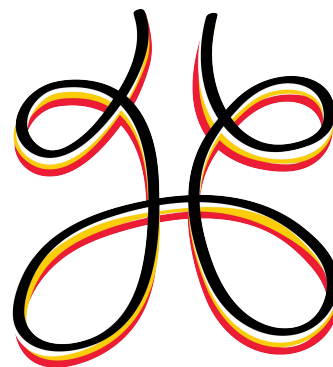


Guidance for Selecting Resources that Include Mi'kmaw and Other Indigenous Knowledge, Culture, and Traditions



When using any resource with students, teachers must review it in full and determine its appropriateness. This includes resources created by or about Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people. Because teachers know their students best, they are responsible for deciding whether a resource will be helpful or potentially harmful in a specific context.

The suitability of a resource may differ from year to year, class to class, or even from one student to another. For this reason, teachers must apply their professional judgement each time they select and use a resource.

This responsibility applies even if a resource has previously been reviewed or approved by a teacher, Regional Centre for Education, Conseil scolaire acadien provincial, or the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

If teachers have any concerns about a resource when using this document to review and select materials for classroom use, they are encouraged to consult with colleagues and reach out to their administrator or Regional Centre for Education / Conseil scolaire acadien provincial for further guidance.

Authenticity and Accuracy

When selecting a resource, teachers should make every effort to ensure that its content is portrayed authentically and accurately.

Authenticity

Authenticity in this context refers to where the knowledge is coming from. Are the teachings flowing from community, environment, self, and family?

Mi'kmaw teachings are received during ceremonies and through observation and participation with Elders and traditional Knowledge Holders. Teachings are conveyed through sacred practices, songs, dances, dreams, visions, and stories of lived experiences that are passed down from one generation to the next. Authenticity is important because it helps to preserve cultural significance and teachings while enhancing the accuracy of the information.

Note: In some situations, a resource may be selected when it is not entirely authentic because it can facilitate a deeper analysis or understanding in students. When considering such a resource, it is important to confirm that it is the best choice for your students. For further information, please see “First Voice” and “Problematic Content/Terminology” on page 6.

Accuracy

Accuracy in this context refers to the knowledge itself. Are the details correct? Is the knowledge correctly portrayed and interpreted? Has the knowledge originated from or been vetted by Elders, Knowledge Holders, community members, or other reliable sources?



Evaluation Considerations

If the answer to any of the following is NO, the resource will require further evaluation.

Voice

- Is the author/creator of the resource from the community which the resource is about (i.e., first voice)?
 - If the author or creator of the resource is not from the community the resource is about, are references involving the community respectful and accurate?
- Is credit given to the sources of knowledge in the resource (Elders, Knowledge Holders, community members, etc.)?
- If the resource contains Indigenous storytelling, value systems, and/or oral traditions, is it clear where the author learned about them?

Validity

- Are the details and content correct?
- Has the author/creator of the resource collected and researched the knowledge authentically and ethically?
- Is there evidence that traditional knowledge has been vetted by Elders, Knowledge Holders, or other reliable sources?
- Is there evidence that the author has permission from Elders, Knowledge Holders, and community members to share traditional knowledge and practices?
- Does the resource present current understanding of the information/knowledge available?



Racism, Discrimination, Stereotyping, and Bias

Racism, discrimination, stereotypes, and bias are felt by many groups in society. This document helps teachers examine resources and identify issues of racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and bias that are specific to, or most felt by, Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people.

Evaluation Considerations

If the answer to any of the following is YES, the resource will require further evaluation.

Appearance

- Are Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people portrayed with stereotypical or negative physical attributes?
- Are certain physical characteristics such as skin tone, facial features, and hairstyle (length, braids) portrayed in a negative, demeaning, or superficial way?
- Do certain mannerisms, gestures, or body language contribute to negative or stereotypical portrayals?
- Does the resource negatively portray Mi'kmaw or other Indigenous family values and the critical role of extended family in children's lives?

Language

- Are languages, dialects, or speech patterns that differ from what is considered "standard" portrayed as lesser forms of communication, or used to imply that Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people are less intelligent or capable?

Racism/Discrimination

- Does the resource contain gratuitous use of profanities, racist, or derogatory terms?
- Does the resource portray Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people as a single, homogenous group rather than as diverse and multifaceted?
- Does the resource perpetuate or promote negative attitudes or behaviours about individuals or groups because they are Mi'kmaw or Indigenous?
- Does the resource perpetuate or promote falsehoods, myths, or stereotypes about Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people?

Gender

- Does the resource misrepresent or negatively portray what it means to be two-spirited?



Socio-economic Status

- Are wealth or socio-economic status associated with race or ethnicity in a pejorative way?
- Does the resource negatively portray Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people based on their income and/or housing?
- Does the resource negatively portray Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people solely based on where they live? (within/outside community)
- Does the resource inaccurately portray or misrepresent life in Indigenous communities?

Knowledge Systems, Beliefs, and Values

- Does the resource negatively portray Mi'kmaw or other Indigenous value systems, practices, and beliefs?
- Does the resource contain material that misrepresents Mi'kmaw and other Indigenous people, whether explicitly or through omission?
- Are individuals presented as being representative of, or responsible for, an entire value system?
- Are Indigenous values the target of implied or overt messages of hate or intolerance?
- Does the resource negatively portray traditional Indigenous spirituality as inferior to others?



Other Considerations

First Voice

There may be times when a resource was created by an Indigenous person and terminology that might be considered problematic in other contexts is less so because it is authentically representing first voice. Literature and poetry can be examples of this but, as with any resource, teachers need to weigh the value of the resource against the potential harm to students. It is important to discuss this with students so they recognize the context, purpose, and value of authentic, first voice sources, as they grow their understandings of cultural and linguistic identities and knowledge systems.

Problematic Content/Terminology

Teachers also need to consider the context in which a resource will be used. Does the resource contain terminology that would otherwise be considered problematic but is being used as a teaching tool to foster a deeper understanding of issues by students? It is important to discuss problematic content and terminology critically to better understand their historical context and impact. This is often the case with older students such as those at the high school level.

Often, historical primary source documents contain outdated or problematic terminology. Teachers may find that these documents are still valuable teaching tools for students. This is often the case when teaching about treaties and legislation, for example. Teachers should consider whether the resource is necessary for use—whether it is the most appropriate option available to support the intended learning outcomes—and whether the potential learning benefits outweigh other considerations.

Mi'kmaw Language

It is important to recognize that there may be slight variations in language—both in vocabulary and pronunciation—between and within Mi'kmaw communities. These differences are usually minor and rarely affect communication. Dialectal variations should be respected and should not prevent the use of a resource.

In Nova Scotia, the Smith-Francis orthography is the recognized writing system for the Mi'kmaw language. However, other orthographies are used across different regions of Mi'kma'ki, and a resource should not be dismissed simply because it uses a system other than Smith-Francis, unless it is intended for use in a Mi'kmaw Language classroom.



Related Resources

Meador, Jane E. 2022. *Mi'kmaw Ways of Being and Knowing*.

<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/mikmawwaysofbeingandknowingen.pdf>.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2023. *Guidance for Selecting Short Term Learning Resources*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

https://curriculum.novascotia.ca/sites/default/files/documents/resource-files/Guidance%20for%20Selecting%20Learning%20Resources_EN.pdf.

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. 2019. *Inclusive Education Policy*. Halifax, NS: Province of Nova Scotia.

<https://www.ednet.ns.ca/docs/inclusiveeducationpolicyen.pdf>.

