



Lieutenant Governor Community Spirit Award Nomination

Potlotek First Nation Community

History

Chapel Island (Mniku) was one of the meeting places for the seven Mi'kmaw district chiefs who came from Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Quebec and Newfoundland. The district chief system has evolved into the Grand Council of the Mi'kmaw traditional government. In July 2005, Chapel Island, including the church, located on the Bras D'Or Lakes was designated as a **National Historical Site of Canada**. A monument was set up on the mainland side of the reserve. Burial sites, dance circle and other features attest to its long use. In the mid-18th century, a Roman Catholic Church was first erected on the island.

The tradition of gatherings has continued to this day and now thousands of Mi'kmaq come each year to celebrate the Feast of St. Anne, renew their faith and reinforce family ties. The Grand Council of the Mi'kmaq still meets twice a year on Chapel Island, a sacred place for the community.

A wooden altar that had been in a nearby church for more than a century was returned to the Potlotek First Nation in Potlotek, NS. According to legend, the altar was rescued during a British attack on Fortress Louisburg in 1758.

Potlotek fought to have the altar returned to St. Anne's Church on Chapel Island and were finally able to see their dream come through on July 20, 2015. The altar tells the story of the French, Mi'kmaq and Catholic History.

Potlotek First Nation Administration

A Chief, seven council members and a Chief Administration Officer govern Potlotek First Nation. The Chief and Council deal with governance issues while the CAO takes care of the day-to-day issues affecting the various departments. These include: Education, Fisheries, Economic Development, Health, Employment, Finance, Social Assistance, Public Works and Housing.

Education Department

Potlotek Education administers all education programs on behalf of the Potlotek First Nation. These programs include: Mi'kmawey Elementary School, Allan Lafford High School a Head Start Program, Daycare, Adult Learning Program, Language Department, Post Secondary Funding Program, and Land Based Learning Program.

We are committed to the life long learning of our community members and the promotion of cultural identity. We recognize the importance of learning in the classroom as well as land-based learning. We have taken on the added responsibility of educating those in our surrounding communities.

We have a staff of 54 which includes: Administration, Teachers, Support staff, Red Road Leaders, Language consultants, Elders and Social Worker.

We are seeing the fruits of our labors as our students successfully transition through our specialty programs that are unique to our schools. We are especially proud of our Math Enhancement Program and Land Based Learning Program.

Besides overseeing the educational programs, The Potlotek Education Administration Staff oversee various projects in the community. Here is just a sampling of some of these ventures.

Parks Canada/Fortress Louisburg/Highland Park

Potlotek Education Department has an established partnership with Parks Canada. Their sewing group, affectionately known as The Sweat Shop, has designed and constructed traditional 17th century Mi'kmaq garments, which are now worn by a fortress animator on site and at local venues for the purpose of public education. Most recently, they are painstakingly beading a traditional peaked cap for the same animator.

Interestingly, this connection led to a partnership with the Highlands National Park and a performance of the book, Sweetwater Maiden, by author Mary Louise Bernard, performed by Mi'kmawey School Drama Group.

Plans are now in progress for their Cultural Coordinator, Ann Marie Marchand, to translate the next book by Mary Louise Bernard. It is anticipated that their theatre group will perform this next story also.

Islandwise/Lumiere

Over the period of the last year, Potlotek Education Department , in partnership with The Sweat Shop, their sewing group, has formed a partnership with Island Wise, a science learning initiative of Cape Breton University and Indie City Productions, with clothing designer Angel Aubichon and engineer Teddy Sayed. They had previously produced costumes for the play, Muin and The seven Bird Hunters. Using light technology that engineer Teddy Sayed had previously applied in costumes for Victoria's Secret, together they installed lights in all the costumes. The coming together of the arts and technology initiative was a performance at the Lumiere Festival of Lights in Sydney.

Celtic Colours

Potlotek took part in the Celtic Colours International Festival for the second time in 2018. During their first year in Celtic Colours, they did workshops in quillwork and dreamcatchers, allowing community members to share their expertise in these arts. This past year, their student theatre troupe presented Muin and The Seven Bird Hunters by elders Lillian Marshall and Murdena Marshall. Their performance was followed with a traditional moose meat dinner for the public attending the performance. Also, during Celtic Colours, we treated 40 tourists from around the world to a boat tour.

