Wasoqopa'q First Nation

Comprehensive Community Plan 2025

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Pjila'si
Welcome

Over the years I have had the privilege of working alongside many passionate and dedicated individuals who serve our Mi'kmaw Communities with heart and purpose. I am grateful to our staff, our Council, and most importantly, our people.

The strength of our Nation lies in the voices of our community- elders, youth and everyone in between who continue to guide and shape our future, today and for generations to come. These voices are heard, respected and valued.

We are a proud Mi'kmaw First Nation and Wasoqopa'q will remain committed to delivering services that reflect our unique needs, values and aspirations of our people.

As our Nation continues to grow, so too does the needs to expand and strengthen our programs and services.
We are always striving to do better, together.

Chief Deborah Robinson

What is a Comprehensive Community Plan?

A comprehensive community plan (CCP) is:

- **Community led** - Developed through community engagement
- **All encompassing** - Includes all parts of the community - culture, economy, education, infrastructure, history, etc.
- **Long term** - Generally looks to both short term and long term goals and dreams, usually 25+ years into the future.
- **Includes everyone** - Elders, youth, families, staff, and all community members!
- **Assists with funding** - Many applications want to know if a potential project aligns with a community's long term plans.

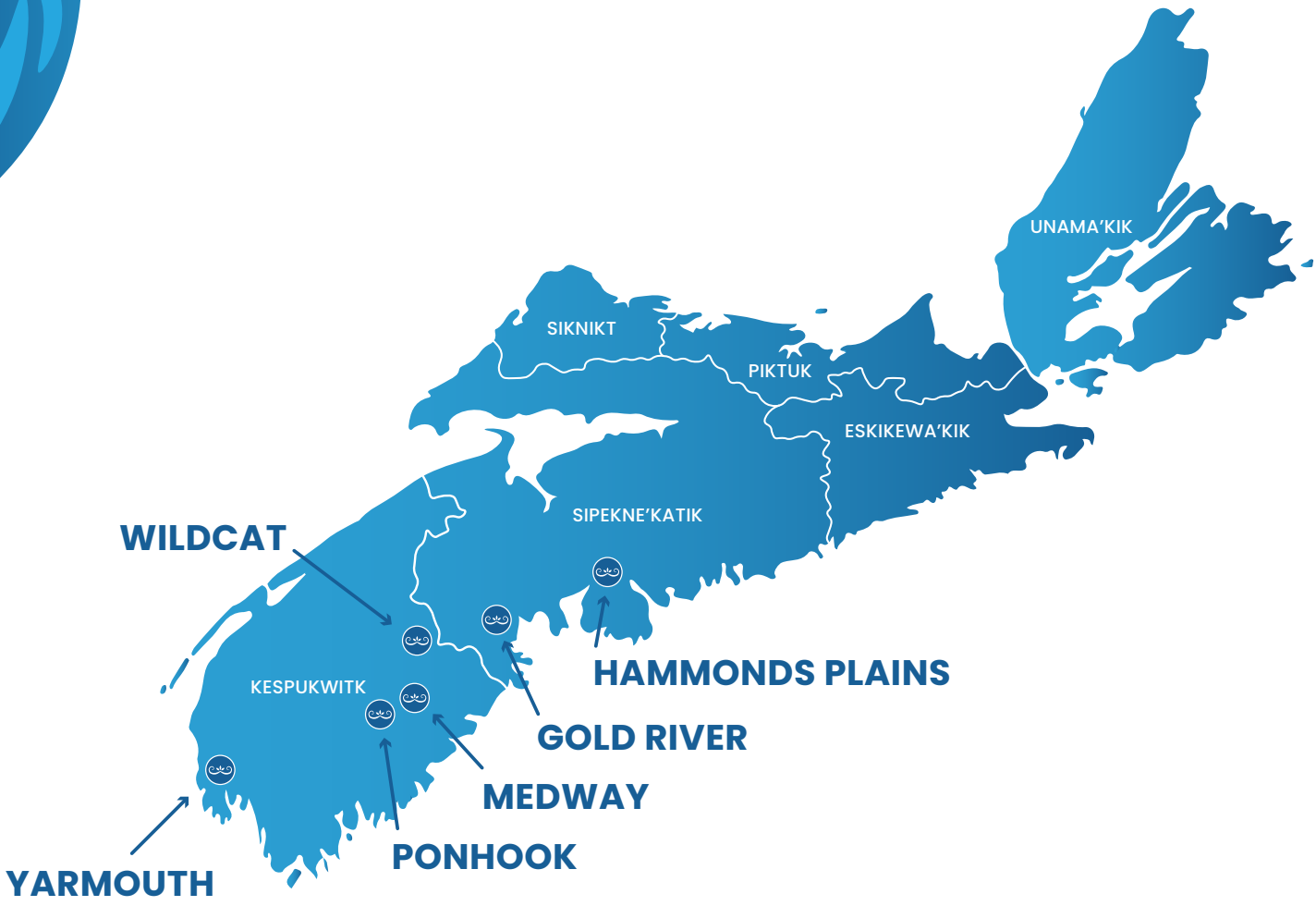
What it's not:

- **A guarantee** - Each idea needs to be considered for feasibility, sustainability, funding opportunities and community impact.
- **Rigid** - The plan changes as the community grows; new opportunities may present themselves.
- **Fails to consider the past** - Acknowledging where we've come from helps to direct the future.
- **Created from outside the community** - Community led plans has more success!

We Are Wasoqopa'q

The Mi'kmaq people have lived across the lands of present-day Nova Scotia for over 10,000 years, deeply connected to the rivers, lakes, forests, and coasts.

The area known today as **Wasoqopa'q,** formerly known as Acadia First Nation, includes the communities of **Ponhook, Medway, Wildcat, Gold River, Yarmouth, and Hammonds Plains, with deep connections to the Mersey, Tusket, Roseway, Gold River and LaHave River systems. Kejimkujik and Lake Rossignol are also of great significance.** These places are rich with Mi'kmaq history, including **sacred sites, burial grounds, ancestral habitations, and petroglyphs.**



Our History

Mi'kmaq seasonal life saw families move between coastal summer habitations and inland winter hunting grounds. Rivers like the Mersey and Tusket, along with lakes like Kejimkujik and Rossignol were crucial to sustenance and spiritual life.

Colonization brought treaties, reserve establishment, land displacement, and gold rush disruptions. However, the resilience of Mi'kmaq knowledge keepers has kept culture and history alive—many of their stories, like those of **Chief Joseph Jermey, Frank Jermey, Chief Charles Labrador, Joseph Pennel,** and **Jim Charles**, among others, continue to shape the Nation's legacy.

The below portrait is of an early Mi'kmaw settlement on the edge of Lahave/Mahone Bay, represents the return from a fishing expeditition, carrying a paddle and harpoon. As seen different shape and sized wigwam's were built, the rounded and rectangular shapes were used for multi-families, storage, meetings, and celebrations. The image represents the community working together to construct canoes, baskets, tools, frames for stretching and treating hides and cooking in celebration of the safe successful hunt.

Notable Mi'kmaq Figures in Wasoqopa'q History

Captain Penall (John Pennell Sr.) c. 1745-1843: Participated in the Battle of Quebec; son of Chief Bernard Argomartin (c.1722-1817). Pennel derives from the Mi'kmaq pronunciation of "Bernard".

Joseph and John Pennell: Fishing guides and leaders in the Gold River community in the 1850s.

Katie (Michael) Francis 1850-1928: Well known basket maker; raised children with husband Stephen in Milton, Queens County. Passed down knowledge of guiding, basket making and traditional medicines.

Jim Charles: Kejimkujik guide and miner, hid gold in butter to protect his secret find.

Chief Joseph Jermey: One of the last to travel traditional routes between Kejimkujik and Wildcat; taught grandson **Charles Labrador** traditional life.

Chief Charlie Paul: First chief after Acadia's recognition in 1967; born in 1905.

Chief Charles "Bob" Labrador: Born 1932, mentored by grandfather Jermey; respected elder and cultural teacher.

Frank Jermey: Community knowledge keeper, council member, and storyteller of burial mound traditions and fishing culture.

Deborah Robinson: First woman elected Chief of Acadia in 1987.

Wasoqopa'q First Nation Historical Timeline

Pre-Contact - 1700s

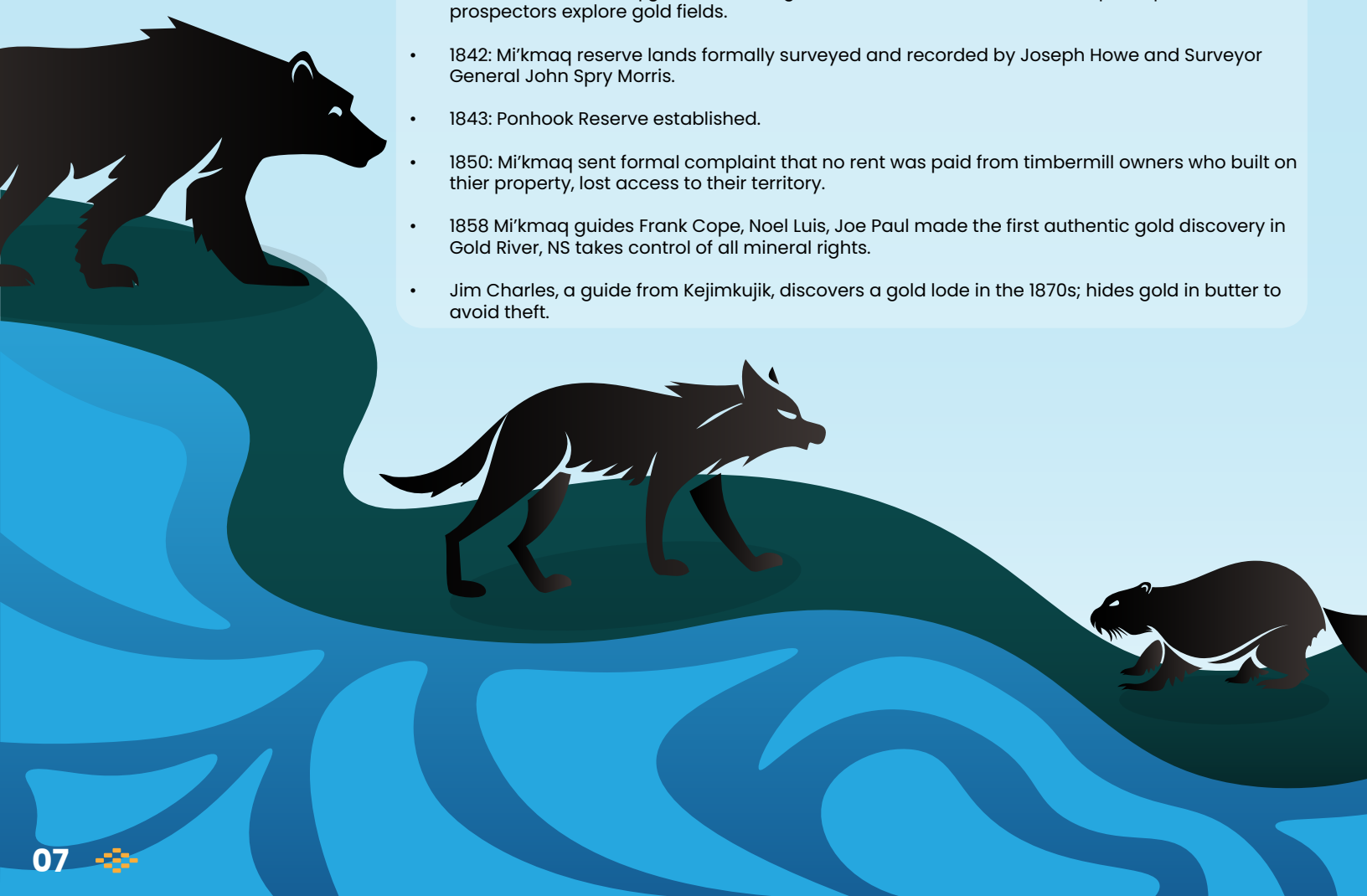
- 10,000+ years ago: Mi'kmaq archaeological evidence discovered (tools, arrowheads, burial mounds) along the Mersey River and Lake Rossignol. Mi'kmaq knew about gold and referred to it as wisosoolewa "brown silver"
- Kejimkujik is a spiritual and cultural site, home to petroglyphs and ancient trees.
- 1752: Treaty signed between Chief Jean Baptiste Cope and Governor Hopson, reaffirming Mi'kmaq hunting and fishing rights, and unceded territory.
- 1759: Captain Penall (John Pennel Sr.), son of Chief Bernard Argomartin, fights at the Fall of Quebec with the British.
- 1763: Royal Proclamation centralizes Indigenous affairs, acknowledging Mi'kmaq land rights.

