

FROM INFORMATION GAPS TO CO-GOVERNANCE

COUNTERING MIS/DISINFORMATION IN
INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE STUDIES IN
CANADA

ANGELINE GILLIS
CONFEDERACY OF MAINLAND MI'KMAQ



CHRIS MILLEY
NEXUS COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LTD.



DR. IAN STEWART
NEXUS & UNIVERSITY OF KINGS COLLEGE

*A policy proposal grounded in the
Mi'kma'ki / Nova Scotia
experience with Mi'kmaw
Ecological Knowledge Studies
(MEKS)*



- Indigenous knowledge has been recognized
- Yet no national standard protocol across full assessment cycle
- Uneven practice persists
- Information gaps remain
- Severe risk of mis- and disinformation

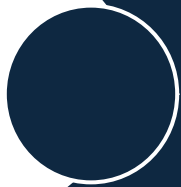
THE PROBLEM

CORE CONCEPT



1. **The issue:** Indigenous knowledge must be considered. No common assessment architecture
2. **The risk:** Variation across projects leads to inconsistent methods and timing
3. **The response:** move work upstream. REA and SEA to identify baselines and knowledge gaps.
4. **The aim:** build co-governance and improve legitimacy and predictability

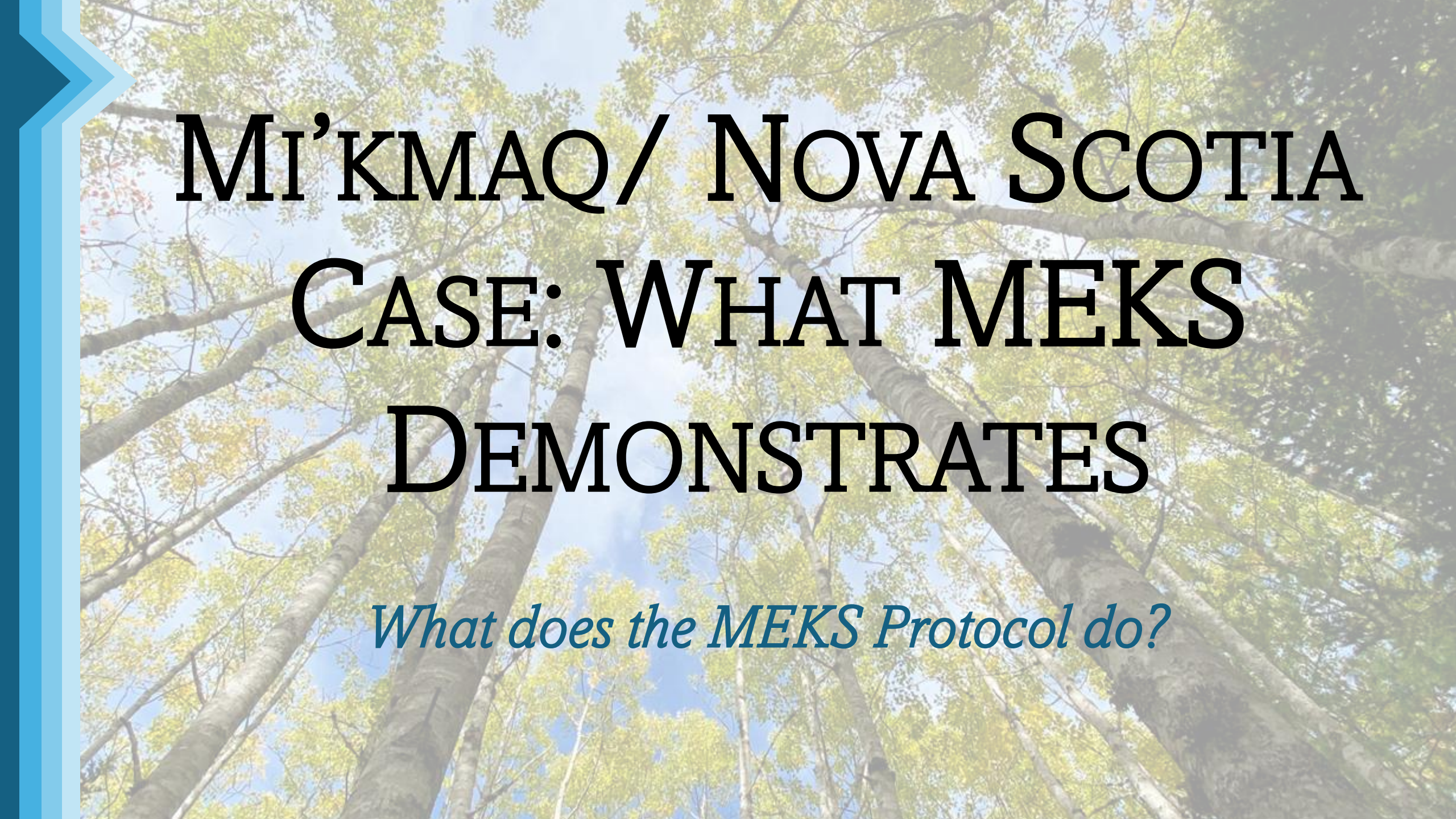
- Recognition outpaced implementation in IAs
- Lack of standards = Practice varies widely
- Weak frameworks enable misinformation
- Trust in evidence is undermined



