

## Mi'kmawitasik: Mi'kmaw Made

## Step Into the Story

Since time immemorial, Mi'kmaw people have been artists, crafters, and cultural innovators. For thousands of years, our history, technology and cultural knowledge have been passed from one generation to the next, and shared through entrepreneurship and trade with other Nations and visitors.

The Mi'kmaq are the original ambassadors of this sacred land. We welcomed the first newcomers to Mi'kma'ki - our traditional territory - and established Peace and Friendship Treaties. We have a reputation for friendliness and hospitality. We honour this legacy by providing a platform for Mi'kmaw artists and entrepreneurs to share their unique perspectives and stories with the world.

This toolkit is your guide to thriving in authentic Mi'kmaw tourism.

## THE BRAND LOGO

The Mi'kmawitask logo proudly represents the Mi'kmaw people and welcomes the world to experience authentic Mi'kmaw products and services. The accompanying Mi'kmawitasik brand mark certification, underpinned by the principles below, is dedicated to honoring, promoting, and protecting our cultural heritage.

## **PKIJO'TMNEJ**

(Bee-gee-joe-dim-n-edge)

Let's make it last



## **MALIAP'TMNEJ**

(Mall-lee-up-dim-n-edge)

Let's take care of it

## WLO'TMNEJ

(Wool-owe-dim-n-edge)

Let's treat it well

L'NUIMK (ool-noo-imk)

Living the L'nu way



## What is Authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism?

Authentic Mi'kmaw cultural tourism involves the sharing, celebration, and appreciation of the diverse aspects of Mi'kmaw culture, encompassing both traditional and contemporary products and experiences, and facilitating meaningful exchanges between the Mi'kmag people and visitors to Nova Scotia.

Authentic Mi'kmaw cultural tourism is inherently Mi'kmaq-led, is truly Mi'kmaw, and by extension helps to define what it means to be Mi'kmaq. Authenticity means finding ways to support the growth and evolution of the Mi'kmaw tourism industry, while safely creating and sharing Mi'kmaw c ulture and heritage as a tourism offering.

Developed with the invaluable input of Mi'kmaw Elders, Knowledge Keepers, and various cultural contributors, Mi'kmawitasik encourages our Makers and Experience Providers not only to share their culture but also grow as entrepreneurs, while staying aligned with their cultural values.

Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuaqn Negotiation Office (KMK) and its partners supported Mi'kmaw leadership in developing authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Guidelines for Nova Scotia, available for review at mikmawitasik.ca. While we have developed these guidelines with community input, we recommend consulting with your elders and community to ensure your cultural tourism ideas align with authentic Mi'kmaw traditions.

## Why Promote Cultural Tourism?

Cultural Tourism provides an opportunity for people to share their culture and language with others. It instills a sense of pride within communities and creates opportunities to educate and share awareness of who the people of an area are, while increasing economic benefit for their communities.

## What Does It Mean To Be Authentically Mi'kmaq?

Being authentically Mi'kmaq is the embodiment of Mi'kmaw culture and heritage. For tourism, it is about Mi'kmaw-led experiences that help visitors genuinely appreciate and celebrate Mi'kmaw culture in diverse forms. This approach includes using Mi'kmaw language, traditions, and practices to express cultural beliefs, history, and identity.

The essence of authenticity in Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism is rooted in the lived experiences of the Mi'kmaq, ensuring that every aspect, from information to products, originates authentically and directly from the Mi'kmaw people.

During our community engagement sessions, our community members have identified the following as just a few examples of cultural tourism offerings that are authentically, undeniably Mi'kmaw:

## Sample Mi'kmaw Experiences

- ◆ Summer Solstice Mawiomi community celebration
- ◆ Storytelling circle featuring a community Elder
- ◆ Learning Circle focused on the Mi'kmaw Centralization Policy
- ♦ Kojua dance or waltes game demonstration
- ◆ Culture camp teaching traditional hide tanning or fish drying techniques

### Sample Mi'kmaw Products

- ◆ Traditional Mi'kmaw quillboxes, wooden flowers, and baskets
- ◆ Traditional beaded jewelry or contemporary silver work
- ♦ Mi'kmaw-designed clothing
- ◆ Contemporary oil paintings and alternative art forms inspired by traditional teachings
- Skin care products using traditional plants and medicines









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"Authenticity comes from the hearts, minds, and hands of the Mi'kmaq."

- Mi'kmaw Elder

## About the Mi'kmawitasik Cultural Tourism Program

Mi'kmawitasik: Mi'kmaw Made (Meeg-maw-wee-duh-sig) is a cultural tourism brand certification trademark registered for the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia by the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs. This brand serves to preserve and promote Mi'kmaw culture and traditions while providing a meaningful and authentic cultural experience to visitors in Nova Scotia. Mi'kmawitasik is guided by the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

This initiative empowers Mi'kmaw artisans, craftspeople, experience providers, and entrepreneurs to showcase and sell their products and services while respecting, protecting, and promoting Mi'kmaw culture and traditions.

### Eligibility

Our members consist of Mi'kmaw artisans, craftspeople, performers, cultural experience providers, and entrepreneurs who want to showcase their products and services to a wider audience. Mi'kmawitasik is currently a pilot project. Presently, Mi'kmawitasik membership is open to:

- ♦ Individual Mi'kmaw community members with a verified ancestral connection to one of the 13 Mi'kmaw communities within Nova Scotia.
- Mi'kmaw community-owned cultural tourism entities.

Note: At this time, Mi'kmawitasik eligibility does not include regulated, commercial industries.

## Membership Approval

Membership approval is based on the following criteria:

- 1. Weta'pek'sin Verification of eligibility based on the Mi'kmaw principles of Weta'pek'sin sharing information about your family roots and ancestral connection to community.
- 2. Cultural Authenticity Transparency regarding your cultural knowledge and creative expression and a willingness to continue to learn about Mi'kmaw culture and share our teachings.
- 3. Nationhood As a member of Mi'kmawitasik, you become a Cultural Ambassador for the Mi'kmaw Nation. Attending an orientation session is a requirement for membership.