Late 1800s – Early 1900s

- Joseph Pennell and brother John Pennel become renowned fishing guides in Gold River.
- 1876: Indian Act created, leading to systemic assimilation and restrictions.
- 1902: Joseph Pennell fought for his people to recieve monetary compensation for the railway constructed from Halifax to Yarmouth.
- 1908: 7-ft Mi'kmaq skeleton found in Indian Gardens, evidence of ancient presence.
- 1920s: Mersey River dammed, creating Lake Rossignol, flooding cultural lands and gathering places.

1800–1860s: Reserve Establishment & Gold Discoveries

- 1801: Ten reserves established including: Ponhook Lake; Medway River; Wildcat (1820); and Gold River (1820).
- 1830s–1860s: Mi'kmaq guides including Joe Paul, Noel Louis, and Frank Cope help settlers and prospectors explore gold fields.
- 1842: Mi'kmaq reserve lands formally surveyed and recorded by Joseph Howe and Surveyor General John Spry Morris.
- 1843: Ponhook Reserve established.
- 1850: Mi'kmaq sent formal complaint that no rent was paid from timbermill owners who built on thier property, lost access to their territory.
- 1858 Mi'kmaq guides Frank Cope, Noel Luis, Joe Paul made the first authentic gold discovery in Gold River, NS takes control of all mineral rights.
- Jim Charles, a guide from Kejimkujik, discovers a gold lode in the 1870s; hides gold in butter to avoid theft.



Mid 1900s – Centralization and Displacement

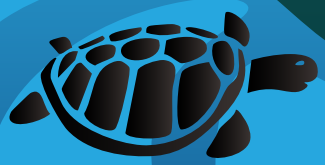
- By the mid 1900's there were 65 gold mining districts in the territory.
- 1932: Chief Charles Labrador born near LaHave River; raised at Wildcat by grandfather Chief Joseph Jermey.
- 1942: Centralization policies forcibly relocate many Mi'kmaq to Eskasoni and Shubenacadie.
- 1951: Indian Act revisions allow traditional ceremonies again.
- 1960: Mi'kmaq gain right to vote in the federal election without losing status.

Modern Events & Rededications

- 2004: Repairs to Mersey Dam reveal ancient Mi'kmaq sites.
- 2012: Province purchases 224,600 hectares from Mersey Paper Co., preserving land near Kejimkujik.
- November 26, 2012: Todd Labrador and Rose Morris lead ceremony rededicating 1800s Mi'kmaq burial ground in Bridgewater, where Louis Labrador is buried.

Formation of Acadia First Nation

- 1967: Acadia Band unites, led by visionaries including Frank Jermey.
- 1967: Acadia becomes 12th recognized First Nation in Nova Scotia.
- 1987: Chief Deborah Robinson becomes the first woman elected chief of Acadia.



Reclaiming our Identity

Wasoqopa'q First Nation is more than just a name, it is a symbol of pride, reclamation, and identity.

This name will forever remind our people of their strength and resilience as they unified to reclaim their space within the District of Kespukwitk.

The journey toward becoming Wasoqopa'q First Nation started in 2015. At that time, surveys were sent to our members about a potential name change, however the response showed our people weren't yet ready. Understandably, many felt uncertain or hesitant, letting go of the name "Acadia First Nation" also meant confronting a deep connection to identity that had been shaped by years of colonial systems.

Today, we are living through a powerful resurgence, the revitalization of our Mi'kmaw language within our communities. With the passing of historic legislation recognizing Mi'kmaw as the first language of Nova Scotia, the timing was right to try again. This time, our people knew it was time and our leaders knew it was time, we moved forward together.

Director of Community Enhancement & Cultural Revitalization, Melanie Robinson-Purdy, alongside the Mi'kmaw and Culture Committee of Wasoqopa'q First Nation, worked very closely with Mi'kmaw linguist Bernie Francis to choose a name that would reflect the spirit, unity, and strength of our people.

We honour and give thanks to "Acadia First Nation," the name given to us by the federal Department of Indian Affairs - it carried us through many generations. But now, we rise together with pride to embrace the name that is truly ours:

Wasoqopa'q First Nation - Bright Water First Nation

Wherever you stand within Wasoqopa'q First Nation; on our Mi'kmaw "reserve" lands and all the unceded lands in between; where all our people live, you will be standing near water, samqwan. Be it a river, brook, lake or ocean, water is our life, it sustains people, feeds our people and gives us all life.

Wasoqopa'q First Nation, Wasoqopa'qewaq - The people of Bright Water First Nation

Wasoqopa’q Mission and Vision

Wasoqopa’q Mission Statement

Wasoqopa'q is committed to fostering a safe, healthy, and inclusive Mi’kmaq Nation by honoring our traditions, protecting our lands and waterways, and empowering our people through strong leadership, economic sustainability, and cultural preservation.

Wasoqopa’q Vision Statement

Wasoqopa'q a unified self-sustaining Nation that honours our past , protecting our connection to our traditions, territory, culture, language and the well-being of our people for generations to come. Rooted in the wisdom of our ancestors, we are committed to strengthening our Nation’s interconnectedness to one another, our territory, and our L’nu ways.

The Tree Ecosystem: A Powerful Metaphor for Community Development

Nature provides us with powerful lessons about growth, resilience, and sustainability. A tree, much like a thriving Nation, is a living system that relies on a strong root system, a sturdy trunk, and flourishing branches to reach its full potential. Each part of the tree plays a critical role in nurturing, sustaining, and expanding the community.

By understanding the tree as an ecosystem, we can see how Wasoqopa'q development is deeply interconnected—our values provide stability, our core fibers/guiding principles give us direction, and our growth is shaped by our shared efforts to sustain and nurture the future.

Roots (Values), the Foundation of Our Nation
The roots of the tree represent the Seven Grandfather Teachings of *Love, Respect, Courage, Honesty, Wisdom, Humility, and Truth*. These teachings are deeply embedded in the land, just as our cultural values are rooted in our ancestors, traditions, and connection to Mother Earth.

Roots serve as the tree's lifeline, absorbing water, minerals, and nutrients from the soil to provide strength and nourishment. Similarly, our values interconnect and strengthen our community, ensuring that all decisions, relationships, and development efforts remain connected to our cultural identity.

Without a strong root system, a tree is unstable, just as a community without deep cultural and spiritual foundations can struggle to grow. Our values ground us, ensuring that we move forward with wisdom and integrity, always drawing from the teachings of our ancestors.

Trunk (Core Fibers/Guiding Principles) the Strength and Structure of Our Nation
The tree trunk represents the Core Fibers, the guiding principles that hold our Nation together.

These include:
- Sustainable, Safe, and Healthy Development
- Connection to our People - Transparent Communication
- Honouring our Past by Seeking Truth and Reconciliation
- Respecting our Mother Earth
- Nation Building and Leadership in Mi'kma'ki
- Honouring our Seven Generations

The Tree Ecosystem: A Powerful Metaphor for Community Development *(continued)*

Ensuring a Future for the Next Generations
The trunk acts as a bridge between the deep roots and the growing branches. It carries essential nutrients from the roots upward, just as our guiding principles transform values into action, ensuring that our community's goals, policies, and initiatives remain connected to our cultural foundation.

A tree's trunk also provides stability. Through seasons of change storms, winds, and shifting conditions, it stands strong.

Likewise, our Nation's guiding principles give us resilience in the face of challenges, ensuring that we continue to grow in a way that is sustainable, ethical, and aligned with our identity.

Branches & Leaves (Community Growth & Future) The Outcomes of a Thriving Nation
The branches and leaves represent our aspirations, community growth, and future development initiatives. They stretch outward, reaching for the sun, just as our community reaches for new opportunities, economic prosperity, social development, and cultural renewal.

Branches are diverse, some large, some small, all working together to support the whole tree. This mirrors the many sectors within our community; governance, education, economic development, health, and cultural preservation each playing a role in strengthening our Nation.

Leaves are where energy transformation happens. Through the process of photosynthesis, trees absorb sunlight and convert it into nourishment. In the same way, our Nation absorbs new knowledge, experiences, and opportunities, using them to nurture future generations and sustain our people.

When our roots (values) are strong, our trunk (guiding principles) is stable, and our branches (community initiatives) are well-supported, we flourish together creating a circular self-sustaining ecosystem that supports not only our present community but generations to come.

The Roots (Values) of Our Community: The Seven Sacred Teachings

Our comprehensive community plan is built upon the Seven Sacred Teachings, which are deeply woven into our governance, community planning, and daily lives. These teachings guide us in how we treat each other, how we lead, and how we build a future rooted in Mi'kmaq traditions:

LOVE / KESALTULTIMK: Supportive

Speak to each other, to our Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth and Wasoqopa'q members from the goodness of the heart, show kindness and respect to one another.

Love for one another, for our land, our culture forms the foundation of our community. We must act with kindness, and care in all that we do.

RESPECT / KEPMITE'TEKEN: Culture/Traditions & Knowledge

Honour each other's voices, and contributions and re-integrating our Mi'kmaq culture and traditions, sacred spaces is essential in rebuilding our Nation

Show respect and include our sacred teachings as we, with our Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth and Wasoqopa'q members, plan for the next Seven Generations.

