

We are all Treaty People

by Amanda O'Regan-Marchand, Executive Staff Officer, Professional Learning

I acknowledge that this article is being written on the unceded land of the Mi'kmaw people. Living and working on this land is a privilege that carries a responsibility to learn, act meaningfully, and honor the enduring stories and traditions of the Mi'kmaw community.

This month, we are celebrating [Mi'kmaw History Month](#) with this year's theme of *Arukwek aq Atukowinu'k – Storytelling and Storytellers*. By clicking the link above, you will find a beautifully informative website that contains an enriched collection of resources that can help us to learn about the history of the Mi'kmaq people.

To help acknowledge and support our path towards reconciliation and building our knowledge, we are proud to share this month's Pathways for Professional Learning giveaway, "Stories from the Six Worlds Mi'kmaw Legends" penned by author, Ruth Holmes Whitehead. Holmes Whitehead is a renowned Mi'kmaw historian and lives in Halifax.

Continuing with the idea from previous October Pathways articles, look for opportunities to weave Mi'kmaw ways of knowing and being year-round in your learning spaces. One of the resources that can help you is the brochure published by Treaty Education Nova Scotia, [We Are All Treaty People](#). On the back cover of this beautiful resource, which is available in English, French and Gaelic, there is an invitation to us—Nitap, the Mi'kmaw word meaning "friend" introduces this resource as starting point for deeper learning and understanding together as Treaty people.

This October, focus on gratitude for the First Peoples of this land and their enduring care of the earth through appreciation and reciprocity. Explore this resource to discover ways to say Wela'lin/Wela'liq, Tapadh Leat/Tapadh Leibh, Merci, Thank you, craft sincere land acknowledgements, and learn about Mi'kmaw districts in the Atlantic Provinces through an illustrated map that supports informed and meaningful recognition.

During the month of November, when we often look to the past to show appreciation for sacrifice and courage, this valued resource offers readers information both about the content of the

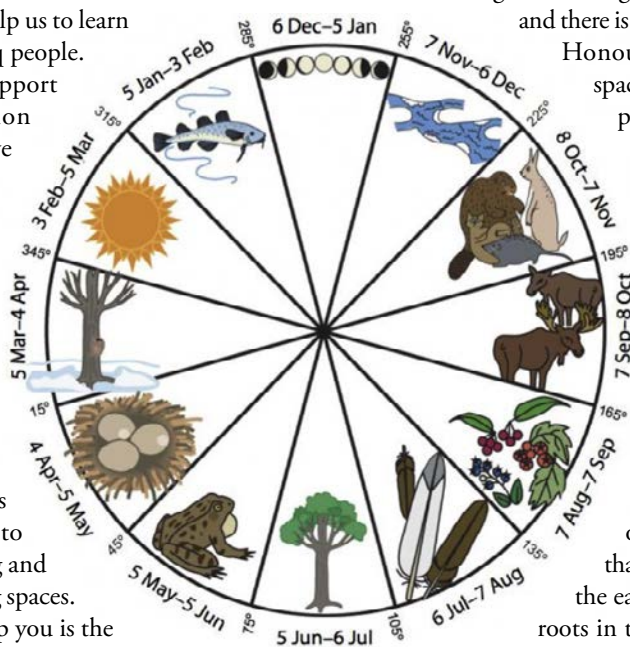
treaties but also offers the opportunity to reflect on why these treaties are important. Delving deeper into the *why* can allow to a more holistic understanding of these agreements and their place in our efforts as settlers to demonstrate our commitment authentically and with greater understanding.

During the month of December, when we are often focused on traditions, the *We are all Treaty People* resource extends a hand and welcomes us into the stories that underlie symbols, language and song. There is a glossary of commonly used greetings and there is also a page dedicated to the Mi'kmaq

Honour Song. If you have ever shared space while the Honour Song has been performed, it can be a very moving experience. The beating of the drum, symbolizing the heartbeat of Mother Earth and the sound of voices sharing the sacred lyrics, offers listeners the opportunity to be present and reflect on the incredible history of the Mi'kmaq people. As you enter January, the birth of a New Year, there is the recognition that the Mi'kmaq year is unique from the calendars we have on our walls and our devices. Based on the knowledge that so many generations gathered from the earth, the Mi'kmaq calendar finds its roots in the phases of the moon that appear in the night sky and how they relate to the cycle of

life on earth. The Mi'kmaq Moons Project was developed through a collaboration among Mi'kmaq Elders and the CBU Canada Research Chair in Integrative Science. (Source: <https://definingmomentscanada.ca/education/etuaptmumk/mikmaw-moons/>)

The month of February, often a month where there is focus on expressing admiration and affection towards one another, try and make time to extend a genuine hand towards our Mi'kmaq neighbours and communities. We could seek to better understand the origin of the word Nitap and the significance of its usage on the resource as part of the invitation to bridge understanding towards reconciliation. Although traditionally celebrated during the month of September, the Mi'kmaq Kina'matnewey Schools describe it as a day to encourage friendship and working together. Much like



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this article focuses on the recognition, celebration and genuine action towards growing in our knowledge of Mi'kmaw history all year round, making opportunity to continue extending friendship and working together during every month is a meaningful way to show our dedication as Treaty People.

March is nutrition month. *We are all Treaty People* shares the history of traditional Mi'kmaw medicines and ceremony. I have participated in a "smudge" and am grateful to understand more about this sacred tradition. I have also learned more about medicine bundles, sweat lodges, sacred fire and drums because of this resource. The design of this pamphlet inspires further learning. During the month of May, in which we often focus on our mental well-being gives us another opportunity to explore these sacred traditions.

As spring arrives in April, this resource shares information and history of the Mawio'mi, which is the Mi'kmaw word for pow wow. During a Mawio'mi, Mi'kmaw communities welcome anyone who wants to learn about Mi'kmaw history and culture through sharing food, artisans' creations and dance. The resource shares that, *"Traditional Mi'kmaw dancing is a celebration of life, and each dance tells a story."* As spring celebrates new life, the opportunity to attend a Mawio'mi is a truly special and sacred experience.

During the month of June we often focus on PRIDE through recognition and allyship with our 2SGLBTQAI+ community. The 2S at the beginning of this acronym refers to two-spirited, which some Indigenous communities recognizes as both the feminine and masculine spirit being present in individuals. Within the resource, allyship is discussed in the context of our role as Treaty people and how we can demonstrate meaningful action towards truth and reconciliation. These actions include, *"actively supporting the struggle, transferring the benefits of your privilege to those who have less, speak up, even if you are scared and acknowledge that the conversation is not about you"*. As a Treaty ally, how might you show your allyship in these ways? Explore ways that you can be a Treaty ally.

Thank you for taking the time to read this article. I hope you found it as engaging to explore as it was inspiring for me to write.

Wela'lioq