The boat tour discussed pre-contact and contact versions of the history of Chapel Island with tourists while enjoying a beautiful tour of the Bras D'or Lakes and the National Historic Site of Chapel Island and Alec Island. Potlotek Education Department, in partnership with The Union of Nova Scotia Indians, began developing Alec Island two years ago as a tourist destination. There they have a mini village with eight wigwams and a sweat lodge. Another valuable initiative of Potlotek Education Department during The Celtic Colours Festival was the presentation of The Kairos Blanket Exercise. This is a very interactive cultural workshop where non-indigenous participants have an opportunity to be guided into the history from a First Nations perspective. It was delivered to a group of 65, including Richmond Academy students and very tourists from all over North America and Norway.

Christmas Concert

In December 2017, the Education Department received a grant from New Horizons for Seniors. With this funding they organized and hosted a concert called, Let's come Together, which involved performers of different cultures and musical talents. To cite some examples, Dwayne Cote, world-renowned fiddler, and Joel Denny, Mi'kmaq cultural performer and entertainer, and The Steppin' Out Little Big Band were headliners for this event! The purpose of hosting such a concert was to give former parishioners a chance to re-open their church: Immaculate Conception in Barra Head, for one last Christmas celebration. The concert was so successful the Potlotek Education Department held it for a second year!

Multicultural Day

Potlotek Education has created and delivered many cultural and arts events but their signature event has become their Multicultural Day Event with the theme "Celebrating Our Neighbors" (now a Multicultural Week). This yearly event came about after a staff member's research into the issue and history of centralization. It was remarked that there are two sides to reconciliation. This opened our eyes to the fact that natives and non-natives alike experienced losses through centralization and colonization. Non-natives too felt at a loss when government decisions were made towards their native neighbors. It was felt that, by hosting a multicultural event for residents of Richmond County and beyond, staff would create a fun way to bring all cultures together to celebrate how far we have come. The event is now held on June 27th annually. In the last two years of Multicultural Day, Potlotek Education has hosted such things as a community round dance (dance of friendship), an African drumming workshop, musical

performances by Cape Breton embassatours, The Barra Mac Neil's, Celtic piper, Courtney MacPherson, Town Crier Allie MacPherson, World re-known fiddler, Dwayne Cote, Aboriginal emerging artist/drummer, Morgan Toney, Mi'kmaq drum group, Stoney Bear Singers, international step dancer Leah Campbell, The International Student group, the Chinese Dragon Dancers, The Highland Village milling frolic demonstration, St Peters Pirate Association, and Parks Canada heritage interpreters. They also had booths created by staff of the education department on their own heritages such as Acadian, Dutch, German and had contributions of traditional foods from cultural groups that are found in cape Breton such as Irish, Polish, Lebanese, Italian, Mi'kmaq , and Acadian. Local artisans and crafters were encouraged to set up tables to sell their items.

The Red Dress Movement for Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls

Since 2016, community volunteers have been a part of the Red Dress Movement. With the help of their high school students and Adult Education Students, they have hung Red Dresses throughout the community to raise awareness.

In both 2017, and 2018, The Education Department participated in the Nicholas Denys Day Parade. A group of women in red dresses paraded down the main street, demonstrating their need for awareness of the issue of missing and murdered Indigenous women. This led to the highway display in Potlotek.

They partnered with Value Village and their Get to Give campaign, Councillors Wayne Johnson and Quentin Doucette to display red dresses at a location in Potlotek First Nation. Related to this, they partnered with artist Laurie Pottie from St Peters, to take her painting, depicting a sole red dress in a lonely wooded area, to Alana Paon, local MLA, who presented Laurie's work in the Nova Scotia legislature. All of this effort was made more powerful through the use of tactile art.

Sweatshop

Since 2015, Potlotek Education Department has worked hard on a revival of traditional regalia. Through a local arts and crafts movement, a group they passionately call the "Sweat Shop", has produced peaked hats and ribbon shirts, powwow regalia, jingle dresses, baptism and first communion garments for families and, of note, Parks Canada, for their Heritage Interpreter program. The Sweat Shop also created quilts that they gifted to the Head start program and Daycare.

