Community Engagement Session #1

Our Mi’gmaw Culture:

Our VISION & Goals

SUMMARY

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

Listuguj is one of 324 First Nations communities that undertook and won a class action law suit against the federal government, seeking funds to help recover from the serious and enduring impact of colonialism and residential schools. The court approved the settlement in 2023.

With the resources from the 4 – Pillars Foundation, which is an Indigenous-led legal trust, we now have additional funds (about $500K/yr, for 5 years) to undertake very important revitalization and development work that will help us heal, and transition to the type of Mi'gmaq lives that *we* want and deserve.

To qualify for our share of the funding, we must submit a credible Plan addressing each of the 4 Pillars, *the key aspects of our lives that were most impacted by the colonialist practices,* especially residential schools. These are:

- Our Mi'gmaw **culture;**
- Our Mi'gmaw **language;**
- Our Mi'gmaw **heritage;**
- Our **wellness.**

The LMG has decided to take advantage of this opportunity to undertake a meaningful consultation with the community to update our community VISION on each of these four (4) pillars, and to establish the priority goals that we should pursue for each Pillar, during the next decade, with a focus on the next 3 to 5 years.

> This document summarizes the strong and thoughtful input from the community consultation sessions focused on the first pillar: our **Mi'gmaw CULTURE**.

We were able to hold consultation sessions with representatives from our Listugujewa'q, including our…

- Women;
- Elders;
- Men;
- The General Membership;
- Youth aged 10 – 15 years.

Possibly, because of the good weather, we were unable to meet with our young parents, a key group for this exercise. We were also unable to meet with the youth group, aged 18 – 30 years.

The total number of people who came out was less than hoped for, but what we lacked in quantity, we made up for in quality input, which should be evident from the following pages.

PROCESS

At this stage in the planning process, what we most need to determine is the VISION that the community wants to pursue and achieve for each of the core pillars.

Once each group identified their preferred VISION for our Mi'gmaw Culture, we asked them to identify the most effective actions they believe the LMG and the community must take to makes as much progress as possible towards the VISION in the next 3 -5 years.

Since we don't have unlimited resources, we asked each group to prioritize their proposed goals, see below.

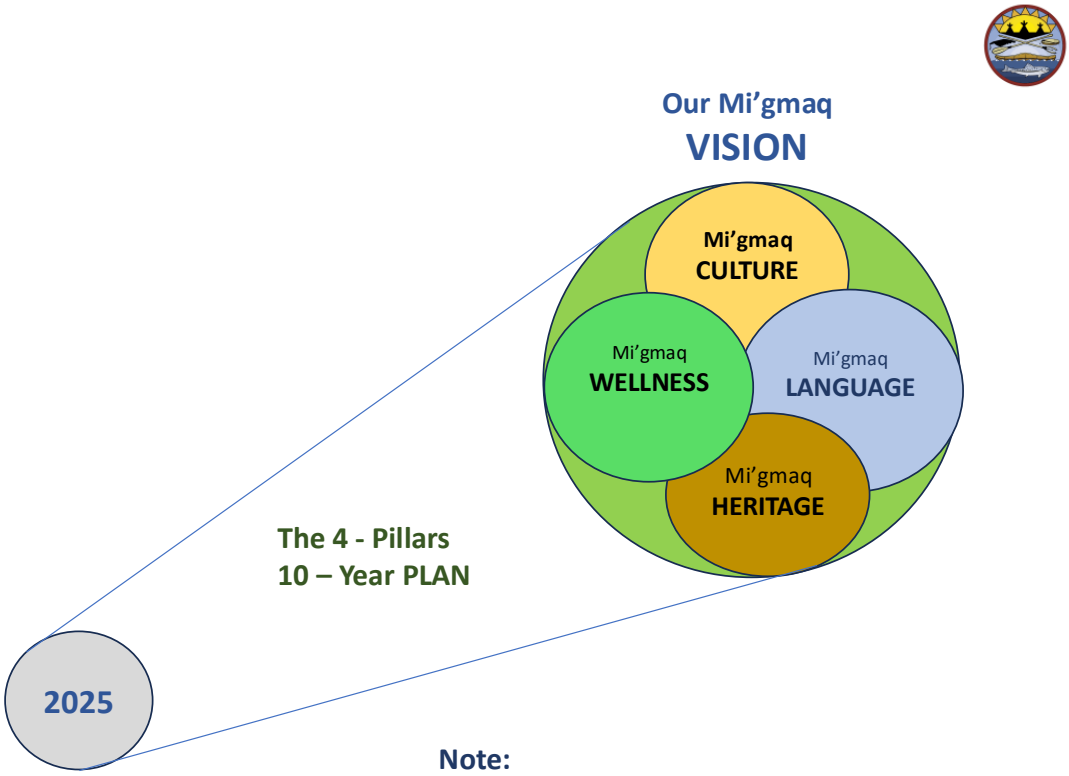
The VISION developed from this exercise will guide *all* related programming for the LMG.