Note: Applicants will need a copy of their Status Card (Certificate of Indian Status) or Wula Na Kinu Card (Proof of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Identity) in order to submit their application. Mi'kmaq may apply for Wula Na Kinu at https://www.mikmawns.ca

## Mi'kmawitasik Application Process

- 1. Mi'kmawitasik applications can be completed on paper or electronically. Please visit mikmawitasik.ca for more information.
- 2. Fill out the Mi'kmawitasik application and submit to the Mi'kmawitasik Administration Team.
- 3. Applications will be reviewed, verified, and approved by our Team.
- . Approved members will:
  - ♦ Attend a Mi'kmawitasik Rights and Responsibilities Orientation Session.
  - Sign the Licensing (Rights and Responsibilities) Agreement.
  - Receive personalized Mi'kmawitasik membership materials including a QR Code.
  - Work with Mi'kmawitasik team to create an online marketing profile.
  - ♦ Participate in ongoing training, funding, and marketing opportunities.
  - Renew membership every two years.

## Your Member Involvement

Welcome to the Mi'kmawitasik family! If you are Mi'kmaq, you have the right to apply to use this brand. As a member, you play a crucial role in sharing and preserving our rich Mi'kmaw culture. Whether you're creating Mi'kmaw products, sharing stories, or offering immersive cultural experiences, your contributions are invaluable. As a Mi'kmaw Member of Mi'kmawitasik, you have two opportunities to be included.



Mi'kmaw Makers are individuals who are accepted members of the Mi'kmaw community, and who create authentic - although not necessarily traditional - Mi'kmaw products such as crafts, art, and clothing.

Makers bring our culture to life by offering many different products to tourists. It's about showcasing the beauty and depth of Mi'kmaw culture to visitors through your creations, personal stories and connection to community.



Mi'kmaw Hosts are individuals or organizations that offer experiences rooted in Mi'kmaw culture and traditions such as guided tours, cultural workshops, storytelling sessions, traditional ceremonies, and other experiences that showcase Mi'kmaw heritage and way of life.

Providers offer authentic experiences that immerse people in our traditions and way of life. From guided cultural tours to traditional ceremonies, your experiences offer a window into the soul of our community.

#### YOUR JOURNEY & COMMITMENT

As a Member of the Mi'kmawitasik program, you, your business, and your organization receive a number of powerful benefits and rights that will help you take your authentic Mi'kmaw tourism operation to the next level. In exchange, you will be expected to uphold several responsibilities as a designated representative of Mi'kmaw culture.

#### **Member Benefits**

Joining Mi'kmawitasik opens up a world of opportunities. You'll gain increased visibility, support for preserving our culture, and access to a community of like-minded individuals. Use the Mi'kmawitasik logo, enjoy promotional support, and connect with audiences eager to learn about our culture.

#### YOUR MEMBER BENEFITS INCLUDE:

- Use of the Mi'kmawitasik trademarked logo on marketing materials such as business cards, stickers, and product labels
- Listing and verification on the Mi'kmawitasik website with a personalized QR code
- ♦ Increased visibility and marketability through Mi'kmawitasik marketing channels
- Respect and validation of your cultural knowledge and expertise
- ♦ Protection against cultural appropriation
- Access to support for preserving & promoting Mi'kmaw culture
- Collaboration opportunities with other members

## Member Rights & Responsibilities

As a member, you have rights to recognition, support, and fair compensation. You also carry the responsibility to represent our culture accurately and with respect, complying with guidelines that ensure our traditions are shared authentically and responsibly.

#### YOUR MEMBER RIGHTS INCLUDE:

- Recognition and respect as authentically Mi'kmaq – Mi'kmaw Maker or Mi'kmaw Host
- ♦ A Certificate of Authenticity
- Access to Mi'kmawitasik resources & support to access fair compensation for your offerings
- Legal protection of your intellectual property

#### YOUR MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES INCLUDE:

- ◆ Respect for Mi'kmaw culture and traditions
- ◆ Accurate representation of products and services
- ◆ Compliance with program guidelines and local laws and regulations

Read the full set of guidelines at mikmawitasik.ca



Basketry, quillwork, and furs by Rob McEwan, L'sitkuk First Nation



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## HOW DO WE KNOW WHEN SOMETHING IS AUTHENTICALLY MI'KMAQ?

Must originate from our people

Must connect to Mi'kmaw history and tradition

Transparency about a story or product's origin



#### WHAT'S REALLY OURS?

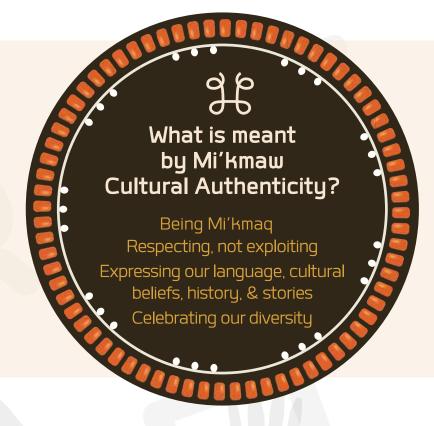
Mi'kmaq have adapted to survive

Our knowledge and wisdom must evolve

Practices can be authentic even if influenced by others

Transparency, knowledge, and openness about other cultural influences is key

Authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Guidelines are required to support the growth and evolution of the Mi'kmaw tourism industry, while safely creating and sharing Mi'kmaw culture and heritage as part of a tourism offering. Kwilmu'kw Maw-klusuagn Negotiation Office (KMKNO) and its partners supported Mi'kmaw leadership in developing authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Guidelines for Nova Scotia. These guidelines have been based on conversations with Mi'kmaw Elders, Knowledge Keepers, tourism operators and artisans following a study commissioned by the Assembly of Nova Scotia Mi'kmaw Chiefs. The guidelines inform our program as much as our Mi'kmaw values of L'nuimk.







