

WINTER 2025



DALHOUSIE
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NEWSLETTER



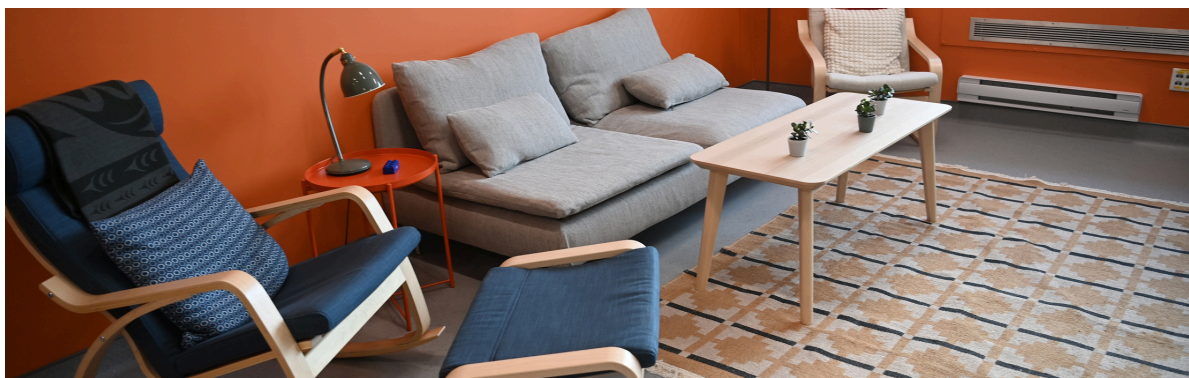
Honoring Winter Solstice: Welcoming the Return of Light

As we approach the Winter Solstice on **December 21**—the *longest night of the year*—we take a moment to reflect on what this time means across Mi'kma'ki and in many Indigenous cultures. The Solstice marks not only the turning of the season but the return of the sun, a reminder that even in the darkest moments, light is already on its way back to us.

For the Mi'kmaq, this time of year has long been connected to reflection, renewal, and community. Traditionally, Elders share teachings, families gather to honour ancestors, and stories are passed down that speak to resilience, gratitude, and the responsibilities we carry into the new season. It is a time to slow down, listen deeply, and acknowledge the balance between light and darkness that guides both nature and our own journeys.

As we close out the year and enter the festive season, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations, extends warm wishes to all members of our Dalhousie community. May the return of the sun bring rest, clarity, and a renewed sense of connection. We look forward to continuing our shared work—grounded in respect, reciprocity, and relationship—in the new year.

Wela'lin | Thank you, and warm blessings for the season ahead.



New Indigenous Student Centre on Sexton Campus

In a significant step toward reconciliation, the Sexton Campus has unveiled its **new** Indigenous Student Centre—marking a transformative moment for both Dalhousie and the broader community. More than a physical space, the centre represents a commitment to creating an inclusive environment where Indigenous engineering and architecture students can thrive academically, culturally, and socially.



The centre arrives at a crucial time. Indigenous peoples have long been underrepresented in STEM fields due to systemic barriers and a lack of culturally supportive learning spaces. This new centre helps bridge that gap by providing a place that honors the heritage and contributions of Wabanaki and Indigenous communities.

Designed to support academic success, the centre offers study areas, a kitchenette, tutoring, and direct access to the Indigenous Pathways Coordinator. It will also host cultural workshops and gatherings that build representation and belonging, while supporting students' skills development and career readiness.



Importantly, the centre serves as a community hub—where Indigenous students can connect, share experiences, and find kinship and mentorship. Regular events such as storytelling and crafting nights will strengthen students' ties to both the university and their cultural traditions.



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The space also plays a role in fostering cultural awareness among the broader campus community. Through open events and educational programming, the centre will deepen understanding of Indigenous histories and lived experiences—helping to break down stereotypes and advance reconciliation across Sexton.



For the fields of science and engineering, the centre's opening is especially meaningful. Indigenous knowledge systems bring unique insights to innovation, sustainability, and problem-solving. By supporting Indigenous students, Dalhousie is helping diversify these disciplines with new perspectives that are vital for addressing complex global challenges.

The establishment of the Indigenous Student Centre reflects the university's commitment to equity, inclusion, accessibility, and reconciliation. By tailoring resources to Indigenous

learners, Dalhousie affirms its responsibility to create equitable opportunities and support Indigenous success.

The opening of this centre is a milestone—one that will have lasting impact on students, faculty, staff, and the communities we serve. It stands as a beacon of empowerment and a celebration of the invaluable contributions Indigenous Peoples bring to STEM and to Dalhousie as a whole.

