

KMK Newsletter

July 2026



MESSAGE FROM KMK

Happy Summer! We're working to continue our quarterly newsletters again this year, with this being our second issue of 2026.

Our newsletters provide updates on what our team has been working on over the past few months, so if you see anything that you'd like to learn more about, as always, please feel free to reach out to our team!



MESSAGE FROM KMK'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



As part of orientating myself into the role of Executive Director at KMK, I felt it was important to take the time to sit with those who helped shape the path that brought us to where we are today. In doing so, I had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Viola Robinson, one of the key leaders and Knowledge Holders involved in the development of KMK and broader Mi'kmaw governance work.

For me, this was never simply an administrative exercise. It was an opportunity to learn from the past so we can move forward in a good way for the future. As Mi'kmaq, we have always understood the importance of listening to our Elders, seeking guidance from those who carry lived experience, teachings and historical knowledge. That approach is aligned with who we are as a people and how we continue to ground ourselves in Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and doing. Throughout these discussions, several important teachings stood out to me. One of the clearest messages was that the work of KMK and the Assembly has always been rooted in nationhood, unity, and Treaty implementation. The Treaties already exist. Our work is not to rewrite or modernize those Treaties into something different, but rather to ensure they are respected, implemented and meaningfully recognized as they were originally intended.

Dr. Robinson also reinforced that KMK was created as a Mi'kmaw-driven institution grounded in collective governance and the advancement of Mi'kmaw rights. The organization was never intended to replace community voices or leadership, but rather to support the Chiefs and the Nation through coordinated implementation work, research, negotiations, and relationship-building.

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Another important lesson was the understanding that governance within Mi'kmaw society is deeply relational. Leadership is not simply about authority or administration. It is about accountability to the people, maintaining respectful relationships, creating space for voices to be heard, and ensuring that our work remains connected to community and future generations.

The discussions also highlighted the importance of the Five Pillars as foundational principles intended to guide Mi'kmaw governance, decision-making, and implementation work. These principles remind us that our governance systems must remain grounded in Mi'kmaw values, collective identity and nationhood while navigating the realities of today's governance environment. At the same time, there were honest reflections about the challenges our organizations continue to face. Like many Indigenous institutions, KMK operates within complex external systems involving federal funding structures, consultation pressures, and evolving government relationships. The teachings reinforced the importance of continually re-centering our work around Mi'kmaw values, Treaty relationships, communication, transparency, and community trust.

One of the biggest takeaways for me personally was the reminder that nationhood is not just a political concept. It is a responsibility. It requires us to think beyond individual communities and continually work toward strengthening the collective voice and future of the Mi'kmaw Nation as a whole. I want to sincerely thank Dr. Viola Robinson for taking the time to share her knowledge, experiences and teachings with me. These conversations have helped ground my approach to leadership and have reinforced the importance of carrying this work forward in a way that respects our history, our Treaties, our governance traditions, and our people.

Wela'liog.

World Biodiversity Forum in Davos, Switzerland

In June, Sherilyn Young (third from the left in bottom right photo) from our Consultation Team participated in the World Biodiversity Forum in Davos, Switzerland alongside members of Unama'ki Institute of Natural Resources. Wela'liek to thanks from UINR and Sherilyn for representing Mi'kma'ki at this global forum!



Marking 300 Years Since Signing the 1726 Treaty

A few KMK team members were on-site in Annapolis Royal on June 4th for the anniversary of the signing of the 1726 Treaty, signed right here (picture with the Mi'kmaw flag flying) 300 years ago.

Our team was part of the event's Steering Committee and had a booth with Parks Canada, talking about the collaborative archaeology projects we've done together. Wela'liek to the Grand Council, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and all partnering organizations for bringing everyone together, Nation-to-Nation to commemorate the signing of the 1726 Treaty.



Moose Webinar

On June 24, 2026, KMK and UINR co-hosted a Moose Webinar to talk to community members again about the moose population. The session began with KMK providing data from the survey they shared on Facebook last fall, about the moose hunt.

In that survey, participants clearly voiced that there is clear tension between the need for conservation and the desire to exercise Treaty Rights, especially for food security and keeping our culture alive. There were also a number of responses that talked specifically about how we should return to harvesting, once the population is stable to do so.

Over 88% said the decline in the moose population changed the way they think about harvesting in the future. There were suggestions of a more controlled and accountable harvest, for the Moose Management Committee to look at stronger enforcement and harvesting limits - including the protection of cows and calves. In fact, 66% said that once population numbers were high enough, the Treaty harvest needed to be different from how it once was. Many of these same thoughts were expressed in the webinar in June. Not only did attendees express their frustration with not being able to hunt moose, but others also talked about how worried they were about the health of the species.

During the webinar, Allison Bernard, Wildlife Lead for KMK, and Clifford Paul, Moose Management Coordinator, answered questions and led a discussion with community members on their thoughts of harvesting moose, now and in the future. What we know for sure coming out of this session is that more discussions need to happen. Suggestions from community members and harvesters who attended the session ranged from no harvesting in 2026, to limited or controlled harvesting. Both perspectives bought for different challenges and concerns.

