



# A'tukwaqni

news and stories from Tajikeimik

## Celebrating Indigenous Nurses Day

### Culture is Care: Honouring L'nu Nurses in Nova Scotia

Alexa Sylliboy, Communications Specialist

Today, on Indigenous Nurses Day, we take time to honour and celebrate the nurses in our communities who are not only providing care, but also carrying forward culture, knowledge, and strength. L'nu nurses are more than healthcare workers - they continue to lead, care, and advocate for their communities through every stage of life. From community clinics to leadership tables, their presence has shaped and strengthened healthcare for the better.

It's a day to recognize the long journey of Indigenous people in healthcare and the trailblazers who made this journey possible. One of those being Sister Elizabeth Veronica Matthews, a Mi'kmaq nurse from Eskasoni First Nation.



Sister Elizabeth Veronica Matthews

Sister Veronica was one of the first Indigenous registered nurses in Nova Scotia, she dedicated most of her career to making change and improving healthcare for Indigenous communities. Through her work with the Aboriginal Nurses Association of Canada, the Eskasoni Health Board, and Cancer Care Nova Scotia, she shaped policies that prioritized Indigenous voices in healthcare decision-making.

She did it with grace, humility, and deep love for-

**Did you know?** Indigenous Nurses Day falls on April 10th each year in honour of Charlotte Edith Anderson Monture, Canada's first Indigenous registered nurse. It's a day to celebrate her legacy and the important contributions of Indigenous nurses across the country!

her people. Whether she was advocating for better services, mentoring young nurses, or standing firm in her belief that care must be grounded in culture, Sister Veronica's legacy lives on in the policies she helped shape, the programs she founded,

and the countless lives she touched.

At Tajikeimik, we are proud to continue that work alongside a growing team of passionate and deeply committed L'nu nurses: Julie Francis, Jenny Morgan, Erin Holmes, Lucinda Googoo, Courtney Pennell, and Emily Peter-Paul. Each of these women brings unique experience, knowledge, and community connection to their work, and each is helping to shape a future where Indigenous health is led by Indigenous voices.

**Julie Francis, Director of L'nu Nursing,** leads the overall vision for strengthening and supporting the Indigenous nursing workforce in Nova Scotia. For over 12 years, she's cared for and served her community - an experience that now drives her mission to grow and support the next generation of L'nu nurses.

"My community has taught me so much about their needs and strengths," Julie says. "Now my job is to help create more L'nu nurses, which will improve the health and wellness of the Mi'kmaq Nation - in our homes, our hospitals, and across the health system."

**Jenny Morgan, Program Lead for Cultural Safety and Community Care Transitions,** although she is no longer a practicing nurse, that doesn't stop her from working to make sure that Mi'kmaq people feel safe and respected when they access healthcare. She's helping health systems understand what cultural safety really means - and how we can design care that honours our people, our histories, and our stories.

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**Erin Holmes, Mi'kmaw Cancer Care Lead**, is focused on ensuring that Mi'kmaw communities have equitable access to cancer care that is culturally safe. She brings deep experience and compassion to her work, building bridges between cancer services and the needs of our communities.

At the same time, **Lucinda Googoo, Courtney Pennell**, and **Emily Peter-Paul** are working right inside nursing schools across the province as **Mi'kmaq Indigenous Nurse Education Specialists**. Their roles are all about mentorship and student support - helping Indigenous nursing students feel grounded, supported, and seen throughout their education.

Emily Peter-Paul shares, "It's important to have Mi'kmaw nurses because they understand our culture, our communities, so our patients/clients don't have to explain their backgrounds. Mi'kmaw nurses can advocate for our Mi'kmaw patients in a way that non-indigenous healthcare providers can't. Being a nurse means advocating for our people in different ways and always striving for better health outcomes for our people."

Their presence in these institutions is a powerful shift - one that helps create safe spaces where Indigenous students can thrive, stay connected to their culture, and succeed in their nursing journey.

Together, the nurses on the Tajikeimik team represent something larger than themselves - a movement toward healthcare that truly reflects who we are as L'nu people. They remind us that nursing is not just a profession - it's a calling that carries responsibility to culture, community, and future generations.

Wela'liek, to all the Indigenous nurses across Mi'kma'ki - those who came before, those who are serving now, and those who are just beginning their journey. Your knowledge, your leadership, and your commitment to your communities are transforming healthcare for the better.

If you're thinking about a career in nursing, or wondering what support is available, visit **LnuNursing.ca**. It's a space filled with resources, stories, and connections - because you don't have to walk this path alone.

OUR AMAZING TEAM OF

**L'NU NURSES**



**Erin Holmes, RN**  
Mi'kmaw Cancer  
Care Lead  
Membertou First Nation

**Jenny Morgan, former LPN**  
Program Lead: Cultural Safety  
and Community Care Transitions  
Membertou First Nation

**Courtney Pennell, RN**  
Mi'kmaq Indigenous Nurse  
Education Specialist  
Wasoqopa'q First Nation

**Julie Francis, RN**  
Director, Office of  
L'nu Nursing  
Eskasoni First Nation

**Emily Peter-Paul, RN**  
Mi'kmaq Indigenous Nurse  
Education Specialist  
Metepenagiag Mi'kmaw Nation

**Lucinda Googoo, RN**  
Mi'kmaq Indigenous Nurse  
Education Specialist  
We'koqma'q L'nue'kati

**About Us**

Tajikeimik is the new and developing health and wellness organization being created to lead 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.

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