COURAGE / MELKITA'T: Commitment

Use our collective strength to guide Wasoqopa'q with our Elders, Knowledge Keepers, youth and community members to guide us as we overcome challenges and make bold decisions for the well-being of our people.

HONESTY / KOQAJA'TEKEN:
Solidarity

Demonstrate truthfulness in our words and integrity towards one another building trust and unity within our community.

WISDOM / NSITUO'QN:
Ethical

Honour and respect the knowledge of our ancestors, elders, knowledge keepers, and the lessons we continue to learn to shape our path forward.

We must always seek wisdom in our decisions and how they impact the next Seven Generations.

HUMILITY / WANQWAJITE'TEKEN:
Empowerment

We recognize that no one person is greater than another, we are all equal, accepting of our roles in Wasoqopa'q as equals.

We are committed to empowering unity to strengthening our collective responsibility to serve our people and our land.

TRUTH / TETPAQA'Q:
Resilience

We must always speak and act in truth, to be true in everything we do as part of Wasoqopa'q First Nation ensuring that our Nation's future is built on integrity and trust.

The Cycle of Connection: How Energy Moves Through the Tree and Community

The tree is not a static entity—it is constantly transmitting energy, nutrients, and resources through its ecosystem. This mirrors the way knowledge, resources, and leadership flow through our community:

- **Roots absorb the wisdom of our ancestors –** The teachings of our elders and cultural traditions form the base of our knowledge.
- **The trunk channels these teachings into action –** Policies, programs, and leadership ensure that our values are reflected in everyday decisions.
- **Branches and leaves extend outward to bring new opportunities –** Education, economic growth, social programs, and community initiatives ensure that we continue to evolve and adapt while remaining connected to our core identity.
- **The cycle continues –** Leaves fall, decompose, and return to the soil, enriching the roots, just as knowledge, culture, and traditions are passed down to future generations, ensuring that the community remains strong.

A Self-Sustaining Future: The Strength of an Ecosystem
A healthy tree doesn't stand alone, it exists within an ecosystem, relying on the land, water, sun, and air to thrive. Similarly, our Nation's development depends on collaboration, partnerships, and stewardship of our environment.

If one part of the tree is weak the roots dry out, if the trunk is damaged, or if the branches do not receive enough nourishment—the entire tree suffers. Likewise, if we do not protect our values, maintain strong governance, or invest in future generations, our community's growth will be stunted. When all parts of the system work together, we create a thriving, resilient Nation, deeply rooted in culture, strong in leadership, and expansive in opportunity.

The Tree as a Living Representation of Wasoqopa'q
The tree is more than just a metaphor—it is a living reflection WFN's journey. Our roots (values) keep us connected to our past, our trunk (guiding principles) provides strength and structure, and our branches and leaves (growth and aspirations) reach toward the future.

By nurturing every part of this ecosystem, we ensure that our Nation not only survives but flourishes, creating a legacy of strength, wisdom, and sustainability for generations to come.

Building Our Future Together
The Community Comprehensive Plan is more than a strategy, it is our collective vision for the future of Wasoqopa'q First Nation. It ensures that our governance, programs, economic development, and community initiatives align with the values and traditions that have sustained us for generations.

By upholding our Core Fibers and embracing the teachings of our ancestors, we move forward together—strong, resilient, and united in our commitment to our people and our land.

Core Fibers – Guiding Principles (Trunk)
The Strength and Structure of Our Nation

Our Core Fibers integrate how we grow as a Nation, ensuring that all decisions reflect our shared values and responsibilities. These principles serve as a foundation for our governance, community well-being, and long-term sustainability:

1. Sustainable, Safe, and Healthy Communities
We are caretakers of our lands, waters, and people. Every decision we make must ensure a balance between growth, environmental stewardship, and the well-being of our community. Our future is built on a foundation of sustainable economic and social development that nurtures our identity and protects our way of life.

2. Connection to our People
We believe in openness, accountability, and respect in all interactions. Strong communication strengthens our community and ensures that every voice is heard and valued in decision-making processes.

3. Honouring our Past
Healing and reclaiming our history is essential for our future. We honour the truth of our past, work to strengthen our cultural identity, and strive for reconciliation that brings justice, respect, and recognition to our people.

4. Respecting our Mother Earth (Ankotme'k Wsitkamuk)
Our relationship with the land is sacred. We are committed to protecting and respecting the natural world, understanding that the health of our land, water, and resources is directly tied to the well-being of our people.

5. Nation Building
Through wisdom, collaboration, and self-determination, we fortify our path toward sovereignty, strong governance, and community-led initiatives.

6. Seven Generations
Every action we take today is with future generations in mind. Our decisions must reflect the needs of our children and grandchildren, ensuring they inherit a strong, thriving, and self-sufficient Nation.

Wasoqopa'q Comprehensive Community Plan: *A Community Building Tool*

Wasoqopa'q is rooted in the strength of our people, our land, and our traditions. Our Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) is a living vision that reflects the needs, aspirations, and cultural identity of our Nation.

It is built upon the knowledge of our ancestors, guided by the voices of our people, and shaped by our shared responsibility to future generations.

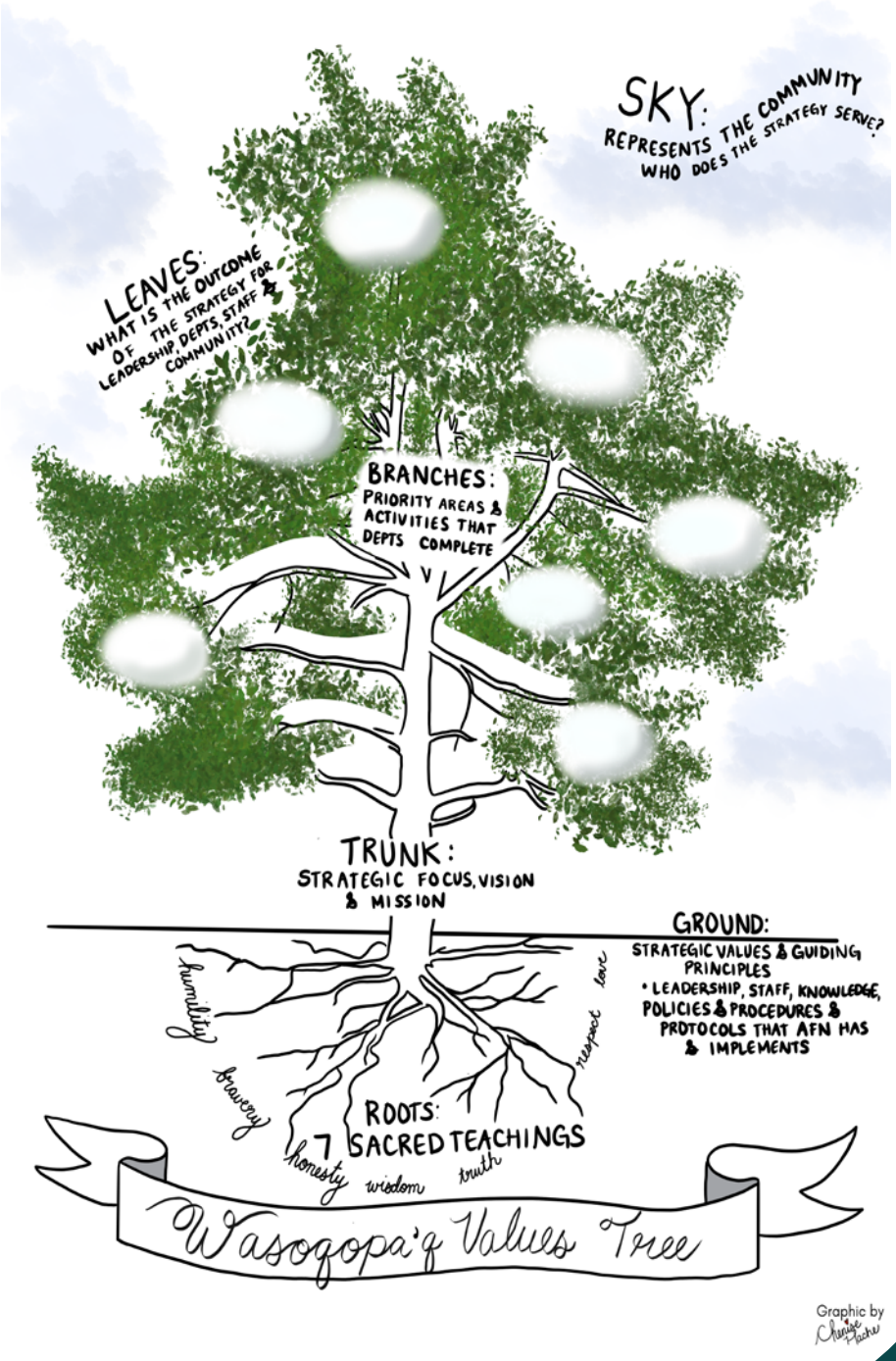
At the heart of our plan are the values and core fibers that define who we are and how we move forward together.

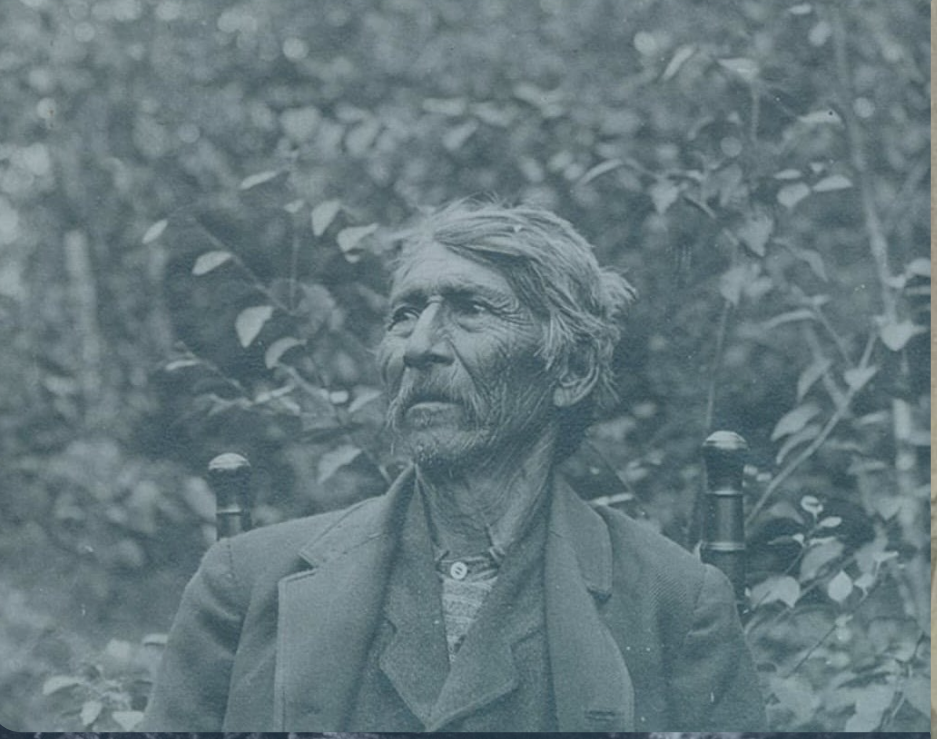
These principles are not just policies or operational frameworks—they are the commitments we make to each other and to the land that sustains us.