#### HOW CAN THE BAND BE INVOLVED?

Develop and mentor - help tourism businesses to grow

Value and support crafters and artisans

Strengthen opportunities to learn language, culture & traditions

Offer tourism experiences through Band-controlled entities



#### WHAT CAN BE SHARED?

**Examples of what can be shared:** 

Stories, Songs, Dances, Mawiomis, Traditional Foods

**Examples of what should not be shared:** 

Sacred spiritual, personal, and medicine ceremonies



## WHO SHOULD OFFER CULTURAL EXPERIENCES TO VISITORS?

Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Those with experience and guided by Elders

Those raised with a strong cultural background

Note: Compensation is acceptable and can vary



### **HOW DO WE PROCEED?**

Authenticity is determined by Elders and Knowledge Keepers

Our language and culture must be protected from exploitation

We must allow our artists freedom to create

Authentication should include ongoing cultural appreciation, mentorship, & training



#### WHAT IS THE NON-MI'KMAW ROLE?

Leave creation, controlling, and leadership to Mi'kmaq  $\,$ 

Partners and collaborators are welcomed

Cultural awareness training is essential



## HOW WILL VISITORS KNOW WHAT IS AUTHENTICALLY MI'KMAW?

A certification process

An authentic, global Mi'kmaw brand

Mi'kmaw visibility throughout Nova Scotia

# L'nuimk

### "LIVING THE MI'KMAW WAY"

This term represents the essence of being Mi'kmaq. It encompasses the core principles and values that define the Mi'kmaw identity and way of life. (L'nuimk: ool-noo-imk)



## If you are Mi'kmaq, you are authentic. You are you.

As a Mi'kmaw individual, your authenticity is inherent in your identity, your heritage, and your lived experience. In the Mi'kmawitasik community, every Mi'kmaw individual carries the essence of what it means to be Mi'kmaq. This essence is not defined by a set of rigid criteria or external validations. Instead, it is a living, breathing aspect of your being, shaped by your personal experiences, cultural knowledge, and creative expression.

Your role as a Mi'kmaw Maker or Cultural Experience Provider is not just about the products you create or the experiences you provide. It is about how these creations and experiences connect back to you, your story, and your community. It's about how you embody the values, traditions, and spirit of the Mi'kmaw people in your work and share those gifts with others.

It is L'nuimk.

By defining who you are and what you offer, you contribute to the richness and diversity of the Mi'kmaw cultural landscape, adding your unique thread to the collective narrative.

This plays a vital role in educating consumers and stakeholders in the cultural tourism sector, fostering a deeper understanding and appreciation of Mi'kmaw culture and ensuring that the legacy of the Mi'kmaq continues to thrive and inspire for generations to come.

## Embracing L'nuimk: Your Path Forward

This self-reflection process was created to support each other and build our capacity as part of the Mi'kmaw Nation, creating a transparent and authentic visitor experience. There are three categories of self-reflection for you to consider as you define your role within the Mi'kmawitasik Member community, whether you provide services, create products, or both for visitors and customers:

#### ARTISTIC ABILITY

#### **CULTURAL CONFIDENCE**

#### **CREATIVE EXPRESSION**

The purpose is **not** to pigeonhole - but rather to spark questions, discussions, and ongoing reflection about how we represent ourselves as Mi'kmaq.

The diagram on the next page can help clarify this for you, using the following steps:

## 1. Complete the L'nuimk Self-Reflection

- ◆ For each category (Artistic Ability, Cultural Confidence, Creative Expression), carefully evaluate where you stand based on the definitions provided.
- Be honest and introspective in your assessment.
- ♦ Recognize and embrace your gifts.

#### 2. Document Your Reflections

- Write down your thoughts and insights gained during the self-reflection. This can be an ongoing process.
- This documentation will be helpful for both your own personal understanding and for sharing your story authentically with others.

## 3. Embrace Continuous Learning and Growth

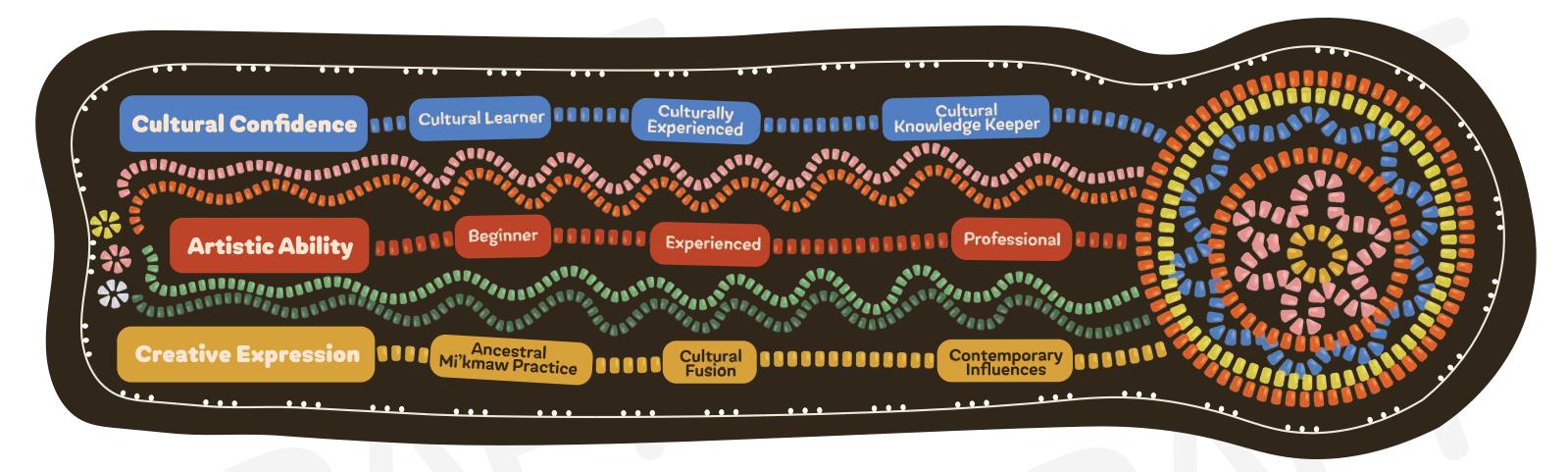
- ♦ Recognize that this is a part of our collective ongoing journey in the exploration of Mi'kmaw culture.
- Use the insights gained to identify areas for further learning and personal and professional growth.

#### 4. Share and Discuss

- ♦ If comfortable, share your insights with a mentor or peer for feedback and discussion.
- ♦ Engage in discussions within the Mi'kmawitasik community to enrich your understanding and connection.
- Identify elements you would like to have included on your Mi'kmawitasik website and social media profiles.

This self-reflection process is a valuable tool for personal and community growth, helping to ensure the authenticity and richness of Mi'kmaw culture in the offerings you provide.





## Reflecting on Your Journey

To become an effective and authentic Member under the Mi'kmawitasik program, there are three areas of readiness that are important to consider and account for as you proceed towards full authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism readiness.

Look over this intricate tapestry of interwoven beads and let it serve as a mirror to your unique journey as a member of our vibrant community. Each bead and thread tells a story, much like the chapters of your own life.

As you trace each one, take a moment to introspect. Celebrate your achievements, acknowledge your growth areas, and set intentions for the future.