The LMG already has several programs, operations plans and goals in place to address some of the proposed goals, like the Community Comprehensive Plan (CCP), we will carefully re-assess our priorities and all sources of funding to determine which specific goals will remain as the focus of the 4 – Pillars Plan, and how best to use all available funding. There are clear limitations on how the funding from the 4-Pillars trust can be used.

In this way, we hope to be able to optimize our good work and progress towards our VISION, during the next 3 – 5 years, and beyond.

This Plan will be updated every 3 – 4 years.

Visual representation



Note:
These elements must be fully integrated into your current VISION for Listuguj, and your current LMG priorities

Our Mi'gmaw CULTURE: our VISION

NOTE

- We know that our Mi'gmaw culture is fully embodied in our Mi'gmaw language. One is not possible without the other.
- Our participants during this first round of consultations provided high quality input and we did not have time to undertake the work on our Mi'gmaw language in a good way, though it was often referenced.
- Our Mi'gmaq language will be the focus of the next round of consultations, early this Fall, when we also hope to complete the consultations on Heritage and Wellness.

Our VISION for our Mi'gmaw culture is of our people, the Listugujewa'q…

- Living productive, active, healthy, engaged and happy lives as proud and capable Mi'gmaw, living in a close relationship with our land/territory;
- Interacting with genuine mutual respect, confidence and competence, as Mi'gmaw, among ourselves and with the changing world;
- Fully knowledgeable about, and inspired and empowered by, our Mi'gmaw culture, including our histories, stories, medicines, protocols and teachings, and practising our ceremonies and ways of knowing, being and doing at all stages of our lives. Our Mi'gmaw culture is our "normal" way of life;
- Acknowledging the special role of our Elders and Knowledge Keepers in assuring we pass on our cultural ways and knowledge to our future generations;
- Being born into our culture and language and learning, living and appreciating it from the very beginning of our lives, including actively participating in the special ceremonies and practices at the proper times in our lives;
- Providing special support, encouragement and learning for our children and youth so they seek and appreciate high personal standards in all they do, which we celebrate;
- Accepting our personal responsibility to learn, know, share and live consistent with our cultural ways on a day-to-day basis, and to celebrate it and pass it on to future generations; and
- Affirming, exercising and protecting our Mi'gmaw rights, title, interests, and jurisdiction throughout our LMG territory to protect our wholistic Mi'gmaw ways of living.

Our PRIORITY GOALS for our Mi'gmaw CULTURE

"Goals" are the most effective "actions" we plan to take during the next 3 -5 years, to help us advance as much as possible towards our VISION.

Since we have limited resources, we must also prioritize our goals. The participants started by proposing all the goals they believe will help us move along the path towards our VISION for Culture.

We then asked them:

- *"If we could only work on three (3) of these goals, which 3 will bring the greatest benefit as we seek to strengthen our Mi'gmaw culture and achieve our VISION?"*

The following are the three (3) major goals that were proposed. There are also many other helpful goals that were proposed, and these can be worked into the planning process, some of them as direct support goals under one of the following three (3) priority goals.

All suggested goals will be kept for reference when the final planning is in place.

Goal #1: **Teach our people, especially our children and youth, to know, understand, and have a deep pride in our histories, stories, skills, medicines, art forms, and crafts, and our ceremonies, protocols and Sacred Teachings, and have these empower us in our everyday lives.**

Key considerations

- Seek the knowledge from our Knowledge Keepers, and support and acknowledge their work.
- Use the "workshop series" approach, grouping each learning series around specific knowledge or skills, e.g. a separate workshop series on crafts, or on-the-land skills, or key teachings, etc.
- Integrate this learning and these cultural ways from birth and maintain them throughout early childhood, and forward into our daycare centres, primary and secondary schools, so it is lived and experienced as our "normal" way of living, as it should be.
- Learn to identify, address and eliminate negative colonialist thinking and practices.
- Integrate this with the strengthening and use of our Mi'gmaw language.
- Involve the students/learners directly in the design and delivery of the learning process; make it highly interactive and experiential.
- Fully integrate it with on-the-land learning, which is our way.
- Provide designated sites and welcoming spaces for some of this learning and the practice of key skills, e.g. a cultural centre.