Roots (Values)
Representing the Seven Grandfather Teachings, which are the foundation of Wasoqopa'q First Nation.

Trunk (Core Fibers/Guiding Principles) The strength and structure of the our community, connecting values to action.

Branches & Leaves (Community Growth & Future)
Representing the outcomes, aspirations, and development initiatives that stem from a strong root system and resilient trunk.





SIX COMMUNITIES, ONE NATION

Wasoqopa'q

Wasoqopa'q First Nation's unique geographical composition spreads through the Southwestern region of Nova Scotia spanning five counties from Yarmouth to Halifax. A Mi'kmaw Nation with ties to traditional territory. Wasoqopa'q First Nation encompasses six (6) reserves - **Yarmouth, Ponhook, Medway, Wildcat, Gold River,** and **Hammonds Plains.** Additionally, Wasoqopa'q First Nation has additions to reserve lands in Gardner's Mill and Shelburne. These lands boast the intrinsic beauty that Nova Scotia has to offer with lakes, rivers, resources and cultural significance.

The Mi'kmaw people, traditions, culture and spirituality are celebrated and remain for those to discover generations to come. Wasoqopa'q First Nation welcomes you to explore the uniqueness of each community that is part of Mi'kma'ki - our home.

All Communities SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Elder & Youth Participation
- Staff Expertise, Commitment, and Knowledge
- Cultural Revitalization & Language Preservation Efforts
- Growing Economic Development & Revenue Streams
- Stable & More Transparent Leadership
- Access to Education & Lifelong Knowledge Learning
- Improved Health & Well-being Support Systems
- Financially Stable and Increased Access to Resources
- Community Infrastructure Growth
- Sustainability & Land Stewardship

Opportunities

- Enhancing Quality of Life Programs & Support for Seniors
- Expand Community Gatherings & Cultural Events
- Improve Communication & Digital Presence
- Expand Economic Development Sectors & Partnerships
- Expand Land Development & Resource Management
- Youth & Mentorship Expansion
- Improve Access to Emergency & Mental Health Services
- Access to FNFA Governance & Policy Development
- Growth in Membership & Community Needs
- International & Nation-to-Nation Partnerships

Weaknesses

- Limited Transportation & Accessibility for Seniors
- Gaps in Emergency Response & Follow-Up
- Weak Communication & Information Accessibility
- Outdated Policies & Governance Challenges
- Inequities in Resource Distribution
- Cultural & Language Access Needs Expansion
- Economic Development and Political Connection & Business Diversification
- Housing Crisis & Infrastructure Gaps
- Insufficient Education & Professional Development Opportunities
- Community Division & Political Barriers

Threats

- Environmental & Climate Challenges
- Financial Constraints & Economic Uncertainty
- Gaps in Communication & Community Engagement
- Social & L'nu Identity Threats
- Division & Internal Community Struggles
- Government & Policy Threats
- Substance Abuse & Social Dependency
- Racism & External Pressures
- Safety

Wasoqopa'q Collective Community Vision

Our collective vision for the next 1 to 10 years:

A United and Inclusive Community - A community built on mutual respect, shared pride, and strong cultural connection, where all members feel included and valued.

A Healthier and Thriving Nation - Accessible healthcare, mental health, and addiction support services, affordable housing, food security programs, and sustainable living initiatives to support long-term community health.

A Transparent and Engaged Governance - A trustworthy and transparent leadership that actively involves members in decision-making, collective community-driven approach to governance and planning.

A Prosperous and Self-Sufficient Economy - Economic sustainability through diverse business opportunities, job creation, and community-led enterprises, and increased support for local entrepreneurs and businesses to ensure long-term economic growth and self-sufficiency.

Long-term & Generational Vision for Wasoqopa'q:

Wasoqopa'q envisions a self-sustainable culturally strong, and interconnected Nation that honours its past, protects its future, and ensures prosperity for generations to come. Rooted in Mi'kmaq law, tradition, and a deep relationship with the land and water, our community will thrive through education, self-governance, and cultural revitalization.

A Strong and Self-Governing Nation
"I hope future generations have access to our lands, water, ceremony, recreational use, and resources for their livelihood."

- Strengthen Mi'kmaq self-governance and law while ensuring treaty rights and access to services, land, and resources for all members.
- Define membership based on Mi'kma'ki principles, ensuring that future generations understand and uphold their identity.

Cultural Revitalization and Generational Knowledge
"We have entire communities of Mi'kmaq people who have no idea what it means to be Mi'kmaq, perhaps if they knew the teachings, they wouldn't let greed and disrespect take hold."

- Revitalize and protect the Mi'kmaq language to ensure it is spoken and carried forward.
- Instill culture as a guide for future generations, fostering pride, respect, and responsibility in preserving traditions.
- Ensure all members know the history of the land and water, protecting the relationship that has sustained our people for generations.

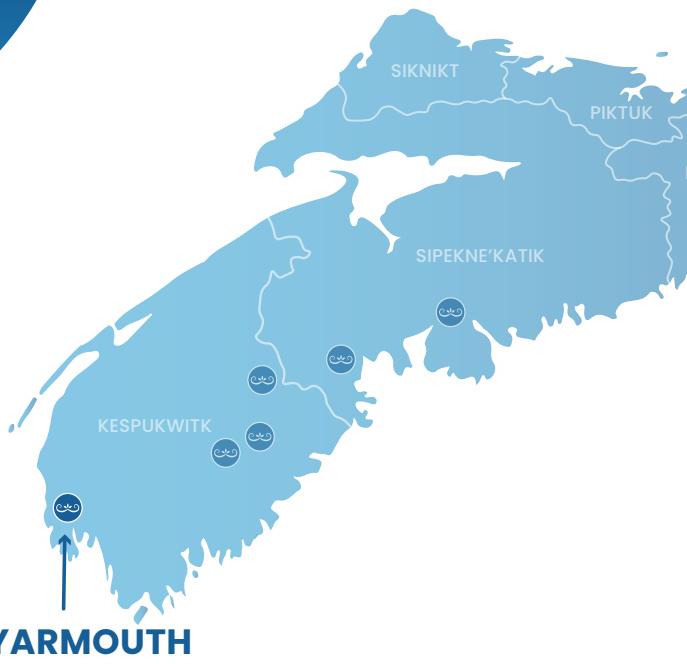
Sustainable and Prosperous Communities
"I hope future generations are able to respect and take care of the land and water better than we are now."

- Create a self-sustaining economy that prioritizes business, education, and housing, allowing members to prosper.
- Expand land for future generations, ensuring space for growth, culture, and economic development.
- Protect natural resources to maintain a healthy ecology, strong communities, and thriving people.
- Strengthen community ties and relationships across all Mi'kma'ki, ensuring a unified Nation.

"We must be more than just individuals—we are a community, connected by our shared history, land, and future."

Community Profile

Yarmouth



The Yarmouth Reserve, which is the most populated reserve, was officially established on June 8, 1887.

Located in Yarmouth County on 27.7 hectares of land, this Reserve maintains the largest Band membership on Reserve, and is considered the central hub of Wasoqopa'q First Nation with the main administration office located there.

Amenities (2024):

- 87 homes;
- More than 30 employees (administration, staff, youth, health, fisheries and carpentry);
- Commericial businesses including:
  - Your Winner's World; Winners One Stop, AFN Entertainment Centre; and the TRU by Hilton.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Businesses thriving**
- **Strong youth**
- **Hotel and economic development**
- **Population and growing youth**
- **Resilience**

Opportunities

- **Employing community members**
- **Cultural growth**
- **Fishing distributions of all kinds**
- **Apartment buildings for members**

Weaknesses

- **In differences**
- **Program guidelines**
- **Lack of support for mid-range members (19-64 yrs)**
- **Communication**

Threats

- **Lack of consistent funding**
- **No contingency plans**
- **Racism and discrimination**
- **Passing on status**
- **Government deciding membership and no membership code**

Yarmouth Community Vision

Short Term (1-10 Years)

Cultural Revitalization & Traditional Knowledge
- Expansion of traditional workshops (drum-making, baking, cooking, trapping, fishing, medicine/food gardens).
- Language preservation and land-based learning programs.
- More community powwows and cultural celebrations.

Economic Development & Entrepreneurial Support
- Creating a marketplace for crafters and economic programs to support artisans.
- Tourism and craft-based economic development initiatives.
- Bringing back craft grants and microgrant funding for businesses.
- Encouraging greater community involvement in economic development initiatives.
- Balancing sustainable funding initiatives for long-term prosperity.

Youth & Family Engagement
- Teen hub and new youth center to support young community members.
- Fun nights for kids & game nights for adults to strengthen social bonds.
- Early childhood education improvements, including an earlier Head Start program.
- Community-based services for children, youth, and families to build a holistic support network.
- Programs that integrate parents and children in learning and cultural activities.

Community Infrastructure & Public Spaces
- Development of bike-friendly infrastructure for safety and recreation.
- More community gathering spaces for youth and families.
- Community units and housing repairs to support long-term living conditions.
- Development of a fitness center for community use.

Health & Well-being
- Access to healthcare services (dentist, doctor, senior support, transportation for people with disabilities).
- Balance of well-being programs to promote physical, mental, and emotional health.
- Ensuring transportation for people with disabilities and seniors.
- Financial assistance for water acces off-reserve to improve living conditions.
- Expansion of medicine and food gardens for community sustenance.
- Food security initiatives to ensure access to nutritious meals.

Stronger Municipal & External Partnerships
- Improved relationships with municipal governments for reconciliation and support.
- Strengthened school partnerships to integrate Indigenous education and reconciliation efforts.

Next Generation (25+ Years)

In the next 25 years, Yarmouth envisions a strong, self-governing community that has secured more land and built meaningful partnerships with outside communities. The community will have a powerful voice at decision-making tables, shaping policies that reflect its values, traditions, and aspirations.

Through language revitalization efforts, future generations will speak Mi'kmaq, ensuring that cultural identity is preserved and passed on. Sustainable community growth will be supported by expanded housing, assisted living facilities for Elders, and essential infrastructure to meet the needs of all members.

Economic self-sufficiency will be achieved through strategic economic development, tourism, and land-based industries, reducing reliance on external funding. Reconciliation efforts will foster meaningful partnerships and mutual respect with neighbouring communities.

Community Profile

Gold River

Established in 1820, the Gold River Reserve, also known as Amapapskegek the Rocky River, has approximately 270 hectares of land, is located in Southern Nova Scotia and is approximately 61 kilometres from Halifax.