This tapestry is a testament to the diverse paths we tread; but remember, every bead, every twist, every turn, adds to the beauty of the whole.

## 1. ARTISTIC ABILITY

#### **BEGINNER**

Every artist starts somewhere. Remember the first time you picked up a tool or material? Think about the raw passion and curiosity that drove you.

#### **EXPERIENCED**

Recall the countless hours of practice, the lessons learned, and the progress made. How have you grown since those initial days?

#### **PROFESSIONAL**

Reflect on the mastery you've achieved. What are the moments of pride and accolades you've received?

### 2. CULTURAL CONFIDENCE

#### **CULTURAL LEARNER**

Remember the early days of soaking in knowledge, the questions you had, and the eagerness to learn more about your culture.

#### **CULTURALLY EXPERIENCED**

Reflect on the depth of understanding you've gained over time. How have your teachings enriched your connection to your roots?

#### **CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE KEEPERS**

Think about the wisdom you hold and the responsibility you carry to pass it on. How do you ensure that the next generation inherits this rich legacy?

## 3. CREATIVE EXPRESSION

#### ANCESTRAL MI'KMAW PRACTICE

Think about the traditions passed down through generations. How do you honor these ancestral practices in your work?

#### **CULTURAL FUSION**

Ponder on the blend of old and new in your creations. How do you merge traditional techniques with modern influences?

#### **CONTEMPORARY INFLUENCES**

Consider the current trends and inspirations that shape your work. How do you stay relevant and innovative?

## **Artistic Ability**

## in Mi'kmaw Culture

Artistic Ability within the context of Mi'kmaw culture refers to the skills, creativity, and proficiency demonstrated by individuals in various forms of traditional and contemporary Mi'kmaw arts and crafts. This encompasses a wide range of activities, including but not limited to beadwork, basketry, carving, storytelling, etc. as an expression of cultural heritage, and the preservation of ancestral knowledge and traditions. It's a way of keeping the culture alive and vibrant, passing it down through generations.

## # Beginner

New to a particular skill or activity, with a basic understanding of the skills and knowledge involved. They are in a learning and exploration stage.

## # Experienced

Has sufficient knowledge, skills, and experience to perform a task or activity effectively. They have acquired a significant amount of knowledge and skills; can perform tasks with a high degree of confidence.

### # Professional

Has spent many years perfecting their craft and has a deep understanding of the principles, techniques, and history of their work. Recognized as leaders and experts in their field, and may have a significant influence on the development of their craft or industry and as mentors.

### **ACTIVITY**

Reflect on your confidence and expertise in your craft. Choose the description that best represents your current skill level and understanding. Keep in mind that this choice is fluid and can change as you continue to learn and grow. Think about your artistic journey, the skills you have acquired, and your level of confidence in your craft.

Use this space or extra paper, as required.

Describe your current ability level.

Where do you want to improve or grow artistically?

How can you progress towards your desired artistic ability?

## **Cultural Confidence**

## in Mi'kmaw Culture

Cultural Confidence in Mi'kmaw culture refers to the degree of knowledge, understanding, and respect an individual has for Mi'kmaw traditions, values, history, and practices. This concept is not just about having information; it's about internalizing and living the principles of **L'nuimk**.

Cultural Confidence manifests in various ways: the ability to participate in ceremonies, understanding and using the Mi'kmaw language, knowledge of historical and cultural narratives, and the capacity to teach and pass on this knowledge to others.

It's a reflection of an individual's journey in reconnecting with their roots and embracing their identity as Mi'kmaw. Those with high cultural confidence often act as cultural ambassadors or knowledge keepers, playing a pivotal role in the community by fostering cultural continuity, resilience, and pride.

As a Mi'kmaw Nation, we collectively have been impacted by colonization and cultural loss. Despite historical adversity and systemic challenges, many have retained many aspects of our language and culture. However, many individuals and communities are also on a path of cultural reclamation and language revitalization, and everyone's story and experience is different. Assessing one's level of cultural confidence provides an opportunity to determine where we fit on the cultural confidence spectrum and what opportunities exist as part of our lifelong learning journey

Cultural Confidence encourages Members to examine their level of confidence with Mi'kmaw protocols, spiritual teachings, history, treaties, place names and geography, ancestral land-based hunting, fishing, and gathering practices, traditional medicines, ancestral arts, Mi'kmaw games, tools, musical instruments, hieroglyphics, petroglyphs, child rearing practices, ceremonial practices, rites of passage, etc.

### # Cultural Learner

New to their Mi'kmaw cultural practices, they are in a learning and exploration stage.

## **# Culturally Experienced**

Has been immersed in their cultural practices for at least 5 years, and has a solid foundation of knowledge and experience. They are recognized by their peers and actively involved in ongoing learning and sharing of the culture.

## # Cultural Knowledge Keeper

Has spent many years consistently practicing and learning about Mi'kmaw culture and language. They regularly participate in cultural gatherings and events in a cultural leadership role. They are sought out for advice and guidance and have significant influence in their communities and industries.



## Acknowledgement

It can be uncomfortable to identify oneself as a Cultural Knowledge Keeper or Elder. With L'nuimk, we acknowledge that we typically receive those honoured titles from others.

Receiving the title of Cultural Knowledge Keeper or Elder recognizes that the pursuit of cultural excellence is part of our lifelong learning journey. We honour and respect this accumulation of experience and knowledge gained through dedication, hard work, passion, and a commitment to the collective pride in identity of the Mi'kmaw Nation.

By embracing these values, we create a supportive and empowering environment for our next generations to thrive and carry on the teachings.

## **ACTIVITY**

Reflect on your cultural journey, including the impact of colonization and the process of claiming and revitalizing your language. Consider your position on the cultural confidence spectrum and the lifelong learning opportunities that lie ahead. Contemplate the aspects of Mi'kmaw culture that resonate with you and the steps you have taken to reconnect with your heritage.

Use this space or extra paper, as required.

Reflect on your journey of expressing your culture in a modern world. What products or services do you offer, and why?
Who and what have influenced you as a producer of goods or services? What is the tension between ancestral and modern practice for you?
How would you describe what you do to someone else? How would you help an Elder to understand your work and vision and its connection to being Mi'kmaq?



## in Mi'kmaw Culture

Creative Expression in Mi'kmaw culture encompasses the diverse ways in which individuals interpret and represent their cultural heritage through artistic mediums. This can range from traditional practices such as weaving, storytelling, and drum-making to more contemporary forms like digital art, music, or fusion crafts that blend traditional and modern elements.

