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Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Supporting Student Success

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Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey – Supporting Student Success
September 2014

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Executive Summary

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is the official name for the Mi'kmaq Education Authority, officially created in 1997. The Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey represents the educational interests of 12 Mi'kmaw communities in Nova Scotia. The *Mi'kmaq Education Act*, a self-governing agreement, recognizes the role of the education authority to support local band schools in delivering language immersion and other culturally rich programs and activities. However, unlike a school board, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey serves rather than directs the activities of its members' local schools.

The Director of Education has stated that for the Mi'kmaw communities self-governance was an essential first step, but insufficient without community-based programming to enrich the education of Mi'kmaw children. This includes training and employing more First Nation educators in elementary and secondary schools. With Mi'kmaw-focused teaching pedagogy, schools seek to engage students in a successful education experience.

Some substantial outcomes include:

- High school graduation rates among First Nation students in Nova Scotia were nearly 88%, considerably higher than the national average of 35%;
- Numeracy and literacy rates in elementary and secondary schools have increased;
- More than 500 First Nation students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions;
- Eighty-eight Mi'kmaw Nation students graduated from a post-secondary institution in 2013;
- MK special needs students receive the focused attention they need to grow and thrive;
- A bilateral Education Services Agreement with the province aimed at enhancing collaboration, coordination and providing for the seamless transition of students between education systems.
- Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Student Information System

Local human capacity is the most important feature of the Mi'kmaw Nation governance infrastructure and each year the MK educational system sees growth in all areas of its human capital. Great effort is expended to support and mentor teachers working in the system, and to train future staff members to become language teachers, early childhood educators, teachers, and teaching assistants, and to build capacity in all areas.

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey continuously strives for academic excellence in its students and communities, and continues to make great strides in its efforts to empower youth, and in turn, empower the Mi'kmaw nation. Twenty years ago, the Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey communities hoped students would graduate and go on to post-secondary, now they expect the students to graduate and exceed provincial students.

Context

Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey (MK) is the official name for the Mi'kmaq Education Authority, officially created in 1997. This corporate body has its head office in Membertou First Nation, Sidney, Nova Scotia, which includes the Atlantic First Nations Help Desk, and another sub-office in Cole Harbour, Nova Scotia. The MK is about facilitating and assisting the jurisdiction of education for the Mi'kmaw Nation communities it serves. The *Mi'kmaq Education Act*, a self-governing agreement, recognizes the role of the education authority to support local band schools in delivering language immersion and other culturally rich programs and activities. However, unlike a school board, Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey serves rather than directs the activities of its members' local schools.

The 12 communities that are members of the MK include:

Acadia Mi'kmaw Nation	Paqtnkek Mi'kmaw Nation
Annapolis Valley Mi'kmaw Nation	Pictou Landing Mi'kmaw Nation
Bear River Mi'kmaw Nation	Potlotek Mi'kmaw Nation
Eskasoni Mi'kmaw Nation	Shubenacadie Mi'kmaw Nation
Glooscap Mi'kmaw Nation	Wagmatcook Mi'kmaw Nation
Membertou Mi'kmaw Nation	We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw Nation

Seven of the twelve communities have community schools:

Name of School	Community
Eskasoni Elementary and Middle School	Eskasoni
Chief Allison M. Bernard Memorial High School	Eskasoni
Eskasoni Training and Education Center	Eskasoni
Membertou Elementary School	Membertou
Pictou Landing Elementary School	Pictou Landing
Mi'kmawey Kina'muokuom	Potlotek
L'nu Sipuk Kina'muokuom	Shubenacadie
Wagmatcookewey Mi'kmaw School	Wagmatcook
We'koqma'q Mi'kmaw School	We'koqma'q

All of the communities have their own pre-school K4 daycare and Head Start Program.

MK is overseen by a Board of Directors, which consists of the Chiefs from each of the member communities. The current Chairperson of the Board is Chief Leroy Denny. The Director of Education, Eleanor Bernard, oversees a staff of about 30 directors, coordinators, consultants and technicians, and is accountable to the Board of Directors.

The Directors of Education from each community participate in educational planning through an Education Working Group. The communities can also decide to put in place a sub-committee to study and provide direction on various issues. There is presently a Standing Committee for Post-secondary Education.