Positioned near the mouth of the west side of picturesque Gold River, the Mi'kmaq people have a long history in the area of using the resources within Gold River and the area surrounding Mahone Bay.

In addition to the river itself, the area is known as a location with traditional camp sites and there are various areas that have cultural and spiritual importance.

Current developments:

- Businesses like Gold Bean Café and Gold Nugget AFN facility.
- Recreational areas and community events, including the Gold River Mawiomi Grounds.
- Housing expansion

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Housing is growing.**
- **Community gardening.**
- **Participation in Pow Wow.**

Opportunities

- **Trading post, ice cream stand.**
- **ATV trails and rallies.**
- **Traditional medicinal dispensary.**

Weaknesses

- **Restriction on land usage and entrepreneurial options/support.**

Threats

- **Lack of funding for entrepreneurial ventures.**

Gold River Community Vision

Short Term (1-10 Years)

Strengthening Community Connections & Unity
- Improve connections between on- and off-reserve members and among all Nova Scotia reserves.
- Increase nation-wide events to unify the six communities.
- Establish a community committee with monthly meetings for better engagement.
- Organize more community family trips and summer activities for all ages.

Cultural Revitalization & Traditional Knowledge
- Revive traditional ways of living, including hunting, food growing, and traditional food classes.
- Expand native knowledge workshops, crafting, sweetgrass picking, and treaty education.
- Increase Mi'kmaq language visibility through signage, policy, and community use.

Infrastructure & Land Development
- Improve roads, signage, and speed limits for safer transportation.
- Develop a land use plan for future growth and economic projects.
- Construct an overpass and highway development to improve employment opportunities.

Economic Growth & Job Creation
- Establish new businesses to enhance economic self-sufficiency.
- Create landscaping jobs for preteens and teens to introduce youth to employment.
- Develop a food store on reserve to support local food security.

Health & Well-being Services
- Ensure doctors, dentists, and councillors visit at least once a month for better healthcare access.
- Expand mental health services, addiction support, and culturally sensitive medical care.
- Develop a fitness center for community health and recreation.
- Develop senior housing on reserve to ensure safe and accessible living spaces.
- Build a youth center and improve playground equipment for younger generations.

Improved Governance & Leadership
- Require councillors to visit often for direct engagement.

Enhanced Community Safety & Security
- Establish community peacekeepers to improve local safety and security.
- Increase cultural sensitivity training for service providers working in the community.
- Bylaws.

Next Generation (25+ Years)

In the next 25 years, Gold River envisions a strong, self-sustaining community with greater autonomy, increased land, and enhanced economic and social infrastructure. Through a re-vitalization and reconnection, the community members see the importance in rebuilding relations with neighbouring communities in the Sipekne'katik District.

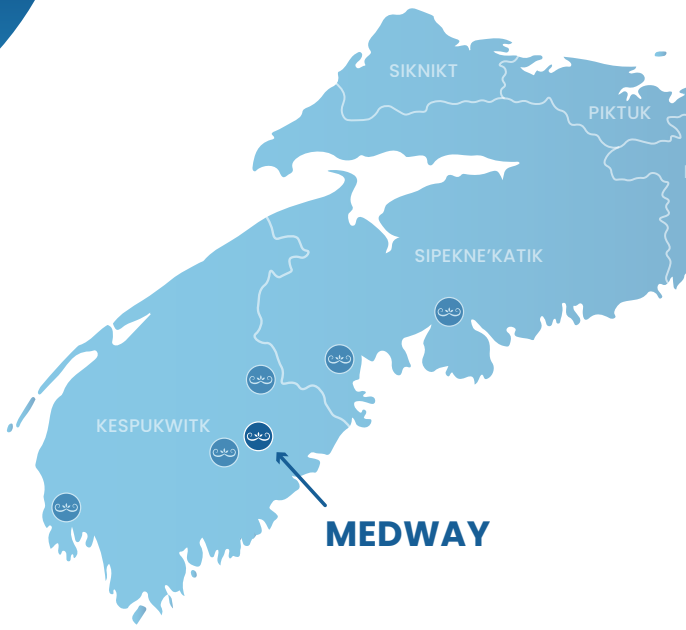
Cultural revitalization will be at the heart of the community, ensuring that the Mi'kmaq language, traditional knowledge, and ceremonies are preserved and passed down. Gold River is known for its cultural events, such as Powwows and land-based learning initiatives, which will strengthen identity and pride.

Sustainable community growth will be supported through expanded housing options, including modular homes for the homeless and on-reserve homeownership opportunities. Economic self-sufficiency will be achieved by increasing Band-member-owned businesses and supporting sustainable development.

Health and wellness services will be prioritized with the establishment of a treatment facility, increased access to on-reserve doctors, essential stores, and mental health support services. Unifying on- and off-reserve members through stronger relationships, mutual respect, and better communication will foster long-term community resilience.

Community Profile

Medway



The Medway Reserve was established in 1865 and is the smallest of the reserves.

Located on the Medway River in Queens County, the community lies on 4.7 hectares of land and is approximately 108.8 km southwest of Halifax and 40 km south of Bridgewater.

Current amenities:

- Eight housing units.
- Band office with five roles supporting education and employment.
- Medway Entertainment Ltd., including a gas station, snack bar, and convenience store.
- MacPhersons WFN GP Ltd. purchased in July 2025 includes an appliance and furniture store, fishing and hunting supplies, a Bell dealership, additional lands and a corporate Shell location.
- Purchase of land and building in Milton in July 2025 for future community use.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Stores.**
- **AFN Gas station.**
- **Restaurant.**
- **Propane/Furnace Oil.**
- **Freeman's lumber industry (25 jobs).**
- **Fire hall.**

Opportunities

- **Jobs available.**

Weaknesses

- **Land not large enough.**

Threats

- **Discrimination with non-Indigenous people.**
- **Mental health patients in the area can experience challenges accessing care.**

Medway Community Vision

Short Term (1-10 Years)

Strengthened Communication & Community Engagement
- Improve communication channels and outreach to both on and off reserve community members.
- Increase gatherings and community events to foster unity and reduce division.
- Improve access to community resources beyond Facebook, ensuring members know what supports are available.
- Foster togetherness through healing events, knowledge sharing, and collective growth initiatives.

Cultural & Language Revitalization
- Expand language revitalization efforts, including classes, school curriculum integration, and cultural support programs.
- Establish an Elder-in-Residence program to provide knowledge and mentorship in schools.
- Support traditional skills programs such as beading, crafts, and artisan training.

Economic Development & Financial Stability
- Strengthen meaningful partnerships in business and economic ventures to create long-term financial security.
- Develop entrepreneurial training programs to empower members in business development.

Youth Engagement & Development
- Ensure youth employment opportunities that foster career growth in growing local sectors.
- Increased support services for our post secondary students.
- Increase youth involvement in decision-making, and economic opportunities.
- Provide employment pathways and career training to encourage young members to stay connected to the community.

Fair Leadership & Governance
- Promote fairness, and transparency in leadership and community programs.
- Strengthen member decision-making processes, and increased transparency to decisions made on behalf of the Nation.

Housing & Infrastructure Expansion
- Increase affordable housing options, including off-reserve senior housing opportunities.
- Expand community housing solutions that support accessibility to all community members both on and off-reserve.

Mental Health & Trauma Support
- Develop mental health initiatives and intergenerational trauma resources for community healing.
- Implement culturally relevant mental health and wellness programs.

Next Generation (25+ Years)

In the next 25 years, Medway envisions a culturally rich community that strengthens its connection to the land, traditions, and community-focused prosperity. The community will have a thriving tourism industry immersed in culture, creating economic opportunities while preserving traditions.

Cultural revitalization will remain a priority, ensuring that youth learn the L'nu way, including traditional dancing, regalia making, and knowledge of the land and wildlife. Stronger connections among all communities will reinforce collective L'nu identity and pride.

Sustainable growth will be supported through land and wildlife preservation efforts, aligning the community with future industries while protecting the environment and Mi'kmaw moderate livelihood rights and traditions. Access to housing and healthcare services will be improved, a mobile health clinic will help address mental and physical health disparities in remote areas.

Community Profile

Hammonds Plains

Wasoqopa'q First Nation also owns land in Hammonds Plains, NS, that was approved for Reserve status in 2017. The purpose of purchasing this land was for future economic development for the Nation.

Currently, Hammonds Plains houses a small office which serves off-Reserve Band members living in the Halifax Regional Municipality and northern Nova Scotia.

- **Hammonds Plains Entertainment - a gas station and VLT company.**
- **Weliankweyasimk Women's Shelter opens fall 2025.**

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Businesses (hotel, restaurant, fisheries, gaming, and more).
- Mi'kmaq language program
- Youth pursuing post-secondary education.
- Archeology.

Opportunities

- Economic growth, location, tourism, Indigenous tourism.
- Youth leaders.
- Cultural activities (basket making, quill making).
- Elders and knowledge keepers (gen to gen).

Weaknesses

- Organizational growth
- Communication and celebrating success
- Recognition that lateral violence is not our culture.

Threats

- Loss of culture.
- Loss of language.
- Decision making and transparency.

Hammonds Plains Community Vision

Short Term (1-10 Years)

Youth & Elder Connection
- Increase youth and senior involvement through intergenerational programs like cooking classes and traditional teachings.
- Develop policies and initiatives to keep youth in the community and reduce reliance on group homes or external fostering.

Language & Cultural Revitalization
- Expand accessible language classes and encourage community participation to keep our culture and identity strong.
- Strengthen traditional teachings and cultural programming for all generations.

Education & Workforce Development
- Enhance and increase education (ex: train the trainer) funding and applicable policies to support lifelong learning.
- Improve employment rates by increasing access to job training and workforce development programs.
- Implement succession planning initiatives to build capacity, leadership and career opportunities.

Economic Growth & Business Expansion
- Support economic diversity through the establishment of an economic development corporation.
- Develop policy frameworks for the development of new business initiatives, and attract meaningful partnerships that provide access to resources to support our sustainable growth goals.
- Advocate for a community center/office space in Hammonds Plains to serve as a hub for services, events, and programming.
- Explore the establishment of a law firm to provide community-centered legal support.

Health & Wellness
- Expand access to health services, including dental care and mental health support.
- Implement food programs and policies to support food security and wellness.

Next Generation (25+ Years)

In the next 25 years, Wasoqopaq envisions a thriving, self-sustaining community with full autonomy over its healthcare, education, housing, and economic development. Our community will have a locally operated health clinic to ensure accessible physical, mental, emotional, and traditional healing services for all members.

Mi'kmaw culture will be deeply embedded in daily life, with expanded language programs, policy development, and Mi'kmaq signage reinforcing identity and heritage. The vision includes the establishment of a community-run school, ensuring that education is rooted in Mi'kmaq traditions, history, and knowledge systems while preparing future generations for success.