Goal #2: **Support our Knowledge Keepers so they can pass on their knowledges, including our on-the-land skills, and record (video) their knowledge so it can be preserved and passed on to future generations.**

Key considerations

- Given the age and health of some of our Knowledge Keepers, this is urgent. We need to be concerned about the state of the mental health of our Knowledge Keepers and record them while they are fully capable.
- Also, fully involve our Knowledge Keepers in the learning and practice of our Mi'gmaw histories, stories, teachings, and ceremonies in our schools.
- Encourage our Knowledge Keepers (women and men) to select key individuals to whom they will specifically transfer their teachings, so these younger individuals can continue the transmission, and be recognized for their knowledge.
- Knowledge Keepers must also be role models and live consistent with the teachings.
- Help all participants identify negative colonialist ways, and eliminate them from our healthy Mi'gmaw thinking and living.
- Use this Mi'gmaw knowledge to strengthen and unify our families and community.

Goal #3: **Engage each person, especially our Knowledge Keepers, young parents, other adults, and youth in this important revitalization, and have them take *primary* responsibility for ensuring that our Mi'gmaw culture and ways becomes the "normal way of life" in our families and homes, and in our community and institutions.**

Key considerations

- Raising our children and youth in a healthy, decolonized Mi'gmaw way is first and foremost the responsibility of the parents and extended Mi'gmaw families.
- For this revitalization process to succeed, we must engage with all key players in an ongoing, productive, unifying process.
- Our Mi'gmaw culture should become a unifying force in our community. Consistent with our Sacred Teachings, all relations, communications and dealings among ourselves should be done with sincere mutual respect.

Conditions for success

All participants were very concerned about the commitment of the LMG, both members and the Chief and Council, to follow through on this good thinking. The following "conditions for success" were raised among several.

1. Full political understanding by, and commitment and support from, the political leadership in assuring the full implementation of the best thinking of the members (this Plan), including sustained support for the Plan *following any change in political or administrative leadership*.
    - This also includes the sustained focus and commitment of the resources required to support this critical work.
2. Our members must engage and take *personal* responsibility for the full revitalization of our language and culture, starting in our homes.
    - They also need to fully engage in the ongoing community dialogue and planning to assure optimal benefits from this revitalization process.
    - We need to show genuine mutual respect in all our dealings with each other.
    - We need to overcome "engagement fatigue" and a lack of faith in the process, i.e. "They don't listen to me anyway…they never do what they say they will…"
3. The integration and alignment of these goals with the current priorities of the affected departments of the LMG, with the appropriate connections between departments to ensure a wholistic, well coordinated approach.
4. Wherever possible, engage with the learner (students, members) in designing interactive learning processes, based on experiential learning, with good on-the-land learning.
5. We must "walk the talk" regarding our respect for our 7 Sacred Teachings, and specifically when it comes to respecting ourselves and others when it comes to living healthy, Mi'gmaw lifestyles. This means that all forms of addictions to alcohol, drugs, or gaming must be addressed, including shutting down the outlets. We need to "walk the talk".
6. We must feel free to express our thoughts, as citizens, in a respectful way, without fear of reprisal.

Next steps and suggested timing

1. Resume the community engagement sessions for Language, Heritage and Wellness in the 3rd week of September.
    - Use the summer to discuss and stimulate interest among the members for good participation in the Fall.
2. Meet with the Administration Leadership Team to review the outcomes and discuss:
    - How best to integrate the priority goals with current plans and priorities; and
    - How to optimize funding from all sources.
3. Make the final presentation and recommendation to Council for approval and agree on the reporting and accountability process, including regular progress reports to the community.

This initial progress report was presented to Chief and Council for their consideration and approval on 6 June 2025.

The Chief and Council expressed their **strong agreement with the thinking included in this initial report**, and their **sincere appreciation for the good contributions of the members who participated**.

Chief and Council strongly suggested that, in the VISION, we emphasize the need for all Listugujewa'q to communicate and relate to each other, at all times, consistent with the Sacred Teaching of **sincere, mutual respect**. This was added.

They also suggested that we learn and use our traditional protocols, which are also based on respect.

They believe the project is off to a good start and **encourage all members to take every opportunity to get engaged** when the consultation sessions resume in early Fall.

The Chief and Council are committed to support this project.

Wela'lin to all those who took the time and made the personal effort to contribute to these very helpful discussions, and provide strong and thoughtful guidance.