Finance and Planning is a corporate service, which oversees the management of the budgeting, accounting, internal control, financial reporting, procurement services, and human resource

management functions of the organization. The Director of Finance and Planning plays an active role in negotiating and serving on committees at all levels of government. The Director also leads the strategic and operational planning exercise for MK, administers all grants and other financial contributions to communities, and manages MK's capital program.

The MK has a defined vision of common opportunity and high standards – a mission to advocate, represent, and protect – and guiding principles that are consistent with the seven sacred teachings of respect, honesty, courage, love, truth, humility, and wisdom.

In the fall of 2011, MK undertook the development of a strategic plan, which was approved by the Board of Directors. The plan established goals for each of nine chosen areas. The goals must be accomplished in a culturally sensitive way, and supported by appropriate measurement. The goals include:

1. Improve literacy rates;
2. Improve numeracy rates;
3. Improve the rates of bilingualism;
4. Create a more comprehensive performance measurement and accountability system;
5. Improve healthy and active lifestyles for students;
6. Ensure stakeholder communication is excellent;
7. Appropriate, timely and accountable programs for special needs students;
8. Improve employability of students through access to education and skill development opportunities at post-secondary level; and
9. Use New Paths funding to improve the quality of education and to enhance the educational experience of students, teachers, administrators, parents and communities.

History

Between 1992 and 1999, the participating Mi'kmaq First Nation communities of Nova Scotia, the federal government of Canada, and the province of Nova Scotia worked within their respective authorities and together to return the jurisdiction of on-reserve education exclusively to the First Nation communities of Nova Scotia. This action was to implement the *Mi'kmaq Education Act*, a tripartite agreement that had been developed over several years by the Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs. This eventually resulted in the signing of legislations Bill C-30 (federal) and Bill No. 4 (provincial) on April 22, 1999. The self-governing agreement allows the communities to provide bilingual, bicultural Mi'kmaw education, which was a priority for the chiefs.

The agreement and legislation provided participating First Nation communities with jurisdiction over primary, elementary, and secondary education on reserve and with management responsibilities for Aboriginal and Northern Development Canada post-secondary education programs. The agreement stipulates that the primary, elementary, and secondary programs and services offered shall be comparable to those provided by other education systems in Canada so as to permit the transfer of students between education systems without academic penalty. While Mi'kmaq schools follow provincial policies and practices respecting the delivery of education including curricula, school calendar, and student assessment regime, an important distinction is the emphasis placed upon the infusion and incorporation of Mi'kmaq language, heritage, and cultural programming.

For the participating Mi'kmaw communities, jurisdiction in education has meant:

- Power to make Mi'kmaw education laws;
- Total authority over Mi'kmaw education; and
- Legal authority to negotiate education with provincial and federal governments on a government-to-government basis.

Since 2008, MK and the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Early Childhood Development have operated under an Education Services Agreement aimed at enhancing collaboration and coordination and providing for the seamless transition of students between education systems. Because of the *Mi'kmaw Education Act* self-governing agreement, MK was able to sign this innovative education agreement with the province of Nova Scotia that focused on improving performance and accountability, co-operation, and increasing respect for language and culture. The five-year agreement replaced existing tuition agreements between MK member bands and school boards, with a common tuition agreement between MK and the province. The agreement set the foundation for a formal reporting structure between regional school boards and MK on student achievement, attendance, discipline, and a range of other educational measures.

The agreement also created an accountability framework so that bands and families can hold schools accountable for the money spent on educating their children. The agreement aimed to better engage parents and the Mi'kmaw community in the public school system. The education agreement also established a formula for the calculation of tuition that will be paid to school boards educating on-reserve Mi'kmaw students attending public schools.

Under the accord, which is renewed every five years, the department offers teachers in the MK system the same professional development provided free of charge to those in the provincial system. In turn, MK shares its expertise in language curriculum and Mi'kmaw programming with the department and also helps increase the knowledge and understanding of First Nation culture, language, and history in public schools.

There are about 500 MK students currently attending public schools. The Director of Education sits on the Provincial School Boards Association.

