



CULTURE, HERITAGE, ARCHAEOLOGY AND TOURISM STRATEGIC PLAN

Maw-lukutijik Saqmaq

July 2026

MAW-LUKUTIJIK SAQMAQ

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Preamble

In 2015, the Maw-lukutijik Saqmaq launched the Culture, Heritage and Archaeology Strategic Plan, a landmark document that affirmed Mi'kmaw as the rightful authorities over our own heritage, language, and cultural expressions. Developed through extensive engagement with Elders, knowledge keepers, artists, and community leaders, the plan reflected a shared vision: to protect, celebrate, and advance Mi'kmaw ways for generations to come.

The 2015 plan established five strategic priorities that have guided our work over the past decade:

- **Telling Our Mi'kmaw Stories** – Ensuring narratives are expressed through the Mi'kmaw language and worldview, shaped by Mi'kmaw voices.
- **Cultural Ownership** – Reclaiming guardianship of archaeological, ethnographic, and linguistic heritage.
- **Self-Governance and Co-Management** – Asserting jurisdiction over cultural assets and building equitable partnerships with governments and industry.
- **Capacity Building** – Strengthening community and institutional skills to lead cultural stewardship.
- **Expression, Celebration and Promotion** – Integrating Mi'kmaw culture into public life and the tourism economy through collaboration and representation.

These priorities laid a strong foundation for advancements in our cultural renewal, governance, sovereignty, expression and agency. Our collective ambition to reclaim Mi'kmaw authority as keepers of our culture, history, and language has steadily grown.

Culture, heritage, archaeology and the healthy growth of Mi'kmaw cultural tourism are critical to our Nation's strengthening, as well as in protecting and implementing our treaty and aboriginal rights. The renewal of our strategic approach in these sectors is grounded in careful planning, evolving our governance capacity, and the development of protocols and other tools that support Mi'kmaw cultural sovereignty, authenticity, and long-term growth of our Nation.



Mi'kmaw Nation Led Cultural Protection Frameworks

- *Culture, Heritage and Archaeology Strategic Plan* - 2015
- *Treaty Education Nova Scotia* - 2015
- *Principles of Mi'kmaw Ancestral Remains Protocols* – 2016
- *Maw-Kleyu'kik Knijannaq Child and Family Initiative* – 2018
- *Cultural Tourism Strategy for the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia* - 2019
- *Authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Guidelines for Nova Scotia* – 2021
- *Protect Our Culture: An Intellectual Property Guide for Mi'kmaq* – 2022
- *Netawey App* – 2022
- *Mi'kmaw Language Act* -2022
- *Mi'kmawitasik: Mi'kmaw Made (Authenticity Brand)* – 2023
- *Research Principles and Protocols – Mi'kmaw Ethics Watch Toolkit* – 2023
- *Mi'kmaw Archaeological Protocols* – 2024
- *Mi'kmaw Language ReVITALization Strategy* - 2024–2030
- *Toqi'maliaptmu'k Parks Canada Co-Management Agreement* - 2025

All 13 Mi'kmaw communities have advanced significant cultural, heritage, archaeological, and tourism initiatives - from language revitalization to land-based learning, cultural centres, and major tourism experiences such as Eskasoni Cultural Journeys, Membertou Heritage Park, and Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre.

A network of Mi'kmaw organizations—including KMK, Mi'kmawey Debert Cultural Centre (MDCC), Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network (NSITEN), Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK), Union of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq (UNSM), Confederacy of Mi'kmaw Nations (CMN), Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources (UINR), Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre (MNFC), and Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA) - support this work through cultural programming, stewardship, community services, arts and language initiatives, and advocacy for Mi'kmaw rights and jurisdiction.

Core Mi'kmaw principles—**Netukulimk**, **Etuaptmumk**, and **Msit No'kmaq**—provide the shared foundation that embeds authentic Mi'kmaw culture and heritage in policy, governance, and sectoral decision-making and development. -making

Taken together, these accomplishments reflect a decade of intentional progress strengthening the Mi'kmaw Nation's cultural sovereignty and visibility. These efforts constitute a robust, culturally grounded national system to continue the work of protecting Mi'kmaw culture, heritage, and archaeology, and advance authentic Mi'kmaw cultural tourism and sovereignty across Nova Scotia.



Strategic Renewal

The renewed Strategic Plan builds on this foundation. It responds to new opportunities and challenges, reflects our deep commitment to self-determination, and charts a path for the next decade—one that ensures Mi'kmaw culture, heritage, and archaeology continue to thrive as living, dynamic expressions of who we are.

Central to this renewal were the inputs received from the 2025 Culture, Heritage, Archaeology, and Tourism (CHAT) Gathering, held on March 18th and 19th in Truro. This gathering brought together Council members, Mi'kmaw organizations, Elders, community members, cultural practitioners, and youth to lead and engage in meaningful dialogue on Culture, Heritage, Archaeology, and Tourism. The event provided an open space for knowledge-sharing, reflection, and collective effort designed to shape the new strategic plan. Their insights and guidance on protecting and using archaeological sites, safeguarding traditional language, enhancing cultural tourism, practicing *Etuaptmunk*, and ensuring youth development and support directly informed the priorities and strategic direction, the keystones, of this renewed plan.