Daisy Peter-Paul, Program Coordinator
Indigenous Pathways Program | Faculty of Engineering
Dalhousie University



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Celebrating Mi'kmaw Language Teaching with **Curtis Michael**

For Curtis Michael, teaching the Mi'kmaw language is both a personal commitment and a community responsibility: to keep L'nui'suti alive and ensure it continues to be learned by future generations. Raised in Sipekne'katik, Curtis grew up hearing Mi'kmaw from his grandparents—one of the few families in the area still speaking the language. Their teachings shaped his identity and continue to inspire his work today.



When his grandfather passed away, Curtis made a promise to himself: “When I go into Wa'so'q — the light — I want to speak Mi'kmaw to him.” That drive, strengthened by the influence of his grandmother in Eskasoni—known lovingly as Dr. Granny—guides how he teaches: through culture, story, and joy.

Curtis has brought this approach into the classroom since joining Dalhousie in 2021. His Mi'kmaw Language for Non-Speakers courses (INDG 2901/2902) blend humour, movement, and cultural teachings, drawing students from Mi'kmaw communities, across Canada, and around the world. Faculty and staff are also among his learners. Dr. Margaret Robinson (FASS) shares that his classes helped her reconnect with cultural worldviews embedded in the language: “It was the most fun I've had as a learner.”

In 2025, Curtis was appointed as a full-time Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences—an acknowledgement of his dedication to language revitalization and student success. FASS Dean Dr. Jennifer Andrews notes, “His passion for the Mi'kmaw language is something he shares every day with his students and community.”



For Curtis, teaching is more than a role: “It doesn't feel like a job,” he says. His work ensures that L'nui'suti—and the stories, values, and culture carried within it—will continue to be spoken, shared, and celebrated for generations to come.

[Read More Here](#)

Community Engagement

OVPIR Participates in Mawkim Data Sovereignty Forum

On October 22nd, Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations, John R. Sylliboy, participated in the **Mawkim Data Sovereignty Forum**, a gathering that brought together First Nations leadership, policy experts, and community partners to discuss how data governance can advance sovereignty, rights, and community well-being across Mi'kma'ki.

John led **Session 3: "Indigenous Citizenship – Membership Policy,"** offering reflections on the responsibilities and complexities that surround citizenship, membership, and belonging within Indigenous Nations. His session emphasized that decisions about identity and citizenship—who is counted, how, and by whom—must remain firmly in the hands of Indigenous communities, guided by their laws, traditions, and governance systems. He also spoke to the intersection between membership policy and data sovereignty, noting that accurate, respectful, and community-controlled data is essential for self-determination, program development, and protecting inherent rights. Participants engaged in a meaningful conversation on how institutions and governments must uphold these principles in practice, not just in policy.

John's contribution highlighted the importance of relational accountability, community-led decision making, and the ongoing work required to ensure that data governance reflects Indigenous values and sovereignty. **Wela'lin** to Mawkim and all partners for creating a space that brings these vital conversations forward.

Sharing Indigenous Knowledge on a Global Stage

From Nov 26 – 28th, the Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations represented Dalhousie by participating in the 2025 Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) Congress in Nairobi, Kenya.

Zealand, and India, sharing insights on Etuaptmumk (Two-Eyed Seeing) as a foundation for Indigenous-led research, teaching, and policy. The session brought together Indigenous and academic leaders from across the Commonwealth, highlighting how universities can strengthen accountability, reciprocity, and relationships with Indigenous communities through inclusive research practices.



Vice-Provost John R. Sylliboy contributed to the plenary session **Indigenising Research: Shared Lessons from the Caribbean, Canada, Australia, New**



Left: John R. Sylliboy & Right: Charity Kabaya (Trade Commissioner Assistant - Nairobi, Kenya)



Visiting the Maasai Village at the Maasai Mara National Reserve

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Wli Nuelewi aqq Pusu'l Puna'ne



As we prepare for the holiday break and the Winter Solstice—the return of the light—we extend our warmest wishes to you and your families. This is a time for rest, reflection, and renewal, and we are grateful for everyone who has walked with us throughout the year.

Wela'lin for your continued support, partnership, and care. May the season bring peace, warmth, and good health, and may the coming year be filled with new energy and opportunity.

We look forward to reconnecting in the new year.
Warm greetings from the OVPIR team.

Wela'lin

Office of the Vice-Provost, Indigenous Relations
Henry Hicks Building, Room 337