Activities Accomplished

The Director of Education has stated that, for the Mi'kmaw communities, self-governance was an essential first step, but insufficient without community-based programming to enrich the education of Mi'kmaw children. This includes training and employing more First Nation educators in elementary and secondary schools. A key initiative has been the development of language immersion programs in three communities, one offering courses through Grade 12. With Mi'kmaw-focused teaching pedagogy, schools seek to engage students in a successful education experience.

Through the addition of the First Nations School Success Program (FNSSP) program, supplementary dollars have been available to hire literacy and math consultants to work in the community schools. They have created math, literacy, and numeracy leads in all of the schools. These leads are trainers or mentors to the other teachers in the areas of math, literacy, and numeracy. The literacy, maths, numeracy and Mi'kmaw consultants have worked as part of a FNSSP team, which includes the

Assessment Coordinator and the Performance Measurement Coordinator, to develop school assessments.

In the province of Nova Scotia, there is a database system called Datavan. Between 2005 and 2014, without any funding support, work was done in consultation with Datavan to develop the MK Student Information System (MKSIS). Modules include attendance, behavior, lesson plans, special education, graduation rates, achievement scores, post-secondary, and nominal roll. This has led to data-driven decision-making around improvements to teacher training, changes in pedagogy, and changes in curriculum. The numeracy and literacy consultants rely on the school assessment data to inform their professional development sessions throughout the year.

MK communities have been able to use the data collected by the MKSIS as follows:

- To create useful information such as educational support statistics, i.e. year-end data, graduation rates, retention rates;
- To have the ability to ask more in-depth questions about the real issues in their schools;
- To undertake reporting in a timely fashion;
- Being able to complete the Provincial Nominal Roll within one week; and
- The development of Mi'kmaw Language Proficiency Scale.

Over the years, MK and its member communities have been able to realize their goals through partnerships such as with Cape Breton University and Nova Scotia Educational Leadership Consortium (Masters' degree in Educational Leadership) for teacher training, with St. Francis Xavier University for Certificate in Mi'kmaw Immersion, with Dalhousie University for a Means University College Entrance Preparation (UCEP) transition program to strengthen students' math skills, and others.

In 2010-2011, MK reported a high school graduation rate of 75% for students in the system, up from 70% two years earlier and almost on par with Nova Scotia as a whole. In 2012-2013, the number reached 87.7%, more than double the national average.

Materials or Tools Developed

The following materials or tools have had a significant impact on the success of Mi'kmaw students and teachers:

- Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey Student Information System
- Resources for Mi'kmaw language instruction;
- Mi'kmaw language proficiency scale;
- Evaluation rubriques to appraise teaching assistants; and
- Job Descriptions for principals and teachers around Special Needs students.

Logic Model

Inputs

- Director of Education
- MK Team
- Education budget
- *Mi'kmaw Education Act*
- Education Services Agreement
- Consultants
- Member Communities
- Mi'kmaw Nation Schools
- Board of Directors
- Education Working Group
- Volunteers

Activities

- Protect educational and language rights
- Provide support to communities
- Continued work on Language Resources
- Improving lives of special needs students within the schools and communities
- Continue progress on Evaluation and Assessment
- Increase participation in sporting events
- Use data results to improve professional development and mentorship for teachers
- Provide support for strategic plan goals
- Further explore assistive technology for special needs
- Provide support for transitioning students
- Increase success in math and science for Mi'kmaw students in provincial schools
- Support math tutoring and enhancement in Mi'kmaw Nation schools
- Provide instructional guidance and resources for teachers
- Support Mi'kmaw teacher training efforts by communities
- Support Red Road Project for Youth Leadership
- Support community engagement activities
- Create new linkages to support educational needs of communities

Outputs/ Performance Indicators

- MKSIS
- Language Resources
- Math, numeracy and literacy assessments
- School success assessments
- Provincial literacy and numeracy scores
- Curriculum
- Percentage of Mi'kmaw teachers and educators in system
- Performance measurement system

- Extent/type of communication with stakeholders
- Examples of levels of cooperation between partners
- Extent of increased student success in math and science
- Percentage of students participating in sporting events
- Extent of physical activity in classroom
- Examples of assistive technology being used
- Extent of professional development provided to teachers
- Red Road Youth Leaders

Short Term Outcomes

- Improved literacy rates
- Improved numeracy rates
- Improved rates of bilingualism
- Comprehensive performance measurement system
- Improved active healthy student lifestyles
- Excellent stakeholder communication
- Needs met for special needs students
- Improved employability of students
- Improved quality of education in schools
- Communities Involved in education
- Increased enrollment in postsecondary and skills training.