In June, information from the session was shared with the Assembly and their direction was to have the Moose Management Committee - which is made up of representatives from KMK, UINR, CMM and community - to meet again very soon to look at the science and the numbers to really figure out where we are this year, and how the Mi'kmaq should decide to move forward.



MOU Signed with the Whale Sanctuary Project

The Assembly and the Whale Sanctuary Project have formalized their commitment to working together by signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), with commitments to collaborating on educational outreach and research opportunities, while recognizing the Mi'kmaw principle of Etuaptmumk (Two-eyed seeing) and confirming opportunities for future collaboration. With a shared respect for the Wksitqamuk (Earth) and Mi'kmaw worldviews about the environment and all living things, this MOU serves as recognition of shared values in respect to marine animals and their long-term welfare in Mi'kma'ki.

"We're pleased to further the relationship we're building with the Whale Sanctuary Project to protect marine life," said Chief Wilbert Marshall, Natural Resources Lead for the Assembly. "Through knowledge sharing, the integration of our values and understandings, we hope that this sanctuary will be a place to learn, grow and advocate for these important species, for generations to come."

"Today's agreement reflects a shared commitment to advancing education and related programming that respects both the science of animal welfare and the knowledge systems that have guided stewardship of these waters for generations" said Charles Vinick, Chief Executive Officer of the Whale Sanctuary Project. "This agreement with the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs codifies and strengthens the work we can do together to educate and communicate our shared respect for all life."

The Whale Sanctuary Project works to bring an end to the exploitation of captive cetaceans (whales and dolphins) and is creating North America's first coastal sanctuary for whales retired from aquariums and marine entertainment parks. With the MOU, the Assembly and the Whale Sanctuary Project hope to facilitate employment and skill-based training opportunities, as well as the integration and amplification of Mi'kmaw knowledge in education and outreach related to the sanctuary.

Construction mobilization is underway for the sanctuary in Port Hilford Bay, Nova Scotia, while the Whale Sanctuary Project continues to raise the capital funds to complete the sanctuary and welcome its first whale residents. Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn has been in active consultation on this project since 2021. In both western science and Mi'kmaw knowledge systems it is well understood that cetaceans are sentient, cognitively and emotionally complex beings. This MOU is a milestone for Mi'kma'ki as part of the global cetacean sanctuary movement and for re-building our relationship with the natural world and all our relations within it.

Whale Sanctuary Project Groundbreaking Ceremony

On June 16, KMK participated in the groundbreaking ceremony for the future Whale Sanctuary Project (WSP) seaside sanctuary in Port Hilford Bay, Nova Scotia. Since its inception, the Whale Sanctuary Project has been working to establish a permanent seaside sanctuary for whales and dolphins currently living in captivity, providing them with a safe habitat in the waters of Mi'kma'ki. The sanctuary will encompass more than 100 acres of protected ocean habitat, with depths reaching up to 18 metres.

Throughout the planning and development process, KMK has worked alongside WSP to incorporate Mi'kmaw values, laws, language, and governance into the project. This collaborative approach helps ensure the sanctuary reflects the cultural, environmental, and stewardship principles of Mi'kma'ki while supporting the long-term care and well-being of the animals that will one day call it home.

Photos courtesy of the Whale Sanctuary Project.

Top photo: Shauna-Lee Wright, KMK Governance Analyst, provided a welcome song.

Middle photo: Bec Borchert, KMK Marine Protected Areas Coordinator, provided opening remarks.

Bottom photo: Ceremonial shovels turned the soil to mark the upcoming start of construction.



Staff Spotlight: New Faces, New Roles & Achievements

There have been a few changes and additions to the KMK team, so we're taking the time to welcome or celebrate these awesome individuals!

Patrick Butler our Energy and Mines Advisor was recently promoted to Consultation Manager and will now help to oversee everything that happens in the Consultation Department.

Gerard Francis moved into the role of Parks Lead, reflecting the leadership he brings to Parks file.

Tracy Menge has had a title change from Benefits Officer to Manager of Partnerships and Arrangements, reflecting the growing scope of her work.

Greg Hart has been moved to the role of Manager of the Nova Scotia Power (NSP) file. All NSP-related work and employees now work with Greg.

Catherine Berliner's role as Manager of Governance has been updated to better reflect the scope and vision of the position. Cathy's new title is Director of Governance and Nationhood Renewal.

James McCarthy's role as Human Resources Executive has changed to Director of Human Resources and Organizational Wellness. Both Catherine and James will join the Senior Leadership Team.

Kiearra McPhee was the successful candidate for the Administrative Support, Generalist position. Welcome Kiearra!

Michael Basque joined KMK in June as our Fisheries Manager after working for several years for UNSM as the Assistant Manager of the TRP Fishery. Welcome, Mise'!!