This concept is not just about preserving the past; it's also about evolving and adapting the culture to contemporary contexts. It reflects the dynamic nature of the Mi'kmaw culture, showcasing how traditional elements can be reimagined to stay relevant and engaging in today's world. This expression is a celebration of Mi'kmaw identity, offering a creative outlet that honors the past while embracing the future. It is a powerful tool for cultural storytelling, education, and the continuation of Mi'kmaw heritage.

The Creative Expression scale is a tool used to understand the style and nature of your products and experiences, guided by the principles of L'nuimk. It helps categorize cultural tourism offerings into different categories based on their connection to Mi'kmaw ancestral traditions.

The three areas for reflecting on your style of Creative Expression are:

- Ancestral Mi'kmaw Practice
- **Cultural Fusion**
- Contemporary Mi'kmaw Influence Wooden carving by Ed Benham, Wasoqopa'q First Nation



## ANCESTRAL MI'KMAW PRACTICE

#### Is there a timeframe for Ancestral knowledge?

There is fluidity in interpretation of what this means. Is this a specific timeframe? Are we referring to Mi'kmaq since time immemorial? For the last 10,000 years? Since before contact? What about practices that have been adopted into communities and practiced for hundreds of years?

For example, traditional beading and decorative materials such as quills, bone, teeth, antler, and other natural materials were updated with more modern materials such as glass beads in the 1700's. Yet glass beaded objects are entrenched within the identity of Mi'kmaw cultural art.

It is important to acknowledge that all cultures evolve. Indeed, Mi'kmaq today are a modern people, participating in a modern world. So, where is this line? Who makes these decisions? These questions are raised for consideration with Makers of Mi'kmaw products and Providers of Mi'kmaw cultural experiences.

#### As you embark on this journey, ask yourself the key question:

#### Does my creation unmistakably and identifiably represent my Mi'kmaw culture?

Mi'kmawitasik requires Members to be transparent with their cultural offerings. If you have adapted other non-Mi'kmaw elements within your products and experiences, it's important to clearly share this information with consumers so that we do not mislead anyone.

We acknowledge the historic influences that have impacted Mi'kmaw language and cultural knowledge and practices today. At the same time, the primary focus of Mi'kmawitasik is to emphasize Mi'kmaw cultural authenticity within creative expression, honoring our ancestral heritage and fostering cultural reclamation and continuity.



Tracing of a petroglyph of the insignia worn by Mi'kmaw chiefs 📕 Interpretation of petroglyph on a rawhide drum



Provided by Jeff Ward, Membertou Heritage Park, 2024

## **Examples of Ancestral Mi'kmaw Practice Products**

- Decorative jewelry such as earrings, necklaces, rings, bracelets, hair accessories
- Beaded clothing and regalia like moccasins, leggings, dresses, peaked hats
- Clothing and jewelry and other items made with natural materials like bone, antler, teeth, quills, deer hide, moosehide, fish scales, shells, fur, birchbark, etc
- Carving/Sculpting such as traditional wooden flowers, wood carvings
- Mi'kmaw Basketry using traditional materials such as ash, birchbark, or quillwork
- Art with specific Mi'kmaw symbology like Mi'kmaw hieroglyphics or petroglyphs, the eightpointed star, medicine wheel
- Musical instruments including the jigmagn and drum
- Traditional Food such as lobster, eel, clams, mussels, luskinigan, berries
- Games such as Waltes

## **Examples of Ancestral Mi'kmaw Practice Experiences**

- Dance demonstration such as the kojua
- Medicine walk and teachings about traditional plants and foods
- Guided fishing tour with stories about traditional fishing practices and place names
- Basket making workshop and discussion about materials and harvesting practices
- Beadwork skills session with teachings related to ancestral Mi'kmaw symbols
- Interactive discussion and Q&A with a Mi'kmaw hunter and trapper
- Cultural demonstration of how to play Waltes
- Cooking class featuring luskinigan and eel stew



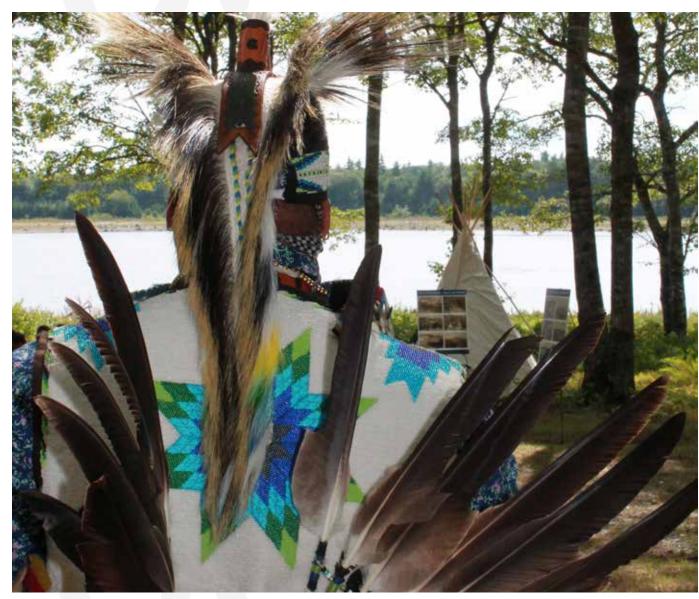


## **CULTURAL FUSION**

Indigenous Fusion here refers to the practice of incorporating customs and art elements from different First Nations on Turtle Island (North America) and adapting them to align with Mi'kmaw customs and traditions. Sometimes other nations have borrowed Mi'kmaw ancestral practices as well, creating shared customs and practices throughout our traditional territories.

Cultural Fusion artists in Mi'kma'ki have drawn inspiration from diverse Indigenous cultures, integrating these elements into their artistic expressions. This approach emerged as a response to the forced displacement and suppression of Mi'kmaw culture through colonization, as well as the sharing of culture through Indigenous trade networks in existence long before the arrival of Europeans.

It is also important to acknowledge that cultural revitalization takes time. To that end, producers must be able to share their stories and be transparent with those who purchase their products and experiences.