Intermediate Outcomes

- Successful Mi'kmaw schools
- Competent teachers and educators
- Bilingual and bicultural education in all Mi'kmaw schools
- Enriched community-based curriculum in all Mi'kmaw Nation schools
- Improved performance and accountability in provincial schools
- Effective co-operation between partners
- Increased respect for language and culture in provincial system
- Improved lives for special needs students in schools and communities
- Fully engaged communities
- More employment opportunities for graduating students

Long-term Outcomes (Impact)

- Successful Mi'kmaw Nation Students

Outcomes

Some substantial outcomes in the short-term include:

- High school graduation rates among First Nation students in Nova Scotia were nearly 88%, considerably higher than the national average of 35%;
- Numeracy and literacy rates in elementary and secondary schools increased;
- More than 500 First Nation students were enrolled in post-secondary institutions;
- Eighty-eight Mi'kmaw Nation students graduated from a post-secondary institution in 2013, confidently expanding their personal horizons and ready to make a change in their communities;
- MK special needs students are getting the focused attention they need to grow and thrive.

Atlantic Canada's First Nation Help Desk continues to provide technology-related resources and excellence in service to MK and Atlantic Canada First Nation schools. Some highlights include:

- Fibre optics connectivity;
- Safe Internet feeds;
- Reliable videoconferencing networks; and
- More youth employment opportunities.

Mi'kmaq language and immersion efforts have seen the creation of a 6,000+ word Mi'kmaq-Mi'gmaq online talking dictionary. With help from the First Nation Help Desk, Mi'kmaq language classes are now offered to daycares via videoconference and Mi'kmaq 110/Mi'kmaw Language 11 web-based courses are offered in all high schools. St. Francis Xavier University has also delivered its first program in the Mi'kmaw language and has graduated Mi'kmaq immersion teachers with a certificate in teaching immersion.

The MKSIS can now efficiently monitor strategies and goals for schools and create accurate educational support statistics such as graduation, attendance and retention rates.

Tangible growth:

- Two new schools have been and are in the process of being built in Membertou Mi'kmaw Nation and Wagmatcook Mi'kmaw Nation.
- One new gymnasium has been built for the community of Eskasoni.