Mniku Radio

Potlotek's Education Department's Radio Station has been licensed to broadcast in Richmond County since 2018. The Radio Station, CIYR 93.7, Miniku Radio on your dial, began in 2016 through a grant from The National Indian Brotherhood. The focus of which is to provide cultural programming that allows us to promote language and culture through our schools. Mikmawey School and Allan Lafford High School students are encouraged to use the facility daily. Our high school students have been trained through high school courses to run the station under the

direction of station manager, George Marshall, recent recipient of the Lillian Marshall award for cultural Leadership.

Though they are still growing, the station has formed an important role in promoting cultural events, language learning, traditional music, and communications.

Land Based Learning

This program began in 2016 and has become a leader across Canada. It offers hands on cultural learning and offers our children more of an opportunity to learn the language through action. The vision of the program is to build a strong foundation in Identity for our students and connect them to the realization that current courses in curriculum are fundamental to our sense of being as Mikmaq People. The land based learning instructor has invited members of other Mi'kmaq communities and provincial schools to Potlotek and has visited other communities to train cultural leaders.

It is our hope that this work will continue through the youth and even lead them to careers as successful guides, crafters, artisans and innovators.

After 150 Sacred Fire

Since pre-contact, pre-colonization and pre-government, fire has always been a constant in our ancestors' lives, dependent on it for survival. By having a yearlong fire and keeping it going in each community we are showing that after 150 years of colonization our flame is still lit.

After a year of Celebrations and promises of a better future, our First Nation Communities are holding on to the hope of a better tomorrow. We cannot help but wonder when these promises will reach fruition. Instead of waiting for the government to decide to move forward, we can begin a review process and decide what we really need.

Keeping in mind the Grounding exercises that took place on Alex Island in Potlotek First Nation under the direction of UNSI, we were determined to continue this process of connecting with our past as we transition on into a future built on reconciliation.

In Potlotek we started off the year, 2018, with a Full Moon on January 2, and an opportunity to ring in the New Year with a Full Moon Celebration. This celebration began with a Sacred Fire in Potlotek First Nation, home of Mniku, the capital of Mi'kma'ki.

This Sacred Fire, once lit will hold the prayers of our people for the future. Community members will offer tobacco to the fire and share their hopes for the future.

Fire keepers will be tasked with keeping the Sacred Fire lit all month and protected in a tipi. At the end of the moon's cycle, we will transfer the fire through an ember, and deliver it to the next waiting First Nation. This First Nation will welcome the Sacred Fire and Full Moon with a Community Celebration. The Sacred Fire became a Unity Fire for all of Unamaki.

Mid Winter Feast

Feast (Wi'kapaltimk Aqtapuk) is an ancient Mi'kmaw Feast. It was celebrated shortly after the first new moon of Punamuiku's(January) Mid-winter was the end of the year and the start of the new ceremonial year for the ancient Mi'kmaq.

The Mid-winter Feast purpose was the presentation of thanksgiving to all the spiritual forces, especially to the Great spirit, for the blessings of life, health, and sustenance and the privileges of social life." Our ancestors had elaborate celebrations and this being their main one, it was most likely celebrated by speeches, dances rituals and fasting.

The Mid-winter feast was re-newed by the late Elder Lillian B. Marshall in Chapel Island in 1989 as a result of supporting and showing our appreciation for our hunters who risked prosecution by joining the illegal moose hunt in the Cape Breton Highlands on September 17, 1988 that was staged by the Union of Nova Scotia Indians. The Union was protesting the lack of government action in settling treaty rights disputes, claiming a right to do so under the treaty of 1752. The Mid-Winter Feast is a yearly event that we recently extended into a weeklong event. During this week we celebrate through food, song, drumming, dancing and fun competitions. It involves a lot of hard work and planning which is done by a strong group of volunteers.