**Prairies-inspired Regalia on a Mi'kmaw dancer** Photo by KMK

## **Examples of Cultural Fusion Products**

- Adapted regalia such as the Jingle or Ribbon dress combined with Mi'kmaw motifs
- Dreamcatchers with Mi'kmaw symbology
- Drums or artwork with other Indigenous symbology
- Art with a modern subject using ancestral materials or symbology
- Artworks that combine Mi'kmaw symbols with artistic influences from other First Nations on Turtle Island.
- Crafts that blend traditional Mi'kmaw techniques with contemporary materials or design aesthetics.
- O Jewelry pieces that incorporate traditional Mi'kmaw beadwork with modern styles or materials.
- O Textile products that feature Mi'kmaw-inspired patterns combined with designs from other Indigenous cultures.
- O Music performances that combines ancestral Mi'kmaw sounds with other cultures, for example Morgan Toney, We'koqma'q First Nation

## **Examples of Cultural Fusion Experiences & Events**

- O Powwow, a First Nation practice from the Prairies, particularly those featuring both grass dance and kojua as examples of two cultures brought together
- Community celebrations open to travellers including adapted ceremony, such as St Anne's Mission
- O Interactive demonstrations that showcase the fusion of Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous practices, such as culinary or music workshops.
- Collaborative art projects that involve artists from different Indigenous backgrounds creating together.
- Storytelling events that share narratives and legends from multiple Indigenous cultures, highlighting their interconnectedness.





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## CONTEMPORARY MI'KMAW INFLUENCE

Contemporary Mi'kmaw Influence encompasses artistic expressions that resonate with current social, political, and cultural contexts, highlighting a dynamic facet of Mi'kmaw art and design.

This category is marked by innovation and experimentation, often challenging and redefining traditional forms and conventions. Recognizing the continuous evolution of cultural expression, contemporary Mi'kmaw art frequently integrates modern techniques, materials, and ideas, reflecting the adaptation of Mi'kmaw culture's extensive historical roots to the realities of modern life.

These contemporary expressions are tailored to appeal to a modern audience, which might not have a direct connection to the ancestral cultural beliefs and practices of the Mi'kmaw people.

Contemporary Mi'kmaw artists are known for pushing the boundaries of traditional art forms, incorporating a diverse range of cultural perspectives, and actively participating in the broader contemporary art community. This approach not only keeps Mi'kmaw culture relevant and engaging in today's world but also ensures its ongoing vibrancy and adaptability.



Modern pottery with traditional designs by Nancy Oakley, Eskasoni First Nation

## **Examples of Contemporary Products:**

- O Digital artworks that incorporate Mi'kmaw symbols and motifs with modern techniques and technology. (ex Patuo'kn, a Mi'kmaw illustration and design company, We'koqma'q First Nation)
- O Mixed media installation exhibits that explore contemporary social or environmental issues through a Mi'kmaw lens. (ex shalan joudry, L'sitkuk First Nation)
- Artwork such as digital paintings or oil, that may not include any identifiably Mi'kmaw motifs but, because it was made by you, is still Mi'kmaw (ex David Brooks, Sipeknek'atik First Nation)
- O Purchasable, experimental fashion designs that combine Mi'kmaw textile traditions with innovative materials and avant-garde aesthetics; (ex LED lights regalia by Joyce Julian, Potlotek First Nation or beaded footwear by L'nu'k Clothing, Millbrook First Nation)
- Sculptures created with unconventional materials, challenging traditional sculpting methods and pushing artistic boundaries (ex Tayla Fern Paul, Pictou Landing First Nation)
- O Modern dance performance such as the Mi'kmaw modern dance piece, Samqwan by Sarah Prosper, Eskasoni First Nation

## **Examples of Contemporary Experiences:**

- Renting a cottage by the ocean with Mi'kmaw décor and participating in a guided-walk with cultural insights with the owner/operator
- O Guided urban tours that explore the contemporary Mi'kmaw presence and contributions to the cityscape
- Guided experiences that immerse participants in contemporary Mi'kmaw storytelling or cultural practices
- Music compositions that combine the Mi'kmaw perspective with contemporary genres and production techniques with Q&A and cultural insights/storytelling session with the musician/artists. (ex Mi'kmaw Rapper Shift from tha 902 Todd Googoo)







## **ACTIVITY**

Reflect on how your creations authentically represent Mi'kmaw culture, connect to your community and Elders' teachings, and embody innovation while honoring ancestral wisdom. Consider your creative journey, the ways your products or experiences reflect your Mi'kmaw identity, and the cultural influences that shape your work.

Use this space or extra paper, as required.		
Describe your current style or approach to cre	eative expression.	
What new avenues or directions do you want	to explore creatively?	
How can you expand your creative horizons ar	nd push boundaries?	

## Preparing Your Cultural Tourism Business

Whether you're considering starting a new venture, are actively engaged in creating, making, performing, or providing experiences independently, or you're already established in cultural tourism, this toolkit is for you. It's designed to guide you through various stages of your entrepreneurial journey within the framework of Mi'kmawitasik's Authentic Cultural Tourism resources.

Our goal is to equip you with the tools and insights needed to navigate the unique aspects of promoting and preserving Mi'kmaw culture, no matter where you are in your business lifecycle. Let this toolkit be your companion in aligning your business endeavors with our rich Mi'kmaw traditions and values.

## **Defining Visitor Expectations**

Understanding visitor expectations is crucial for delivering satisfying experiences. Visitors seek authentic, engaging, and memorable interactions that provide insight into Mi'kmaw culture and traditions. Defining your offerings in alignment with existing tourism and traveler expectations will help you sell more products and experiences.

For instance, a simple demonstration of the Kojua dance would be considered a product. However, if you incorporate hands-on instruction, storytelling, and historical insights, it transforms into an experience.

Below, we define key aspects of a cultural tourism business to help your visitors understand what to expect and how to engage with Mi'kmaw offerings. These definitions, developed with Tourism Nova Scotia, will aid in your readiness journey and help in listing your offerings on their website, ensuring greater visibility.

#### WHAT IS PURCHASABLE?

Purchasable items and activities are the goods and services you provide that visitors can buy. For example:

Products	Events	Experiences
Beaded jewelry, traditional foods,	Admission to a performance, entry to	Guided tours, workshops, or
artworks, music tracks	an exhibit, tickets to a concert	demonstrations you can actively
		participate in

#### WHAT IS AN EVENT?

An event is a single, scheduled, organized activity or gathering where visitors primarily attend and observe. For example:

- A community celebration where visitors observe ceremonies.
- A dance performance showcasing traditional Mi'kmaw dances.
- An art exhibit displaying Mi'kmaw cultural artifacts and contemporary artworks

#### WHAT IS AN EXPERIENCE?

An experience includes at least two purchasable items or activities, while also giving visitors an opportunity to learn something by doing something, with someone who lives here. For example:

- Waltes Cultural Experience: Visitors not only learn about the game but also get the opportunity to play it.
- A guided tour with a cultural ambassador, featuring storytelling and hands-on activities.