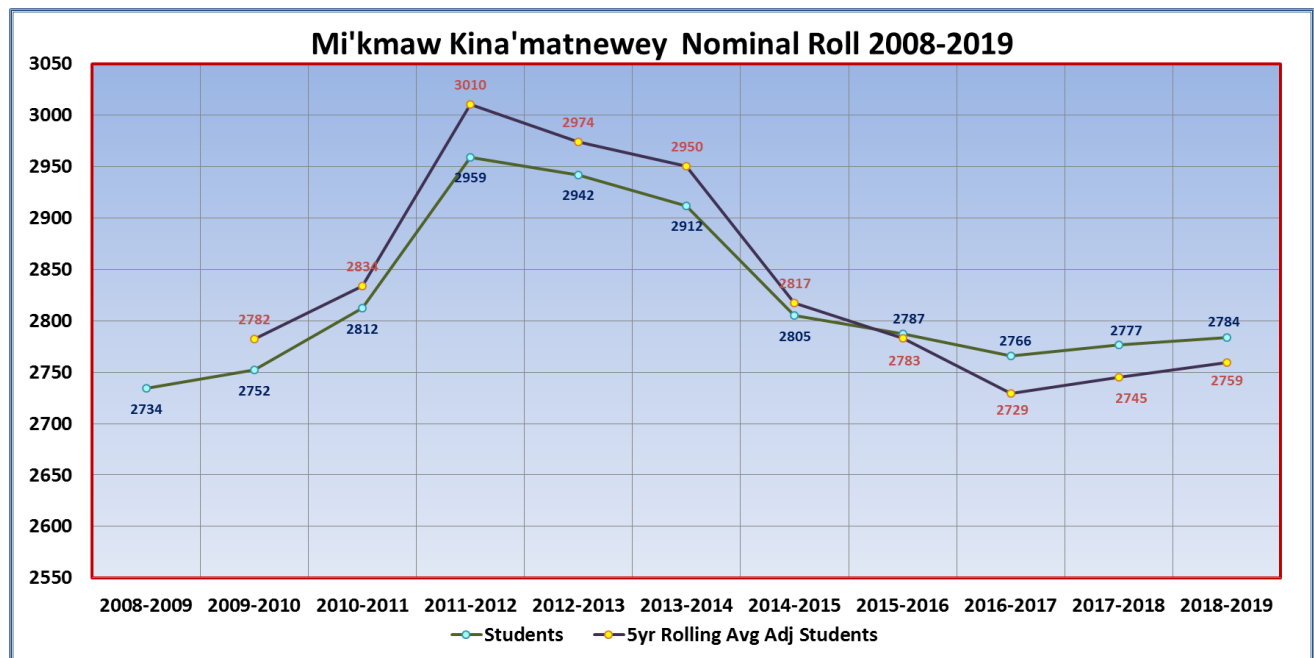
Statistics

The following statistical tables were provided by David Peters, Performance Measurement Coordinator for MK, according to the requests provided; however, the identity of the schools or communities reporting the data was kept confidential. The data is based on information reported by the communities for the 2013-2014 school year. The tables have been provided in picture format.

Nominal Roll Growth Rate

The student population has declined by 1% in the last year. Among the demographic factors contributing to the decline in numbers, more women are continuing their studies and delaying starting families. The rolling average adjustment is internal for the calculation of funding.

