

First Nations Summit

STATEMENT

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First Nations Summit voices support for Mi'kmaq and condemns non-indigenous protests

X̣ẉməθḳẉəỵəm (Musqueam), Sḳẉx̣ẉú7mesh (Squamish) and sə̣lilẉətał (Tseil-Waututh)/ Vancouver, BC – The First Nations Summit (FNS) is voicing strong support for the Mi'kmaq people and the Sipekne'katik First Nation as they exercise their constitutional rights to the Atlantic lobster fishery in Saulnierville, Nova Scotia. The FNS also condemns the abhorrent and dangerous intimidation tactics that have been used by non-indigenous commercial fishermen as means to disrupt the Sipekne'katik fishery.

The Mi'kmaq people have been waiting for 21 years for the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to adequately implement the 1999 Supreme Court of Canada decision in *R. v. Marshall (1999)*, which affirms Mi'kmaq treaty rights to the fishery as well as a commercial right to generating a moderate livelihood through the fishery.

Regrettably, as we have witnessed on the west coast time and time again, the unfortunate reality has been for DFO to quickly implement court decisions that restrict fishing rights, while at the same time willfully ignoring or minimizing decisions that recognize and affirm Aboriginal and treaty rights. It is long overdue for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to cease this practice and follow the rule of law by fully implementing decisions such as *R. v. Marshall (1999)*.

The FNS joins the Sipekne'katik First Nation in calling on Bernadette Jordan, Minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Premier Stephen McNeil and the RCMP to uphold the rule of law and to meet the requests put forth by the Sipekne'katik First Nation, including;

- *For the Premier of Nova Scotia to address the ongoing systemic denial of services by Nova Scotia businesses;*
- *For the RCMP to uphold the rule of law and protect the Mi'kmaq from illegal protest and criminal behavior of the some of the commercial fishing industry and its members by increasing RCMP presence on the wharfs and towns and to apply the full authority of the law against the illegal activities; and*
- *For the Minister of Fisheries, call a moratorium of their search and seizure practices in application to Mi'kmaq regulated fisheries and to fully apply the powers under the Fisheries Act s. 43 and Fishery General Regulations to apply to any commercial fisherman or license holders, who violate s. 22(7)."*

Let there be no doubt, the Government of Canada and DFO's strategy to deny these constitutionally protected inherent rights is what has created the environment for the systemic racism emerging as the Mi'kmaq exercise their rights. It is beyond time for these racist actions to end. The FNS urges both the governments of Canada and Nova Scotia to immediately and actively uphold the inherent rights of First Nations and impose strong repercussions on any who illegally undermine them.

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The First Nations Summit speaks on behalf of First Nations involved in treaty negotiations in British Columbia. Further background information on the Summit may be found at www.fns.bc.ca.

Contact: Colin Braker, FNS Communications Director, Ph. 604-328-4094