Potlotek Fisheries

Potlotek Fisheries is committed to providing and offering their services to the community of Potlotek. Volunteering and partnering with other organizations in the community help us fulfil our goal of making our community a better place to live in, culturally and spiritually. Every year Potlotek Fisheries distributes fresh lobster that is caught during our Food Social Ceremony (FSC) season to all community members, with an emphasis on Elders. Community fishermen volunteer their time every day to harvest lobster for the whole community. Our fishery technicians also volunteer their time to cleaning up Mniku (Chapel Island) for Pentecost Sunday (June), St. Anne's Mission (July). Fishery technicians also volunteered their time in preventing further erosion on Chapel Island (sacred island). In collaboration with the Band council, Potlotek Fisheries distributes holiday meals and moose meat (caught during Youth Moose Camp) to the community. During Christmas season our office gathers items to give to the children. We have done Christmas shoe boxes and Christmas jars for all Daycare to Grade 8 students. This year we are celebrating our 20th Annual Fishing Derby. The months of preparation and volunteering from community members is what has made the derby successful for 2 decades. The derby is a 2 day event and requires many people to make it successful. From people manning the BBQ's, handling tickets, giving tickets, observers, people taking care of the children (fixing tangled lines, showing them how to cast and for safety). From working 12+ hours each day starting at 5:30am to 6pm on Saturday and 5:30am to 9pm on Sunday (Fathers Day). Our community is a great place with caring motivated people.

Potlotek Fisheries is always willing to provide our time and resources for the betterment of Potlotek First Nation and their residents.

Native Employment Program

The Native Employment Program provides training and employment to Potlotek First Nation members which is funded through the Mi'kmaq Employment Training Secretariat (METS). Students apply to the training facility of their preference and once accepted fill out a funding

application. If they meet all criteria, they will be sponsored throughout their program. This covers both short-term and long-term programs.

This department is also responsible for employment in the community. Applications are accepted until the posted deadline for summer works. There are also other job postings which are available to both community and non-community members. Student funding for employment is through proposal based applications from Service Canada and INAC (FNIYES).

We are in the process of starting summer works, which will employ students and many homeowners. This is a very busy yet awesome time of year as these many workers beautify our community. Students in particular are set up in placements associated with their educational endeavours so that they can get more experience in their field of interest.

The METS students are finishing up their year soon and while some may be graduating, others are finishing up their first year. Student success is very important and we encourage and support our students throughout the year. Some take a shorter version and get trained right to employment.

Apprenticeship is also a big thing and many of our carpenters are now apprentices who will work towards their red seal. We had four new red seal carpenters and one is working towards his blue seal.

Potlotek Elders

Potlotek First Nation attends the annual pilgrimage to Ste. Anne De Beaupre, Quebec held on the last Sunday in June. Ste. Anne is the patron Saint of the Mi'kmaw people.

Potlotek First Nation charters a motor coach for the community's sick and elders. The bus departs from the community hall on Thursday making a brief stop in St. Peter's to receive a blessing from Fr. Anson for a safe journey. They stop in Truro for lunch and in Fredericton for an overnight stay. They continue their pilgrimage to Quebec the next day. Arriving in Quebec to freshen up and have dinner before the evening's Mass and Candle Light Procession. The journey home begins on Monday morning.

The Elders look forward to this trip every year. It is an opportunity for them to get out of their house and not have to worry about planning a trip. All their needs are taken care of. They meet up with their friends and family members from other First Nations.

One of our Elders has taken it upon herself to help out with the Community Garden. She is a very active participant that promotes a healthy and active lifestyle. She has previously led an Elders project along side another Elder, which saw them overseeing various events in the community.

Our Elders continue to be a priority in the community. They currently see the benefit from the Education Department's Language Program. The program is centred on learning the Language through food, they deliver meals to the Elders.

As noted by Fisheries, the Elders are treated to fish and seafood through the food fishery and also the Moose Harvest. Our community truly caters to our beloved elders.

Potlotek Youth

The youth in our community have access to a Youth Centre for after school hours. Here they are free to play with their friends or catch up on homework. During March break, various trips are planned to keep the youth occupied. These include movies, swimming, skating, bowling and laser tag. Our red Road leaders in the community plan after school activities throughout the school year and summer. They might supervise the gym or host bonfires and wiener roasts. We also have outdoor equipment available in the community including mountain bikes, canoes and kayaks. Fun days are hosted to allow for the supervised use of this equipment.