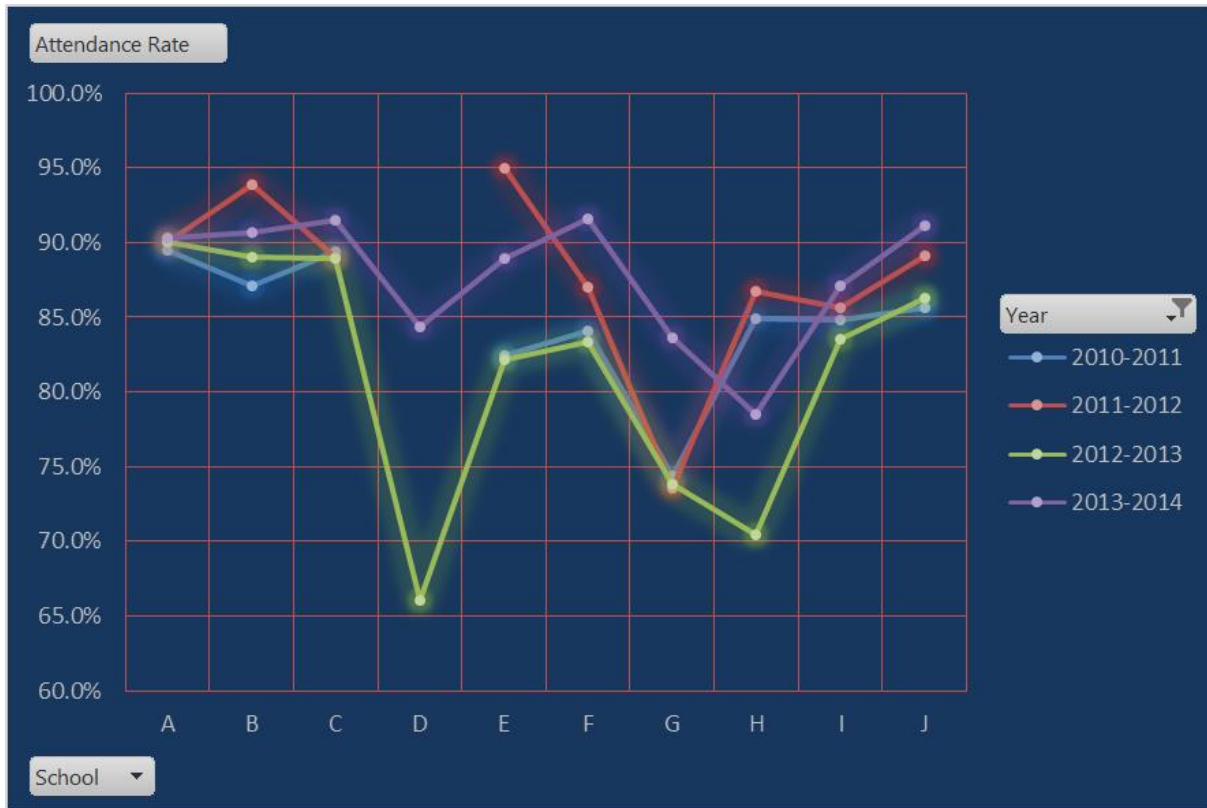
Figure 1.0



Attendance Rates

For 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, all schools used the attendance modules in the MKSIS to record student attendance. It was not always complete for previous years as indicated by the table.

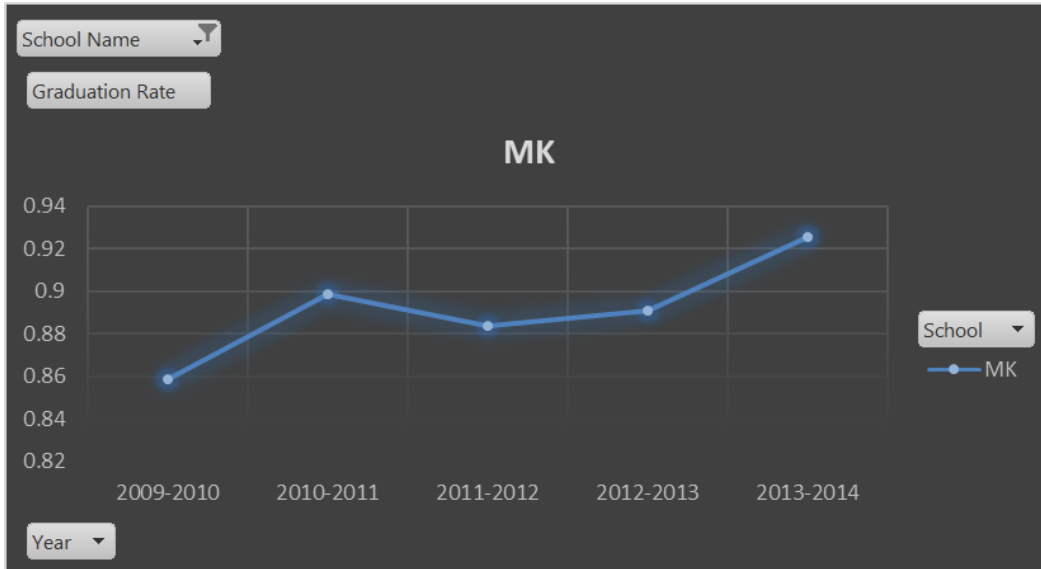
Figure 2.0



Graduation Rate for All MK Secondary Students

The percentage of students who complete grade 12 for all MK secondary students has risen to just over 92% for 2013-2014.