This Strategic Plan is a testament to the value and impacts of those conversations, with each keystone grounded firmly in the voices of the people of the Mi'kmaw Nation in Nova Scotia. It affirms our responsibility to uphold and steward Mi'kmaw cultural heritage in all its forms, ensuring that the generations of today and tomorrow inherit a living culture rooted in a healthy and distinct Mi'kmaw identity, resilience, ceremony, and collective aspiration.



The Five keystones of our Strategic Plan

A keystone—the central stone of an arch—symbolizes strength, stability, and the connection of all other elements. Five Keystones emerged through the renewal process, each supporting and strengthening the structure of the Strategic Plan.

1

Governance and Policy

This Keystone strengthens Mi'kmaw self-governance by embedding Mi'kmaw laws (Netukulimk, Etuaptmumk, Msit No'kmaq) into all sectors, affirming Mi'kma'ki as the foundation for decision-making, and ensuring consistent, Nation-level policies, laws, standards, and co-management frameworks. It reinforces unified governance across the 13 communities and develops protections for authentic cultural expression.



2

Cultural Sovereignty & Mi'kmaw Ways

This Keystone prioritizes cultural authority by advancing repatriation and repatriation, asserting jurisdiction over cultural knowledge and belongings, safeguarding intellectual property, centering Mi'kmaw language in all cultural work, and ensuring proper protection, stewardship and interpretation of heritage and archaeological resources.

It also advances research, digital heritage and IPCA-based stewardship rooted in Mi'kmaw governance and knowledge systems.

Central to this keystone is the principle that Mi'kmaw cultural heritage must be created, directed, interpreted, and managed by the Mi'kmaw Nation and our communities. Without this leadership, cultural representations risk being inaccurate, inauthentic or shaped by external perspectives.



3

Capacity and Expression

This Keystone strengthens the cultural, educational, and organizational capacity of the Mi'kmaw Nation through infrastructure development, culturally grounded training, leadership development for knowledge holders, and youth-focused, land-based and language-based learning. It also supports creative expression by investing in Mi'kmaw artists, performers, and cultural practitioners.

Care, custody and control of Mi'kmaw archaeology, heritage sites, and cultural resources must rest with the Mi'kmaw Nation and our communities. Building our capacity by including training and technical expertise development is essential to ensuring that we are equipped to lead, manage, and share best practices in heritage protection.

Mi'kmaw cultural heritage extends beyond physical artifacts. While current practices often focus on tangible elements such as tools and archaeological materials, equal—if not greater—attention must be given to intangible cultural values, including:

- Oral histories and stories
- Songs, ceremonies, and teachings
- Language and knowledge systems
- Memory, relationships, and lived experience



4

Tourism Development

This Keystone supports the growth of authentic, Mi'kmaw-owned tourism enterprises through culturally grounded business development, funding support, and unified, Nationwide branding and marketing. It also ensures visitor education, responsible tourism practices, culturally aligned site management, and strategic partnerships that uphold Mi'kmaw priorities.

Mi'kmaw cultural heritage is a vital pillar of Nova Scotia's history and identity and represents a meaningful opportunity for sustainable tourism development.

As tourism opportunities expand however, it is essential that the Mi'kmaq remain vigilant in how cultural heritage is used and represented. The protection of our intangible cultural values must be prioritized, as these are fundamental to Mi'kmaw cultural expression and identity.

Cultural heritage must not be over-commercialized or altered to meet external expectations. Doing so risks undermining its authenticity, integrity, and significance.



5

Sustainability

This Keystone embeds Netukulimk in cultural, environmental, and tourism planning by protecting land and water, fostering ecotourism and land-based experiences, and integrating digital tools into cultural stewardship. It also advances long-term financial sustainability through strengthened funding models, Nation-led revenue generation, and monitoring systems that track cultural integrity, environmental impact, and community benefit.

Cultural landscapes are not simply geographic spaces. As living records of Mi'kmaw history and relationships with the land, these places are filled with meaning. This perspective reflects a dynamic interaction between people and environment, where culture is continuously expressed, practiced, transmitted and continue to exist.

Recognizing the land as a living cultural landscape ensures that heritage is not treated as static or confined to the past, but as an evolving and current expression of identity and continuity.

Each of the five strategic priorities outlined in the *2015 CHA Strategic Plan* relates to at least one of our *2026 CHAT Strategic Plan's* Keystones, with the fifth Keystone an essential and, necessarily outlined, strategic need. To ensure that our renewed ***Culture, Heritage, Archaeology and Tourism (CHAT) Strategic Plan*** is upheld and effective, the Maw-lukutijik Saqmaq also recommended outlining next steps through *2026 CHAT Implementation Guidelines*. The intention is that these implementation guidelines will be assessed annually, by all partner organizations, for progress, lessons and alignment as we build and strengthen our Mi'kmaw Nation's governance needs and sectoral development in culture, heritage, archaeology and tourism.





Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn

Mi'kmaq Rights Initiative

Our Rights. Our Future.