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## **Successful Mission to New Zealand Explores Crown-Maori Relations**

Representatives of the PEI Government and Epekwitk Mi'kmaq recently returned from a successful study of Crown-Maori relations in Aoteroa-New Zealand.

Led by Chief Darlene Bernard and Deputy Premier Darlene Compton, the delegation met with the Canadian High Commission in Wellington, representatives of four Departments within the New Zealand Government, the Maori Language Commission, the Maori Fisheries Trust, the Waitangi Tribunal, *Te Papa Tongarewa* - the National Museum of New Zealand, the Federation of Maori Authorities, the Te Arawa Maori, the Rotorua Lakes Council, *Te Puia* - the New Zealand Maori Arts and Crafts Institute, and *Te Peringa* - the Faculty of Law at Waikato University.

The Mission took place between January 22nd and 29th and included visits to Wellington, Rotorua, Hamilton and Auckland.

The delegation identified opportunities for Prince Edward Island in the areas of Economic Development and Indigenous Tourism, Indigenous-to-Indigenous Trade, the development of *mi'kmawisimk* (the *Mi'kmaq* language), as well as opportunities to increase collaboration between the Crown and Epekwitk Mi'kmaq.

“Together, we were able to learn about the Crown-Maori partnership in New Zealand, their past and present situation, from a variety of perspectives,” said Deputy Premier Darlene Compton. “Prince Edward Island and the Mi'kmaq have collaboratively taken important steps forward on reconciliation and this mission has certainly strengthened our relationship as we continue to work closely for the future of the PEI Mi'kmaq.”

“Maori have had great success in reviving their language, te reo, and making Maori culture an increasingly mainstream part of life in Aoteroa-New Zealand, as well as an emerging part of their national identity,” said Chief Darlene Bernard. “Through entrepreneurship, prudent fiscal management and treaty settlements, Maori have also become a significant force in the Aoteroa-New Zealand economy.”

The delegation included representatives of L'nuey, the newly established Mi'kmaq Rights and Reconciliation Initiative, as well as Members of the Legislative Assembly, Sidney MacEwen and Lynne Lund, upon invitation of Epekwitk Mi'kmaq.

At Te Papa Tongarewa, the delegation was honoured with a *Mihi whakatau* - a formal Maori welcome - which was a powerful experience and a tremendous honour for the group.

The Mission was organized by L'nuey with the valuable assistance of the Canadian High Commission in Wellington and the Canadian Consulate in Auckland.

The Mission was made possible through contributions from Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada - Nation Rebuilding Program.

“Critically, we developed some strong relationships with Maori and with key officials within the Government of New Zealand,” said Chief Bernard. “Maori also want these relationships to be maintained, nurtured and to bear fruit.”

- 30 -

Media Contacts:

Sean Doke  
Junior Communications Officer  
L'nuey  
sdoke@lnuey.ca

Vicki Tse  
Bilingual Senior Communications Officer  
Executive Council Office of Prince Edward Island  
vickitse@gov.pe.ca