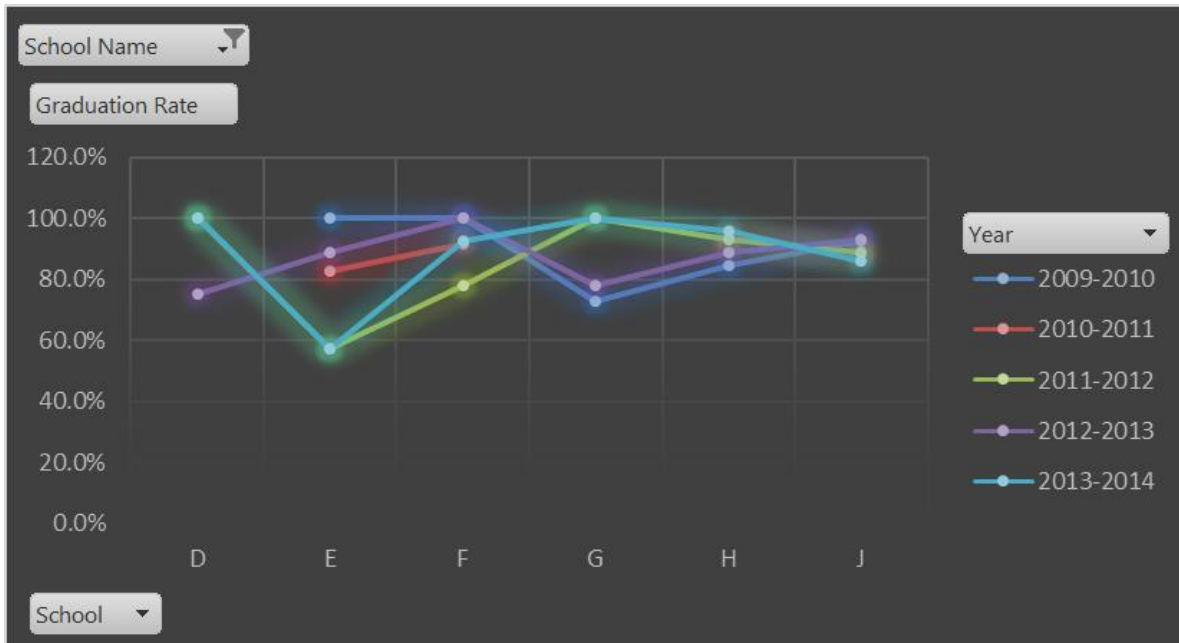
Figure 3.0



Reported Graduation Rates for MK Schools

Within the MK schools, the reported graduation rate for 2013-2014 varied between 60% and 100%; however, it is not possible to know if the schools reporting the data, who are represented by letters, are elementary, or secondary.

Figure 4.0



Student Age-Grade Report for 2013-2014

The following table provides information from MKSIS on the ages of the students for each grade level. The table indicates that up to the end of secondary school a good majority of students are at the appropriate age/grade level. In grades 10, 11, and 12, we start to see more variation in ages. Nevertheless, the students are still in school.

Figure 5.0

Year 2013-2014														
Age	K4	PR	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
4	64													
5	61	76												
6		96	67											
7		12	67	47										
8			9	94	47		1							
9				11	81	42								
10					18	82	37	1						
11						18	83	28						
12							18	95	13					
13								34	59	20				
14									23	67	18	1		1
15									1	25	57	15		
16										5	32	64	19	
17											7	21	47	13
18											2	8	28	65
19												2	12	36
20												4	6	17
21												1	1	10
22													1	5
23														2
24														2

Significant Accomplishments

Local human capacity is the most important feature of the Mi'kmaw Nation governance infrastructure, and each year the MK educational system sees growth in all areas of its human capital. Great effort is expended to support and mentor teachers working in the system and to train future staff members to become language teachers, early childhood educators, teachers, and teaching assistants, and to build capacity in all areas.

Sharing information and exchanging ideas helps to build success. L'nui'sultinej Conference 2013 was a success with over 300 Mi'kmaw Nation educators participating in the chance to meet and share and build success for Mi'kmaw students.

Physical education and sporting events are well supported by MK schools and volunteers from the communities. The MK works to send students to provincial and national aboriginal competitions such as the Nova Scotia Aboriginal Track and Field Championships, National Aboriginal Hockey Championships, and North American Indigenous Games.

MK continuously strives for academic excellence in its students and communities and continues to make great strides in its efforts to empower youth and, in turn, empower the Mi'kmaw nation. Twenty years ago, the MK communities hoped students would graduate and go on to post-secondary; now they expect the students to graduate and exceed provincial students.

Next Steps

Some of the next steps planned by the MK team to support the community schools include:

- Improving the literacy and numeracy scores of individual students;
- Building capacity in schools through mentoring;
- Creating opportunities for more interaction with math consultant regarding NSIS collaborative approach;
- Supporting culturally competent goals in IPP;
- Professional development for guidance counselling;
- Deciding how best to prepare special needs students for post-secondary, skills training or work;
- Renegotiating the level of capital funding to support the needed infrastructure; and
- Continuing to build success.