Aboriginal Day, June 21, saw a fun day of canoes and kayaks at the Potlotek Fishery in partnership with St. Peter's Pirates.

Our Mikmaq Physical Activity Program allows our youth to take part in snowboarding and surfing, as well as the opportunity for National Sporting events.

A yearly Moose Harvest in the Cape Breton Highlands is one of the highlights for the youth. A committed group of volunteers oversees the trip and ensures the youth are properly drilled on safety as they partake in the Moose Hunt. Last year's hunt was highly successful.

The land Based Learning Program at the High School acknowledged the first kill of one of the hunters and did a ceremony for the young man. Those in attendance were treated to a feast of Moose meat as they thanked and congratulated the young hunter.

Economic Development

In the Economic Development division of Potlotek First Nation, we have been working closely with our partner, St. Peter's Economic Development to develop the Canal Landing Project. This project will see two sister buildings established at the St. Peter's Canal site this summer. The buildings will be used to attract tourists and to serve as a portal to transport tourists from the canal to Potlotek First Nation. This project is set to begin this summer through our funding partner, ACOA.

The Economic Development division of Potlotek has also created a new rack card series that promotes our community and its events. These were distributed in Halifax during the Saltscapes Tourism Expo the weekend of April 26-28. This event sees more than 40,000 people and it was interesting to observe how many are interested in cultural experiential tourism. This is set to be available in our community this summer through 7 different excursions. We have also connected with numerous visitor information centres that will distribute our rack cards; including the Halifax Airport, Kentville, Bridgewater and St. Peter's to name a few.

Another huge and successful project that the Economic Development Division has worked on was the Capes Keys and Coves, Southcoast to Adventure tourism guide. A partnership was formed between Potlotek First Nation, St. Peter's Economic Development and Isle Madame Tourism Association. This year, the cover of the guide featured Potlotek First Nation. Economic Development is also working with the Education Department to host a career/job fair which is set for June 6, 2019. We have had numerous confirmations of participants from employers to universities. We have formed a working group within our Potlotek departments to ensure that our career/job fair is a success this year and in years to come.

Potlotek Health Centre

Potlotek Health Centre provides a range of services and programs for community members as follows:

Urgent care walk-ins	Home and Community Care
Pre and Post-Natal Support	Aboriginal Head Start
Communicable Disease control	Immunizations
Diabetes Clinic	Children's Oral Health
Mental Health	Environmental Public Health
Addiction Services	Injury Prevention

A staff of 8 including a Nurse Practitioner and Health Nurse serve the needs of the community.

Health also hosts a yearly Suicide Prevention Camp for youth and an annual Elders gathering. Well Women and Well Men Clinics are also yearly events in the community.

Powwow/ Mi'kmaq Heritage Month

Potlotek First Nation revived the community Powwow in 2017. The Powwow takes place during the month of July, the weekend before St. Anne's Mission. The audience got to partake in the beautiful regalia as participants danced to the drums. Evenings saw community dances in the community hall, feasts and a fireworks display.

The Mikmaq History Month Event takes place in the school with a Mini Powwow event in the Schools followed by a Seafood Feast donated by the Potlotek Fisheries.

All our events are made possible by the help of community volunteers.



Dear Selection Committee,

Potlotek First Nation is a community that has overcome a lot of hardships to get to where we are today. As a small first nation community we are dealt our fair share of hardships. Whether it is an issue with our water, underfunding, unemployment or health issues, we have rallied together with an altruistic approach to problem solving.

Keeping the community spirit alive has always been at the forefront of our minds as we work together to create a harmonious atmosphere in which to live, work and play.. Reviving the ways of our ancestors has brought us back to our roots to really strengthen our drive and commitment to move forward.

Through the revival of traditions, regalia, language and culture we are building on the spirit of Potlotek First Nation. Together we are stronger, and nowhere is this more apparent than in Potlotek First Nation, Capital of Mi'kmaki.

We are very proud to showcase our community to you and we thank you for this opportunity.

Wela'liog,

Crystal Nicholas
Chief Administration Officer

Noelle Doucette
Potlotek Education

Diane Basque
Native Employment Officer

Charles Doucette
Potlotek Fisheries

Tahirih Paul
Economic Development

Charmaine Greencorn
Indian Registry

