

Mawita'mk Wjit Pisunn: Gathering for Medicines, Sharing, and Preserving our Knowledge

By Bridget Stevens and Abigail Binns

We are reflecting on the Mawita'mk wjit pisunn held in Membertou on March 5th and 6th—a powerful gathering centered on Mi'kmaw medicine, language, and the sharing of knowledge passed down through generations.

This gathering brought together community members, Knowledge Keepers, and participants who have been part of our ongoing work documenting Mi'kmaw traditional medicines. Through interviews and shared stories, we continue to learn about the deep relationship our people have with the land, the plants, and the language that carries this knowledge.

Throughout the Mawita'mk wjit pisunn there was a strong sense of connection, to each other, to our ancestors, and to the teachings that guide us. Many shared that their hearts were full after spending time

together in such a meaningful way. Being in that space reminded us all of the importance of coming together, not only to learn, but to support one another as a community.

We are currently at a critical time where much of our language and traditional knowledge is at risk of being lost. Gatherings like this are not only important, they are necessary. Every story shared, every plant named in Mi'kmaw, and every teaching passed on is an act of preservation.

"I loved this event, being with other L'nuk, sharing our stories and listening to our elders makes me feel we're coming to a full circle. Back to our roots where we help each other with love, respect and knowledge," said participant Jane Hennessey.

Our ancestors once helped others survive when they first arrived on

our lands, sharing food, medicines, and knowledge of how to live in balance with the environment. Today, we as Mi'kmaw people are coming together once again. This time to help one another heal, to reclaim what was taken, and to preserve what is sacred—for future generations.

This work is not done alone. Each person who participated in the medicine interviews, who attended the gathering, and who continue to share their knowledge is contributing to something much bigger: the protection and revitalization of Mi'kmaw culture and language.

We are grateful for the opportunity to learn from Dorene Bernard, who shared her knowledge of making traditional salves. Knowledge Keepers expressed excitement in learning new ways to prepare medicines, showing

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Kathy Denny, Madeline Poulette and Mary Ellen Gould, sharing stories and lived knowledge of Mi'kmaw medicines, reflecting the strength of generational teachings and connection to the land.



Jane Hennessey



Mildred Johnson, Ernest Johnson, Sharon (Paul) Rudderham and Roderick Stevens, lifelong Knowledge Holders with a deep connection to Mi'kmaw medicines and a continued commitment to supporting and sharing knowledge within the community.

Mawita'mk Wjit Pisunn... continued

that even within our traditions, there is always room to grow, share, and deepen our understanding.

It was especially beautiful to witness the pride among all participants, seeing people stand strong in who they are, embracing their identity, and honouring their culture. There was a visible sense of confidence and belonging, a reminder that our culture is alive and carried within each of us.

Bridget Stevens, Mental Wellness and Healing L'nui Npisun Consultant, shared, "on a personal level, I feel an overwhelming sense of gratitude for the opportunity to learn from our Knowledge Keepers. Their willingness to share their teachings, stories, and these moments are something I will always carry with me. Each lesson is not just about medicine, but about

how to live with respect, balance, and understanding.

"I am especially grateful for the opportunity to learn from my father. Through this journey, the bond we have built through medicine and culture has brought true healing into my life. Not only physically, but spiritually and emotionally. These teachings have helped guide me, strengthen me, and remind me of who I am and where I come from.

"This work has shown me that medicine is more than what we gather from the land; it is also found in our relationships, our shared experiences, and the love we carry for one another. There is healing in being together, in learning together, and in supporting one another as a community," said Bridget.

We extend our gratitude to everyone who joined us, shared their stories, and supported this gathering. Your voices and knowledge are invaluable. Together, we are preserving something precious. Together, we are strengthening our communities. And together, we are ensuring that our knowledge, language, and medicines continue to live on.



Blair Joseph Bernard and Abigail Binns during a smudging practice, showing how cultural medicines and ceremony support connection, grounding, and overall wellbeing.



Roderick Stevens and Bridget Stevens, father and daughter, reflecting the importance of family support and guidance throughout the work.



Dorene Bernard from Sipekne'katik sharing teachings on traditional salve-making, guiding participants through the process of preparing Mi'kmaw medicines.



Medicine Circle, capturing moments of laughter, connection, and shared engagement throughout the day.

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.)

Millbrook Office: 4 Stanley Johnson Street, Millbrook, Nova Scotia, B6L 5B4

Memberstou Office: 90 San'tele'sew Awti, Suite 305, Memberstou, Nova Scotia, B1S 0A5