Charles Harrington will join KMK in July to fill the role as Energy and Mines Advisor. We look forward to meeting Charles!

Twila Gaudet and **Heather MacLeod-Leslie** both celebrated milestones at KMK. Twila just marked 19 years with KMK, and Heather 18 years! Thank you both for your dedication and commitment to this work!

Sable Island Visit

Chief Rodney Peterson, KMK's Executive Director Nathan Sack, and members of KMK's consultation and governance teams had the opportunity to visit Sable Island National Park Reserve on July 6.

It was an incredible day and an unforgettable experience for everyone. The team had the chance to see Sable Island's iconic wild horses, grey seals, and the island's remarkable biodiversity firsthand.

KMK is grateful for the ongoing relationship we have built with Parks Canada, which provides the opportunity to send groups to Sable Island each year. Wela'liek, Parks Canada for making another amazing visit possible!



Centralization Research Update

The idea of Centralization was first proposed in 1918, but it was put aside after the First World War when cost-saving pressures eased. It was considered again during the Great Depression, but that attempt quickly failed. During the Second World War, the federal government revived the idea to reduce costs and limit its responsibility for supporting Mi'kmaw communities. In 1942, Canada adopted Centralization, aiming to move Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia onto two remote reserves: Eskasoni and Shubenacadie. The government planned to relocate more than 2,100 Mi'kmaq from about 19 communities, but only about half actually moved. By 1949, the policy was declared a failure and ended, though many Mi'kmaw families had already moved to Eskasoni and Shubenacadie.

In 2023, the Assembly tasked KMK with supporting the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia to seek an apology and financial compensation for the Centralization policy. Work began at that time to conduct interviews with Elders who experienced or remembered Centralization. Craig and Tyler, from our team, spoke to a number of people and recorded their stories about the impacts that Centralization had on them, their families, and their communities.

At the same time, historical research was conducted by a company out of Ottawa - Joan Holmes and Associates (JHA) - who reviewed thousands of pages of Senate and House of Commons meeting minutes from the 1940s and 50s, Library and Archives Canada (LAC) holdings, thesis documents by independent researchers, and our own interview transcripts. In late 2025, JHA delivered a 160+ page report, plus over 360 relevant historical documents as attachments. Some files were locked by the LAC, and we had to seek permission to access. We were not granted permission to access these files until after JHA finished their report. We then hired Lisa Patterson, a scholar who studied Centralization for her thesis, to review and report on the findings in those locked files. Lisa delivered her report in April 2026, which focused on employment difficulties because of Centralization.

Through our interview and research processes, members of the KMK team and of our Centralization Working Group have been repeatedly told that the Mi'kmaw Nation wants a meaningful apology from the Crown. The Mi'kmaq want (and deserve) compensation for the trauma suffered by Elders, as well as the lasting intergenerational effects of Centralization on Mi'kmaw society and culture, and economy. However, an apology remains a critical part of the healing and reconciliation process.

We also recognize that time is growing short for Mi'kmaw survivors of Centralization. Many of the Elders directly affected have now passed on and if we are to ensure that there are survivors who will hear the Crown apologize, the Centralization file must keep moving forward. We are now at a stage where we can bring our position and information forward to the federal government through the Rights Implementation process.

In the coming months, the KMK team will be pushing for a side table through the Made-In-Nova Scotia Process to talk about Centralization and at the same time, look into hiring a law firm to begin a full legal review of the materials we have collected. We will also be continuing conversations in community. We want to still hear from community Elders to see what they would like to see in an apology and what they hope the federal government's response will be.

If you would like to provide thoughts, or be involved in that conversation, please reach out to us at info@mikmaqrights.com to by calling 902-843-3880, asking to talk to Craig or Crystal about Centralization.

Naming of CCGS Naalak

Nappaaluk

We were deeply honoured to support the naming celebration of the CCGS Naalak Nappaaluk - a new Canadian Coast Guard science vessel carrying a name with profound meaning and legacy. Naalak Nappaaluk was a highly respected Inuk Elder, Knowledge Keeper, and educator whose impact continues to be felt across Nunavik and beyond.



Pictured is the ship's sponsor, Qiallak Nappaaluk Qumaaluk, Naalak's youngest child, whose lifelong dedication to education, culture, and community continues her dad's legacy in such a powerful way.

Wela'liog to our incredible drummers, Eastern Eagle, and Kalolin Johnson who shared our language in singing O Canada at the event. This event was a beautiful moment of connection, culture, pride, and respect between the Mi'kmaq and the Innu of the North.



Summer Shutdown

The KMK offices will be closed from July 24 to August 9 for our annual summer shutdown.

We wish you all a happy and safe summer!



N'multis aqq Wela'lin

To stay up to date, check out our website at www.mikmagrights.com, find us on Facebook @Mi'kmaqRights Initiative or follow us on Instagram @KMKNO1752.