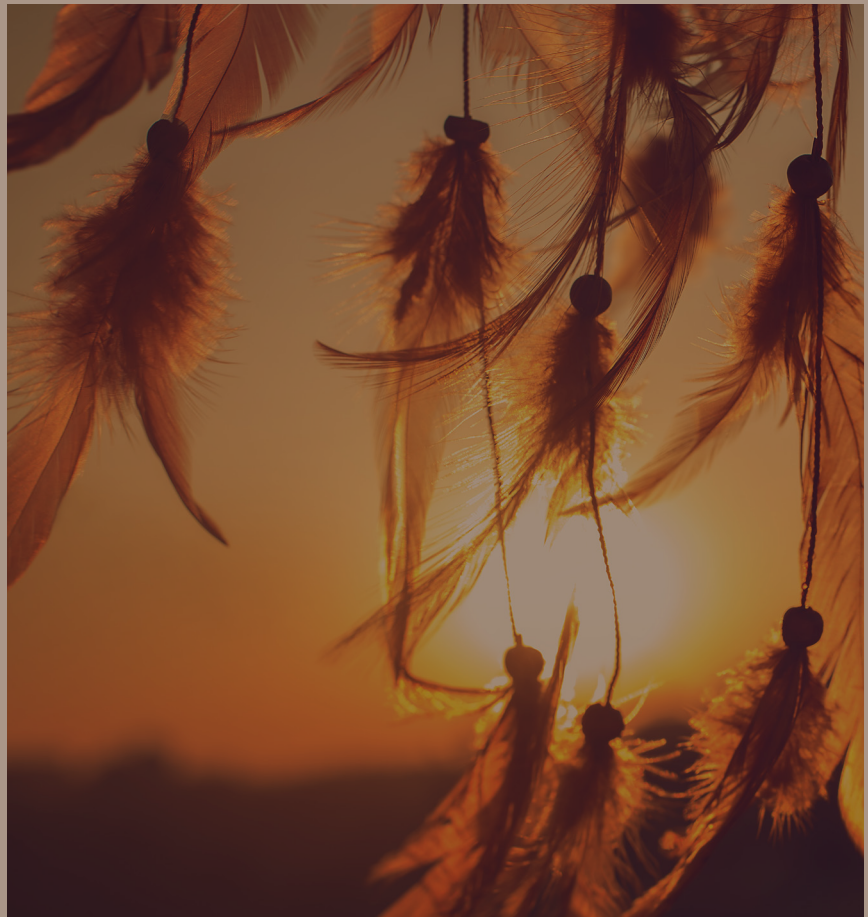
Understanding how to approach Mi'kmaw communities
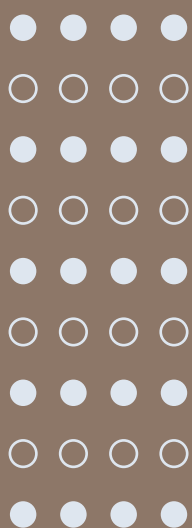
- If it is helpful, look into bringing in community facilitators to help.
- Smile and welcome people; make introductions; direct people to food and drinks.
- Build the relationships before you need them.
  - Community champions, points of conduct
- Ensure you begin with protocols - Elders, prayers, shared values.
  - Outline group expectations - what they need to have successful meeting outcomes
  - Share the agenda and note how much time you have.
- Be open, vulnerable, honest, and kind - human connection and passion vs "it's my job."
- Be encouraging of others viewpoints - accept people where they are are; summerize as you go.
- Take the time it takes.
- Be patient and respectful with speakers; pause/take extra time to ensure people can share.
- Thank/praise/validate people for their contributions.
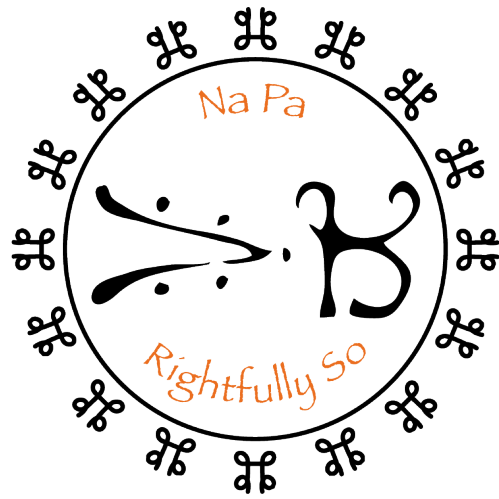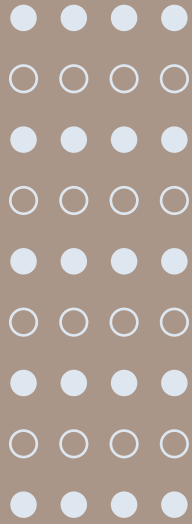
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This document was prepared by the team at Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn and includes best practices that we take within our organization when engaging our Mi'kmaw communities. We always encourage any outside organization or entity to work with the communities directly to learn the protocols and procedures that want to see undertaken by different people, at different times. Working directly with communities is always important.