#### WHAT IS A PACKAGE?

A travel package includes two or more purchasable tourism products or services available for purchase by visitors at a single price. For example:

- Millbrook Cultural and Heritage Centre Package: Admission to the centre and a guided tour.
- Membertou Heritage Park Package: Admission to the park and lunch at Kiju's restaurant.



### INDIGENOUS CULTURAL TOURISM & BUSINESS RESOURCES

Starting or expanding an authentic cultural tourism operation, like any business, is inherently a large risk, and can be fraught with challenges and obstacles. To help mitigate that risk and ensure your business' smoothest possible path to success, you may wish to consider taking advantage of any of the following tools:

#### https://www.nsiten.com



Your first stop should be **Nova Scotia Indigenous Tourism Enterprise Network** (NSITEN), a Mi'kmawitasik partner organization that is aimed at growing the capacity of individuals, businesses, and community-led tourism initiatives. A cornerstone for capacity building in Mi'kmaw communities across Nova Scotia, NSITEN plays a pivotal role in connecting members to essential resources such as funding, increased visibility, and networking opportunities.

Their success stories, like bringing Loretta Gould's art to a prominent display at the Halifax International Airport, exemplify the impactful possibilities of this collaboration. As you navigate the complexities of starting and nurturing a cultural tourism business, we invite you to draw upon NSITEN's extensive network and expertise, as well as a wide array of Indigenous Cultural Tourism resources, to ensure our members are well-equipped for success.

In addition, we can recommend the following Indigenous-specific business supports:

- ♦ Ulnooweg Development Group guides entrepreneurs through start-up procedures such as business plan writing, budget development, financial projections, and risk management while helping established businesses with succession planning and internal audits.
- The Halifax Mi'kmaw Native Friendship Centre's Employment & Skills Training Program works collaboratively with external businesses, communities and networks to build and maintain partnerships; to provide access to programs and services that support the development of skills, training, work experiences and ultimately employment.
- ◆ The Office of L'nu Affairs' Aboriginal Community Development Fund (ACDF) supports Community-led initiatives and projects that generate community economic benefits for Nova Scotia Mi'kmaq and other Aboriginal people in the province through a variety of business, cultural, social, ecological and economic development activities.
- ♦ Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC) is a global leader in the marketing and development of Indigenous tourism experiences whose members are Indigenous-owned and controlled businesses from every province/territory in the country.
- ♦ The Indigenous Tourism Conference is platform for sharing knowledge and practices among Indigenous tourism operators, highlighting the significance of Indigenous cultures in tourism. It offers insights into sustainable tourism practices and cultural preservation.
- ♦ GMIST (Gros Morne Institute for Sustainable Tourism) specializes in providing training and professional development opportunities in sustainable tourism for tourism operators, with a focus on leveraging natural and cultural assets.



- Nova Scotia's Department of Communities, Culture, Tourism and Heritage offers financial support to Indigenous communities for projects that preserve and promote cultural heritage, support community development, and enhance the sustainability and vitality of Indigenous cultures.
- ◆ The Original Original mark of excellence assures visitors of a quality tourism experience. It is displayed by businesses that offer products and services that are truly authentic and that have been accredited by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC). Businesses accredited to use The Original Original mark of excellence will be given priority treatment in ITAC's marketing programs and will have access to exclusive development and marketing opportunities. You may wish to look into this accreditation as the culmination of your business readiness.
- ◆ The Canada Council for the Arts provides support to Indigenous artists, groups, and arts organizations through dedicated funding that respects, supports, and acknowledges the unique cultural, creative, and artistic expressions of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This support encompasses a wide range of initiatives, including grants for individual artists, community projects, and organizational development, aimed at fostering the growth and visibility of Indigenous arts and cultures in both national and international arenas.
- ♦ Arts Nova Scotia provides grants that can be accessed by Indigenous artists and business owners.
- Non-Indigenous-specific additional tools and resources can also be found at the end of this document.

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## Checking The Boxes

To become an effective and authentic Member under the Mi'kmawitasik program, there are four areas of readiness that are important to consider and account for as you proceed towards full Authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism readiness.

#### **CULTURAL READINESS**

The level of preparedness of a community or organization to share their cultural traditions and practices with visitors in an authentic and respectful manner. Cultural readiness embodies the qualities of: Being Mi'kmaq; Respecting, not exploiting; Expressing Mi'kmaw language, cultural beliefs, history, and belief; and Celebrating Mi'kmaw diversity. Some questions to ask to determine if you are culturally ready are:

Am I familiar with the cultural practices and traditions of my community?
Do I know where to go, and who to ask, to access traditional Mi'kmaw knowledge and teachings?
Have I received any formal training or education related to cultural heritage and tourism?
Am I comfortable sharing my culture with visitors from different backgrounds?
Do I have access to appropriate cultural resources and materials to use in my experiences?
Have I considered the potential impacts of sharing my culture with visitors, both positive and negative?
Am I prepared to adapt my experiences to meet the needs and interests of visitors from different cultures?
Am I familiar with the Authentic Mi'kmaw Cultural Tourism Guidelines for Nova Scotia and have I made a commitment to reflecting these protocols in my business?

### **BUSINESS READINESS**

The level of preparedness of a business or organization to operate in the tourism industry. Business readiness involves having a well-defined business plan, access to financing, appropriate marketing and promotional strategies, and an understanding of legal and regulatory requirements. Some questions to ask to determine if you are business ready are:

under stariding of regarding regulatory requirements. Some questions to ask to determine it you are business ready are.	
	Have I developed a business plan for my cultural tourism experiences?
	Have I identified my target market and developed strategies to reach them?
	Am I familiar with the regulations and laws related to cultural tourism in my area?
	Have I established partnerships with other businesses or organizations in the tourism industry?
	Am I prepared to handle complaints or negative feedback from visitors in a professional and constructive manner?
	Do I have a system in place for managing finances and record-keeping for my business?

