



Nova Scotia

“The Province of Nova Scotia continues to trailblaze our country for the 231 Calls for Justice. There is so much work to do! In my heart, I know that with continued support, a true path of advocacy, and collaboration, we will continue to lead and show the rest of our Nation what true reconciliation looks like.”

Chief Annie Bernard-Daisley, Lead Chief, Mi'kmaw Women, Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs

“Responding to the Calls for Justice is something that we need to do together. The phrase ‘nothing about us, without us’ reminds us to centre the experiences and wisdom of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. I value the strong leadership and dedication of Mi'kmaw women as we build our forward path in Nova Scotia”.

Hon. Kelly Regan, Minister Responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Introductory Statement

We honour all survivors, family members, those lost to violence, and everyone affected by ongoing experiences of violence. Before, during, and after the National Inquiry, the Mi'kmaq and the Province of Nova Scotia embraced a collaborative approach that kept families and survivors at the centre of our work. We have a strong relationship, built on respect, understanding, and shared work over many years. This foundation includes formal and informal structures and relationships that have helped us to have meaningful conversations about what needs to change to improve health, social, and economic opportunities, and outcomes. We are committed to eliminating violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and strengthening community safety and wellbeing.

Over many years, we have strengthened capacity and relationships to advance our collective work, supported families, participated in roundtables, held marches and vigils to remember those who are missing or who have been murdered. The Mi'kmaw Women Leaders Network is an example of a strong, organic partnership between Indigenous women's organizations, women leaders, and provincial government, created to ensure that families are safe and supported, before, during, and after the Inquiry. This Network hosted ceremonies to welcome families and Commissioners to the first hearing held in a First Nation community – in Membertou in October 2017 – and continues to support families. Our collaborative FILU Community Outreach Specialist model meets families where they are, in ways that are culturally appropriate, trauma informed, and built on trust.



Current Progress

The principles that guided our approach throughout the Inquiry – honouring relationships, keeping families at the centre, and collaboration and partnership – continue to guide our work and actions taken to date to respond to the Calls for Justice in Nova Scotia. Following the release of the Final Report, respective women leaders from the Province, Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs, and the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA) met to determine the best path forward. We agreed to a collaborative approach that centres Indigenous women's leadership – a commitment that acknowledges their rightful power and place. NSNWA has been identified as the lead and is working closely with Mi'kmaq families, communities, and organizations, as well as the NS Status of Women office and the Office of L'nu Affairs. This approach builds on grassroots experiences and engages partners to deepen connections and identify meaningful actions to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Indigenous women, girls, 2SLGBTQQA+ people, families, and communities.

While we develop our forward path together, we continue to work to address issues identified in the Final Report – and by the Mi'kmaq – in a collaborative way. In 2019, the Province secured stable operational funding for the NSNWA. This commitment ensures sustainability for the organization to continue to develop responsive, trauma-informed, Indigenous-women led programs and supports, and leverage project-based funding from a stable foundation. For example, NSNWA secured funding from

WAGE to develop a Nova Scotia Indigenous Human Trafficking Strategy over the next three years. In 2019, the Mi'kmaq Native Friendship Centre opened the first Indigenous second-stage housing project in Nova Scotia, which offers transitional housing and culturally appropriate supports for Indigenous women and children leaving domestic violence. In 2020, the Province supported re-opening the Jane Paul Indigenous Women's Resource Centre, which provides supports to Indigenous women off-reserve in Sydney, many of whom live with complex and intersecting realities of homelessness, poverty, violence, addiction, and multiple system interactions.

These commitments are steps in the right direction – and we know there is more to be done. Visionary initiatives such as the NSNWA's Resilience Centre – a space for Indigenous women-led, trauma-informed, culturally appropriate services and supports – will support long-term healing, wellness, and self-determination. The Mi'kmaq, Canada, and Nova Scotia are engaged in significant transformation efforts – including Maw-kleyu-kik Knijannaq (Mi'kmaq Child Welfare Initiative), and the development of Tajikeimik (Mi'kmaq Health & Wellness Authority) – that aim to address systemic factors that contribute to health and social inequalities.

We have seen the positive impact of such agreements on educational outcomes in our province (Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey, the Mi'kmaw Education Authority), and continue to seek opportunities for structural, legislative, and policy frameworks that will write a new chapter in our relationship.

We are working to connect and integrate our responses and actions into important and strategic provincial initiatives – such as *Standing Together*, our action plan to prevent domestic violence, our Poverty Reduction Strategy, our Culture Action Plan, Treaty Education, and the development of an Indigenous Justice Action Plan – leveraging opportunities for holistic and meaningful change.

Priorities and Next Steps

Collaborative engagement to guide our implementation plan is ongoing, and is focused on key areas:

- ★ Engagement with family members, survivors, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people to gather perspectives on needs, opportunities, and priorities specific to Nova Scotia. Annual family and survivor gatherings continue to ground what matters most.
- ★ Research embracing a nationhood approach, traditional research methods, and a comprehensive environmental scan to identify alignments, gaps, and preliminary recommendations.

- ★ Workshops with leadership, community organizations, and partners. Coordination with the Mi'kmaq-Nova Scotia-Canada Tripartite Forum to align actions and complement TRC priorities.
- ★ Raise awareness of the context and impacts of MMIWG in Nova Scotia, through development of a communications strategy and materials.

Closing Statement

We are on a path to write a new story together – one that centres Indigenous women's leadership, strengthens relationships, and focuses on healing, wellness, and resilience. The examples shared in this document are part of our story so far – of working together to find new ways to address root causes and challenges, and build on strength, courage, and hope. We commit to continuing to work collaboratively and holistically on interrelated priorities – health, wellness, culture, safety, gender-based violence, economic security, justice – to build a better future. In creating the right forward path for Nova Scotia, we know that collaboration with partners, including Indigenous, provincial, territorial, and federal governments, will be required. We will continue to seek opportunities for partnership and collective action to build a country that is safe for everyone.