WHY IT IS NEEDED NOW

WHAT FEDERAL LAW ALREADY PROVIDES

- Legal basis already exists
- Impact Assessment Act, s.22
- Strategic and regional tools exist (ss.92-7)
- Confidentiality protections exist (s. 119)
- Federal programs support participation



MI'KMAQ / NOVA SCOTIA CASE: WHAT MEKS DEMONSTRATES

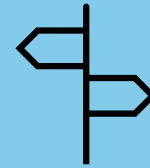
What does the MEKS Protocol do?



Sets out essential components for planning, collection, analysis, reporting and distribution of Mi'kmaq ecological knowledge in Nova Scotia.



Frames MEKS as professional and accountable work tied to potential effects on Mi'kmaq Rights, lands, waters, and resources.



Confirms ownership and prior informed consent expectations for information that is shared voluntarily.



States clearly that a MEKS is not the same thing as Crown consultation or proof that the Duty to Consult has been fulfilled.

- Too focused on single projects
- Evades cumulative effects
- Misses common baselines
- Often too late in process
- Evidence becomes fragmented

LIMITS OF PROJECT-LEVEL IA ALONE

WHY A MANDATORY, TIERED, COLLABORATIVE MODEL

- Mandatory rules
- Tiered responsibilities
- Collaborative governance
- Clear roles for all parties
- Better division of labour

THE MANDATORY, TIERED, COLLABORATIVE MODEL



THE MANDATORY, TIERED, COLLABORATIVE MODEL



1

- National Indigenous Knowledge protocol
- Baseline standards and clear trigger rules
- Evidence integration guidance
- National standards as a floor, not a ceiling

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- Builds shared baseline information
- Addresses cumulative effects
- Identifies sensitive areas and reveals data gaps
- Gives projects a strong starting point

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3

- Project-level tier remains essential
- It is more focused, transparent and addressed project-specific issues
- Uses regional and strategic context
- Tracks how Indigenous knowledge shaped decisions & monitors feeds back into system



KEY COMPONENTS OF THIS NEW MODEL



Co-governance and Participation

- Participation is not an add-on
- Compatible with current co-operation agreements with provinces
- Indigenous rights-holders use their own protocols
- Regulators ensure fair structure
- Proponents fund and apply findings
- Public engagement remains important



Policy Instruments

- Federal protocol or regulation
- Indigenous-led capacity support
- Data governance strategy
- Communication guidelines
- Integrated permitting guidance
- Regional monitoring system



Expected Benefits

- Better evidence quality
- More consistent baselines
- Fewer methodological disputes
- Greater respect for rights
- Stronger project reviews
- Reduced vulnerability to misinformation
- More resilient assessment systems

Concluding Points

- Proposal is grounded in existing law
- Reflects current Mi'kmaw experience
- Supported by key policy and legal foundations
- Advanced understanding of IKS credibility and improved resilience to misinformation

THANK YOU.

ANGELINE GILLIS
CONFEDERACY OF MAINLAND MI'KMAQ
AGILLIS@CMMNS.COM

CHRIS MILLEY
NEXUS COASTAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT LTD.
CMILLEY@NEXUSCOASTAL.COM

DR. IAN STEWART
UNIVERSITY OF KINGS COLLEGE
IGSTEWAR@DAL.CA