Further details on programs to help improve your readiness in these categories can be found at the end of this toolkit, and additional information and assessment questions for these types of readiness can be found at mikmawitasik.ca

### **VISITOR READINESS**

The level of preparedness of a destination or attraction to meet the needs and expectations of visitors. Visitor readiness may involve having appropriate tourism infrastructure (e.g. accommodations, transportation), welcoming and friendly customer service, and a variety of experiences and activities that appeal to different types of visitors. Some questions to ask to determine if you are visitor ready are:

Am I knowledgeable about the needs and expectations of my target audience?
Have I developed a range of products and services that cater to different visitor interests and preferences?
Do I have the necessary infrastructure and facilities to provide a comfortable and enjoyable experience for visitors?
Am I able to communicate effectively with visitors from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds?
Have I developed a strong customer service approach and training program for my staff?
Is my experience safe and accessible for all visitors?
Is my experience sustainable and beneficial to the local community and economy?

## TRAVEL TRADE / EXPORT READINESS

The level of preparedness of a destination or attraction to work with the travel trade industry and market itself internationally. Travel trade / export readiness may involve having an understanding of the travel trade distribution system, being able to offer competitive pricing and commission rates, and having the ability to communicate effectively with travel trade partners and international visitors. Some questions to ask to determine if you are travel trade/export ready are:

ready	y are:
	Have I developed a clear value proposition for my cultural tourism product or experience?
	Have I identified my target markets and developed strategies to reach them?
	Am I familiar with the regulations and laws related to cultural tourism in the areas where I plan to operate?
	Do I have appropriate insurance and permits to operate my business in other countries or regions?
	Have I established partnerships with other businesses or organizations in the travel and tourism industry?
	Am I prepared to adapt my experiences to meet the needs and interests of visitors from different cultures and backgrounds?

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## Non-Indigenous Business Resources

Aside from this toolkit, there are many other resources available that can further assist in the development of your Authentic Mi'kmaw cultural tourism experiences, including those below.

#### **TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA**

After collaborating with NSITEN, connect with Tourism Nova Scotia for further guidance and resources:

The TNS Business Development program provides one-on-one coaching to start or grow a business. This should be your first stop when starting a new business.

The TNS Experience Development is a group of advisors who help an entrepreneur learn how to identify the customers who are most likely to be interested in what you offer. If you are already operational, they can help.

The Refocus Travel Trade Program helps fully established entrepreneurs to identify opportunities, implement best business practices and build partnerships with travel agents and tour operators to attract customers and recover sales.

The Tourism Nova Scotia Webinar Series offers practical advice on business planning, website optimization, marketing, research insights, developing experiences and packages.

#### NOVA SCOTIA REGIONAL SUPPORTS

**South Shore Tourism Cooperative** promotes Nova Scotia's South Shore, supporting local businesses, artisans, and attractions to enhance community engagement and tourism.

Yarmouth and Acadian Shores Tourism Association focuses on promoting the unique cultural and natural attractions of the Yarmouth and Acadian Shores region to travelers.

Coastal Nova Scotia (previously DEANS) promotes tourism in the Eastern and Northumberland Shores, offering resources and marketing support for local tourism businesses.

**Destination Cape Breton** works to promote Cape Breton Island as a premier travel destination, providing marketing support and resources for tourism operators in the region.

**Discover Halifax** is dedicated to promoting Halifax as a vibrant and diverse travel destination, offering extensive resources and marketing support for local tourism businesses.

Digby Area Tourism Association supports tourism in the Digby area, relevant for L'sitkuk, providing resources and marketing opportunities for local businesses.

Valley Regional Enterprise Network serves the Annapolis Valley, supporting economic development and offering resources relevant to AVFN and Glooscap FN.

**IGNITE Atlantic** offers business incubator support across Nova Scotia, helping tourism businesses and other enterprises grow and succeed.

#### **FURTHER RESOURCES**

Rendezvous Canada is an annual international tourism industry event organized by Destination Canada, bringing together buyers and sellers of Canadian tourism products to promote Canada as a premier tourism destination.

**Destination Canada** is Canada's national tourism marketing organization, dedicated to promoting Canada as a desirable travel

destination worldwide. It supports the Canadian tourism industry through marketing initiatives and research.

The Nova Scotia Experience Toolkit helps you learn about different types of travellers, experience development planning and pricing tools, industry best practices, and marketing insights to create an experience that will set your business apart from the competition and create more demand.

The Atlantic Canada Travel Trade Readiness Toolkit equips tourism operators with tactics, processes and best-practices to help you expand your business by working with travel agents, tour operators and online travel agency partners.

**DigiPort** is a one-stop resource to access services, training, and support to improve online presence and digital marketing. It is delivered in partnership between Tourism Nova Scotia and Digital Nova Scotia to help tourism businesses connect with qualified digital service providers while accessing articles, videos, tip sheets and webinars to be more visible online, reach more potential customers, and close the sale.

The Digital Adoption Programs in partnership with Digital Nova Scotia to help tourism businesses and organizations improve their digital marketing and online presence.

The Tourism Digital Assistance Program helps businesses improve online presence to attract customers by increasing their visibility online and provide the services customers expect.

The Digital Content Marketing Program helps entrepreneurs to create high quality videos and photos to use in marketing or to develop digital marketing campaigns.

The RADIATE Tourism Program helps businesses develop and market up to two fall, winter, or year-round tourism packages or experiences that appeal to local and Atlantic region travellers.

Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) works to create opportunities for economic growth in the region by helping businesses become more competitive, innovative and productive, by working with diverse communities to develop and diversify local economies, and by championing the strengths of Atlantic Canada.

A Guide to Starting and Running an Accommodation Business in Nova Scotia will help an entrepreneur work towards the vision of starting an accommodation business in Nova Scotia or help enhance an established business to raise appeal for travellers.

Operating an Accommodation Business guide outlines regulations, best-practices and resources for accommodations businesses. It includes profiles of recently opened and expanded accommodation businesses in the province and shares what operators are doing to set their business apart from the competition and attract customers.

A Guide to Starting and Running a Restaurant in Nova Scotia details what is required to start and successfully operate a restaurant in Nova Scotia. In this guide, the Restaurant Association of Nova Scotia offers insights and suggestions to improve your business.

A Guide to Planning and Hosting Festivals & Events in Nova Scotia describes each step of planning and hosting a festival or event in Nova Scotia – including choosing a venue, coordinating staff and volunteers, marketing an event, and ensuring a fantastic experience for the guests.