

## Celebrating Smiles and Stories: Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles Book Reading Event

by Coral Paul

On April 21, 2026, Tajikeimik hosted a Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles Book Reading for mainland communities in Sipekne'katik First Nation, to celebrate Oral Health Month. Families with children aged 0-6, along with health system partners were brought together for a relaxed morning. The goal was to connect, have fun, and talk about the importance of oral health in a way that felt easy and natural.

The plan was simple: start with games, share some snacks, and end with a live reading of the Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles book. Children moved between activities at their own pace. Parents and caregivers talked to each other and with staff, sharing stories and asking questions.



Reading of the Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles book.

(L to R): Kristie Fisher, LPN in Sipekne'katik; Jenaya Pictou, NSCC Dental Assistant student from Millbrook First Nation; and Alyssa Abram, Tajikeimik, with the Baby Smiles puppet

After snacks, children, parents, caregivers and staff gathered in the centre of the room for a live reading of the Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles book in both Mi'kmaw and English. The reading was led by Jenaya Pictou, an NSCC Dental Assistant student from Millbrook First Nation, and Kristie Fisher, Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN) in Sipekne'katik.

Following the reading, we asked Jenaya Pictou, who read the Mi'kmaw version of the book, what inspired her to enter the field of dentistry. She shared

that Mi'kmaw and Indigenous people are underrepresented in healthcare, specifically dentistry.

"I think it's an important step for reconciliation for us to take up space in the field," said Jenaya.

When asked what advice she would give to youth who may be thinking about entering the field, she said "go out and learn."

The conversation also touched on the importance of community support for students while they are away at school.

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Future dentist in the making

## Celebrating Smiles and Stories.. continued

She shared that while it is important for youth to explore opportunities outside of the reserve, it is also important for our communities to support youth along their journeys and ensure youth have space to return to their communities after their studies. She also noted that events like this can help spark interest in different career paths and remind youth that there is space for them in health care and in other fields.

What started as a simple book reading became a chance for families, community members and health system partners to connect, share experiences, and create space for important conversations about oral health, language, education and representation.

Wela'liek to everyone who attended- we hope you enjoyed the morning. We would also like to thank those who brought the event to life: Tina Sack-Nevin, Sipekne'katik's Health Director; Mary-Lou Bernard, Elder in Sipekne'katik; Shauna Hachey, Associate Professor at Dalhousie University; Sharon (Paul) Rudderham, Director of Health Transformation at Tajikeimik; Jenaya Pictou; Kristie Fisher; and the Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles team members.



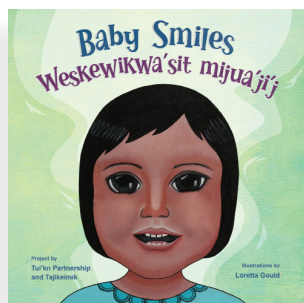
Front (L to R): Sarah Paul, Tina Sack-Nevin, Jenaya Pictou, Adrianna Bonnell, Carolyn Pierce, Shauna Hachey

Back (L to R): Peggy O'Reilly, Kristie Fisher, Wendy Wells, Desiree Murray, Lindsay Peach, Alyssa Abram, Rebecca Affoo in the tooth mascot, Coral Paul

### About Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles:

The Weskewikwa'sit mijua'ji'j - Baby Smiles book provides healthy habits to promote baby's healthy teeth and is available to Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia. Read, watch or listen to Baby Smiles, in both Mi'kmaw and English, by visiting the Tajikeimik website at: [www.mhwns.ca/babysmiles](http://www.mhwns.ca/babysmiles)

Physical copies of the book are available for free to Mi'kmaw community members in Nova Scotia. To request a copy, please contact your community's Health Centre.



#### About Us

Tajikeimik is the new and developing health and wellness organization that is leading health transformation on behalf of Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia. In collaboration with Chiefs, Grand Council, and Health Directors, Tajikeimik will build on and evolve the health and wellness services and programs used by Mi'kmaw people in Nova Scotia; improve health service delivery; and strengthen coordination with Federal and Provincial health system partners - with the goal of improving overall health for Mi'kmaq and communities.

Elukuti'kw wjit naji-wlo'tinenew utanminal.  
(We are working toward better health for all in our communities.)

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