Housing will be a key priority, with the development of better, more affordable, and sustainable housing opportunities to support growing families and ensure that all members have a secure place to call home. Economic sustainability will be strengthened through diverse business initiatives and self-sustaining enterprises, allowing the community to generate its own wealth and reduce reliance on external funding. A focus on environmental sustainability will guide all future growth, ensuring that natural resources, land, and cultural sites are protected while the community thrives.

Community Profile

Wildcat

Approximately 138 km southwest of Halifax and located next to the Wildcat River on 465.4 hectares of land in Queens County, the Wildcat Reserve was established in 1820.

Wildcat community members continue to practice engage traditional activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping and canoeing. Wildcat has the largest land mass of the six reserves and is surrounded by stunning forests and rivers, with a small population makes this community tight knit and interconnected.

Historical significance:

- Deep cultural and spiritual ties.
- Continued generational knowledge sharing of traditional practices: hunting, fishing, trapping, and canoeing.
- Sacred sites: eel weirs, pottery shard area, burial ground.

Features (2024):

- 17 houses, a greenhouse, and beekeeping initiatives.
- Community hall with a sub-office.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Community center to bring people together.**
- **Strong community pride**
- **Continued intergenerational knowledge transfer.**

Opportunities

- **Greenhouse, bee keeping, community garden.**
- **River for recreational and traditional use.**
- **Cabins to stay in, proposal was completed to build rustic cabins on the river.**
- **Healing Centre for all WFN communities.**

Weaknesses

- **No stores**
- **Winter roads are challenging**

Threats

- **Community feels isolated.**

Wildcat Community Vision

Short Term (1-10 Years)

Cultural Revitalization & Traditional Practices
- Strengthen language programs, including youth language classes and land-based language learning.
- Expand traditional practices, cultural art programs, and Elder knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Establish community gathering grounds and creation of community burial site to honour traditions.
- Support community involvement and unity within Wasoqopa'q and neighboring communities.

Environmental Sustainability & Green Energy
- Promote green energy initiatives and increase species-at-risk awareness programming and through signage and education.
- Develop fully operational greenhouses to support food security and farming sustainability.
- Expand sweet grass beds and other medicines to provide access for all community members.

Youth Engagement & Community Inclusion
- Establish a dedicated youth worker to teach language, culture, and arts.
- Create consistent youth programs focused on social skills, safety, and active lifestyles.
- Increase youth activities and community events to strengthen intergenerational connections.

Economic Development & Entrepreneurship Support
- Support Mi'kmaq entrepreneurs and create community-based tourism initiatives.
- Develop a farmers market, building on existing beekeeping initiatives to expand local economic opportunities.
- Open a community healing centre that promotes connection to traditional activities, land based learning for those who need addictions and healing services.
- Open a convenience store with a gas pump to meet community needs.

Health & Wellness
- Improve healthcare access by scheduling access to nurses and doctors in community on a consistent basis.
- Increase access to home care services to support Elders and those in need.
- Implement cannabis safety policies and regulations to ensure responsible community use.

Infrastructure & Land Use Development
- Develop land use planning to ensure responsible growth and sustainability.
- Expand community spaces, including a community hall addition for gatherings and events.
- Secure more land for future development and environmental stewardship.

Next Generation (25+ Years)

In the next 25 years, Wildcat envisions a self-sustaining, culturally strong, and environmentally protected community that serves as a center for healing, traditional knowledge, and sustainable living. A healing center on the river will provide a retreat space for mental health support, cultural teachings, and land-based wellness programs, ensuring that members have a place for peace and restoration.

Cultural preservation will be deeply embedded in daily life, with a focus on creating fluent Mi'kmaq speakers, youth learning traditional hunting skills, and revitalizing Indigenous ways of living off the land. Elders and knowledge keepers will play a critical role in mentoring future generations while maintaining the traditions of hunting, harvesting, and environmental protection.

A commitment to environmental stewardship will guide all future development, ensuring no further deforestation and protecting river ecosystems. Efforts to remove smallmouth bass and pickerel from local waters will help restore traditional fish populations, reinforcing sustainable food systems and ecological balance.

Sustainable community growth will be supported through accessible senior housing and an assisted living facility in Wasoqopa'q, providing Elders with safe and independent living options while staying connected to culture and community.

With a strong foundation in tradition, sustainability, and self-sufficiency, Wildcat will thrive as a model of Indigenous resilience, environmental harmony, and cultural strength for generations to come.

Community Profile

Ponhook

Next to Lake Rossignol, the Ponhook Reserve was established in 1843 and is located on 101.8 hectares of land which is approximately 40 km northwest of Milton, in Queens County, and is 115.2 km southwest of Halifax.

Ponhook is steeped in ancestrial history, Lake Rossignol has produced many archeological finds including ancient eel weirs. In more recent times the area was known as a spot for vacationing, swimming, hunting, and canoeing.

- 101.8 hectares, with a portion designated as Ponhook Lake Nature Reserve for rare plant species.
- Eight coastal plain species identified, including one critically imperiled species.
- Historical findings: 7-foot Mi'kmaq skeleton and birchbark canoe unearthed in 1908.

Features (2024):

- Eight housing units.

Community Profile

Gardner's Mill

The Gardner's Mill property involves 2,827 acres of land in South West Nova Scotia, approximately 25 km from the Town of Yarmouth. The property was donated to the Wasoqopa'q First Nation by the late John Cook, a former resident of Gardner's Mill. Since 1998, the Wasoqopa'q First Nation has been going through the mechanisms necessary to add the property as reserve lands. The land is rural and largely undeveloped. The most pertinent existing land use within the property is the WFN Sawmill, a small lumber mill that produces fire wood and ungraded lumber. The land is used for recreational purposes as well, such as hiking, swimming and fishing.

Community Profile

Shelburne

A sub-office in Shelburne serves off-reserve members in the Lockport, Shellburne, Barrington and surrounding areas.

In 2017 WFN purchased the 12 acre "Ox Bow Motel" site located in Shelburne County adjacent to Highway #103 with a highway exit next to the parcel. The following year the buildings on the lot were evaluated and determined to be in very poor condition and demolished. An application for Addition to Reserve is currently underway along with future planning being considered.

Wasoqopaiq First Nation COMM
CULTURE
IN SCHOOLS
MENS HEALING
STRENGTH IN NUMBERS
JUNE '24
EMBRACING OUR OWN NAME
STRENGTHS
OUR LANGUAGE
OUR IDENTITY
THE SCOPE OF OUR COMMUNITIES
AREAS TO IMPROVE
COMMUNICATION
YOUTH
L'NUI'SIN?
E'E!
EDUCATIO
5 YEARS
HEALING
THE FUTURE OF OUR COMMUNITY
ACADIA FIRST NATION
Graphic by Cherise Tache

MUNITY ENGAGEMENT
HAMMONDS PLAINS · MEDWAY · GOLD RIVER · WILDCAT · YARMOUTH
LOCATION! LOCATION! LOCATION!
THE WHOLE FAMILY
THE WHOLE SELF
BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
TOURISM
OPPORTUNITIES
YOUTH RECREATION + RECONCILIATION
TRANSPARENCY
CONCERNS
DRUGS & ADDICTION
CULTURE CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM
OUR SAFETY
YARMOUTH POW WOW
HEALTH
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
INDEPENDANCE
INFRASTRUCTURE
OUR OWN COMMUNITY HELPING OUR OWN COMMUNITY
25 YEARS
A CONNECTED COMMUNITY
SOVEREIGN
OPPORTUNITY
LIFE SKILLS
HEALTH CLINIC
FOOD

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Health Care and Social

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

"What our communities need now to feel safe, supported, and well."

Family, Mental Health, and Addictions Support
- Establish support groups or counselling services that address family issues, mental health challenges, and substance abuse within the community;
- Develop educational programs to raise awareness about mental health and substance abuse, with importance on cultural sensitivity and Indigenous perspectives;
- Provide staff training on trauma informed programs and services.
- A safe place to heal (a retreat);
- More culturally appropriate mental health and addictions programming;
- More addictions services;

Parenting and Social Support
- Parenting classes for families;
- Support for social health through community gatherings, especially for Elders;
- Programs that promote community-wide mental health through culture and recreation;

Health and Wellness Access
- Health has improved outreach to community members — but there is a need for more promotion of mental health supports;
- Improve accessibility to health care and well being support services through community programs;
- Safe and inclusive health centers, and use of traditional healing circles and teachings that promote well being in all communities.

Active Living & Physical Wellness
- Physical activity groups (e.g. walking/running clubs);
- Accessible spaces for exercise: walking trails, sports fields, etc.;

Traditional Medicine & Healing
- Traditional medicine workshops;
- Collaborate with traditional healers and practitioners to incorporate traditional medicines in the community's healthcare system;

Food Security & Healthy Living
- Community gardens;
- Culturally relevant food security initiatives to support healthy eating and community nourishment;

Capacity & Infrastructure
- Begin developing a health and safety strategy and Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee;
- Improve building conditions and explore planning for new accessible health and wellness infrastructure;
- Ensure transportation access to reach health services;
- Early planning for assisted living options for Elders;

Social Dependency & Employment
- Begin breaking the cycle of social dependency;
- Begin employment and skills training that helps community members get off social;
- Many community members do not access NIHB — awareness and trust need to be built;

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Health Care and Social

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

"What we're building toward for our children and their children."

Self-Governed Health Care System
- Own healthcare facilities and more providers;
- More medical centres, treatment centres, and mental health support;
- More medical professionals and clinical care;
- Accessible and culturally safe health centres, including building new health infrastructure;
- Provide an equal standard of care and health;

Holistic and Traditional Healing
- Rooted in traditional healing, from education practices to community care;
- Land-based healing models embedded into health services;
- Community members able to heal their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being within their own communities;
- Accessible traditional, holistic approaches to health and healing;
- Expand healing circles, cultural spaces, and traditional medicine systems;

Breaking Dependency and Building Strength
- Social program reform, transition away from dependency through case management and empowerment;
- Transitional use social programs that help people stabilize and move forward;
- Increase skill training and access to employment as part of health and well-being;
- Training retention and employment tied to wellness and growth;

Elder Care & Community Wellness
- Resiliency centres and Elder centres;
- Assisted living facilities for aging population;
- Healthy homes for all generations;
- Safe community spaces;

Culturally-Rooted Health Programs
- Embed Mi'kmaq values into healthcare delivery;
- Expand culturally relevant education of services and wellness practices;

Infrastructure & Access
- Build strong community health infrastructure, including equipment, staff, and service education;
- Ensure long-term transportation access and funding to support health equity;
- Food security as a core part of health, supported by sustainable, land-based solutions;

Community Healing & Safety
- A full-circle approach to health that addresses trauma, addiction, and the spiritual needs of community;
- Every member has a path to healing and restoration, not through colonial systems, but through community and cultural leadership.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Governance and Leadership

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

"This is what the community is calling for right now to rebuild trust, increase visibility, and include all voices—on and off reserve."

