

FIRST NATIONS LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Statement

October 15, 2020

FNLCC stands with the Mi'kmaq and calls on Federal Government, Government of Nova Scotia and the RCMP to step in and stop the racist violence



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(X^wməθk^wəyəm (Musqueam), Sk^wxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliwətał (Tseil-Waututh)/Vancouver, B.C.) The First Nations Leadership Council (a collaborative working relationship between BC Assembly of First Nations, First Nations Summit and Union of BC Indian Chiefs – [FNLCC]) strongly denounces the abhorrent violence and disregard for the law by non-indigenous protesters who have disrupted and interfered with the legal and constitutionally protected rights of the Mi'kmaq people. Inciting hostility and undermining the Mi'kmaq right to earn a moderate living from fishing, they have attempted to hinder and deny the Nation's fishing activities, including their Atlantic lobster fishery in Saulnierville, Nova Scotia for the past several weeks.

Over the past 48 hours, the Mi'kmaq people have been subjected to mobs of protesters that have engaged in violent criminal activities, including burning and vandalizing vehicles outside two Mi'kmaq lobster storage facilities in southwest Nova Scotia. These hateful activities, as well as the lack of immediate action on the part of the RCMP, the federal government and the Government of Nova Scotia, are clear and horrendous evidence that systemic racism is alive and well in Canada. Complete inaction on the part of the RCMP and governments to step in and stop the racist violence equates to complicity.

The Mi'kmaq people have a right to the same protections afforded to all Canadian citizens. The FNLCC calls on the Federal government, Government of Nova Scotia and RCMP to immediately step in to protect the Mi'kmaq fishers and citizens as they exercise legal and constitutionally protected rights to the fishery. A strong message needs to be sent by all levels of the government and law enforcement that they have adopted a firm and clear stance in defending the recognized legal fishing rights of First Nations, and will prosecute any illegal protest or criminal behavior aimed at undermining these rights

The Mi'kmaq people have been forced to wait for more than 20 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 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 continued inaction of the DFO and the federal government has created an untenable, frightening environment in which unchecked systemic racism has fuelled violence, division, and vandalism across Nova Scotia over the past six weeks. The Mi'kmaq people should not have to wait any longer; it is time for the Minister of Fisheries to fully implement the *Marshall* decision now. Government inaction and indecision can no longer bolster and condone the infringement of Mik'maq rights and further acts of hostility and violence.

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The First Nations Leadership Council is comprised of the political executives of the BC Assembly of First Nations (BCAFN), First Nations Summit (FNS), and the Union of BC Indian Chiefs (UBCIC).

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