

# Government of Nova Scotia

## Introduction

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| <p><i>"It's been an exciting year for the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia, with substantial strides made toward reconciliation. NS Native Women received funding for the building of a Resilience Centre. Historic transformations were made in health with Tajikemik, and in culture revitalization with the passing of Language Act, recognizing the Mi'kmaq language as the first language. We know we have more work to do, however unity and love will guide our path. Our ancestors are shining down with smiles and gratitude. Let's continue this walk that we are on together."</i></p> <p>Chief Annie Bernard-Daisley<br/>Co-Chair, Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq Chiefs</p> | <p><i>"It took 50 years, a dream come true that our founder, Helen Martin, first president of the NS Native Women's Association hoped would one day happen! It has happened that Indigenous Women's voices can be heard across our Nation, at last! Past Presidents have worked hard, and the membership continues to work hard to make sure our first President's dream stays alive! As President of NSNWA, I am thrilled to be celebrating this year's 50th anniversary of NSNWA!"</i></p> <p>Bernadette Marshall<br/>President, Nova Scotia Native Women's Association</p> | <p><i>"Together, with our Mi'kmaq partners, we are on a path to building a better future for Indigenous women and girls and two-spirit people. Through our collaborative approach we continue to actively work to connect, align, and integrate our responses and actions to the priorities in the MMIWG National Action Plan."</i></p> <p>Hon. Karla MacFarlane<br/>Minister Responsible for the Advisory Council on the Status of Women, Minister of L'nu Affairs</p> |
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The Province of Nova Scotia is committed to eliminating violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and continues to work in partnership with the Mi'kmaq to take meaningful action in Nova Scotia. We are pleased to provide a joint update on our progress. The Mi'kmaq and the Province have embraced a collaborative approach to responding to the 231 Calls for Justice through the National Inquiry. Families and survivors are at the centre of our work. We are walking together in partnership to address priorities identified by the Mi'kmaq, in the Final Report, and in the National Action Plan in a collaborative way. We honour and acknowledge all survivors, family members, those lost to violence, and everyone affected by ongoing experiences of violence.

## Highlights

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The principles that guided our approach throughout the Inquiry – honouring relationships, keeping families at the centre, and collaboration and partnership – continue to shape our work and actions taken to date to respond to the Calls for Justice in Nova Scotia. Through a holistic approach, progress is being made on interconnected, foundational areas such as health and wellness, culture and language, child welfare, housing, gender-based violence, and economic security. The safety of Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people remain a critical priority on our pathway to reconciliation.

On July 29, 2022, Nova Scotia and Canada announced more than \$8 million to support the construction of the Nova Scotia Native Women’s Association Resilience Centre in Millbrook First Nation. This project represents hope and a new chapter – focused on healing, strength, and resilience – led by Indigenous women. It means that the Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people will have a safe space where they can receive the trauma-informed, and culturally appropriate, healing and wellness programs they need to live happier, healthier lives. It also addresses the systemic barriers to enhancing safety, wellbeing, and economic security of Indigenous women, girls, boys, 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, and their families. The Resilience Centre is a symbol of commitment and action in response to the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls for Justice and to advancing reconciliation.

On Treaty Day, October 1, 2022 the *Mi’kmaw Language Act* was proclaimed. The Act recognizes Mi’kmaw as Nova Scotia’s first language and will support efforts to preserve and promote it now and for future generations. This work reinforces the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action and aligns with MMIWG Calls for Justice, to ensure meaningful access to language, culture, and identity as a foundation for resilience and safety.

In November 2022, Nova Scotia hosted the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Federal, Provincial, and Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for the Status of Women annual meeting – capped by the historic announcement of the first National Action Plan to End Gender-based Violence (the National Action Planna). Pillar Four of the National Action Plan, Implementing Indigenous Led Approaches, specifically reflects the importance of preventing and addressing gender-based violence against Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people. The National Action Plan and the MMIWG2S+ National Action Plan are aligned and mutually reinforcing. They aim to prevent GBV, address its root causes, and provide better supports for victims, survivors, and their families. The province has conducted engagements with Indigenous organizations to ensure their knowledge and experience informs the implementation of the National Action Plan in Nova Scotia.

On April 21, 2023, thirteen Mi'kmaq First Nation Chiefs, the Federal Minister of Indigenous Services and Nova Scotia's Minister of Health and Wellness signed a trilateral Memorandum of Understanding on the next steps to help transform the design and delivery of health services for Mi'kmaq throughout the province. Working on behalf of the Mi'kmaq in Nova Scotia, Tajikeimik is a Mi'kmaw health and wellness organization that is guided by the 13 Chiefs and Health Directors in the province and the Mi'kmaq Grand Council.

Halifax will welcome 5,000 Indigenous athletes from 756 First Nations communities to participate in the North American Indigenous Games in July of 2023. NS is working closely with North American Indigenous Games 2023 to support the success of the games and to ensure athletes feel welcomed and safe.

## Progress

Nova Scotia continues to collaborate with Mi'kmaw partners, through the leadership of the Nova Scotia Native Women's Association (NSNWA). Through engagement with families and grassroots organizations, NSNWA hosted a Mawio'mi in August 2022. This gathering was an Indigenous-led engagement to gather knowledge, experience, and solutions to inform future actions, through ceremony and healing.

Nova Scotia continues to fund the NSNWA and the Jane Paul Indigenous Women's Resource Centre. Providing core funding to NSNWA is important to enhancing their capacity to focus on strategic outlook of services for Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+. NSNWA was one of the Women serving organizations that received funding under the Province's Investments announced on March 8, 2023-International Women's Day to support and strengthen the sector.

The Jane Paul Indigenous Women's Resource Centre 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. Jane Paul Indigenous Women's Resource Centre has expanded access to mental health supports, supervised parenting visits, food and clothing bank, economic supports, and cultural activities.

Our collective work recognizes the interconnected and intergenerational impacts of systemic discrimination, racism, and sexism. In April 2022, the *Dismantling Racism and Hate Act* was passed. This legislation is the first of its kind in Canada, and outlines government's approach to addressing systemic racism, hate, and inequity, and commits to developing a provincial strategy and a health equity framework by July 2023.

## Next Steps

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We are on the pathway to building a better future and writing a new story with Indigenous partners. We are actively working to connect, align, and integrate our responses and actions to priorities in the MMIWG National Action Plan.

- Nova Scotia is providing funding to support NSNWA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary gala event in June 2023 to celebrate the accomplishments of NSNWA over the past 50 years and honour Mi'kmaq women/2SLGBTGIA+ people who have demonstrated an outstanding contribution to improve the lives of Mi'kmaq women and 2SLGBTGIA+ people.
- The province will provide funding to support the continuation of *Creating Communities of Care Through a Customary Law Approach* project.
- Continuing discussions with the Mi'kmaq and Canada regarding Tajikeimik (Mi'kmaw Health and Wellness Authority).
- Continuing the integration of Indigenous voices in the implementation of Gender Based Violence National Action Plan.
- Partnering with and supporting a multi-year Mi'kmaw language revitalization strategy (stemming from the new Mi'kmaq Language Act legislation). From this Act, in collaboration with the Mi'kmaq, as represented by Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK), the Mi'kmaw Language Committee has been established. This Committee will develop a multi-year strategic plan for the revitalization of the Mi'kmaw language in Nova Scotia, and;
- NS supports the NSNWA in raising awareness on the context and impacts of MMIWG, including the promotion of a Mi'kmaw-led media campaign on sexual exploitation and non-consensual sharing of intimate images.