Real, Regular, and Relatable Communication
- Hire a dedicated communications position.
- Set up ongoing communication between Chief and Council and members: open houses, newsletters, social media, and regular visits.
- Establish a general community email for questions, concerns, and check-ins with Council.
- Develop a clear communication strategy between Council, Band Admin, and community, using multiple platforms like an updated website, newsletters, Facebook, and possibly a mobile app.
- Ensure quarterly updates on what leadership is working on.

"We need communication we can count on, not just when elections come."

Connect Our Spread-Out Communities
- Bring communities together and strengthen relationships and ties.
- Ensure regular visits from Chief and Council to all communities, especially valley and off-reserve members.
- Provide internet access in communities to ensure equal opportunity to stay informed and engaged.

Clear, Accessible By-Laws and Policies
- Offer educational sessions to help community members understand what policies mean and how they work.
- Make all policies and by-laws easy to access, on the website, posted at the Band Office, shared at gatherings.
- Begin work to decolonize policies so they reflect our Mi'kmaw values, not just colonial systems.

"How can we follow what we don't understand? Teach us, show us."

Transparency That Feels Real
- Keep the community website up to date with meeting dates, financial updates, decisions, and ongoing projects.
- Launch a public reporting system so departments and staff can share what they're working on with members.
- Make sure people understand how money is being spent and invite input before major spending decisions.

Leadership That Is Visible and Accountable
- Leadership should make regular visits to communities and show more of a visible presence.
- Implement a process where people can reach out, share concerns, and be heard without judgment.
- Leadership should regularly seek out knowledge from Elders and build spaces where Elders feel invited into decision-making.

Build Capacity Inside Our Nation
- Train and support new leaders through leadership and succession planning, such as a youth council.
- Develop policies and procedures to clarify roles, responsibilities, and how things are run.
- Invest in staff development: HR training, health and safety policies, succession planning for staff, and more youth and Elder programming in each community.

"We need to know who does what—and how to step up when it's our turn."

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Governance and Leadership

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

"This is the vision community members shared for how governance should grow over time."

True Mi'kmaw Self-Governance
- Establish our own systems for governance and membership codes, law-making, dispute resolution, and all the tools we need to govern ourselves.
- Strengthen our political structure and Nation-wide presence, rooted in Mi'kmaq law and teachings.

Full Transparency & Community-Led Decision-Making
- Governance that is fully open and understood by members, with regular reporting and consistent check-ins.
- Create stronger interaction between government and membership, where people feel heard and included at every level.

Leadership Rooted in Tradition
- Use the knowledge of Elders and Traditional Knowledge Keepers in planning, decision-making, and community healing.
- Cultural awareness and Mi'kmaw teachings must guide governance, not just outside systems or policies.

"We walk forward best when we walk with our ancestors at our side."

Stronger Community Unity and Participation
- End the feeling of being "6 separate communities"—build a Nation that is unified and proud, without anyone left behind.
- Strengthen governance that brings people together, heals divisions, and supports healthy relationships and communication.

Ongoing Training and Leadership Growth
- Expand training programs for youth, staff, and future leaders to build skills, confidence, and Nation-building capacity.
- Continue building systems that respect diversity of thought, location, and experience, while working toward unity.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Lands, Resources and Infrastructure

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

"What we need to take care of now, for our people today and the ones coming up behind us."

Housing, Infrastructure, Public Spaces, and Emergency Management
- Build emergency safe, warm gathering shelters for when storms hit or power goes out.
- Maintain all community buildings regularly, through reporting, community-led upkeep, and training.
- Improve roads and sidewalks, and make sure all communities have reliable transportation access.
- Develop community centres in every community, for gathering, learning, and emergency use.

Land, Trails, and Environment
- Protect sacred places: burial sites, culturally significant spaces, and medicine trails.
- Build and care for green spaces and walking trails in every community, include spaces for land-based healing, food/medicine gardens, and traditional plants.
- Start tree planting projects and protect existing forests from clear-cutting or overuse.
- Make a land use plan that honours Mi'kmaq values and is led by community voices.

Cultural Revitalization & Natural Knowledge
- Teach how to hunt, fish, trap, and gather in the old ways, reconnect with land-based Mi'kmaq knowledge.
- Facilitate workshops with Elders and Knowledge Keepers to strengthen traditional teachings, especially around natural medicines, forestry, food, and respectful harvesting.
- Partner with environmental organizations to protect species important to our people — and bring back traditional ways of caring for the land.

Youth & Recreation
- Build youth centres and hubs in all communities.
- Develop a community-designed skate park with youth leadership.
- Create space for games, sports, and social programs that keep kids connected and active.

Community Services
- Develop community stores, access to clean water, and food security services in remote areas.
- Build community warming spaces and fundraisers for shared-use buildings (especially suggested near Liverpool).
- Establish addiction and mental wellness centers with a focus on cultural healing.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Lands, Resources and Infrastructure

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

"What we're dreaming for our grandchildren, and their grandchildren too."

Land & Resource Sovereignty
- Complete the current Additions to Reserve (ATR) processes, with a plan to continue to acquire more land to grow in ways that reflect our values.
- Finalize a comprehensive land use plan that respects both development and sacredness.
- Regulate, protect, and educate around land and water rights, especially for food, medicine, and ceremony.
- Establish leasing or use agreements that generate revenue without compromising the land.

Environmental Management Practices
- Generate our own energy (green power), produce our own food (gardens, farm markets), and harvest in sustainable ways.
- Build data centres, office buildings, and rental spaces to generate revenue for the Nation.
- Improve cell service and internet in rural communities to ensure full participation in Nation life.

Community-Driven Growth
- Build an updated Band office, community centres, and daycare/youth programming spaces across all communities.
- Create shopping centres and public buildings for business, training, and community services.
- Maintain a strong focus on community input and shared decision-making for all major development.

Guardianship & Environmental Harmony
- Protect forests, rivers, and sacred sites for future generations.
- Re-establish the idea of being stewards of the land — every project, every initiative should reflect this.
- Address long-term water systems, transportation access, and sustainable food production.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Housing

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

"Things we need to work on now to improve housing in our communities."

Build More Homes — Different Sizes & Needs
- More houses, and different kinds — single dwellings, smaller homes for young people, and bigger ones for families.
- 1–2 bedroom homes, Elders' housing, and youth housing across all communities.

Fix What We Have
- Many homes need regular check-ins to make sure they're safe and livable.
- More home ownership on reserve programs, to provide a pathway to attract community members back to our communities.
- Housing inspections and workshops for people wanting to learn how to do basic home maintenance on their own.

Support for Our Elders
- Elders need accessible homes, senior housing on-reserve and assisted living options close to family and ceremony.

Clearer, Fairer Housing Processes
- A fair, transparent and uniform housing policy, better communication about what housing is available, and easier application processes (like online forms).
- A Housing Committee with community member voices at the table.

Off-Reserve Housing Support
- Off-reserve members need real housing help — support with mortgages, down payments, and ownership programs.

"We are all Wasoqopa'q — on- and off-reserve, we deserve equal support."

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Housing

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

"The generational vision — where we want to go as a Nation when it comes to housing."

Diverse Housing Types for a Growing Nation
- Mix of apartments, row houses, townhouses, modular homes, and multi-unit buildings.
- Granny Suites or small homes behind the main house to keep family together.

Sustainable, Affordable Homes
- Green, energy-efficient homes that are affordable and self-sustaining.
- Future homes should reflect our values: respecting the land, lowering our costs, and supporting a healthy lifestyle.

Build Housing With Our Own People
- More Band-member-run construction companies to train our own people and build our own homes.
- That means jobs, skills, and pride in the homes we live in.

Accountability & Education
- More responsibility placed on homeowners for small repairs and upkeep — but with the right education and support.
- Separate maintenance teams, housing policies that are lived by, and a stronger sense of ownership and care.

Ending Homelessness
- Eliminate homelessness, both on- and off-reserve, and make sure everyone has a safe, warm home.

"There should be no Mi'kmaq person homeless or living in unfit conditions."

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Economic Development

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

"Grounded in the voices of Wasoqopa'q community members, here's what the Nation is ready to start building and strengthening now."

Community-Led Entrepreneurial Support & Job Creation
- Establish funding and mentorship programs for community members wanting to start or grow a business.
- Create a platform to promote local businesses, like a Wasoqopa'q business directory or online marketplace.
- Utilize community centers for multi-use purposes, events, jobs, training spaces, and safe spaces.
- Prioritize youth employment through job training, paid internships, and youth-owned business incentives.

Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Setup & Structure
- Create a separate economic development division with three key focus areas: corporate, community-based, and individual business streams.
- Quarterly and annual reviews of all AFN-owned and supported businesses to track success, financial health, and community value.
- Focus on sustainable, values-aligned business opportunities, with less focus on cannabis or liquor stores;
- Promote youth-driven enterprises.

Feasibility Studies & Infrastructure Planning
- Conduct feasibility studies to identify the right economic opportunities tailored to each community's strengths.
- Examples include:
  - Hammonds Plains: Gas station, hotel, sports complexes.
  - Gold River: Hotel, highway service center, but only once social wellness issues (e.g., addiction) are addressed.
  - Wildcat: Culturally-based wilderness retreat and/or addictions healing centre.
  - Yarmouth: Tourism, fisheries, processing plant, cultural centre.

Diversification of Revenue & New Business Development
- Invest in diverse sectors: aquaculture, tourism, renewable energy, data storage, retail, and office space rentals.
- Develop plans for community fundraising, reducing dependency on outside dollars and increasing self-generated income.
- Every opportunity should make sense locally, no more duplicate gas stations or empty buildings.

Governance, Transparency & Policy Alignment
- Economic projects must be guided by community values (Netukulimk), transparency, and proper business oversight.
- Annual performance and financial reviews must be standard.
- Policies to ensure separation between governance (Chief & Council) and business operations, to avoid conflicts of interest.
- "Leave no one behind" approach: economic success must benefit on- and off-reserve members equally.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Economic Development

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

"This is Wasoqopa'q's long-range economic vision — one that puts the next generation first."

A Self-Sufficient Nation with Economic Sovereignty
- Financial independence through corporate, community, and individual enterprise streams.
- Establish a Wasoqopa'q fish plant and processing/distribution centre to reclaim food systems and create local jobs.
- Long-term planning that ensures the Nation can grow without relying on government funds.

Nationwide Economic Presence
- Each community will host a unique economic engine, supporting local strengths and cultural tourism:
  - Wildcat: Wilderness healing retreat
  - Medway: River-based tourism and cultural education
  - Hammonds Plains: Gas station, hotel, business centre
  - Gold River: Highway hotel, treaty-based tourism
  - Yarmouth: Fisheries, cultural tourism, craft market

Environmental Management Plan
- Align all development with Mi'kmaw environmental protection, and land stewardship.
- Protect water, land, and natural resources, no development that harms river systems or forests.
- Avoid extractive, harmful industries, the economy must always serve the people and the land, not the other way around.

Generational Growth & Economic Healing
- Create intergenerational job pathways, young people stay connected to their roots while building careers.
- Economic development becomes a tool for healing intergenerational trauma, poverty, and loss of purpose.
- Restore trust in Wasoqopa'q's economic systems through accountability, unity, and transparency.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Culture, Language and Traditions

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

Start More Language Classes (In-Person & Online)
- Offer Mi'kmaq language classes taught by Elders, using traditional teaching methods like circles, storytelling, hands-on learning activities and gatherings in community.
- Make classes available online so members who live off-reserve can also learn and stay connected to culture.
- Begin language incentive programs (e.g., top-ups or honorariums or childcare support) for people actively learning or using the language.

Preserve and Share Our Elders' Knowledge
- Launch an oral history project to record stories, teachings, and traditional knowledge shared by Elders.
- Store teachings in a community archive or database that youth and families can access.
- Use this material to create family learning kits and storybooks for children and grandchildren.

Revive Traditional Teachings & Skills
- Run hands-on workshops on traditional practices like: Basket-making, Beading and regalia-making, Drumming, singing, and dancing, Traditional food gathering and cooking,
- Protect access to medicines and land-based teachings.
- Offer guided hunts and fishing training to pass on safe and respectful harvesting practices.

Create a Culture, Heritage & Language Committee
- Form a group made up of Elders, youth, off-reserve members, and cultural leaders to:
- Plan and promote cultural events year-round (e.g., powwows, feasts, healing ceremonies).
- Protect sacred spaces for smudging, ceremonies, and reflection.
- Guide survival skills programming, like wilderness training and land-based education.

More Community Events in All Areas
- Host more cultural activities and family events in every community, including Halifax and off-reserve hubs.
- Run crafting nights, intergenerational learning programs, and cultural retreats.
- Expand community mailouts and notifications so everyone hears about events in time.

Designate and Expand Cultural Spaces
- Create or expand cultural buildings in each community to host workshops and gatherings.
- Build or improve community spaces like powwow grounds, green spaces for smudging, and spaces for teaching youth.
- Encourage development of a central culture and language centre to house artifacts and promote Mi'kmaq history.

Focus on Cultural Safety and Inclusion
- Provide cultural sensitivity training to health workers and service providers.
- Encourage 2SLGBTQIA+ inclusion in cultural and community events.
- Promote respect, healing, and unity among members by fostering safe spaces to connect.

Support Living off the Land
- Offer land-based training for youth to learn how to live off the land as many ancestors did—hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering food and medicine.
- Promote sustainable resource use and conservation education for moose, deer, and fish stocks.

Support Crafters and Artists
- Provide support programs and funding for crafters and artists to continue traditional arts and create businesses.
- Promote community markets and events where members can sell handmade items.

Improve Communication Around Culture
- Create a communications plan to better share information about cultural events, programs, and learning opportunities (mailouts, app, social media).
- Make sure people in all communities feel connected and informed.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Culture, Language and Traditions

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

Fluent Speakers in Every Community
- Develop immersion language programs for children and adults.
- Offer certification programs to train new language teachers.
- Incorporate Mi'kmaq into everyday life—workplaces, signage, schools, and community events.

Build Cultural Centres
- Build a Cultural Heritage Centre to house community artifacts, oral histories, artwork, and language resources.
- Designate cultural and sacred spaces across Wasoqopa'q for ceremony, healing, and reflection.
- Establish dedicated spaces in each community for language, crafts, ceremonies, and storytelling.

Keep Traditional Ways Alive
- Make traditional practices part of everyday life, including: Hunting and gathering, Ceremonies and seasonal celebrations.
- Language and governance rooted in Mi'kmaq law.
- Ensure youth grow up with the values, responsibilities, and identity that come with Mi'kmaw teachings.
- Develop cultural handbooks with prayers, smudging protocols, ceremonies, and teachings for future generations.

Cultural Self-Sufficiency
- Secure long-term funding for cultural programs and staff positions (Elders, cultural advisors, language teachers).
- Embed culture and language in governance, leadership training, and community planning.
- Promote intergenerational knowledge transfer as a core part of community development.

Stronger Cultural Governance & Policy
- Pass policies that protect sacred sites, language use, and ceremonial rights.
- Ensure Mi'kmaq laws and ways are respected in economic development, land management, community use plan, emergency management plan and education.

Cultural Unity Across All Communities
- Promote shared events, powwows, and cultural education that connect all six communities—on and off-reserve.
- Teach shared Mi'kmaw identity and history to bridge geographic and social divides.
- Support consistent community ceremonies and celebrations to maintain strong spiritual and cultural bonds.

A Thriving Cultural Identity for Future Generations
- Ensure that in 25 years:
  - Children grow up fluent in the language.
  - Ceremonies are part of everyday life.
  - Culture is visible and valued everywhere.
  - Members feel proud, included, and connected to who they are.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Education

Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

Life Skills, Learning Support & Student Empowerment
- Start life skills programs for all ages—teaching financial literacy, cooking, communication, and personal wellness.
- Create afterschool programs that combine homework help and cultural learning like language, crafts, and traditions.
- Support academic tutoring and mentorship programs led by qualified community members, covering a range of subjects.
- Offer transition courses (time management, resume writing, application writing) to help youth and adults succeed.
- Provide guidance and workshops for career exploration, especially in trades, health care, and leadership roles.

Post-Secondary & Career Pathways
- Offer help with college/university applications, including covering costs and offering writing support.
- Provide workshops on bursary/scholarship applications and boost access to education officers.
- Encourage youth to pursue careers in healthcare (nurses, doctors) and provide incentives and support to do so.
- Host education fairs and career guidance programs at the secondary school level.

Youth Employment & Career Preparation
- Create summer jobs for youth, including partnerships with local businesses that align with youth career goals.
- Promote programs that help youth transition from social assistance to the workforce.
- Offer student worker positions within the Nation to gain experience while contributing to the community.

Inclusion, Accessibility & Mental Health in Education
- Make information about educational supports easy to access for new and long-time members (online, print, in person).
- Offer emotional, spiritual, and mental health supports as a foundation for successful learning.
- Increase support for students with disabilities and ensure all schools have resources for different learning needs.

Cultural Learning & Language Revitalization
- Introduce or expand Mi'kmaq language programs in schools, workplaces, and homes.
- Incorporate language and cultural content into afterschool programs and public school curriculum.
- Launch fun, hands-on activities like beading, basket-making, and regalia-making tied into cultural teachings.
- Continue Elder sessions and storytelling as part of the learning experience.
- Promote more Mi'kmaq in workplaces and on public signage.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Education

Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

Self-Determined Education Systems
- Develop a regional Indigenous post-secondary institution in partnership with other First Nations.
- Provide adult training facilities and learning cohorts to support education at all stages of life.

Language Immersion & Revitalization
- Create Mi'kmaq language immersion programs for children, youth, and adults.
- Offer language certificate programs for fluency development.
- Ensure more Mi'kmaq language is used in public spaces, signage, workplaces, and homes.

Post-Secondary Advancement & Equity
- Continue increasing graduate rates through long-term supports and community pride in education.
- Provide more bursaries, scholarships, and funding for all post-secondary pathways.
- Support incarcerated learners and adults re-entering education with tailored resources.

Youth Training & On-Land Learning
- Expand forest schools, on-land training, and traditional youth learning programs.
- Offer workshops in L'nu knowledge, regalia making, hunting, trapping, and land-based skills.
- Prioritize social assistance reform policies that connect learning with workforce readiness.

Cultural Infrastructure & Knowledge Sharing
- Build a cultural museum or heritage centre focused on education, storytelling, and preservation.
- Create safe spaces for ceremony, language, and traditional learning within every community.
- Capture teachings through oral history projects, databases, storybooks, and mentorship programs.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Youth and Elders

Youth: Short-Term Priorities (1–10 Years)

Learning, Culture & Language
- Deliver cultural workshops and youth learning activities focused on Mi'kmaq teachings.
- Create and distribute Mi'kmaq storybooks and traditional teaching resources for youth.
- Boost after-school and weekend cultural programs (drumming, dancing, regalia-making).
- Include more Mi'kmaq language in schools and offer language classes in community.

Youth Connection & Cultural Exchange
- Facilitate youth trips and inter-community gatherings with other Mi'kmaq Nations.
- Develop a Youth Council with representation acknowledged by Chief and Council.
- Foster youth-led programming and youth participation in governance.

Health, Recreation & Well-being
- Build or improve youth centres, gyms, and outdoor recreation areas.
- Offer gym memberships, game zones (pool tables, arcades), and sports programming (soccer, basketball, volleyball).
- Improve accessibility for off-reserve youth and those with limited mobility.
- Provide mental health supports, including land-based wellness and healing programs.

Employment & Life Skills
- Expand summer jobs, internships, and youth entrepreneurship programs.
- Teach life skills like financial literacy, resume writing, and time management.

Elders: Short-Term Priorities (1-10 Years)

Health, Care & Transportation
- Create home support programs including groceries, lawn care, medical transport.
- Offer monthly visits from doctors, nurses, and wellness professionals.
- Implement Meals on Wheels, safe home inspections, and wellness check-ins.

Mentorship & Intergenerational Connection
- Pair Elders and youth through mentorship programs and monthly storytelling circles.
- Establish designated gathering spaces for Elder-Youth meetups and knowledge sharing.
- Support joint programming like cooking classes and shared cultural activities.

Community Inclusion & Services
- Form an Elder Council to guide decision-making and preserve oral history.
- Host monthly Elder gatherings across all six communities.
- Increase Elder visibility in schools and community events.

Housing & Accessibility
- Ensure Elders have access to assisted living, accessible housing, and transport vans.
- Provide shorter cultural day trips that meet Elder preferences and mobility needs.

Comprehensive Community Plan
Priority: Youth and Elders

Youth: Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

Fluent Speakers & Cultural Leaders
- Support full Mi'kmaq language fluency among youth.
- Ensure traditional knowledge (e.g., hunting, regalia-making, teachings) is passed on through programs and institutions.
- Encourage land-based education and sustainability leadership.

Youth in Leadership & Governance
- Establish student and youth councils that advise Chief and Council.
- Increase youth visibility in planning, development, and cultural governance.

Self-Sufficiency & Opportunity
- Support access to higher education, especially for off-reserve youth.
- Build youth-led businesses and offer training to support economic independence.

Elders: Long-Term Priorities (10–25+ Years)

Housing & Independence
- Build Indigenous nursing homes, assisted living facilities, and accessible senior housing across Wasoqopa'q.
- Develop a regional Elders Centre to centralize services and build connection.

Care & Wellness Supports
- Offer long-term access to:
  - Meals on Wheels
  - Safe home inspections
  - Medical vans and transportation
  - Mental wellness and cultural health supports

Legacy & Cultural Authority
- Document and preserve Elder knowledge, oral stories, and traditional teachings.
- Recognize Elders as core leaders and advisors in all Nation-building initiatives.

EVERY CHILD MATTERS

Comprehensive Community Plan 2025
Created by: